



Ontario Energy Board

Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario

Backgrounder

Strengthening Consumer Protection in the Retail Energy Markets

Overview

The *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010* (ECPA) has been in effect since 2011, helping to protect residential and small business consumers from hidden costs, excessive cancellations fees and other unfair industry practices, and ensuring they have information they need to make decisions about energy contracts that are right for them.

On June 1, 2015, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) released a report to the Minister of Energy assessing how effective the ECPA has been at protecting consumers since it was enacted, and recommended 14 new measures to improve and strengthen consumer protection. The OEB's report was informed by extensive, direct consumer consultation and stakeholder feedback.

On January 1, 2017, several new measures took effect, including the ban on energy retailers signing consumers up for energy contracts while they are at consumers' homes. The OEB is also committed to empowering consumers by increasing energy literacy and consumer awareness. Other new measures that will come into effect later in the year are more consumer friendly disclosures and price comparisons, and rules that will make energy contracts more visible on the bill.

The OEB already offers an online bill calculator for consumers who want to compare their utility price with a contract offer, and the OEB's website has information on complaints received by the OEB about energy retailers and on OEB enforcement actions.

Background on Utilities, Energy Retailers

In today's market, Ontario energy consumers have options in choosing their energy supplier. They can continue being supplied by their utility, or they can sign an energy contract with an energy retailer. Energy retailers are not utilities. They offer an alternative way for consumers to purchase electricity or natural gas. The majority of energy consumers choose to purchase their energy from their utility.

Electricity and natural gas prices that most of Ontario's residential and small business consumers pay to their utility are set by the OEB. The OEB does not set prices offered by energy retailers.

An energy contract only covers part of a consumer's bill. A consumer that switches to an energy retailer will still have to pay other charges to their utility companies to have natural gas and electricity delivered to their home or small business. These other charges include delivery charges and taxes.

There are 16 licensed energy retailers in Ontario.

Background on the *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010*

The *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010* came into effect on Jan. 1, 2011. When the ECPA became law, the government stated the goals of the legislation were to: (i) protect residential and small business consumers from hidden costs, excessive cancellation fees and other unfair practices; and (ii) ensure consumers have the information they need to make decisions about electricity and natural gas contracts that are right for them, and confidence that they're protected from unfair business practices.

The ECPA, along with the OEB's own consumer protection rules, set out the obligations that energy retailers must comply with when they sell electricity or natural gas under contract to residential and small business consumers. Learn more about the [OEB's review of the ECPA](#) and the new measures that the OEB recommended to strengthen consumer protection.

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