
DATE: December 23, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **LOW-INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LEAP)**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the duly authorized signing officers of the Regional Corporation be authorized to execute an agreement with Hydro One Brampton Networks Inc. ("Hydro") for the provision of the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP);

And further, that the Region of Peel, through Human Services, administer LEAP for Hydro for 2011 and for subsequent years on an automatic renewal basis;

And further, that the Region of Peel, unless notice as per the agreement is given, provide grants to eligible low-income Hydro customers to assist with Hydro bill payment.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has identified the need to change their policies to assist low-income energy consumers and create a component called Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP).
- The Region of Peel has an opportunity to partner with Hydro One Brampton Network Inc. ("Hydro") to provide assistance to low-income individuals, living within the Region of Peel, with their energy cost.
- The Region of Peel will receive funding from Hydro One Brampton Networks Inc., in the amount of \$75,000 annually, to administer the program as mandated by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB).

DISCUSSION

1. Background

In 2008, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) began consultation with stakeholders to consider the need for and nature of policies that could assist low-income energy consumers. Through that consultation, the OEB identified three components of a Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) that could assist low-income customers better manage their bill payments and energy cost. The three components are: emergency financial assistance; customer services rules; and targeted conservation and demand management programs.

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Utility companies in Ontario are regulated by the OEB and must make funds available to their eligible low income customers for LEAP. LEAP may be delivered by one agency (lead) which is responsible for all functions, or by a network of agencies. Each utility company is responsible for selecting the lead and intake agencies of their choice to deliver the program. In Mississauga, LEAP is delivered by the United Way of Peel Region as the lead agency for Enersource Hydro Mississauga Inc. In Bolton and Caledon the lead agency for Hydro One Networks inc. is the United Way of Greater Simcoe County, with intake agencies in Orangeville.

2. Partnership Opportunity

The Region of Peel has been approached by Hydro One Brampton Network Inc. ("Hydro") to be the lead agency to administer the first component of LEAP- Emergency Financial Assistance identified through the OEB consultation. LEAP is a grant program intended to provide emergency financial relief to eligible low-income customers of utilities and unit sub-metering providers needing funds to assist with current utility arrears.

As a lead agency, the Region will be responsible for intakes, program coordination and financial management and reporting. LEAP will be a component of the current Preventing Homelessness in Peel Program (PHIPP) delivered through Human Services. LEAP will not only be accessed by low-income individuals, but will be extended to both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients in Brampton.

3. Current Status

Under our current Preventing Homelessness in Peel Program, applicants are able to receive one-time funding up to a maximum of \$5,000. However, through the LEAP program, Brampton applicants will have access to an additional \$500 per calendar year once the PHIPP funds have been exhausted. Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients are not eligible to receive funds from PHIPP, but can access funding through LEAP.

4. Program Eligibility Criteria

This program will be available to Brampton residents who must:

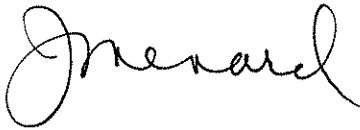
- be an existing customer of the utility company providing the funding;
- be an existing customer of a unit sub-metering provider operating within the service area of the utility;
- reside at the address for which there are arrears; and
- have a pre-tax income at or below the 2009 Statistics Canada low- income cut off.

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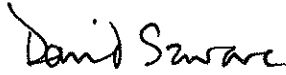
CONCLUSION

The need of our citizens requiring assistance with utility arrears is growing. In 2011, 221 cases in the Region of Peel received assistance with energy charges totalling \$282,544.68. The Region has a long and established history of assisting the residents of Peel in preventing homelessness by providing the necessary funds to pay for energy arrears, reconnection charges and energy security deposits. Partnering with Hydro One Brampton will provide more opportunity for low-income individuals, including Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients, to access funds while building a strong community relationship.



Janet Menard
Commissioner of Human Services

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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c. Legislative Services