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Winter Warmth Program Expands Its Reach with Growing Utility Support

More than 3,300 Ontario families will receive funding to stay warm this winter

OTTAWA, ON December 1, 2008 – Today the United Way and its Winter Warmth utility supporters announced the launch of the 2008-2009 program and welcomed three new utilities on board - Burlington Hydro, Horizon Utilities and Veridian Connections Inc. These utilities join Enbridge Gas Distribution, Enersource Hydro Mississauga, Hydro Ottawa, PowerStream, Toronto Hydro and Union Gas Limited in their efforts to spread warmth during the winter season.

Winter Warmth is an initiative that helps families in need with their energy bills during the cold winter months. The program is coordinated by a network of more than 40 community agencies through the United Way and funded by participating utility companies.

“We are thrilled by the continued success and expansion of the Winter Warmth Program across Ontario,” said Manny Sousa, Chair of the Winter Warmth Steering Committee. “This year the support of three more utilities means that Winter Warmth will be able to reach out to more families and individuals in need and underlines the important role this program plays in communities across the Province.”

Last year the Winter Warmth Program provided energy assistance grants totaling more than \$780,000 to 2200 eligible households, an increase of 48% over the previous year. The total funds available this year are \$1.2 million dollars. More than 6,000 families have received assistance since the program’s launch in 2004.

How the Fund Works

Families and individuals needing financial assistance to pay their heating and hydro bills can find information about Winter Warmth at their nearest community agency participating in the program.

Burlington Hydro, Enbridge Gas Distribution, Enersource Hydro Mississauga, Horizon Utilities, Hydro Ottawa, PowerStream, Toronto Hydro Electric System, Union Gas Limited and Veridian Connections Inc. call centres will also advise customers about how to apply to Winter Warmth, where applicable, and direct them to the appropriate agency.

After successful completion of the application process, funding will be credited directly to the applicant's utility bill.

Eligibility

Eligible grant recipients include households that cannot pay their current energy bill due to reduced income levels or extenuating circumstances, are in arrears or at risk of going into arrears, have recently received a disconnection notice and have exhausted all other sources of financial support.

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Media Contacts

David Collie
CEO
Burlington Hydro
Tel: (905) 332-2264

Catharine Katic
Marketing and Communications Specialist
Enersource Corporation
Tel: (905) 283-4228

R. Susan Barrett
Manager, Communications & Public Affairs
Hydro Ottawa Limited
Tel: (613) 221-0063

Paul Reesor
Communications Consultant
Community Involvement, Events & Sponsorship
Toronto Hydro Corporation
Tel: (416) 542-3043

George Armstrong
Manager
Regulatory Affairs and Key Projects
Veridian Connections Inc.
Tel : (905) 427-9870 ext. 2202

Debbie Boukydis
Director, Public & Government Affairs
Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc.
Tel: (416) 495-5682

Eileen Campbell
Vice-President Customer Services
Horizon Utilities
Tel: (905) 317-4736

Debbie Conte
Corporate Communications Specialist
PowerStream Inc
Tel: (905) 532-4528

Andrea Stass
Media Relations Manager
Union Gas Limited
Tel: (519) 436-5490

Bonnie Morris
Vice President
Resource Development
United Way of Canada
Centraide Canada
Tel: (613) 783-6809