



Ontario
Energy
Board | Commission
de l'énergie
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BY EMAIL ONLY

September 30, 2020

Enbridge Gas Inc.
EPCOR Natural Gas Limited Partnership
Kitchener Utilities
Utilities Kingston

Re: Covid-19 Energy Assistance Program and Covid-19 Energy Assistance Program – Small Business Amended Eligibility Criteria

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 licenced electricity distributors and unit sub-meter providers in licence amendments also issued on June 16 and August 7, 2020.

The OEB has issued a Decision & Order¹ (CEAP Decision) amending the conditions of licence for electricity distributors and unit sub-meter providers in relation to the implementation of CEAP and CEAP-SB. As explained in the CEAP Decision, the OEB has learned that uptake to date for CEAP and CEAP-SB has been significantly less than anticipated and that one of the impediments to higher customer participation in CEAP and CEAP-SB (collectively the Programs) is certain of the eligibility criteria. Based on

¹ EB-2020-0162/EB-2020-0185 dated September 30, 2020.

this information, the CEAP Decision amends specific eligibility criteria in order to achieve the goal of the Programs, which is to allow customers to catch up on their energy bills and resume regular payments.²

Specifically, the OEB has amended the following two criteria for CEAP:

- Customers that made at least a partial payment with respect to amounts owing from bills prior to March 17, 2020 (including accounts subject to an arrears payment agreement) will now be eligible for CEAP, and
- The account holder (or the account holder's spouse or common-law partner that resides in the same residence) will no longer need to be unemployed on the date they file their CEAP application form

The OEB also amended the eligibility criteria for CEAP-SB such that customers that made at least a partial payment with respect to amounts owing from bills prior to March 17, 2020 will now be eligible for CEAP-SB.

Given the similar eligibility conditions and implementation of the Programs by the Gas Utilities, the OEB expects that the Gas Utilities will make the changes to the eligibility criteria for CEAP and CEAP-SB as set out in the CEAP Decision. The Gas Utilities are also expected to be guided by the OEB's direction in the Decision with respect to the requirement that complete payment has not been made by the customer on at least two bills since March 17, 2020. To assist Gas Utilities in implementing the changes, the OEB will be issuing shortly a revised Application Form for both CEAP and CEAP-SB to be used by customers applying to the Programs.

The OEB similarly expects the Gas Utilities to implement the changes in the same manner as set out in the CEAP Decision, in particular the requirement that application forms that were rejected under the old eligibility criteria be re-processed under the new eligibility criteria prior to the processing of any new application forms. The re-processing should be completed as quickly as practicable and not later than October 19, 2020. The OEB recognizes that the reprocessing of previously rejected application forms may affect processing times for new applications and will therefore allow Gas Utilities relief until October 20, 2020, from the ten day processing timeline for new applications received after September 30, 2020.

All other guidance from the CEAP Letter and the CEAP-SB Letter remains unchanged.

² See Ministers' letter dated June 1, 2020

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