

**Ministry of Energy,
Northern Development
and Mines**

**Ministère de l'Énergie,
du Développement du Nord
et des Mines**



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MC-994-2020-1162

December 22, 2020

Ms Susanna Zagar
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Energy Board
2300 Yonge Street, 27th Floor
PO Box 2319
Toronto ON M4P 1E4

Dear Ms Zagar:

We appreciate the continued leadership that both the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and Ontario's regulated utilities have demonstrated during this time. As you are aware, the OEB has led the development of the COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) for residential consumers as well as the small business funding stream (CEAP-SB). CEAP and CEAP-SB were originally intended to support customers who fell behind on their energy bills specifically as a result of the first phase of the pandemic. In light of the prolonged situation and the implementation of the Provincewide Shutdown effective December 26, 2020, we want to make sure customers receive as much support as possible. As part of our sustained efforts to provide relief to customers, we are suggesting revisions to the CEAP and CEAP-SB for your consideration.

We request that the OEB consider these changes and support their implementation by taking the appropriate actions as necessary to ensure licensed electricity distributors, licensed unit sub-meter providers, and natural gas distributors continue to provide the program to their residential and small business customers under modified rules. Specifically, we ask that the OEB consider the following changes to CEAP, which we believe will help more residential customers be eligible for even more support:

- Eliminate previous eligibility criteria and replace with the criterion that the customer has overdue amounts owing from one or more previous bill(s) since March 17, 2020;
- Increase the credit amount cap to \$750 for both electricity and natural gas customers.

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For CEAP-SB, we ask the OEB to consider the following:

- Eliminate previous eligibility criteria and replace with the criterion that the customer has overdue amounts owing from one or more previous bill(s) since March 17, 2020;
- Increase the credit amount cap to \$1,500 for both electricity and natural gas customers.

We ask the OEB, in considering these changes, to examine how they can be implemented in a manner that is fair to customers who applied under earlier eligibility rules as well as to customers who may be newly eligible. We note that the OEB required that utilities reprocess past applications when it amended program rules on September 30, 2020. We ask that the OEB work with electricity distributors, unit sub-metering providers, and natural gas distributors to consider and determine the practicability of reviewing the applications received to date in light of these proposed changes to the eligibility criteria.

The Ministry remains ready to support the OEB with implementation to ensure that revisions are in place as soon as possible in the new year.

We would like to thank the OEB for its continued efforts to help Ontarians get through this difficult time.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Greg Rickford
Minister of Energy, Northern
Development and Mines



The Honourable Bill Walker
Associate Minister of Energy

c: Richard Dicerni, Chair, Ontario Energy Board