

FACT SHEET | Keeping Minnesotans Warm

Budget for a Better Minnesota

In the first days of the legislative session, Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Legislature worked together to invest an additional \$20 million in the state's heating assistance program – helping Minnesotans during the ongoing propane shortage. These additional funds will help ensure low- and middle-income Minnesotans have the financial resources they need to keep their families safe and warm throughout the remaining months of winter. Over 180,000 Minnesota households are expected to get help paying their heating bills this year from the state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – a 30 percent increase over last year.

Helping Minnesotans Heat Their Homes

- **The Need for Help is Great.** Soaring prices for heating fuel, caused by a severe shortage of propane in the Midwest, have led to financial hardship for families across Minnesota. The state's heating assistance program, known as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), offers financial assistance for qualifying Minnesotans who need help paying their heating bills.
- **Funds Were Running Out.** Skyrocketing propane prices, and a growing demand for propane, have put additional strain on the state's heating assistance program. Without the additional state funding provided by Governor Dayton and the legislature, LIHEAP assistance was projected to run out sometime after March 1, 2014.
- **Increased Allocations for Families in Need.** In response to the propane shortage, the Minnesota Department of Commerce announced that LIHEAP applicants who heat their homes with propane and heating oil will now qualify for up to \$1,000 in crisis payments – an increase of \$500.
- **120,000 More Households Now Eligible.** Knowing the financial hardships Minnesotans are facing due to the propane shortage, the Governor took executive action in February to expand eligibility for LIHEAP assistance. Now, Minnesota households earning less than 60 percent of the state median income are eligible for LIHEAP. That means a family of four earning less than \$52,370 per year, or a household of two earning less than \$35,612 now qualify for heating assistance this winter.

Other Actions Taken to Relieve the Crisis

- **Increasing the Supply of Propane.** Governor Dayton has taken every effort to increase the supply of propane being delivered to Minnesota. Those efforts have included easing state regulations for the transport of propane supplies, declaring a state of emergency, working with the Governor of Texas to move propane supplies north to Minnesota, working with propane suppliers to bring propane supplies to at-risk customers, and compelling the action of the federal government to increase the flow of propane to the Midwest. Those efforts have helped increase supplies and drive down prices.
- **Protecting Consumers from Price Gouging.** The Governor has directed the state's Commissioner of Commerce to use his consumer protection authority to help guard Minnesotans from potential price gouging activities and unlawful market manipulation.
- **Creating a Propane Shortage Hotline.** The Administration created a hotline for Minnesotans affected by the propane shortage. Minnesota citizens who have questions or need help accessing or paying for heating fuels are encouraged to call (800) 657-3504 in Greater Minnesota or (651) 297-1304 in the Twin Cities. The hotline operates Monday through Friday, between 9:00am and 4:30pm. In the first month of operation, the hotline helped over 3,400 Minnesotans affected by the ongoing propane crisis.