



ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question

Answer

OESP Changes May 1, 2017

What are the OESP changes effective May 1, 2017?

Monthly credit amounts for OESP have increased by 50 per cent as of May 1, 2017. Additionally, the income eligibility thresholds for some household sizes have increased.

I am already receiving an OESP credit on my monthly utility bill. Do I need to reapply for the increased credit?

No, the increased credit will automatically be applied to your utility bill. Households who are not currently receiving an OESP credit, and who are newly eligible for OESP must apply (<https://ontarioelectricitysupport.ca/>) for the program.

I have recently applied for OESP but don't have a decision yet. Do I need to apply to get the increased credit?

No, if approved the new credit amount will be applied.

What are the households that are newly eligible for OESP as of May 1, 2017?

- A 2 person household with an income in between \$28,001 - \$39,000
- A 3-4 person household with an income in between \$39,001 - \$48,000
- A 5-6 person household with an income in between \$48,001 - \$52,000

Please see the table below which outlines income levels and household sizes.

ABOUT THE ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (OESP)

What is the Ontario Electricity Support Program?

The OESP is an Ontario Energy Board (OEB) program that lowers electricity bills for lower-income households. The OESP provides a monthly credit to eligible customers based on household income and household size. The OESP credits are applied directly to eligible customers' bills.

When can I apply?

You can apply any time. There is no application deadline, but the sooner you apply and are accepted into the OESP, the sooner you will begin to receive the on-bill credits.

When will I start seeing the on-bill credits?

Applications take about 6 to 8 weeks to process. Credits don't take effect until you submit all required information (including the signed consent form, if required) and your application is processed. The credit is applied to your utility bill as soon as possible after your application has been approved.

Eligible customers will receive on-bill credits for two years regardless of when a customer applies and their credits begin. See "How do I Apply?"

If you need assistance before the OESP credit is applied to your bill, please contact your electricity utility or visit the OEB website (<https://www.oeb.ca/rates-and-your-bill/help-low-income-consumers>) for more information about other low-income programs that may be available to you.

How do I contact the OESP Contact Centre? If you have questions about the program, you can contact the OESP Contact Centre in the following ways:

- Call 1-855-831-8151 (toll free within Ontario)
- Email: help@ontarioelectricitysupport.ca (mailto:help@ontarioelectricitysupport.ca)
- Use the Bell Relay service at 1-800-855-1155 (TTY to TTY)

The OESP Contact Centre is open Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

OESP AMOUNTS AND ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply?	The program is available to all lower-income customers who have accounts with electricity distributors or unit sub-meter providers. Customers must apply to the program.
What if I don't have an electricity account?	The OESP provides a credit directly on the electricity bills of eligible customers. It is only available to an electricity account holder. You may also contact 211 Ontario to find out more about other programs that you may qualify for.
Is there a separate program for Indigenous communities?	The Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA) is available to assist Indigenous households with their applications. Indigenous households can contact ONWAA at 1-844-885-3157 or email oesp@onwaa.com to confirm their availability.
Do all lower-income Indigenous customers qualify for the program?	Indigenous applicants must meet the program eligibility criteria to qualify to receive an OESP credit on their electricity bills. Eligibility for applicants is based on household income and household size.

How much will the monthly on-bill credit amount be?

The OESP on-bill credit amount will depend on how many people live in the house and the combined household income after tax.

Effective May 1, 2017

OESP Monthly Credit Amounts by Household Income Level

Household Income (After Tax)	Household Size (Number of people living in household)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
\$28,000 or less	\$45	\$45	\$51	\$57	\$63	\$75	\$75
\$28,001 – \$39,000		\$40	\$45	\$51	\$57	\$63	\$75
\$39,001 – \$48,000			\$35	\$40	\$45	\$51	\$57
\$48,001 – \$52,000					\$35	\$40	\$45

For some customers, the need to use more power is unavoidable. If your home is electrically heated, or you rely on an approved medical device requiring a lot of electricity, OESP offers a higher level of assistance.

OESP Monthly Credit Amounts by Household Income Level – Energy Intensive

Household Income (After Tax)	Household Size (Number of people living in household)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
\$28,000 or less	\$68	\$68	\$75	\$83	\$90	\$113	\$113
\$28,001-\$39,000		\$60	\$68	\$75	\$83	\$90	\$113
\$39,001-\$48,000			\$52	\$60	\$68	\$75	\$83
\$48,001-\$52,000					\$52	\$60	\$68

Which medical devices qualify for a higher level of assistance?

There are three at-home medical devices that will qualify an applicant for the higher level of assistance:

- A. Kidney Dialysis Machine
- B. Mechanical Ventilators (invasive and non-invasive)
- C. Oxygen Concentrator

Are the household income amounts listed in the OESP Monthly Credit tables before or after tax income?

The household income amounts listed on the tables are after tax.

How is my income, and the income of my household members, verified?

The Ministry of Finance will verify your income with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) using your Social Insurance Number (SIN) and the SINs of any other income tax filers in your household. The CRA verifies your income as declared on your tax return from last year or the year before. If you or other members of your household filed taxes only once in the last two years, income verification can still occur. This is true even if you and another household member filed in different tax years.

If you have not filed an income tax return recently, or if your situation has changed since you last filed, your income will need to be manually verified by a designated intake agency. To view a map of intake agencies, click here. (<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zvXp4ZljmoHU.kMlwTlkpvXf4>)

My kids go away to school/live with another parent part-time/my parents live with me but spend the winter away (snowbirds). Can I count them in my household size total?

To be counted in your household total, residents must reside in the home for 6 months or more per year.

I have utility accounts for more than 1 household. May I apply to OESP for both?

The OESP is for your primary residence only, the one you live at for more than 6 months of the year.

I am the primary utility account holder and under 18 years of age. Can I apply for the OESP?

Yes. Primary account holders under 18 years of age must apply for the OESP through a designated intake agency. Your income will need to be manually verified by an agent. To view a map of intake agencies, click here. (<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1JHAgVrCuLAMYGWyhnYHTXc9vnOI&ll=44.75757873373794%2C-77.71914649765654&z=6>)

Will the program be monitored to ensure only those who truly need it are receiving credits?

The OEB will randomly audit program recipients to verify applicant information and the eligibility of households. If an error is found to have occurred, credits may simply be cancelled. If an audit and subsequent investigation points to fraudulent activity, credits could be cancelled and amounts could be clawed back.

How long is the OESP eligibility period?

Most eligible customers need to re-apply every 2 years or whenever their personal circumstances change. For example, eligible customers would need to re-apply if they move or experience a change in income level.

How do I qualify for the extended 5 year program eligibility period?

The extended program eligibility period of 5 years is applicable if any account holder listed on the bill is:

- 1) 65 and over. If there are multiple account holders on your electricity bill, an account holder 65 years or older needs to be entered as the OESP applicant in order to qualify for the extended 5 year eligibility period.
- 2) Receiving a CPP disability pension (see CPP definition of severe and prolonged disability at <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/cpp/disability/definition.shtml> (<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/cpp/disability/definition.shtml>)). Those on disability pensions still have to pass the program income criteria.

APPLICATIONS

How do I apply?

Customers can apply online at [OntarioElectricitySupport.ca](http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca). (<http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca>) You need to complete the online application, print and sign the consent form, and mail it to the address provided on our website.

A paper version of the application can be downloaded from the OESP application website at [OntarioElectricitySupport.ca](http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca) (<http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca>) or can be mailed to applicants by the OESP Contact Centre upon request.

Customers unable to apply online can contact an intake agency. Designated intake agencies can be searched on the OESP application website at [OntarioElectricitySupport.ca](http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca). (<http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca>)

Once you have submitted all required application information (including the OESP consent form), we will verify the household income and confirm eligibility with customers.

What information do I need to apply?	<p>You need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your electricity bill account number, service address, and account holder details. • The birthdates and names of all residents in your home. • Social Insurance Numbers or Temporary Tax Numbers for tax-filing household members.
What if I haven't filed income tax?	<p>If you have not filed an income tax return recently, or if your situation has changed since you last filed, you can apply for the OESP through a designated intake agency listed on our website at OntarioElectricitySupport.ca. (http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca)</p> <p>If you do not have internet access, you can call the OESP Contact Centre at 1-855-831-8151 to receive this information.</p> <p>Please call an intake agency to make an appointment to complete your OESP application. You need to bring all of the information specified in "What information do I need to apply?" and proof of your household income. Cheque stubs and letters from employers are examples of household income proof. Other types of proof may be applicable.</p>
Which agencies are involved and how do I reach out to them if I need their help?	<p>We are working with many agencies across the province that are available to help customers complete and submit their application. Agencies can be searched on the OESP website at OntarioElectricitySupport.ca. (http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca) We continually update the list as new intake agencies sign on. You may also contact the OESP Contact Centre at 1-855-831-8151, 211 Ontario or your local utility for more information.</p>
How can I find an intake agency near me?	<p>We have also created a map of all intake agencies available to help customers complete and submit their OESP applications. You can use this map to search for an intake agency near you. To get to the map, click here. (https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zvXp4ZljmoHU.kMlwTlkpvXf4&usp=sharing)</p> <p>You may also contact the OESP Contact Centre at 1-855-831-8151, 211 Ontario or your local utility for more information.</p>
Can my mailing address be located outside of Ontario?	<p>Your mailing address must be located within the province of Ontario. If you have any questions about your mailing address, please call the OESP Contact Centre at 1-855-831-8151.</p>
How long will it take to process my application?	<p>Customers who qualify can expect the credits to be applied to their bill 6 to 8 weeks later. This timeline is based on your timely completion of all the steps of the application process including mailing in your OESP Consent form to the OESP Contact Centre.</p>
Where do I mail my OESP paper application form?	<p>Mail the completed Ontario Electricity Support Program Application Form to the address below: Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) PO Box 1540 STN B Ottawa, ON, K1P 0C7</p> <p>Important: Please mail your OESP Consent form with your paper application. Make a note of the date you mailed your forms in case you need to track the status of your application later.</p>
Where do I mail my OESP Consent Form?	<p>Mail the completed Ontario Electricity Support Program Consent Form to the address below: Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) PO Box 1540 STN B Ottawa, ON, K1P 0C7</p> <p>Important: If you're submitting a paper application, mail it together with the OESP Consent form. Make a note of the date you mailed your forms in case you need to track the status of your application later.</p>
What if I move?	<p>Customers who move, or whose circumstances change, must re-apply.</p>

PROGRAM FUNDING

How is the OESP funded?	The OESP was previously funded by all ratepayers through a per kilowatt-hour charge on electricity bills. On March 2, 2017, the government of Ontario announced as part of the Fair Hydro Plan that OESP funding would be moving to the provincial tax base.
Why did the OESP credits increase?	On March 2, 2017, the government of Ontario announced Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, which provides additional support for lower-income energy consumers.
I'll never use the program. Why am I paying for it?	For many lower-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.
How is this program different from the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)? (https://www.oeb.ca/rates-and-your-bill/help-low-income-consumers/low-income-energy-assistance-program)	There is an important difference between the OESP and LEAP. The OESP is intended to provide ongoing monthly bill payment support to lower-income customers. The LEAP offers one-time support for low-income customers who are in arrears and facing disconnection of their electricity service. In some circumstances, an applicant may qualify for both programs.

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