

Key Messages

- **Ontario is taking action to reduce electricity bills for families. We're doing this because we know that families need help with the cost of everyday living.**
- **For low-income and fixed-income Ontarians, paying their electricity bills can be particularly challenging, as a higher share of their income goes towards meeting this monthly expense.**
- **To assist those on low and fixed incomes, The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has developed the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), which provides an ongoing rate reduction directly on the bills of low-income electricity consumers**
- **The increase in consulting and advertising costs shown in the annual report was necessary to ensure that low and fixed income Ontarians are aware of the program, and to make it as accessible as possible for potential applicants.**
- **OEB's public outreach campaign has been successful. In the 13 months since the OESP was launched, OEB has received more than 284,000 OESP applications and enrolled almost 185,000 Ontarians in the program. Those numbers continue to grow.**

Questions and Answers

Q1. How can you say you are reducing costs if OEB is spending this kind of money?

The increase in consulting and advertising expenses shown in the annual report's financial statements was necessary to ensure that low and fixed income Ontarians are aware of the program, and to make it as accessible as possible for potential applicants.

In developing the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), the OEB gathered significant input from consumers and partners, including First Nation and Métis communities, consumer representatives, utilities, provincial ministries and community agencies that provide services to low-income households.

To reach as many consumers as possible, the program included a broad public awareness campaign, which attracted 1,000 applications per day for the first 100 days.

Q2. Is there any third-party oversight of these costs?

The OEB's financial statements have been audited by the Auditor General of Ontario.

Q3. Who is paying for these huge increases? Taxpayers or ratepayers?

The OESP is currently funded by all ratepayers for low-income ratepayers who have applied and meet the eligibility requirements.

The cost to ratepayers is \$0.0011 per kilowatt hour of electricity used for all ratepayers. For a typical residential customer, the amount for OESP is less than \$1 per month.

Under the Fair Hydro Plan, the program would be paid for by government funds. Thus, the charge to ratepayers would be removed.

Q4. Is the OEB going to keep spending this kind of money to advertise the OESP?

The annual report notes that costs for OESP are expected to be lower next fiscal year, as the program has moved beyond the initial start-up mode

Q5. How much is OESP costing ratepayers?

The cost to ratepayers is \$0.0011 per kilowatt hour of electricity used for all ratepayers.

For the typical residential customer, the amount is less than \$1 per month.

Under the Fair Hydro Plan, the program would be paid for by government funds. Thus, the charge would be removed.

The Ontario Energy Board has already taken steps to remove this charge. In a March 23, 2017 Decision and Order, the OEB announced that it will remove the charge on all customer bills starting May 1, 2017, and that the program will be paid for through a variance account until proposed legislative changes are implemented, if approved.