



# Meeting the Special Needs of Whitby's Low Income Families

## WHITBY HYDRO OFFERS SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO CONSERVE AND HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to creating a culture of conservation in their community, Whitby Hydro is committed to helping all of their customers conserve, including the most vulnerable - their low income families. To address their special needs, Whitby Hydro has created two specific conservation programs to reach out to low income customers, providing them with the tools they need to conserve. The utility is also working with a local supermarket to promote the use of cloth bags, over plastic, through a program that is aimed at low income families to help protect the environment.

### The Energy Green Box Program

Providing the tools that will help low income families conserve is at the heart of a popular program called *Energy Green Box*. Whitby Hydro has provided 1,500 families with these packages which are distributed through the local Food Bank.

Each 'box' contains home weatherization tools, along with two CFL bulbs. The weatherization portion of the kit includes foam weather stripping, shrink-to-fit window insulation film, and multiple foam gaskets for electrical outlets and switch plates.

In addition to the resources available in the *Energy Green Box*, families are offered energy efficiency products for their homes through Enbridge's TAPS program. This give-away package includes: an energy efficient showerhead, programmable thermostat, foam pipe insulation, and bathroom and kitchen faucet aerators.

The *Energy Green Box* program is the result of the co-operative efforts of Whitby Hydro, Enbridge Gas Distribution, the local Food Bank, and Friends of the Earth Canada, a charitable, non-profit environmental organization that inspires the renewal of communities and the Earth.

### School Supplies Program for Low Income School Children

Teaching school children the importance of energy conservation is key to creating a culture of conservation in Ontario into the future. With this concept in mind, Whitby Hydro combined conservation awareness and education with much needed school supplies to help low income kids as they headed back to school in September.

During the back-to-school season, many children from low-income families return to school with few, if any school supplies. In partnership

with the local STAPLES Business Depot, Whitby Hydro, through its *School Supplies* program shared the costs of a school backpack filled with new and much needed school supplies, to help over one hundred low income students in their community.

Each student backpack was filled with name brand supplies, including: a pencil case, calculator, binders, a ruler, geometry set, pencil crayons or crayons, folders, dividers, pencils, pens, paper, and erasers. To educate students on the importance of energy conservation, the backpack also contained a package entitled, *Developing a Culture of Conservation*, which provided among other items: games, word puzzles, word searches and colouring pictures to promote the children's awareness of the importance of taking energy conservation measures.

The fully stocked backpacks were distributed to children through the Salvation Army Food Bank and in schools located in low income areas within the community.

### Bags for Life Program

In addition to energy conservation initiatives for low income families, Whitby Hydro also saw the need to lend its support to a community environmental program. Measures have been taken to help the local Food Bank to "Go Green" by replacing plastic shopping bags with the more environmentally-friendly reusable cloth bags. Together with the local Sobey's supermarket, Whitby Hydro has donated 3,000 reusable cloth bags to the Food Bank.

The new cloth bags will help decrease the use of tens of thousands of plastic bags that are used to distribute food to needy families each year. The bags are distributed by social workers at the Salvation Army Food Bank who educate families about the benefits of the program and encourage participants to bring the reusable bags back during each visit. The new reusable bags are *Bags for Life* in the truest sense, and can be returned to Sobey's when they have worn out to be replaced with new cloth bags free-of-charge.

The *Bags of Life* program has helped the Whitby Food Bank save money and has diverted tens of thousands of plastic bags from local landfill sites.

All three of these special programs are helping Whitby's low income families to conserve and contribute to creating a more environmentally-

# Income Families

HELP LOW INCOME CUSTOMERS

friendly community. With the help of Whitby Hydro and important community partners, they are raising awareness of the importance of creating a culture of conservation, while providing the tools that this vulnerable group of customers might not otherwise have access to. ■



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