

CEAP Residential QAs for Distributors and USMP

Questions and Answers

1. What is the COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program or CEAP?

The Government of Ontario is providing \$9 million for its new COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program (CEAP), to support residential customers struggling to pay their energy bills as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.

CEAP provides a one time, on-bill credit to eligible residential electricity and natural gas customers to help them catch up on their energy bills and resume regular payments. The program is being delivered directly by electricity and natural gas utilities and unit sub-meter providers (USMP), further to rules laid out by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB).

2. Which customers are eligible for CEAP?

Residential electricity and natural gas customers may be eligible for CEAP funding if they meet the following criteria:

- i. The customer has an account with a utility or a USMP. Only the customer who is the account holder can submit an application for CEAP.
- ii. Customers may qualify if (before March 17) they:
 - o did not have any overdue amounts on their electricity bill on March 17, 2020, the date of the Provincial Declaration of Emergency, or
 - o made at least partial payments on amounts overdue prior to March 17, 2020.
- iii. The customer (after March 17) failed to make complete payment for the electricity and/or gas charges (as applicable) on at least two bills issued since March 17, 2020, and has an overdue balance on the date of their application for CEAP.
 - o If the customer made partial payments on their bills (including payments made under an arrears payment agreement for amounts owing after March 17, 2020), they may still qualify for CEAP.
- iv. The customer or the customer's spouse or common-law partner that resides in the same residence qualified for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or received Employment Insurance (EI) at any point after March 17, 2020.

The customer is required to confirm that this is the case on their CEAP application form.

- v. In the case of an electricity customer, the customer has not received emergency financial assistance for their electricity bills under the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) in 2020 and has not received funding under the Ontario Electricity Support Program in 2020.

In the case of a natural gas customer, the customer has not received emergency financial assistance for their natural gas bills under LEAP in 2020.

3. Can customers apply for CEAP to help with both their electricity and gas bills?

Yes, but customers can only receive a CEAP credit once for electricity and once for gas.

4. How can a customer apply for CEAP?

Apply for CEAP through your electricity or natural gas utility or USMP. Utilities and USMPs will be making the CEAP application form available on their websites and directly to any residential customer that requests it. Contact your utility or USMP directly as each may have a unique approach for application in-take.

At a minimum, customers can apply for CEAP by email or by mail. Some utilities and USMPs may also have the capability to allow their customers to apply online or by phone. Contact your utility or USMP to find out what options are available.

Utilities and USMPs are expected to process applications in the order in which they are received.

CEAP funding is limited. Submitting an application for CEAP to your utility or USMP does not guarantee funding.

5. I had applied previously and was denied. Do I have to reapply again under the new requirements?

Customers who previously applied but were denied will have their original applications reviewed by utilities and will be contacted directly if they are determined to meet the new eligibility criteria.

6. How have the eligibility requirements changed?

We have updated the eligibility criteria so that more customers may qualify for CEAP. The updates include a removal of the provision that the applicant must be in receipt of CERB or EI benefits on March 17, 2020 (the requirement now is that the applicant be either in receipt of CERB or EI benefits at any point after March 17, 2020).

In addition, customers who made partial payments on their bills prior to March 17, are now eligible to apply for CEAP.

7. Is there a deadline to apply for CEAP?

No, but funding for the program is limited. Utilities and USMPs are expected to process applications in the order in which they are received. CEAP funding is not guaranteed even after a complete application has been submitted.

The government is making \$9 million available for CEAP to support residential energy customers. Each utility and USMP has been allocated a share of that amount, based on how many residential customers they have. Your utility or USMP will stop delivering CEAP once their allocated share of CEAP funding runs out.

8. What is the maximum CEAP credit that a customer can receive?

CEAP funding is limited. Each utility and USMP has been allocated a share of the total pool of CEAP funds, and they are expected to process applications in the order in which they are received. Submitting an application for CEAP to your utility or USMP does not guarantee funding.

Electricity Customers

Eligible electricity customers may qualify for a one-time CEAP credit for half of the electricity charges that are overdue on the date of their application for CEAP, up to a maximum of \$115.

The CEAP credit can be higher for eligible electricity customers if:

- i. their home is mainly heated by electricity; or
- ii. they use one of three at-home energy-intensive medical devices (kidney dialysis, mechanical ventilator or oxygen concentrator).

In that case, they may qualify for a one-time CEAP credit for half of the electricity charges that are overdue on the date of their application, up to a maximum of \$230. The CEAP application form requires that customers confirm whether they meet either of these two conditions.

Natural Gas Customers

The maximum CEAP credit for eligible natural gas customers depends on where they live. Natural gas customers may qualify for a one-time CEAP credit for half of the natural gas charges that are overdue on the date of their application, up to a maximum of \$160 for Northern Ontario or up to a maximum of \$80 elsewhere in the province. Northern Ontario is defined as Enbridge's Union Gas North West or North East rate zones.

9. Why doesn't the CEAP credit amount cover the full amount of a customer's arrears?

The on-bill CEAP credit covers half of the charges that are overdue on the date of the customer's application for CEAP, up to a pre-set maximum amount. Setting the level of support for individual customers in this way assists in achieving the government's objective of making CEAP available to help the most people affected financially by the COVID-19 emergency. For the same reason, CEAP funding is available only once per customer for each of their electricity and natural gas bills.

10. When will a customer see the credit on their bill?

Utilities and USMPs are expected to process complete CEAP applications within 10 business days of receipt.

Provided that your utility or USMP has CEAP funds remaining, the credit will be applied to the next available bill issued to you after your CEAP application been assessed as complete by your utility or USMP.

11. Can a customer receive a CEAP credit if they are on the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) or have received emergency financial assistance under the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) this year?

No. Low-income customers that have received assistance under either of these programs in 2020 are not eligible for CEAP.

The Ontario Government's aim for CEAP is to support residential energy customers that are temporarily behind on their bills as a result of COVID-19.

Eligible low-income customers continue to have access to help under OESP and LEAP.

12. How did the OEB allocate CEAP funding to utilities and USMPs?

The OEB has determined that the fair approach to allocating funds is to do so based on the number of residential customers as reported to the OEB. This approach ensures that residential electricity and natural gas customers across the province are afforded access to a comparable level of funding.

Therefore the OEB has determined that the \$9 million will be allocated as follows:

- a total of \$4.89 million for electricity utilities, to be allocated amongst them based on their respective number of residential customers
- a total of \$0.34 million for USMPs that are serving residential customers, to be allocated amongst them based on their respective number of residential customers
- a total of \$3.77 million for four natural gas utilities to be allocated amongst them based on their respective number of residential customers