

ENERGY media calls

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Hi all,

We have one media call to report today from CBC Sudbury regarding the end to the winter disconnection ban. The journalist reached out to both the OEB and the MO. Minister Thibeault did the interview, sharing the messages below. The OEB summary is below as well.

In addition, Marieke Walsh from iPolitics reached out to get some additional clarity following the Minister's post-QP scrum on Hydro One exec comp. We added the following statement, which echoes the statement sent yesterday evening, and reiterates the government's expectation that Hydro One's compensation package will be reviewed and revised down.

"As we've said before, we are shareholders of Hydro One, not micromanagers. We are pleased that Hydro One has agreed to review its executive compensation model, and we await the results of those discussions. While we've made it clear that our government views these compensation packages as unjustifiably generous, we can't direct the review process. As the company's largest shareholder we are looking forward to a model that is fair to shareholders, Hydro One customers, and the people of Ontario."

Agencies: 1 inquiry

Agency: OEB

Topic: Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)

Reporter & Outlet: CBC Radio, Sudbury

Response type: OEB spokesperson

Questions:

I'm trying to get some information on the low income energy assistance program -- how many people have applied and received money?

Also, whether or not those numbers are on the increase.

Responses:

Protecting Ontario's energy consumers – especially low-income consumers- is at the heart of all the Ontario Energy Board does every day.

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) serves as a one-time emergency grant for customers who are behind on their electricity or natural gas bills and face disconnection. The grant, which is paid directly to a utility, provides eligible customers with up to \$500 in assistance for their electricity bills (\$600 if their homes are electrically heated) and up to \$500 for their natural gas bills. It is one of several ways that the OEB protects vulnerable consumers.

Since 2012, the LEAP program has provided grants to over 82,000 low-income customers facing disconnection.

Electricity Distributors	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
LEAP funds	\$4,677,655	\$5,000,941	\$4,735,875	\$5,180,915	\$6,009,290
Non-distributor funds*	\$56,116	\$30,508	\$800,771	\$2,574,958	\$2,307,901
Funds disbursed	\$3,946,644	\$4,279,839	\$4,762,007	\$ 6,457,863	\$7,776,612
Recipients	8,053	9,293	9,656	14,494	14,330
Average grant	\$432	\$399	\$418	\$ 381	\$ 464

- The increase in the number of LEAP recipients from 9,656 in 2014 to 14,494 in 2015 was mostly attributable to the additional donation of \$2.5 million from Hydro One.
- There was \$540,579 in unused funds remaining at year-end, which was carried forward for use in 2017.
- In some jurisdictions, social agency partners waived administration costs.

Natural Gas Distributors	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
LEAP and WW funds	\$2,269,016	\$2,314,018	\$2,760,904	\$2,357,370	\$2,445,197
LEAP and WW funds disbursed	\$2,134,411	\$2,128,223	\$2,632,808	\$2,266,209	\$2,197,157
Recipients	4,889	4,971	6,135	4,881	5,354
Average grant	\$370	\$364	\$369	\$395	\$341

- In 2016, the Winter Warmth program was replaced by the LEAP Program. Since 2012, Enbridge Gas has delivered funds through LEAP.
- Natural gas distributors had a balance of \$248,049 in unused LEAP funds remaining at year-end, which was carried forward for use in 2017.

We do not yet have the numbers for 2017.

MO Messaging:

Winter Disconnection ban ending

- Last winter our government passed legislation that granted the province's independent energy regulator the power to end all winter disconnections and protect Ontarians, because no one should ever be put at risk of disconnection in the winter.
- Our priority is to make sure families and businesses have access to clean, reliable, and affordable electricity.
- While the ban on winter disconnections ended on April 30, there are a number of government programs designed to help reduce the cost of electricity bills for vulnerable consumers.
- We encourage all customers to contact their local utility about qualifying for programs that are in place to help.
- For example, our government expanded electricity support programs such as the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the Rural and Remote Rate Protection Plan, which provide support to low-income customers and those customers with the highest delivery rates. These customers are seeing savings of up to 40 to 50 per cent off of their electricity bills.
- You can apply for the Ontario Electricity Support Program through the Ontario Energy Board website, or through the Centre de Sante Communautaire de Sudbury.
- Customers can also reduce their electricity bills through energy efficiency programs like SaveOnEnergy, which is accessible at saveonenergy.ca
- In prioritizing affordability, we also moved forward with the Fair Hydro Plan last year, which has lowered hydro bills by an average of 25 per cent for all residential consumers, and as many as half a million small businesses and farms.
- This is the largest rate reduction in Ontario's history, and any increases to electricity rates will be held to the rate of inflation for four years.

Is the spike in accounts in arrears concerning?

- We do want people to be paying their bills.
- Some may have fallen behind over the course of the winter, but there are programs and plans in place to help them catch up.
- I encourage every customer who has heard from Greater Sudbury Utilities to make sure they're having a conversation about getting back on track.
- And make sure you're taking advantage of all the programs available to you – like the Ontario Electricity Support Program, like the Low-income Energy Assistance Program, like SaveOnEnergy.
- These can be accessed through the Centre de Sante Communautaire de Subury, the Ontario Energy Board, Greater Sudbury Utilities, and SaveOnEnergy.ca

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