



Ontario
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BY EMAIL

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James A. Keech
President and Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Mr. Keech:

**Re: Covid-19 Energy Assistance Program and Covid-19 Energy Assistance
Program – Small Business
Amended Eligibility Criteria and Maximum Credit Amounts**

On June 16, 2020, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) issued a letter (CEAP Letter) providing guidance to Enbridge Gas Inc., EPCOR Natural Gas Limited Partnership, Kitchener Utilities, and Utilities Kingston (collectively the Gas Utilities) on how they should implement the Covid-19 Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). On August 7, 2020, the OEB issued a similar letter (CEAP-SB Letter) providing guidance on how the Gas Utilities should implement the Covid-19 Energy Assistance Program – Small Business (CEAP-SB). The guidance provided to the Gas Utilities was similar to the direction that the OEB provided to licensed electricity distributors and unit sub-meter providers in licence (collectively the Electricity Utilities) amendments also issued on June 16 and August 7, 2020.

On September 30, 2020 the OEB sent letters to the Gas Utilities outlining the OEB's expectation that they apply amended CEAP and CEAP-SB eligibility criteria and guidance consistent with the amendments the OEB had made to the licences of the Electricity Utilities in a Decision issued on September 30, 2020.

On December 22, 2020, the OEB received a letter from the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and the Associate Minister of Energy (Ministers' Letter) which recommended that the OEB consider additional amendments to the CEAP and CEAP-SB eligibility requirements and increased maximum credit amounts. In a Decision and Order dated January 14, 2021, (CEAP/CEAP-SB Amendment Decision), the OEB amended the licences of the Electricity Utilities to implement the recommendations from the Ministers' Letter.

Specifically, the following changes were made to CEAP:

- Elimination of the previous eligibility criteria and replacement with the criterion that the customer has overdue amounts owing from one or more previous bill(s) since March 17, 2020 (including accounts subject to an arrears payment agreement);
- An increase in the credit amount cap to \$750

CEAP-SB was amended as follows:

- Elimination of the previous eligibility criteria and replacement with the criterion that the customer has overdue amounts owing from one or more previous bill(s) since March 17, 2020 (including accounts subject to an arrears payment agreement);
- An increase in the credit amount cap to \$1,500

Given the similar eligibility conditions and maximum credit cap for CEAP and CEAP-SB as offered by the Gas Utilities, the OEB expects that the Gas Utilities will also make the changes to the eligibility criteria and increased maximum credit cap for CEAP and CEAP-SB as set out in the CEAP/CEAP-SB Amendment Decision.

The OEB similarly expects the Gas Utilities to implement the changes in the same manner as set out in the CEAP/CEAP-SB Amendment Decision, in particular, the requirement that application forms that were rejected under the old eligibility criteria be re-processed. Where those applications meet the new eligibility criterion, a credit of up to \$750 (for CEAP) or up to \$1,500 (for CEAP-SB) should be applied to any current overdue balances on the customer's account. The re-processing should be completed as quickly as practicable and not later than 30 days from the issuance of this letter. The Gas Utilities should not process any new application forms (or complete the processing of any as of yet unprocessed Application Forms that were received after January 5, 2021) until the re-processing is complete and the 10-day timeline for processing new

applications will be suspended during the re-processing period. Once the previously rejected application forms have been re-processed, the OEB expects the Gas Utilities to begin processing new application forms in the order they were received, and the 10-day timeline will apply.

The OEB also considers it appropriate to allow an opportunity for customers that have already received a credit under the previous eligibility criteria and per customer funding caps to apply for further funding up to the new funding caps, and expects the Gas Utilities to allow for this. To facilitate this, the Gas Utilities are requested to notify customers that previously received a credit that the funding limits per customer have now been increased, and that they are permitted to file a new application for additional credits under the new funding caps to be applied against any current overdue amounts on the customer's account. These applications, and any other new applications, should be processed in the order that they are received, but not prior to the re-processing described in the paragraph above. No customer can receive CEAP or CEAP-SB funding that, in the aggregate, exceeds the new funding cap for the program.

In order to monitor the implementation and effect of the new criterion, the OEB expects Gas Utilities to report to the OEB once the re-processing is complete, and indicate how much of their allotted funding remains for CEAP and CEAP-SB. This report should be filed within five days of the completion of the re-processing.

To assist Gas Utilities in implementing the changes, the OEB will be issuing shortly a revised fillable PDF Application Form for both CEAP and CEAP-SB to be used by customers applying to the Programs. Copies of the Word version of the application forms are being provided along with this letter. The Gas Utilities are requested to make the revised application forms available on their website and make any other necessary changes to their systems or websites to ensure customers have access to the revised form.

Any questions relating to this letter should be directed to the OEB's Industry Relations Enquiry e-mail at IndustryRelations@oeb.ca. Please include "CEAP Implementation" in the subject line.

Yours truly,

Original Signed By

Brian Hewson
Vice President, Consumer Protection & Industry Performance