

Tom Powell Design

Manitoba Hydro

Affordable Energy Program

Focus Group Research

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Executive Summary

Tom Powell Design and Manitoba Hydro commissioned NRG Research Group to conduct a qualitative research study with Manitoba Hydro Customers. The primary purpose of the research project was to gather feedback on proposed marketing materials for the Affordable Energy Program.

A total of three focus groups were conducted in Winnipeg, Manitoba on February 24th and February 25th, 2010. One group was comprised of participants who took part in the Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program (LIEEP), one group was comprised of participants who took part in the Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program (NHN) and one group was randomly recruited from the general public. All general public recruits qualified as lower income households. A total of 28 individuals participated in the study.

Focus groups are a qualitative research method, where participants are led through a discussion by a moderator. Participants are encouraged to provide open-ended and detailed responses to questions that allow for probing of thoughts and feelings with the possibility of discovering deeper unconscious attitudes.

Key Findings

The LIEEP and NHN Program are viewed as excellent programs that offer help to Manitobans in need. Those who have participated in these programs have positive feedback about the programs and most have had positive experiences. One participant praised Manitoba Hydro staff and emphasized to the group that they need to “call” if they run into difficulty with their bill, otherwise they can’t help you. Some of the NHN Program participants have had negative experiences dealing with Manitoba Hydro, and as a result, have the view that Manitoba Hydro is an untrustworthy organization. This can be attributed partly to the fact that to be eligible for the NHN program, the customer must have received a disconnection of service notice or already be disconnected, thus resulting in a negative perception of the corporation.

LIEEP participants and general population participants have a positive impression of the Direct Message outdoor advertisement (Appendix 6.1). The advertisement is attention grabbing and is clear and easy to understand. The message appeals to those who are struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill. The advertisement will not necessarily get people to think about the different Manitoba Hydro programs that are available to the public. NHN participants have a much less positive view of the Direct Message outdoor advertisement. The advertisement's message is negative and untrustworthy. NHN participants are in agreement they will not call Manitoba Hydro to find out more information after seeing a Direct Message outdoor advertisement.

The Informational Message outdoor advertisement (Appendix 6.2) must be more specific in order to grab people's attention and to clearly express the main message of the advertisement. The message is believed to be vague and unclear. The word "Help" is eye catching and the phrase "We can help", grabs your attention.

The Testimonial Message outdoor advertisement (Appendix 6.3) is positive but also confusing. It is not clear if the main message is in regards to lowering Manitoba Hydro bills or if Manitoba Hydro will help you to understand your actual bill when it arrives in the mail. The Testimonial Message grabs your attention but may be more effective if the word "lower" was added so that the main headline reads "Manitoba Hydro helped me lower my Hydro bill".

The Illustrated Message outdoor advertisement (Appendix 6.4) resonates with participants, although several adjustments should be made. The image used was not well suited and did not fit the advertisement. Adding additional text to the advertisement for further clarification on the program is preferred.

Reactions to the direct mail advertisements (Appendix 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8) are positive for the most part. The direct mail advertisements were thought to be clear and easy to read, contain

enough information and will encourage people to call or go online to find out more information. It is important to include a program name, such as the Affordable Energy Program on the direct mail advertisements. Reactions to the direct mail advertisements from the NHN participants are fairly negative. They felt the definitions of the different programs were vague and unclear. They also viewed the advertisements as untrustworthy with incorrect information. The “incorrect information” statement is a result of a copy error that will be described later in the report. Note: One of the eligibility criteria for the emergency funding component of the NHN program is that the customer must have received a utility notification that they are subject to disconnection or be disconnected. Therefore, it is expected that some of the NHN clients may have prior negative perceptions of Manitoba Hydro as their services were at risk of disconnection at a point where they were experiencing personal hardships.

Both the outdoor and direct mail advertisements are not viewed as advertisements targeted towards lower income individuals or households. The advertisements are believed to be targeted to anyone who may need assistance with their Manitoba Hydro bill.

Using the term “lower income” is seen as inappropriate by some and appropriate by others. There are very mixed views regarding using this term to clarify who may or may not qualify for a Manitoba Hydro program.

The program name “Affordable Energy Program” will work to encompass all three individual programs under the umbrella concept. Using the umbrella concept to bring the current three programs together under one program name will work. People feel the concept is clear and easy to understand.

Programs that have well laid out qualifying criteria, that are easy to understand and to access, are the programs that people find easy to use. Ensuring that Manitoba Hydro customer service employees are well informed of the AEP will also lend to the programs success and ease of use for participants.

The LIEEP (Appendix 6.9, 6.10) and NHN Program (Appendix 6.11, 6.12) direct mail advertisements contain enough information and are clear and easy to understand. The direct mail advertisements with images of mother and child are preferred and testimonial quotes are not favoured.

Recommendations

- Include the name of the umbrella program (AEP) on outdoor and direct mail advertisements.
- Use the word “Help” in advertisements.
- Messages that use positive sounding headlines are more often preferred and more effective.
- Be sure all customer service employees are familiar and informed of the programs available.
- Include some information to let people know there are income qualifications. This may be a simple statement such as “Income qualifications required”.
- Have income qualifications easily accessible, either on a brochure or on the website.
- Offer coupons or rebates with the direct mail flyers so people will read them.
- Ensure that program information is clear and easy to understand.
- The NHN group is a different population and may not be reachable using the same campaign that is geared towards the general public. The NHN participants indicated they are more comfortable learning about a program through a secondary agency such as the Salvation Army. Reaching this population will be difficult and the campaign will need to be very specific:
 - Provide clear and direct information. Use numbers such as dollar amounts or percentages to express the amount of help that can be provided.
 - Make sure all customer service employees, including those in delinquent accounts, are familiar with the programs.
 - Have the program name on all advertising materials so the program can be easily referenced.

- Avoid overly dramatic statements such as “Light at the end of the Tunnel” and testimonials.
- Include images of men, women and families. Avoid using animated characters.

Project Background and Objectives

Project Background

Manitoba Hydro is consolidating and enhancing its three main billing assistance programs under one umbrella program called the Affordable Energy Program (AEP). Through this consolidation, program components that target lower income households will work together to create customized solutions to aid participants in managing their Manitoba Hydro bills and reduce their energy burdens.

Using an umbrella concept, the AEP will be made up of three currently existing programs; Neighbours Helping Neighbours, the Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program and Bill Management Services.

Objectives

The overall objective for the enhanced AEP is to improve the affordability of energy for lower income customers while maintaining efficient operations of Manitoba Hydro.

The key research objectives to be addressed in this project are as follows:

- Gather feedback on marketing materials for the AEP.
- Determine that one umbrella campaign resonates and motivates all potential customers for the AEP.
- Test outdoor creative materials to ensure that they resonate with participants.
- Test direct mail creative to determine that enough/too much information has been included, as well as to ensure the creative resonates with participants.

- Determine if the messages of the campaign materials as well as the look and feel of the materials are compelling and address any communication barriers.
- Determine if the key elements are being portrayed in the advertising materials.

Survey Methodology

Sample and Recruitment

A qualitative research methodology (focus groups) was used in this study. This methodology was selected because it allowed for in-depth probing and facilitates two-way exchange of information and views. A total of ten participants were recruited for each group.

Sample for the recruitment was provided by Manitoba Hydro and consisted of individuals who had participated in the LIEEP or NHN programs. The sample for the general population group was randomly generated by NRG Research Group. The recruitment was conducted entirely from NRG’s Winnipeg field facility using a recruitment questionnaire designed by NRG staff in consultation with Tom Powell Design and Manitoba Hydro.

A key criterion for the recruit was ensuring that all participants in the study qualified as lower income households. The full screening criteria can be found in the screening documents appended to this report. For all groups a mix of gender and ages were represented. The table below provides an overview of when the groups were held and the composition:

| Group Type | Date/Time | # of Participants | Gender Split |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| LEIPP Participants | Feb 24 (Winnipeg) 5:30 | 10 | 7 Female/3 Male |
| NHN Participants | Feb 24 (Winnipeg) 7:30 | 9 | 5 Female/4 Male |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| General Population | Feb 25 (Winnipeg) 5:30 | 9 | 5 Female/4 Male |
| Participants | | | |
| | Three Groups | 28 participants | 17 Female/11 Male |

All the focus groups were conducted at NRG’s downtown Winnipeg focus group facility. All individuals were provided a \$75 cash honorarium at the conclusion of the group in appreciation for their attendance and participation.

Discussion Guide and Moderation

The discussion guide used for these focus groups was designed by NRG in consultation with Tom Powel Design and Manitoba Hydro. The guide was structured in a manner to encourage conversational responses with appropriate follow-up questions from the moderator. A copy of the guide is appended to this report. Each group lasted approximately 2 hours and was moderated by Lliisa Morrow, a research professional with NRG Research Group.

Context of Qualitative Research

The primary benefit of focus group discussions is that they allow for in-depth probing that qualifies participants’ behaviour, habits, usage patterns, perceptions and attitudes related to the subject matter. The group discussion allows for flexibility in exploring other areas that may be pertinent to the investigation.

Rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures, the focus group technique is used in marketing research as a means of gaining insight and direction.

Detailed Findings

Perceptions of LIEEP and the NHN Program

The discussion with the LIEEP and NHN participants began with a few general questions about their perception of the program in which they had participated.

The LIEEP participants had a lot of positive feedback about the LIEEP. They indicated the program had been very helpful in helping them make their home more energy efficient as well as save money on their Manitoba Hydro bills. A few participants did mention they had been waiting for their new furnace or insulation for a few months. Overall, the LIEEP participants' impressions and experiences with the program were positive.

LIEEP participants indicated they heard about LIEEP through a variety of sources. These sources include Manitoba Hydro customer service, through friends, family members and coworkers.

The NHN participants felt the program was very helpful in providing emergency assistance when they needed it most. Participants stated they were very glad the program was available since it did help them in a time of crisis. It should be noted that the intent of the NHN program is to assist customers in connecting with available social agencies that they may be unaware of or have difficulty accessing and provide support to help them in managing through their crisis/emergency. The program also provides relief by temporarily suspending the pending disconnection, through financial assistance for their energy bill. This allows the client time to take advantage of the referrals provided by the Salvation Army. Customer feedback indicates that their focus is on the financial assistance provided instead of the referrals which are intended to help them create long term improvements to their financial situation. This could explain why participants expressed concern that the program did not cover their entire Manitoba Hydro bill and that there was a "cap" on what they could receive. They said this made it difficult to "catch up" on paying their Manitoba Hydro bill in full. Several participants expressed having very negative experiences dealing with Manitoba Hydro customer service

employees and billing agents, and were therefore very weary of Manitoba Hydro in general. Although participants spoke highly of the NHN program itself, they also expressed that they did not feel Manitoba Hydro was a trustworthy company and they felt very hesitant to contact Manitoba Hydro for any reason.

NHN participants indicated they heard about the NHN program through a variety of sources. These sources include the Family First Program, Manitoba Hydro customer service, at school, the Salvation Army, as well through friends, family members, coworkers and landlords.

The general population group was asked if they had heard about the LIEEP or the NHN program. The group was not overly familiar with either program, although a couple of participants did indicate they had heard of the programs but were not sure of the program details. It is noteworthy to mention that during the recruitment process, any individual who had participated in either program, LIEEP or NHN, was not invited to attend the general population group.

Outdoor Creative

A total of four outdoor creative messages were tested in all three focus groups. Each message was shown to the group as a bus bench advertisement and a recycling bin advertisement. Each group was shown the four messages one at a time and asked to provide specific feedback for each message. The LIEEP and NHN participants were provided with an explanation of the AEP umbrella concept and told the messages they were about to see were in fact new advertising and communication materials for the AEP. Participants in the general population group were not told about the AEP umbrella concept until after the outdoor ads were presented. This approach was taken so that feedback could be gathered from those who had some familiarity with the AEP programs (LIEEP and NHN) and those who had no familiarity with the programs (general population). The order in which the messages were presented was randomized for each group to avoid an order bias.

Direct Message - *In tough times money is tight (Appendix 6.1)*

The LIEEP and general population participants had a fairly positive first impression of the Direct Message advertisement. The NHN participants had a less positive reaction.

LIEEP Participants

When the LIEEP participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw this advertisement in their neighbourhood, several participants said they thought the advertisement meant that Manitoba Hydro would help pay their Manitoba Hydro bill if needed. Others indicated that the advertisement created more questions than answers. One participant commented, *“I would have a whole lot of questions, like what does Hydro mean specifically?”*

Other first impression comments included:

- *It might be hard to read if you were driving by.*
- *This would be good to include in your Hydro bill, like as a flyer.*
- *It says they would help you with your bill.*

When asked what the Direct Message wording said to them, participants felt the message meant that Manitoba Hydro would provide a different way to pay your bill, perhaps like a budget plan.

Participants in the LIEEP group agreed that the Direct Message advertisement did grab their attention. Specifically they said the word “Money” stood out, as well as the words “We can help with your Hydro bill”. Some participants commented that the phrase “We can help you with your Hydro bill” might make a better headline and should be in larger letters.

The participants did not think the Direct Message advertisement would get them thinking about different Manitoba Hydro programs that are available. A few participants said that the advertisement might get them to call or go online for more information but the majority of the

group felt the advertisement was vague and needed more information to get them to call, such as specific information on how Manitoba Hydro could help with their bill.

The LIEEP group participants were also undecided as to whether the Direct Message advertisement would appeal to someone struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill and if seeing the advertisement would be enough to encourage someone who was struggling to find out more information.

Participant's comments included:

- *No, I would not. This is not enough to get me to look into it. I would need to know what they could help with specifically.*
- *If I was struggling maybe, but I'm not sure I would remember it.*
- *I don't think people would call.*
- *I think it might be enough to get me to call, it's colourful.*
- *I might call or go online.*

When asked about the image on the advertisement the LIEEP group felt the image was a good way to portray someone who was struggling. A few participants felt the concerned look on the woman's face was appropriate for the advertisement. A few participants commented the image looked like it belonged to a credit counselling advertisement, which was seen as negative.

Additional comments also included feedback on the "In tough times money is tight" headline. In general the group was not keen on this headline. They did not like its negative feel and several participants suggested that it be made into a smaller headline and the "We can help with your Hydro bill" be made larger.

NHN Participants

When the NHN participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw this advertisement in their neighbourhood, the group had mixed reactions but their reactions were

generally negative. Participants said they would want to “*know what the catch is*” and if they would need to call Manitoba Hydro to find out.

Other first reactions included:

- *That looks familiar, I've been there before.*
- *What's the catch?*
- *It says that Manitoba Hydro charges too much.*
- *I would put the positive phrase first- lead with the positive.*
- *This sounds really negative.*

When asked what the Direct Message wording said to them, NHN participants felt the message meant that Manitoba Hydro might help with a bill payment plan or give you energy saving tips.

The participants agreed the Direct Message advertisement did grab their attention. However, they felt the message had a negative feel associated to it. The group was in agreement that making the smaller headline, “We can help you with your Hydro bill” larger, would improve the advertisement and make it more attention grabbing.

As mentioned earlier, the NHN participants were very weary and sceptical of Manitoba Hydro in general. They expressed concern regarding the trustworthiness of Manitoba Hydro and their willingness to contact Manitoba Hydro for any reason. Participants were asked if they felt the Direct Message advertisement would get them thinking about different Manitoba Hydro programs and perhaps get them to call or go online to find out more information. All participants in the group said they would definitely not call Manitoba Hydro to find out more information.

Participant's comments included:

- *I would not call. I don't trust Manitoba Hydro.*
- *I don't want to call them when I am behind on my account.*

- *It means that I would have to call Hydro and I don't like talking to their customer service people.*
- *I would want to know their definition of "helping" before I call.*
- *I would be afraid they would ask me for a financial commitment.*

Some participants did indicate they may go online to find out more information but they would need to be given a direct link so they would not have to spend a lot of time searching for information.

The NHN participants were asked what would get them to call Manitoba Hydro to find out more information after seeing an advertisement like the Direct Message. One participant said *"The first thing I see is 'In tough times money is tight', I know that, it's not news to me. But if you had in big bold letters 'We can help you with your Hydro bill' then I know Hydro might be able to help"*. Other participants commented that having a headline that read *"Help is just a call away"* might be effective. Others suggested getting rid of the Manitoba Hydro symbol or at least making it smaller.

When asked about the image on the Direct Message advertisement the group did not feel the image was appropriate. They felt the image was negative (a positive image and message was preferred) and they also felt that the image was *"depressing"*.

The NHN participants were in agreement that it is very important to include a program name or a reference name on any sort of advertising for Manitoba Hydro programs. They felt this was important so they would be able to call in and ask for information on a program by name. It is important to mention that the group indicated repeatedly that having the AEP name on the advertisements was extremely important to them.

General Population Participants

When the general population participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw this advertisement in their neighbourhood, the group's reaction was positive. Participants said the advertisement grabbed their attention and they also thought the phrase "We can help you with your Hydro bill" stood out.

The general population participants felt the main message of the Direct Message advertisement was clear and easy to understand. They felt the main message was simply that Manitoba Hydro can help with paying your bill when you are having a hard time. Some participants thought this meant providing help in the form of a bill reduction, or providing a budget plan. Although participants did think the advertisement was directed at people who were behind on their Manitoba Hydro bill, no one suggested that Manitoba Hydro would provide a grant to help cover the cost of an outstanding bill.

First impression comments included:

- *This tells you that if you're having problems paying your bill, they'll help.*
- *Hydro is doing something to help people who are on a tight budget or can't make their payments.*
- *I'm surprised, like Hydro will lend money? I'm surprised.*
- *I thought, wow, Manitoba Hydro cares.*
- *This would get my attention; it would get me to call.*
- *I think it's all very clear; the wording, the picture, the concern in her face, the past due bill that she's lifting up, and it's self-explanatory.*
- *Too many 'T' words.*

Participants also felt the Direct Message advertisement would get them thinking about different Manitoba Hydro programs. Several participants agreed they would call the phone number or go online to find out more information about available programs.

The general population group felt the Direct Message advertisement would appeal to those who were struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill. The visual image was thought to do a very good job in showing that people who are “*past due*” on their bill may be able to receive help from Manitoba Hydro in some form.

Informational Message – *Do you need help with your Hydro bill? (Appendix 6.2)*

Participants in all three groups had a fairly positive first impression of the Informational Message. However, all three groups also felt this advertisement needed to be more specific in order to be affective, and that the current wording of the advertisement was somewhat vague and unclear.

LIEEP Participants

The LIEEP participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw this advertisement in their neighbourhood. Participants said they would think of the word “*budget*”, and that Manitoba Hydro was offering some sort of program related to bill management or budgeting help.

When asked what the wording said to them, the LIEEP participants thought the main message was that Manitoba Hydro would help with their bill in some way, but were unclear and wondered how Manitoba Hydro could help.

The group agreed that the advertisement did grab their attention. Specifically, the word ‘Help’ was seen as attention grabbing. The participants also agreed that the phrase “We can help” was a positive message, as well as eye catching.

The majority of the group agreed the Informational Message would get them thinking about the different Manitoba Hydro programs that were available and possibly get them to call for more information. The participants also commented that the advertisement should be more

specific and give a bit more explanation of how Manitoba Hydro could help with their Hydro bill.

Participant's comments included:

- *It makes me wonder what kind of programs are out there, but this ad should really give a bit more detail.*
- *It should at least say what they can help you with- your bill, energy efficiency, or something else, or all of it.*
- *It should be a bit more specific.*

When asked if the Information Message would appeal to those who were struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill, the LIEEP group in general thought it would be appealing, but should be more specific as to whom the advertisement was directed towards.

The image used for the Information Message was not favoured by the LIEEP participants. Most commented the image was "*not the best*" and that the image made the advertisement less personal. One participant commented "*The image makes the message less personal- it's just a mouth with a hand, not even a whole person*". Others in the group did not like the image because they felt it portrayed a call-center environment which was seen as negative.

NHN Participants

The NHN participants felt the Information Message was definitely more positive than the Direct Message. The group's first impression of the advertisement was that the message needed to be more specific. A few participants also mentioned they felt the headline "Do you need help with your Hydro bill" really stood out.

The group felt the wording was straightforward and meant that Manitoba Hydro would help them with their Hydro bill in some way, although they were not sure how Manitoba Hydro would help.

When the NHN group was asked if the Informational Message would get them thinking about the different programs Hydro had to offer, the majority said it would not. Again, the group wanted the advertisement to be more specific and include a program name they could easily reference. The participants expressed their hesitance in contacting Manitoba Hydro for any reason.

The participants were asked if they felt someone who was struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill would be influenced by the Informational Message to call Manitoba Hydro for more information. The group did agree that because the advertisement was more positive, perhaps there was more incentive for people to contact Manitoba Hydro to find out more information.

The NHN group did not favour the image on the Informational Message. One participant commented *“I don’t like the picture because it reminds me of a calling a call center and not getting a real person on the line”*. Others in the group were in agreement with this statement.

General Population Participants

When the general population participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw the Informational Message in their neighbourhood, the majority of the group said they think it would mean that Manitoba Hydro was going to offer some sort of billing assistance program or financial support. Some participants said they would wonder what the advertisements were all about since it did not specify.

Participants felt the wording may mean that Manitoba Hydro would help you understand your bill, or that it means Manitoba Hydro was offering a payment plan option. One participant thought it might have something to do with the Power Smart Program. Some participants were not sure what the wording meant and suggested adding some additional text to clarify.

Participants did agree that the word ‘Help’ grabbed their attention. When asked if the advertisement would encourage them to call Manitoba Hydro or go online to find out more

information, a few participants said they would call and a few said they would seek out information online.

The general population participants were in agreement that the advertisement would most likely not get them to investigate different programs offered by Manitoba Hydro, stating that the advertisement was too vague and needs more specifics. Several felt the lack of specific information made it unmemorable.

When asked if they felt the Informational Message would encourage those who were struggling with their bill to contact Manitoba Hydro, the general population participants had mixed views. Several felt that those who were struggling would contact Manitoba Hydro and some felt the advertisement was simply too vague to get people to call.

Some comments included:

- *It would, yes, if you were struggling.*
- *Maybe with different wording.*
- *Maybe if you said 'Are you struggling to pay your Hydro bill?' That way you know it's about the financial part of it.*

Overall the group was not fond of the image used in the Informational Message. They felt it was impersonal and that the image was not clear or easy to see. One participant commented "*It's just a mouth, I don't get it*".

Testimonial Message – Manitoba Hydro helped me with my bill (Appendix 6.3)

The participants in all groups had mixed feelings and impressions of the Testimonial Message advertisement. Although they felt the message was positive, there was some confusion on what the advertisement was all about. Participants were not sure if the advertisement was meant to advertise a program to help lower their Manitoba Hydro bill, or a program to help explain the actual bill itself in case you were confused once you received your bill.

LIEEP Participants

The LIEEP participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw the Testimonial Message advertisement in their neighbourhood. First thoughts that came to mind were that Manitoba Hydro would help people interpret their bill or possibly help with their meter reading.

The LIEEP participants commented they felt a word was “*missing*” from the headline message. When asked what word could be added, participants agreed the word “*lower*” should be added to the headline to make the headline read “Manitoba Hydro helped me lower my Hydro bill”.

LIEEP participants agreed somewhat that the Testimonial Message would grab their attention. Most participants felt the advertisement was not as attention grabbing as the Direct Message advertisement.

Participants also felt that the Testimonial Message would not necessarily get them, or others, thinking about the different programs that Manitoba Hydro offers. They also felt that those who were struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill would not be motivated to contact Manitoba Hydro to find out more information. Again, several participants felt changing the headline to include the word “*lower*” would make the message more effective.

The LIEEP participants felt the image used for this message was weak and did not do a good job of encouraging people to contact Manitoba Hydro to find out more information.

It is also noteworthy to mention that the LIEEP participants did not think this particular advertisement would be targeted towards lower income households.

NHN Participants

When the NHN participants were asked what would come to mind if they saw the Testimonial Message advertisement in their neighbourhood, most agreed that they would wonder what Manitoba Hydro could help with? Was it bill related, or perhaps related to interpreting their actual bill?

Participants in the group did not feel the Testimonial Message advertisement would encourage them, or others who were struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill to contact Manitoba Hydro to find out more information. They also felt the advertisement would not encourage people to investigate other programs offered by Manitoba Hydro.

The NHN participants did not feel the image suited the advertisement. They questioned what the woman was doing. They could not tell if she was filling out paper work or writing cheques. Several participants commented that the image was boring and did not give any information about the program.

General Population Participants

The general population participants had similar views regarding the Testimonial Message advertisement. They felt if they saw the advertisement in their neighbourhood they would question what the advertisement was trying to say. They also agreed that the advertisement was not specific enough to encourage them to call for more information.

The group did not feel there was anything particularly eye catching or attention grabbing about the advertisement. Several participants did say they noticed the word “Help” right away and that the word stood out.

General population participants also agreed that due to the limited information included in the Testimonial Message, they did not feel they or others would be motivated or encouraged to contact Manitoba Hydro for more information.

Similar to the previous two groups, the general population participants were not fond of the image used on this advertisement. Several participants suggested if the Direct Message image was used instead of the current image, the advertisement would be much more attention grabbing and interesting.

Illustrated Message – *Need help with your hydro bill?* (Appendix 6.4)

The majority of participants felt the Illustrated Message advertisement resonated with them, although there were several things they would adjust. Almost all participants agreed that the image was not suited for the advertisement and *“did not fit the headline”*. They did prefer the headline message *“Need Help with your Hydro bill?”* but also felt that some follow up text underneath the main headline was necessary to clarify what type of help is available.

LIEEP Participants

When asked for their first impression if they saw the Illustrated Message advertisement in their neighbourhood, LIEEP participants said they would think that Manitoba Hydro had a program to help with their bill, but they were not sure how Manitoba Hydro would help. Participants agreed the message was eye catching and attention grabbing. One participant commented *“It’s short and to the point. It would be easy to see and read if you were driving by”*.

LIEEP participants also commented that the word *“Help”* stood out and grabbed their attention. Several participants said that another line of text information should be added in order to clarify the program specifics.

Participants had mixed views on whether the advertisement would encourage people to call to find out more information. Some participants felt the headline was *“catchy”* but too vague to get people to call. A few said that if you added the word *“lowering”* to the headline it would entice people to seek out more information.

Impressions of the image were only somewhat positive. Some participants did not like the image simply because it did not give any information about the program, while others thought the image was “cute” and liked the bright blue color.

NHN Participants

When asked what the Illustrated Message would bring to mind if they saw it in their neighbourhood, the NHN participants said they would notice the advertisement. Although there was still a great deal of hesitation in trusting Manitoba Hydro, participants did express that they resonated with this advertisement.

Comments included:

- *I like it because it's simple.*
- *I would be interested but it means I would have to call Hydro and I would like more information first. I am more inclined to call the Salvation Army because I know that they will help me.*
- *I like this ad, it's to the point.*
- *It bothers me that Hydro says they can help but I have had such a negative experience. When I have asked for help, it makes me feel like I am begging and I don't like that. But this ad gets me thinking there might be another program that can help me.*

Participants in the NHN group agreed that if the Illustrated Message advertisement was shown with a different image, included a program reference name (such as the AEP) and had a second smaller message underneath with details on program, they would contact Hydro to find out more information.

General Population Participants

When asked about their first impressions of the Illustrated Message advertisement, the general population group felt the advertisement was targeted towards all types of people and not just those who are struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill. Several people commented they thought the advertisement was straight forward and easy to understand. One participant commented *“It does not matter who you are, what level you are. If you need help just give us (Hydro) a call.”*

General population participants agreed the advertisement was eye catching and easy to read since the headline was short.

Several participants felt the advertisement needed to be more specific. Some suggested adding the word “lowering” so the main headline read “Need help with lowering your Hydro bill?” while others suggested including a headline with *“Payment help, Financial help”*.

In general, the group agreed the Illustrated Message advertisement would get them to seek out more information and possibly encourage those who are struggling with their Manitoba Hydro bill to call or go online for more information.

The general population group did not like the image. The group suggested using the Direct Message Image instead.

When the general population group was asked if they felt the Illustrated Message advertisement was directed at those who have a lower income, the participants were not sure if this was the target population for this message. Some felt that the advertisement was targeted towards those who were struggling to pay their Manitoba Hydro Bill and therefore in a lower income bracket. Others felt that the advertisement did not specifically target any one group of individuals.

Direct Mail

Each group of participants reviewed and discussed a direct mail advertisement. The LIEEP group was shown the Testimonial Message mail advertisement; the NHN group was shown the Illustrated Message mail advertisement; and the general population group was shown the Direct Message mail advertisement. Each group was asked which one of the four outdoor advertisements they felt was the strongest and the advertisement they would choose. This was the direct mail advertisement that each group then discussed.

Although each group did choose a “favourite” outdoor advertisement, the participants did not feel there was one clear winner, and that each advertisement required some adjustments.

LIEEP Participants- Testimonial Message Direct Mail (Appendix 6.7)

Note: An error was made in the copy of this ad that read, “receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment”. It should have read “emergency funding to prevent disconnection of energy services”.

The LIEEP group was divided on which of the outdoor advertisements they preferred. There was definitely no clear favourite choice. The group leaned towards the Testimonial Message outdoor advertisement, but repeatedly suggested the word “Lower” be added so the headline to read “Manitoba Hydro helped me lower my bill”.

The group was shown the Testimonial direct mail advertisement and was told that this would be something they may receive in the mail. Participants were asked what stood out and what their first impressions were. The reactions to the direct mail were very positive.

Direct feedback included:

- *It says to me that Hydro has programs that can help.*
- *This is great- easy to understand and enough information.*
- *The word ‘lower’ stands out.*

- *The quote stands out- it's a strong statement.*

All LIEEP participants were in agreement that the Testimonial Message direct mail gave enough information, was clear and easy to read, and would encourage them to call or go online to find out more information. They did not feel that any of the information was confusing or difficult to understand.

Some direct comments included:

- *I would call, even if I was not going through a difficult time.*
- *I think it gives everybody something to think about- if you're going through a tough time or not, maybe you just want to make some home renovations.*
- *I think it says everything about the program. This would be the best way to get the information out there.*

Several participants questioned if this advertisement was intended for lower income households only. Participants were not sure who might qualify. Some thought it would be beneficial to include some type of disclaimer that clarified that there are income requirements necessary to qualify.

NHN Participants- Illustrated Message Direct Mail (Appendix 6.8)

Note: An error was made in the copy of this ad that read, “receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment”. It should have read “emergency funding to prevent disconnection of energy services”.

The NHN participants generally agreed the Illustrated Message outdoor advertisement would be the one they preferred. However, participants also stated the image would need to be changed, the program name (AEP) must be included and a sub-header with a bit more detail added.

The group was shown the Illustrated Message direct mail and was told this would be something they would receive in the mail. Participants were asked what stood out and what their first impressions were. The reactions to the direct mail were fairly negative. The group's first reaction was that the information on the direct mail was incorrect and false. Participants did not agree with the bullet point "receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment". Participants said that the money you receive through the NHN program is not enough to cover your payment and that you only receive a certain amount. One participant said "Where it says 'receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment' it does not cover your Hydro bill, it only covers part of it". Participants in the group were in agreement with this statement. They indicated that they felt the direct mail was misleading and not truthful. The feelings and attitudes presented can be linked to the copy mistake that did not accurately describe the funding available through participation in the program.

Other comments included:

- *Well here it says 'replacing your furnace' but if you're having money issues, you can't do things like this. You need to have all your bills paid with Hydro before they will help you with any of this stuff.*
- *Yeah, and you can't have bad credit either.*
- *The other thing is that applying for programs like a new furnace or insulation is that Hydro requires you to have a good credit record, which you may not have if you're having financial problems.*
- *The words 'most' or 'all' is not an amount or a percentage- I would rather see a dollar amount or a percentage shown.*
- *If you're a renter, a lot of this does not apply to you.*

The NHN participants were asked if there was any information on the Illustrated Message direct mail that they did not understand or that was confusing. Participants said they felt the

definitions of the different programs, specifically the emergency funding, were not clear. They also felt that not giving a dollar amount or a percentage was misleading and confusing.

Participants also felt that the name of the program must be included on the direct mail so that people would be able to reference the programs and explain why they were calling.

General Population Participants- Direct Message Direct Mail (Appendix 6.5)

Note: An error was made in the copy of this ad that read, “receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment”. It should have read “emergency funding to prevent disconnection of energy services”.

The general population group was also divided on which of the outdoor advertisements they preferred. The group was divided between the Direct Message and the Illustrated Message. When asked to choose one outdoor advertisement, the group leaned towards the Direct Message outdoor advertisement.

The group was shown the Direct Message mail advertisement and were told that the advertisement would be something they would receive in the mail. Participants were asked what stood out and what their first impressions were. The reactions to the direct mail were positive.

Direct feedback included:

- *It's just enough information; it would get me to call.*
- *It's to the point; you don't want too much info on there.*
- *This would be a flyer I would read and not just toss aside.*

The group did not think the advertisement was specifically targeted towards lower income households, they felt the advertisement targeted anyone who may need help with their

Manitoba Hydro bill. One participant said *“It seems to be targeted to those who may be facing challenges and challenges can be anything- not just limited to lower income people”*.

The group was asked if the direct mail gave enough information or if there was any information that was missing or confusing. Participants were in agreement that enough information was included on the advertisement, and that the information would get them to seek out more details. A few participants thought the last bullet point *“choose flexible bill payment options”* was somewhat vague.

The general population participants agreed that if they received the direct mail at home they would either call Manitoba Hydro or go online for more information. Participants agreed the direct mail grabbed their attention and made them want to find out more.

Key Word Exercise

A key word exercise was conducted with each group. The purpose of the exercise was to give the participants a way to apply key elements to the direct mail advertisement they were shown. Each participant was given a worksheet that contained eighteen descriptive attributes, nine positive attributes and their antonyms. A copy of this worksheet is appended to this report. Participants were asked to choose five words that in their opinion would best describe the direct mail advertisement. They were told that when choosing the five descriptive words, to think of all the elements of the advertisement such as the main message, the wording and what the advertisement looked like.

LIEEP Participants- Testimonial Message Direct Mail (Appendix 6.7)

The key words chosen by the LIEEP participants included:

- Approachable
- Appealing
- Easy to understand
- Friendly
- Trustworthy

- Considerate

NHN Participants- Illustrated Message Direct Mail (Appendix 6.8)

The key words chosen by the NHN participants included:

- Considerate
- Approachable
- Dishonest
- Confusing
- Not attractive
- Uninformed
- Unimaginative
- Unreliable

General Population Participants- Direct Message Direct Mail (Appendix 6.5)

- Easy to understand
- Approachable
- Caring
- Appealing
- Friendly
- Considerate

Approachable, considerate, easy to understand, and friendly were the most common words that were chosen among the groups, with the exception of the NHN group.

Addressing Communication Barriers

Using the Term ‘Lower Income’

The participants in all groups were asked if they thought that using the term ‘lower income’ to help define the program, whether it be on outdoor advertisements or on direct mail advertisements, was appropriate. The participants in the LIEEP and the general population

groups were somewhat divided. Participants in the NHN group were all in agreement that using the term 'lower income' was not appropriate.

A few participants in the LIEEP group felt that using the term 'lower income' was labelling a group of people, and the term had a negative stigma. Others in the group felt that using the term was fine because it was clarifying who qualified for the program. One participant commented *"If you're lower income, you're lower income. If it said 'lower income' on the flyer I would know that it would apply to me. It's not negative"*. Some participants suggested including *"various income requirements necessary"* or *"income requirements needed"* on the advertisements so people were aware that income requirements were a part of the program.

The general population group was also fairly divided on whether the term 'lower income' should be used. Some participants felt using the term was just fine since it helped clarify who qualified. Others felt the term carried a negative implication. It is noteworthy to mention that participants in the general population group were confused on what would qualify someone as lower income. One participant said *"What does lower income mean? How much do you have to make?"* Another participant commented *"What constitutes lower income? Is that welfare?"*

When the general population group was asked what could be said instead of 'lower income' to express the same idea, some suggestions included:

- *I think if you just put the minimum qualifying amount like 10k or 20k, whatever it is, so that people who qualify could just see the figure and know if they qualify.*
- *Yes, you could just give an amount. You don't have to call it 'lower income'.*
- *You could just say 'income bracket' instead of lower income.*

The NHN participants had a very clear view on whether using the term 'lower income' was appropriate. The group felt using the term 'lower income' or any wording that clarified the program was for lower income households, was inappropriate. They felt that by including this information on advertisements Manitoba Hydro was *"singling out that group"*, and this was

seen as very negative. The group also felt that including any type of information about income requirements was not necessary and should be avoided. The group felt the advertisements gave enough information, and that people could find out if they qualify on their own.

Affordable Energy Program

The participants were asked if they felt the name 'Affordable Energy Program' would work to encompass all three individual programs under the umbrella concept. Participants in all groups were in agreement that naming the program the Affordable Energy Program made sense to them. Participants in the NHN group and the general population group stated that including the AEP name on advertising materials was very important.

The Umbrella Concept

The umbrella concept was explained to all participants. Each group was asked if they felt bringing the three current programs together to function as one program would work. All groups were in agreement that the umbrella concept would work and they understood the concept. Participants stated it would be important to make sure that all Manitoba Hydro customer service employees were familiar with the AEP program in case people enquire about the programs as a whole or separately.

Reading Flyers

Each group was asked about the different elements a mail advertisement must have to get them to stop and read it and not just toss it aside. Participants in all three groups had similar responses that included:

- Coupons
- Mail-in rebates
- Bright colors
- Different shapes
- Catchy headlines
- Free samples

- Fridge magnets

Making Participation Easy

Each group was asked what could be done so that participating in a program like AEP was made easy for them. Everyone agreed that making the information about the program, as well as the qualifying criteria easy to understand and easy to access was the best way to make participation easy. Participants also agreed that making sure the Manitoba Hydro customer service employees were well informed about the program so they can answer questions.

Some additional comments included:

- *Send something out in the mail.*
- *Outline who qualifies so we know before we call.*
- *Make the information easy to find online.*

The NHN Group also gave the following suggestions:

- *Put the information on your bill.*
- *Have one point of contact when you call in.*
- *Make sure the information is clear and accurate.*
- *Don't include the Manitoba Hydro symbol.*
- *Include some contacts for different agencies, like the Salvation Army so people don't have to call Manitoba Hydro.*
- *Have a separate customer service that could help you with your bill that is not related to accounts receivable.*
- *Don't ask me for money when I call to ask about the program.*

Additional Material Review

LIEPP Direct Mail (Appendix 6.9, 6.10)

The LIEPP and general population participants were shown two potential direct mail advertisements specifically for LIEPP. Participants from both groups felt the direct mail

advertisements gave enough information about LIEEP. They also felt the information was straightforward and easy to understand. Participants in both of these groups resonated more with the first LIEEP direct mail (image of female and child – Appendix 6.9). Some participants stated they did not like the term ‘nest egg’ and said that those who may be lower income or struggling with their bill may not even have a nest egg.

Neighbours Helping Neighbours Direct Mail (Appendix 6.11, 6.12)

The NHN and the general population participants were shown two potential direct mail advertisements for the NHN Program. Participants from both groups felt the direct mail advertisements were clear and easy to understand. Participants stated they preferred the first advertisement (young female and baby boy – Appendix 6.11). Participants were not fond of the testimonial statement on the second advertisement (with older male - Appendix 6.12).

The NHN participants had some very specific feedback regarding the direct mail. They preferred the image of the young mother and baby over the older male, and they noticed the Neighbours Helping Neighbours title immediately. Participants also agreed the first advertisement was more friendly and approachable. When asked if there was any other information that should be included, several felt having a contact for the Salvation Army was required.

Appendix 1: LIEEP Screener

Affordable Energy Program – LIEEP Participants (Group 1)

Recruit 12 for 10 to show

ASK TO SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH THE CUSTOMER NAME ON THE PARTICIPATING CUSTOMER LIST TO NRG. WE ONLY WANT TO SPEAK WITH THIS PERSON, AS THIS IS THE PERSON THAT HAS SIGNED THE FORMS AGREEING TO LET US USE THEIR NAME.

Intro:

Hello, may I please speak with [MUST ASK AND SPEAK WITH NAME ON SAMPLE]

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from NRG Research Group, a national public opinion research firm. We're organizing a discussion group (a focus group) to explore issues an affordable energy program offered by Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro has provided us with a list of people who have participated in the Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program, and would like your feedback on some advertising and promotional materials to further develop the program. All participants who are invited to the group and attend will receive a **\$75** cash honorarium as a thank you. About ten people like yourself will be taking part.

ASK ALL

But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix/variety of people. Is now a good time?

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **THANK & TERMINATE**

READ TO ALL

Participation is voluntary and all your answers will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. We are simply interested in hearing your opinions – no attempt will be made to sell you anything. The format is a “round table” discussion lead by a research professional. An audio/video tape of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The tapes will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed.

1. Have I reached you at your home phone number?

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **MAY I SPEAK WITH SOMEONE WHO DOES LIVE HERE? – IF NO- THANK & TERMINATE**

2. Has your household participated in Manitoba Hydro's Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program?

- Yes- has participated in the program **[CONTINUE]**
- No- has not participated in the program **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- Don't know/ Ref **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

3. And how do you pay for your heating costs each month? **[READ LIST AS NEEDED]**

- You pay your Manitoba Hydro Bill each month **[CONTINUE]**
- Your hydro bill is paid directly through another third party group **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- Your heating cost is included in your rent or common services **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- OTHER **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

4. Please tell me if you or anyone in your household works in, or is employed with:

[READ ALL ITEMS]

- The Media ,
- Advertising
- Market Research
- Manitoba Hydro

[THANK AND TERMINATE IF 'YES' TO ANY OF THE ABOVE]

5. RECORD GENDER [AIM FOR 50-50 PER GROUP]

- Female
- Male

6. Into which of the following ranges does your age fall?

- 18 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65+

Age Quotas: Must Recruit 4 to 5 per group who are 65+.

7. Do you currently own or rent your place of residence?

- Own residence [CONTINUE]
- Rent residence [THANK & TERMINATE]
- Other [THANK & TERMINATE]
- DK/ Ref [THANK & TERMINATE]

8. And how would you describe your home, is it a... [READ LIST AS NEEDED]

- Single detached house [CONTINUE]
- A semi detached house (townhouse, row houses, or multiplex) [CONTINUE- NEED TO HAVE 1]
- An apartment suite [THANK & TERMINATE]
- A Condominium [THANK & TERMINATE]
- Other [THANK & TERMINATE]
- DK/Ref [THANK & TERMINATE]

9. What is the primary type of energy used in heating your house? Is it ...?

- Natural Gas [CONTINUE]
- Electric [CONTINUE]
- Other [THANK & TERMINATE]
- Dk/Ref [THANK & TERMINATE]

10. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? Is it ...?

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college or university
- College or university graduate

11. What is your current occupation? RECORD _____
Please specify if retired.

12. As I mentioned earlier you are being invited to a group discussion with approximately 10 other people. How comfortable are you in participating and speaking out in group discussions of this size? Would you say you are very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, not very comfortable or not at all comfortable?

| | ✓ | Instruction |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Very comfortable | | CONTINUE |
| Somewhat comfortable | | CONTINUE |
| Not very comfortable | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Not at all comfortable | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Don't know | | THANK & TERMINATE |

13. Have you ever attended a consumer group discussion, an interview or survey which was arranged in advance and for which you received a sum of money?

- Yes [CONTINUE TO Q14]
- No [SKIP TO 15]

14. When was the last time you attended a focus group? PLEASE SPECIFY _____

15. Sometimes participants are also asked to write out their answers to a questionnaire, read or watch a TV commercial during the discussion. Is there any reason why you could not participate?

- Yes [THANK & TERMINATE]
- No [CONTINUE]

Appendix 2: NHN Screener

Affordable Energy Program – NHN Participants (Group 2)

Recruit 12 for 10 to show

ASK TO SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH THE CUSTOMER NAME ON THE PARTICIPATING CUSTOMER LIST TO NRG. WE ONLY WANT TO SPEAK TO THIS PERSON, AS THIS IS THE PERSON THAT HAS AGREED TO LET US USE THEIR NAME.

Intro:

Hello, may I please speak with [MUST ASK AND SPEAK WITH NAME ON SAMPLE]

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from NRG Research Group, a national public opinion research firm. We're organizing a discussion group (a focus group) to explore issues an affordable energy program offered by Manitoba Hydro. We understand that the Salvation Army has recently contacted you to ask if you would be interested in being in a focus group to provide feedback on some advertising and promotional materials to promote the Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program as well as Manitoba Hydro's Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program.

I just wanted to confirm that you are interested in talking about the possibility of joining a group like this.

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **THANK & TERMINATE**

All participants who are invited to the group and attend will receive a \$75 cash honorarium as a thank you. About ten people like yourself will be taking part.

But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix/variety of people. Is now a good time?

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **THANK & TERMINATE**

READ TO ALL

Participation is voluntary and all your answers will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. We are simply interested in hearing your opinions – no attempt will be made to sell you anything. The format is a “round table” discussion lead by a research professional. An audio/video tape of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The tapes will be used only by the research professional to assist in

preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed.

1. Have I reached you at your home phone number?

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **MAY I SPEAK WITH SOMEONE WHO DOES LIVE HERE? – IF NO- THANK & TERMINATE**

2. Has your household participated in the **Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program**?

- Yes- has participated in the program [**CONTINUE**]
- No- has not participated in the program [**THANK & TERMINATE**]
- Don't know/ Ref [**THANK & TERMINATE**]

3. And how do you pay for your heating costs each month? [**READ LIST AS NEEDED**]

- You pay your Manitoba Hydro Bill directly yourself each month [**CONTINUE**]
- Your hydro bill is paid directly through another third party group [**THANK & TERMINATE**]
- Your heating cost is included in your rent or common services [**THANK & TERMINATE**]
- OTHER [**THANK & TERMINATE**]

4. Please tell me if you or anyone in your household works in, or is employed with:

[READ ALL ITEMS]

- The Media ,
- Advertising
- Market Research
- Manitoba Hydro

[THANK AND TERMINATE IF 'YES' TO ANY OF THE ABOVE]

5. RECORD GENDER [AIM FOR 50-50 PER GROUP]

- Female
- Male

6. Into which of the following ranges does your age fall?

- 18 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65+

Age Quotas:

Recruit 2-3 who are 18-34

Recruit 6-7 who are 35 to 54

Recruit 2-3 who are 65+

7. Do you currently own or rent your place of residence?

- Own residence **[CONTINUE- NEED 6 OWNERS]**
- Rent residence **[CONUTINE- NEED 6 TENANTS]**
- Other **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- DK/ Ref **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

Need a 50/50 split in of Home Owners & Tenants (Renters) in this group. This information is also in the sample

8. And how would you describe your home, is it a..... [READ LIST AS NEEDED]

- Single detached house **[CONTINUE- MINIMUM OF 3 NEEDED]**
- A semi detached house (townhouse, row houses, or multiplex) **[CONTINUE- MINIMUM OF 3 NEEDED]**
- An apartment suite **[CONUTNIE- MINIMUM OF 3 NEEDED]**
- Other **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- DK/Ref **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

Please recruit at minimum of 3 of each type of residence for this group (Single detached house, Semi detached house/ apartment suite)

9. What is the primary type of energy used in heating your house? Is it ...?

- Natural Gas **[CONTINUE]**
- Electric **[CONTINUE]**

Other [THANK & TERMIANTE]

Dk/Ref [THANK & TERMIANTE]

10. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? Is it ...?

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college or university
- College or university graduate

11. What is your current occupation? RECORD _____
Please specify if retired.

12. As I mentioned earlier you are being invited to a group discussion with approximately 10 other people. How comfortable are you in participating and speaking out in group discussions of this size? Would you say you are very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, not very comfortable or not at all comfortable?

| | ✓ | Instruction |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Very comfortable | | CONTINUE |
| Somewhat comfortable | | CONTINUE |
| Not very comfortable | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Not at all comfortable | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Don't know | | THANK & TERMINATE |

13. Have you ever attended a consumer group discussion, an interview or survey which was arranged in advance and for which you received a sum of money?

Yes [CONTINUE TO Q14]

No [SKIP TO 15]

14. When was the last time you attended a focus group? PLEASE SPECIFY _____

15. Sometimes participants are also asked to write out their answers to a questionnaire, read or watch a TV commercial during the discussion. Is there any reason why you could not participate?

Yes [THANK & TERMINATE]

No [CONTINUE]

Appendix 3: General Population Screener

Affordable Energy Program – General Population Recruit (Group 3)

Recruit 12 for 10 to show

Intro:

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from NRG Research Group, a national public opinion research firm. We're organizing a discussion group (a focus group) to explore issues related to an affordable energy program offered by Manitoba Hydro. All participants who are invited to the group and attend will receive a **\$75** cash honorarium as a thank you. About ten people like yourself will be taking part, all of them randomly recruited by telephone just like you.

ASK ALL

But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix/variety of people. Is now a good time?

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **THANK & TERMINATE**

READ TO ALL

Participation is voluntary and all your answers will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. We are simply interested in hearing your opinions – no attempt will be made to sell you anything. The format is a “round table” discussion lead by a research professional. An audio/video tape of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The tapes will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed.

1. Have I reached you at your home phone number?

- Yes **CONTINUE**
- No **MAY I SPEAK WITH SOMEONE WHO DOES LIVE
HERE? – IF NO- THANK & TERMINATE**

2. For this discussion group we are looking for the individuals who are responsible or jointly responsible for paying the household bills. Would that be you?

- Yes **[CONTINUE]**
- No **[ASK TO SPEAK TO PERSON RESPONSIBLE]**

3. And how do you pay for your heating costs each month? **[READ LIST AS NEEDED]**

- You pay your Manitoba Hydro Bill directly by yourself each month **[CONTINUE]**
- Your hydro bill is paid directly through another third party group **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- Your heating cost is included in your rent or common services **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- OTHER **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

4. Please tell me if you or anyone in your household works in, or is employed with:

[READ ALL ITEMS]

- The Media ,
- Advertising
- Market Research
- Manitoba Hydro

[THANK AND TERMINATE IF 'YES' TO ANY OF THE ABOVE]

5. RECORD GENDER [AIM FOR 50-50 PER GROUP]

- Female
- Male

6. Into which of the following ranges does your age fall?

- 18 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65+

Age Quotas: Must Recruit 4 to 5 per group who are 65+.

7. Including yourself and all children in the household, how many people live in your household?

RECORD # _____

8. Including yourself, how many **adults** (18 years of age or older) live in your household?

RECORD: # _____

9. For the focus group, we are looking for a wide variety of different types of households. What range would your annual household income fall into if you considered the **income from all the adults** in your home? **[READ LIST]**? [REMIND RESPONDENT IF NECESSARY THAT WE ARE JUST LOOKING FOR A BROAD RAND, NOT AN EXACT AMOUNT]

- Under \$28,000 per year
- \$28,000 to just under \$35,000
- \$35,000 to just under \$43,000
- \$43,000 to just under \$52,000
- \$52,000 to just under \$59,000
- \$59,000 to just under \$66,000
- \$66,000 to just under \$74,000
- \$74,000 or more
- DK **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- Refused **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

Qualification Table: **[Using number of people in the household from Question 7 and household income from Question 9) ... follow these guidelines**

- 1 person in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$28,000
- 2 people in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$35,000
- 3 people in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$43,000
- 4 people in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$52,000
- 5 people in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$59,000
- 6 people in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$66,000
- 7 people in Household- Must have a HH income of <\$74,000

10. Do you currently own or rent your place of residence?

- Own residence **[CONTINUE]**
- Rent residence **[CONTINUE- RECRUIT A MAX OF 3 RENTERS]**
- Other **[THANK & TERMINATE]**
- DK/ Ref **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

11. And how would you describe your home, is it a..... [READ LIST AS NEEDED]

- Single detached house [CONTINUE]
- A semi detached house (townhouse, row houses, or multiplex) [CONTINUE- RECRUIT A MAX OF 3]
- An apartment suite [THANK & TERMINATE]
- Other [THANK & TERMINATE]
- DK/Ref [THANK & TERMINATE]

12. What is the primary type of energy used in heating your house? Is it ...?

- Natural Gas [CONTINUE]
- Electric [CONTINUE- MAX OF 2]
- Other [THANK & TERMINATE]
- Dk/Ref [THANK & TERMINATE]

13. Are you familiar with Manitoba Hydro's Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program?

- Yes- Familiar
- No- Not familiar
- Don't know

14. Are you familiar with Manitoba Hydro's Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program?

- Yes- Familiar
- No- Not familiar
- Don't know

[IF FAMILIAR IN Q13 AND/OR Q14- ASK Q15]

[IF 'NOT FAMILIAR/DK TO BOTH Q13 & Q14- SKIP TO Q16]

15. Has your household participated in Manitoba Hydro's Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program or Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program? [IF YES] Which Program?

- Yes- has participated Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program [RECRUIT TO STAND-BY FOR NOW]
- Yes- has participated in Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program [RECRUIT TO STAND-BY FOR NOW]
- No- has not participated in either program [CONTINUE]
- Don't know [THANK & TERMINATE]

16. Manitoba Hydro has created an Affordable Energy Program to improve affordability of energy for lower income households. The program is designed to help Manitobans save money on their energy bills and improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Assuming you could learn all about the program, how interested would you be in participating in a program like this? Would you say....

| | ✓ | Instruction |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Very interested | | CONTINUE- RECRUIT FOR GROUP 3 |
| Somewhat interested | | CONTINUE- RECRUIT FOR GROUP 3 |
| Not very interested | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Not at all interested | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Don't know | | THANK & TERMINATE |

17. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? Is it ...?

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college or university
- College or university graduate

18. What is your current occupation? RECORD _____
Please specify if retired.

19. As I mentioned earlier you are being invited to a group discussion with approximately 10 other people. How comfortable are you in participating and speaking out in group discussions of this size? Would you say you are very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, not very comfortable or not at all comfortable?

| | ✓ | Instruction |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Very comfortable | | CONTINUE |
| Somewhat comfortable | | CONTINUE |
| Not very comfortable | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Not at all comfortable | | THANK & TERMINATE |
| Don't know | | THANK & TERMINATE |

20. Have you ever attended a consumer group discussion, an interview or survey which was arranged in advance and for which you received a sum of money?

- Yes [CONTINUE TO Q21]
- No [SKIP TO 22]

21. When was the last time you attended a focus group? **PLEASE SPECIFY** _____

22. Sometimes participants are also asked to write out their answers to a questionnaire, read or watch a TV commercial during the discussion. Is there any reason why you could not participate?

Yes **[THANK & TERMINATE]**

No **[CONTINUE]**

Appendix 4: Discussion Guide

Manitoba Hydro

Affordable Energy Program Marketing Material

Focus Groups February 24th & 25th - FINAL

Schedule

Group guidelines & Introductions (10 minutes)

Intro of the AEP (10 minutes)

Out Door Creative (30 minutes)

Additional Headlines (If necessary)

Direct Mail Piece (20 minutes)

Addressing Communication Barriers (10 minutes)

Additional Headlines (Time permitting- 10 minutes)

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Objectives

1. Gather feedback on marketing materials for the AEP.
2. Determine that one umbrella campaign resonates and motivates all potential customers for the AEP.
3. Test outdoor creative materials to ensure that they resonate with participants.
4. Test direct mail creative to determine that enough/too much information has been included, as well as to ensure the creative resonates with participants.
5. Determine if the messages of the campaign materials as well as the look and feel of the materials are compelling and address any communication barriers.
6. Determine if the key elements are being portrayed in the advertising materials.

Interview Guidelines

- Use this document as a guide, it is meant to be a semi-structured discussion with focus group participants
- Ask additional questions for clarification
- It is not necessary to answer the questions in order
- Keep discussion informal and conversational
- Summarize notes, comments and conclusions at the end of the discussion
- Avoid discussion of a general nature. Participants should be talking about themselves, their behaviours and attitudes. They should not be expressing opinions about the general population or others.
- Guide participants (remind) to talk about their own household experiences.

Introduction, Guidelines & Warm-Up (10 min)

- Introduce the moderator and NRG
- Introduce assignment and role of the focus group
 - *We discuss some materials and get your reactions.*
 - *Discussion focused on **new advertising materials for the Affordable Energy Program***
 - *Only talking with a few groups of Winnipeg residents, thus your observations and opinions are important.*
- Conduct of the discussion
 - *Not all at once, but do not need to wait for me to call on you*
 - *Respect one another*
 - *No right or wrong answers.*
 - *Want to get individual thoughts and opinions—we're not looking for a consensus.*
 - *Encourage individual group members to participate.*
- Audio/Video recording and presence of observers.
 - *Assure participants we are not selling anything; this meeting is strictly for research purposes.*
 - *Colleagues behind the mirror who are observing.*
 - *Confirm that individual responses will be kept confidential. The purpose is not to report on individuals, but instead to get a better understanding of opinions among Winnipeg households.*
- Roundtable Intros

What I'd like you to do is go around the room and introduce yourself, first name is fine, and tell me what keeps you busy these days. Whether it be work, family hobbies, school, etc.

Introduction of the Affordable Energy Program (10 min)

[READ TO GROUP 3 AFTER OUTDOOR MESSAGES] Manitoba Hydro is consolidating and enhancing its three main bill assistance programs under one umbrella program called the Affordable Energy Program (AEP). Essentially, the current three programs will now be combined to form one program. The overall objective for the enhanced Affordable Energy Program is to improve the affordability of energy for lower income Manitoba Hydro customers.

The three programs being combined are:

- The Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program
- The Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program
- The Bill Management Services Program

For Groups 1 & 2

1. I understand that you have participated in the [Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program / Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program]. What are some top-of mind impressions of the program— what did you like/dislike? [FLIP CHART—BUILD QUICK LIST]

For Group 3

2. How many of you have heard about either of these programs [Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program / Neighbours Helping Neighbours Program]?

Out Door Creative (30 min)

The purpose of today's focus group is to take a look at some new advertising & communication materials for the Affordable Energy Program that we just talked about. I am really looking to gather some specific feedback from you and we have a lot of materials to look at so I am going to guide the discussion along and I may jump in if I think we are getting off track.

The first thing we are going to look at is something you may see on a bus bench advertisement or on one of those large recycling bins, all out doors.

Go through each version (rotate for each group):

Group 1

- Direct Message
- Information Message
- Testimonial Message
- Illustrated Message

Group 2

- Illustrated Message
- Testimonial Message
- Information Message
- Direct Message

Group 3

- Information Message
- Direct Message
- Testimonial Message
- Illustrated Message

3. If you saw this ad in your area, what would your thoughts be? What would come to mind?
4. What does this ad say to you? What do you think it means?
 - a. What stands out? PROBE: A particular word that stands out to you?
 - b. What grabs your attention?

5. Would it get you thinking about the different Hydro programs that are available? How come?
6. If you were someone who was struggling with your Hydro bill, would seeing this be enough to get you to find out more? What would you do? PROBE: Call? Go online?
7. How about the picture? What are your impressions

[Note: If participants are focused on the visual in this section, guide them back to the text. It's important to get feedback on the image but the text is more important]

[Note: If participants are focused on the Outdoor creative not having enough information, guide them back to focus on what is in front of them and explain a second part will be examined in the next section]

9. [Moderator to summarize key points for all three... So what I am hearing...]. As a group choose the first choice or if group is divided top two.

Additional Headlines (If necessary)

10. [If participants are not resonating with one of the three headlines, go over list provided and see if group can choose one they prefer. List on flip chart]

Direct Mail Piece [Review Top Choice] (20 mins)

The next thing we are going to look at is a mail advertisement that you would receive at home in the mail. Please take a moment to read it over.

11. After reading this over, what stands out to you? PROBE: Particular word or piece of info? What makes this stand out?
12. Does this give you enough information to find out more about the program? Too much information?
13. What other information should be included/ taken out?
14. Is there any information on here that is confusing or that you do not understand?
15. Next, I would like to fill out a quick work sheet [Explain work sheet]. Fill this out on your own and don't discuss yet. We will talk as a group once everyone is done.
16. Alright, let's discuss the words you circled. Let's start with words in the first column. [Discuss as a group] **PROBE:**
 - a. What is specifically about the ad that made you choose that word? How does the word [INSERT] describe the ad?
 - b. Is there a word that you would have chosen but it's not on the list?

17. Let's move on to the words in the second column. [Discuss as a group] **PROBE:**
- c. What is specifically about the ad that made you choose that word? How does the word [INSERT] describe the ad?
 - d. Is there a word that you would have chosen but it's not on the list?
18. If you received this in the mail, would it motivate you to investigate the program? Or would you put it aside and forget about it?

Addressing Communication Barriers [10 min]

19. What element would an advertisement need to have in order to make sure that you did not simply throw into the recycling bin or toss aside? What would you want to see / need to see to motivate you to find out more?
20. What could Manitoba Hydro do so that participating in a program like this was made easy for you? **PROBE:** only need to make one call to sign up/ can sign up online.
21. So today I have used the term 'Lower Income'. I'm just wondering if term is ok to use to help define programs like this. Is this seen as negative? In what way?

Additional Materials Review (Only if time permits)

22. [For group 1- review LIEEP advertisement] [For group 2- review NHN advertisement]
- These are some additional advertisements, specifically for the [INSERT PROGRAM NAME] program. What stands out to you? **PROBE:** Particular word or piece of info? What makes this stand out?
 - Does this give you enough information to find out more about the program? Too much information?
 - What other information should be included/ taken out?
 - Anything confusing or that you do not understand?

Wrap-Up [5 min]

I am going to check with my colleagues if there are any last questions.

It's very important to stack all your papers together in a nice neat pile at your seat and on top, please put your name tag. Again, we don't link any personal information with our research, but this will help me know your general demographics- like if your male or female etc.

Any other last thoughts or comments? That completes my questions for this evening. Thank you very much for you input and your time. Good night.

Appendix 5: Key Word Exercise

In the table below, please circle five words, that in your opinion, would best describe this advertisement.

When choosing the five words to describe the advertisement, think of all the elements of the advertisement such as the main message, the wording and what the advertisement looks like.

You can chose words from either column.

Choose the first five words that come to mind- don't think to hard!

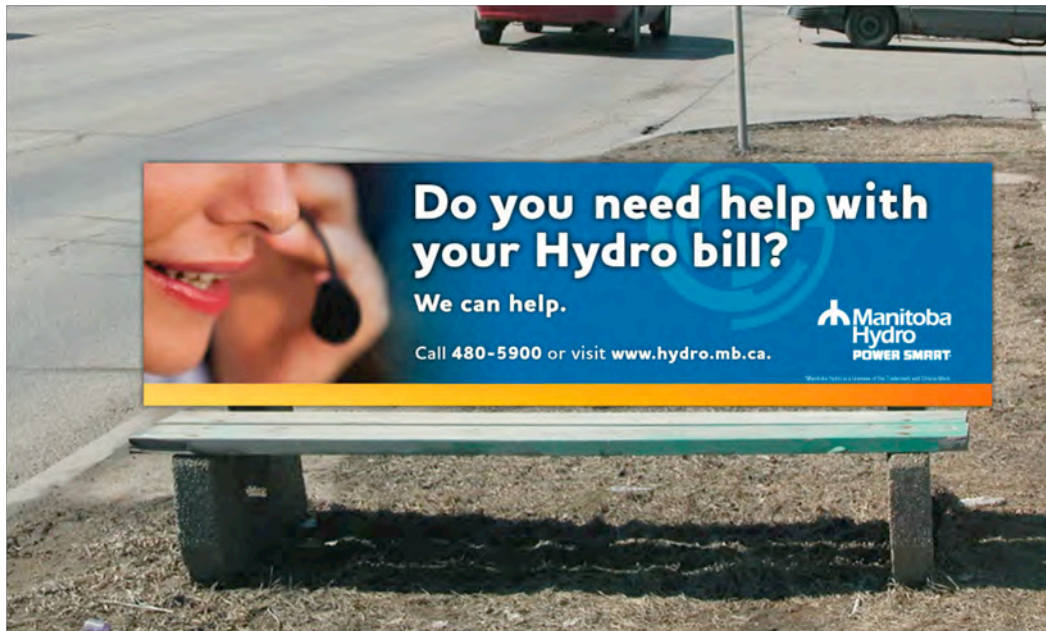
| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Trustworthy | Dishonest |
| Reliable | Unreliable |
| Caring | Uncaring |
| Considerate | Inconsiderate |
| Approachable | Inaccessible |
| Friendly | Cold /Unfriendly |
| Knowledgeable | Uninformed |
| Easy to Understand | Confusing |
| Appealing | Not Attractive |
| Creative | Unimaginative |

APPENDIX 6

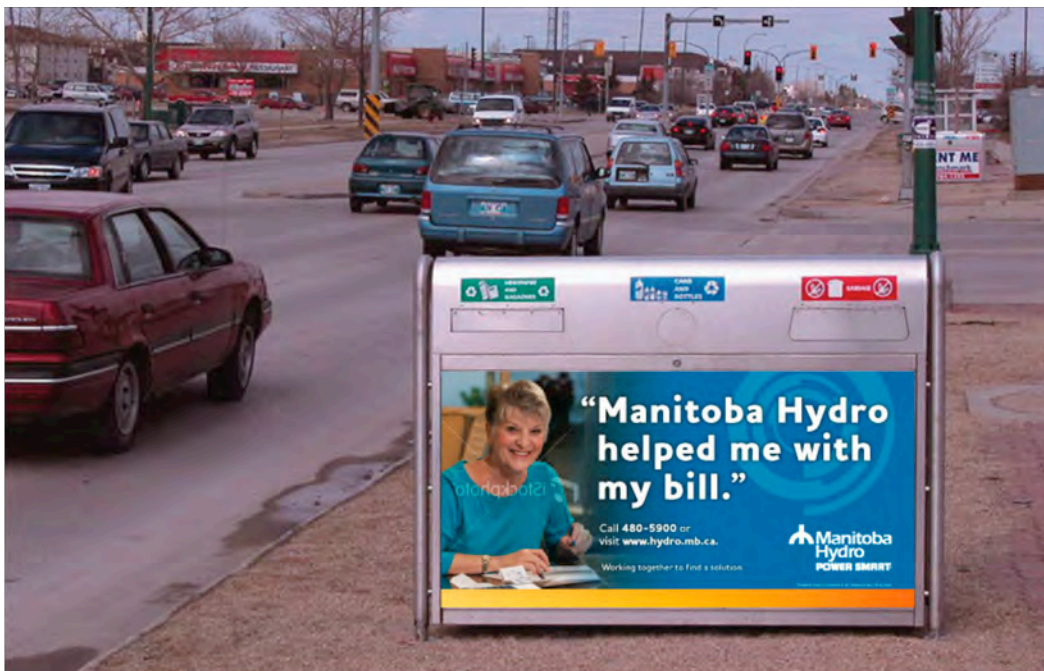
Appendix 6.1: Creative (Outdoor - Direct)



Appendix 6.2: Creative (Outdoor - Informational)



Appendix 6.3: Creative (Outdoor - Testimonial)



Appendix 6.4: Creative (Outdoor - Illustrative)



Appendix 6.5: Creative (Direct Mail – Direct)



In tough times money is tight.

We can help with your Hydro bill.

We understand that our customers may face challenges and that certain circumstances can affect your ability to pay your Hydro bill. If you're having difficulty paying your bill or want to learn how you can reduce your Hydro bill call us.

We have programs that can help you:


- lower your Hydro bill by replacing your furnace and/or insulation with most or all of the costs covered;
- receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment;
- choose flexible bill payment options.

Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
in Winnipeg **480-5900** or visit www.hydro.mb.ca.



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Appendix 6.6: Creative (Direct Mail – Informational)



Do you need help with your Hydro bill?

We can help.

If you are having trouble with your Hydro bill payments, we can work together to find a solution. We have programs that can help you lower your Hydro bill.

Call to find out how you can:

- lower your Hydro bill by replacing your furnace and/or insulation with most or all of the costs covered;
- receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment;
- choose flexible bill payment options.

Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
in Winnipeg **480-5900** or visit www.hydro.mb.ca.



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Appendix 6.7: Creative (Direct Mail – Testimonial)



“The programs they offer helped my family when we were going through a very difficult time. The burden feels lighter and I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

We have programs that can help you:

- lower your Hydro bill by replacing your furnace and/or insulation with most or all of the costs covered;
- receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment;
- choose flexible bill payment options.

Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
in Winnipeg **480-5900** or visit www.hydro.mb.ca.



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Appendix 6.8: Creative (Direct Mail - Illustrative)



Need help with your hydro bill?

If you are having trouble with your Hydro bill payments, Manitoba Hydro has programs that can help lower your Hydro bill.

Call to find out how you can:

- lower your Hydro bill by replacing your furnace and/or insulation with most or all of the costs covered;
- receive a one-time emergency funding that will cover your Hydro bill payment;
- choose flexible bill payment options.

Call 480-5900 or visit www.hydro.mb.ca



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Appendix 6.9: Creative (Direct Mail – LIEEP #1)

Are your energy bills cutting into your budget?

We may be able to help. Through the Lower Income Energy Efficiency program, qualifying homeowners can benefit from:

- an in-home energy evaluation and basic energy saving items at no cost;
- coverage of most of the costs to upgrade your home insulation to Power Smart levels;
- rebates and financing to upgrade your home's heating system.

“This program presented us with energy saving opportunities that we could not provide for ourselves. Thanks to the friendly staff at Manitoba Hydro, we are now living comfortably in a well insulated home.”



Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
in Winnipeg **480-5900** or visit www.hydro.mb.ca.



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Appendix 6.10: Creative (Direct Mail – LIEEP #2)



**You shouldn't have to use your nest egg to heat your home.
We may be able to help you save energy and lower your Hydro bills through our Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program.**

Through this program, qualifying homeowners can benefit from:

- an in-home energy evaluation and basic energy saving items at no cost;
- coverage of most of the costs to upgrade your home insulation to Power Smart levels;
- rebates and financing to upgrade your home's heating system.

Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
in Winnipeg **480-5900** or visit www.hydro.mb.ca.



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Appendix 6.11: Creative (Direct Mail – NHN #1)



Do you need help with your Hydro bill?

We understand that it can be difficult for our customers to pay their Hydro bill by the due date. If you are having trouble with your Hydro bill payments, we can work together to find a solution.

Through our Neighbors Helping Neighbours program, we offer assistance to low income individuals, families, and seniors who are unable to pay their Hydro bill due to personal hardship or crisis with:

- referrals to community support services, counseling and job training;
- one-time emergency funding to assist with Hydro bills.

Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
in Winnipeg **480-5900** or visit www.hydro.mb.ca.



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Appendix 6.12: Creative (Direct Mail – NHN #2)

“Manitoba Hydro helped me with my bill.”

We understand that it can be difficult for our customers to pay their Hydro bill by the due date.

Through our Neighbours Helping Neighbours program, we offer assistance to low income individuals, families, and seniors who are unable to pay their Hydro bill due to personal hardship or crisis with:

- referrals to community support services, counseling and job training;
- one-time emergency funding to assist with Hydro bills.

“This program helped my family when we were going through a very challenging time. The burden feels lighter and I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.”



Working together to find a solution.
Call **1-888-MBHYDRO** (1-888-624-9376),
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