

COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program Small Business (CEAP-SB)

Questions and Answers

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

The Government of Ontario is providing \$8 million for its new COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program – Small Business (CEAP-SB), to support small business and registered charity customers struggling to pay their energy bills as a result of COVID-19.

CEAP-SB provides a one time, on-bill credit to eligible small business and registered charity 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 distributors and unit sub-meter providers (USMPs), further to rules laid out by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB).

2. Which customers are eligible for CEAP-SB?

Small business and registered charity electricity or natural gas customers are eligible for CEAP-SB if they meet all of the following criteria:

- i. The customer has an active account with an electricity distributor, a USMP or a natural gas distributor.
- ii. The customer's account falls within the following class:
 - o For customers of an electricity distributor, the General Service less than 50 kW rate class
 - o For customers of a USMP, the relevant commercial class that uses less than 150,000 kWh of electricity annually
 - o For customers of a natural gas distributor, a non-residential rate class that uses less than 50,000 cubic meters of gas annually

Customers can find information about their class on their bill, or they can contact their utility or USMP.

- iii. The customer has a registered business number or charitable registration number for the small business or registered charity operating out of the premises.
- iv. 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.
- v. 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, they may still qualify for CEAP.
- vi. The customer's small business or registered charity premises was required to close to the public for regular operations for at least 15 days as a result of a government order or inability to comply with public health recommendations.

3. What do you mean by “closed” for 15 days?

The OEB considers “closed” to mean that the small business or registered charity was unable to maintain regular operations as a result of government order or health recommendations that required them to either fully close operations, limit access to their premises or limit the services provided or available to the public.

The following are examples of what closures might include (this list is not exhaustive, and there may be other examples):

- Personal services (e.g. hair salon, chiropractor) that had to fully close.
- A restaurant or coffee shop that had to close regular dining operations and provided only takeaway or delivery service.
- A small fashion retailer or pet store whose premises was closed to the public but was able to provide contactless curbside pick-up for customers.
- A non-publicly funded registered charity whose premises was closed to the public but was able to adapt to provide limited services remotely.

4. Can eligible small business and registered charity customers apply for CEAP-SB to help with both their electricity and gas bills?

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

5. I had applied previously and my application was not approved? 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 for CEAP-SB changed?

The eligibility criteria has been updated so that more customers may qualify for CEAP-SB. Small business customers who made partial payments in early 2020 for amounts owing on their bills prior to March 17, are now eligible to apply for CEAP-SB

7. How can customers apply for CEAP-SB?

Customers must apply for CEAP-SB through their electricity or natural gas distributor or USMP.

Electricity and natural gas distributors and USMPs will be making the CEAP-SB application form available on their websites and directly to any small business or registered charity customer that requests it. Customers should contact their electricity or natural gas distributor or USMP directly as each may have a unique approach for application in-take.

At a minimum, customers can apply for CEAP-SB by email or by mail. Some electricity and natural gas distributors utilities and USMPs may also have the capability to allow their customers to apply online or by phone. Customers should contact their electricity and natural gas distributor or USMP to find out what options are available.

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

Utilities and USMPs are expected to process applications in the order in which they are received, and to process complete applications within 10 business days of receipt.

8. Is there a deadline to apply for CEAP-SB?

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

The government is making \$8 million available for CEAP-SB to support small business and registered charity energy customers. Each electricity and natural gas distributor and USMP has been allocated a share of that amount, based on their reporting on customer numbers. Each electricity and natural gas distributor or USMP will stop accepting applications and providing CEAP-SB credits once their allocated share of CEAP-SB funding has run out.

9. What is the maximum CEAP-SB credit that a customer can receive?

Electricity customers

Eligible small business and registered charity customers may qualify for a one-time CEAP-SB credit equal to the electricity charges that are overdue on the date of their application for CEAP-SB:

- up to a maximum of **\$850** if their premises is mainly heated by electricity, or
- up to a maximum of **\$425** otherwise.

Natural Gas customers

Eligible small business and registered charity customers may qualify for a one-time CEAP-SB credit equal to the natural gas charges that are overdue on the date of their application for CEAP-SB, up to a maximum of **\$425**.

10. What if a small business or registered charity has multiple locations?

An eligible CEAP-SB small business or registered charity customer that has more than one location can receive only one CEAP-SB credit towards their electricity bill and one CEAP-SB credit towards their natural gas bill, even if they have multiple locations throughout the Province the location can be different for electricity and natural gas. This will assist in achieving the government's objective of making CEAP-SB available to help the most people affected financially by the COVID-19 emergency.

11. Why is there a cap on the maximum amount of the CEAP-SB credit available per eligible customer?

The pre-set maximum amount of support for eligible customers will assist in achieving the government's objective of making CEAP-SB available to help the greatest number of small businesses and registered charities affected financially by the COVID-19 emergency. For the same reason, CEAP-SB funding will be available only once per customer for each of electricity and natural gas, even if they have multiple locations throughout the Province.

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

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

Provided that a customer is eligible and their utility or USMP has CEAP-SB funds remaining when they assess the application as complete, the credit will be applied to the next available bill issued after that.

13. How did the OEB allocate CEAP-SB funding?

The government is making \$8 million available for CEAP-SB to support small business and registered charity energy customers. Each electricity and natural gas distributor and USMP has been allocated a share of that amount, based on their reporting on customer numbers. The funding allocated to each class of energy service provider is as follows:

Electricity distributors: \$4.625 million

USMPs: \$53,700

Natural Gas distributors: \$3.32 million

Each distributor and USMP has been advised by the OEB of their share of CEAP-SB funding.