



## Toolkit #2 BACKGROUNDER - ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (OESP)

### What is the Ontario Electricity Support Program?

The OESP is an Ontario Energy Board program that lowers electricity bills for eligible lower-income households. Starting January 1, 2016, the OESP will provide a monthly credit to eligible customers based on household income and number of people in the house. The OESP credits will be applied directly to eligible customers' bills.

For low-income Ontarians, paying their electricity bill can be a challenge. Electricity represents a significantly greater share of their monthly expenses. For households with an annual income of \$20,000 a typical electricity bill could be 10 per cent or more of their income.

The OESP is available to all eligible lower-income customers of electricity utilities, unit sub-meter providers and electricity retailers. It could benefit more than 500,000 Ontario households, including First Nations.

### How are First Nations needs taken into consideration?

After engaging with First Nations, the OEB determined a higher level of support should be provided for lower-income First Nations households to help address some of the unique challenges that may lead to higher electricity use and costs.

In addition, the Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA) will work with First Nations communities to provide on-site, face-to-face assistance where required. This will provide community members with the opportunity to complete an application with personal support.

ONWAA will confirm availability and timing.

### How much will eligible First Nations customers receive?

The OESP on-bill credit amount for eligible customers will vary depending on how many people live in the house and the combined household income.

The credit for a First Nations household is between \$45 to \$75 a month. All other lower-income households are eligible to receive between \$30 and \$50 a month.



### OESP Monthly Credit Amounts – Energy Intensive

Household Income	Household Size (Number of people living in household)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
\$28,000 or less	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$55	\$60	\$75	\$75
\$28,001-\$39,000			\$45	\$50	\$55	\$60	\$75
\$39,001-\$48,000					\$45	\$50	\$55
\$48,001-\$52,000							\$45

### How do First Nations customers apply?

ONWAA will be available to help complete written applications. Please call 1-844-885-3157 or email [oesp@onwaa.com](mailto:oesp@onwaa.com) for more information.

To complete the application, customers will need their electricity bill, birthdates and names of all residents living in the home, and proof of household income.

First Nations customers interested in applying on their own online may do so if taxes have been filed recently and verified income from the Canada Revenue Agency reflects the household's total income.

Applications take 6 to 8 weeks to process.

### How often do First Nations customers need to apply?

Eligible customers will be required to re-qualify every two years. This eligibility period may be extended from two years to five years for certain customers whose circumstances are unlikely to change, for example seniors aged 65+ and customers receiving a CPP Disability Pension.

Customers will also need to reapply when they move or if circumstances change.



## How does OESP work with other low-income assistance programs?

Customers who qualify for the OESP may also be eligible for the following:

- Special customer service rules for low-income customers (e.g. waiver of security deposit)
- Low-Income Energy Assistance Program Emergency Financial Assistance (LEAP EFA) grants
- Energy Efficiency improvements offered by participating local utilities under the SaveOnEnergy Home Assistance Program

Customers can apply for assistance from more than one program. To find out more about other relief and energy savings programs, please call 211 or visit the Ontario Energy Board website ([www.ontarioenergyboard.ca](http://www.ontarioenergyboard.ca)) or the local electricity utility website.

## How is this program different from the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP EFA)?

There is an important difference between the OESP and the currently available LEAP. The OESP is intended to provide ongoing monthly bill payment support to low-income customers.

The LEAP offers one-time support for customers who are temporarily unable to make ends meet due to emergency or illness and may have their electricity disconnected. In some circumstances, an applicant may qualify for both programs.

## Where can First Nations customers get more information about OESP?

ONWAA will be providing on-site support for First Nations. For more information, please contact ONWAA at 1-844-885-3157 or email [oesp@onwaa.com](mailto:oesp@onwaa.com). Customers may also contact:

- Your community's Band Office and Friendship Centres
- 211
- The OESP Contact Centre at 1-855-831-8151. TTY: 1-800-855-1155 or online at: [OntarioElectricitySupport.ca](http://OntarioElectricitySupport.ca)
- The Ontario Energy Board at 1-877-632-2727