



Ontario Energy Board
Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario

NEW ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

OESP Overview

October 6, 2015

What is the Ontario Electricity Support Program?

- In April 2014, the Minister of Energy asked the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to recommend an option for delivering an ongoing ratepayer-funded electricity bill assistance program
- This program was to be in place following the conclusion of the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit (OCEB) December 31, 2015.
- The OEB submitted a recommendation to the Minister in December 2014 following research and discussions with stakeholders representing utilities, low-income consumers, First Nations and Métis groups, ministries and other programs for low-income consumers.
- The Minister announced the government's support of the OEB's recommendation on March 26, 2015 and encouraged the OEB to proceed with implementing the **Ontario Electricity Support Program**.



What We Heard – the OEB’s Report

- A clear consensus emerged that specific program elements must address the unique issues, challenges and needs of First Nations and Métis customers.
 - Low-income residents of First Nations communities face challenges that are unique to their communities and require a higher level of assistance to address high electricity costs
 - Branding and targeted communication of distinct First Nations & Métis programs will encourage greater uptake
 - Local or familiar delivery agents will promote trust within the community and improve program uptake
 - There are, in some cases, historic grievances that impact relationships between electricity distributors and First Nations people and these need to be considered
 - A different threshold, above what is used for existing program Emergency Financial Assistance (LEAP EFA), is preferred to determine low-income eligibility for First Nations & Métis customers



What will the OESP do?

What the OESP is: *An ongoing, on-bill rate assistance program for low-income electricity consumers to be in place by January 1, 2016*

Focus of the OESP: *OESP will provide targeted support to those low-income customers with the greatest need through a reduction on qualifying customer's utility bills*

Funding: *The OESP will be funded through a provincial charge*

Expected to benefit more than 500,000 low-income households



OEB's Recommendations – First Nations and Métis

- In addition to the recommendations for overall program design, the OEB recommended the following unique features in the program for First Nations and Métis customers:
 - Distinctly brand the OESP program for First Nations and Métis customers to encourage greater uptake from the community.
 - The level of assistance would be determined using the OESP energy intensity sliding scale, and Statistics Canada's Low-Income Measure (LIM) to be used to determine eligibility
 - These program elements were included to address concerns expressed by First Nations and Métis that the cost of living in their communities is not adequately reflected in the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) measure
 - Create a tailored intake and qualification process for program intake for First Nations Métis customers.
 - Local representatives promote trust within the community, leading to better communication and outreach of the program and greater uptake.
 - Familiarity with the community will ensure those who do not file taxes will be properly screened for eligibility.



Who will be eligible and for how long?

Who will be eligible?

- Residential customers who receive a bill directly from an electricity distributor or a unit sub-meter provider and live at the address
- Household income falls below the level set in Stats Canada's Low-Income Measure (LIM)
- Eligible amount depends on the applicant's total household income and number of people in the house

How long does eligibility last?

- Eligible consumers will only need to re-qualify every 2 years
The first eligibility period will be staggered between 24-36 months
- Eligibility period is 5 years for some
 - Seniors (65+ years old)
 - CPP permanent disability pension recipients
- Consumers should reapply prior to the end of their eligibility period if their circumstances change
 - E.g., total household income drops, new household members



How much will the OESP credit be?

- The OESP will use a targeted, sliding-scale fixed credit to deliver greater benefits to those in greater need

OESP Credit (\$/month)		Household Size (Number of People in the Household)						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7 +
Total Income	≤\$28,000	\$30	\$30	\$34	\$38	\$42	\$50	\$50
	\$28,001 - \$39,000			\$30	\$34	\$38	\$42	\$50
	\$39,001 - \$48,000					\$30	\$34	\$38
	\$48,001 - \$52,000							\$30



How much will the OESP credit be?

- Those with unique needs will get slightly more assistance to reflect their increased electricity use
 - Consumers who use electric heat as their primary heating source
 - Those that depend on medical equipment requiring significant electricity use
 - First Nation and Métis customers

OESP Energy Intensive Credit (\$/month)		Household Size (Number of People in the Household)						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7 +
Total Income	≤\$28,000	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$55	\$60	\$75	\$75
	\$28,001 - \$39,000			\$45	\$50	\$55	\$60	\$75
	\$39,001 - \$48,000					\$45	\$50	\$55
	\$48,001 - \$52,000							\$45



How will consumers apply?

Complete an Application with a Delivery Agent (intake agency or First Nation or Métis delivery agent)

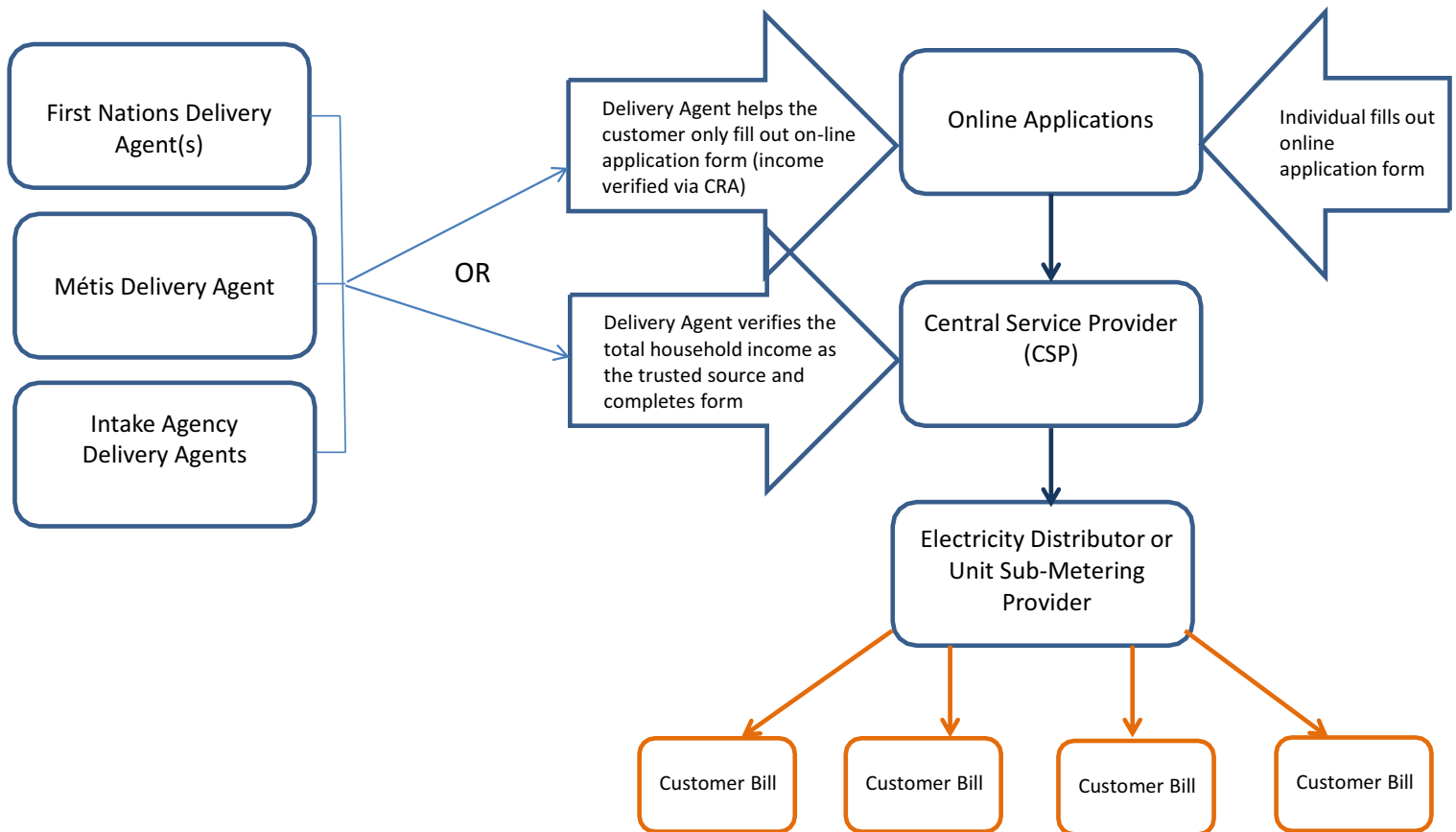
- For those households that have not filed taxes or whose income situation is not reflective of taxes filed (e.g. non-taxable income, job loss since last filed)
- Delivery Agent will calculate total household income and can help provide more holistic assistance

Online or Paper Self-Serve Application For households that have recently filed taxes (e.g. in last 2 tax years)

- Easy to use electronic form with prompts to help complete the form and minimize errors
- Print, sign and mail consent form for income verification
- Income will be verified by Canada Revenue Agency



OESP Delivery Agents



OESP First Nations and Métis Delivery Agents

- The OEB's report recommended distinct OESP delivery agents for First Nations & Métis communities to promote greater uptake of the program. Ideally, a central organization with local delivery agents familiar with the communities' unique challenges, issues and needs.

What are their roles?

Communication and outreach through local representatives who can promote trust within the community, leading to better program awareness and greater uptake for First Nations and Métis electricity customers.

Assist those who need help with completing an online application.

Completing income verification for those who do not file taxes or whose circumstances have changed since the last time they did file (e.g. lost job) and sending to the CSP through an online application form (or via paper if electronic is not possible).



OESP First Nations and Métis Delivery Agents (cont'd)

What won't the DA have to do?	Who will?
Determining eligibility	The DA will verify the total household income as the trusted source and submit it to the CSP. The CSP will confirm eligibility based on income and household size and will send confirmation to the applicant.
Receive / disperse program funding	Delivery agents will receive compensation for their role in the delivery of the program but will not need to manage overall program funding. This will be done by the Independent Electricity System Operator.
Communicating with the local utility	Once it confirms eligibility, the CSP will be responsible for advising the local utility of the approved credit amount to place on the bill.
Advising of need to reapply	Customers receiving the OESP credit will get notification from their utility when their eligibility period is coming to an end with a reminder to reapply.
Maintaining the online application form or system	This is the CSP's responsibility to maintain the online portal and central system.
Program design, monitoring or reporting	The OEB will continue to have responsibility for program design and monitoring. Reporting on update will be able to be done by the CSP with information submitted via the applications.



What communications are planned for OESP?

Background Information

- Website content with email sign up
- Toolkit with backgrounder, Q&As, ½ page newsletter article

Marketing Collateral (Public)

- Brochure
- Poster

Marketing Collateral (Utilities)

- Mandated: On-bill messaging
- Optional: Messaging for envelopes, bill inserts and other notices

Marketing Collateral (MCSS)

- Mail-out insert (OW, ODSP)

Event Handout / Materials

- Postcard
- Speech / presentation content

Digital Marketing

- Suggested social media posts
- Informational video
- Web banner, web copy, portal link

Advertising

- Print / Newspaper ads
- Radio
- In-transit & Transit Shelter

Media Launch

- Earned media strategy
- Media kit materials



What are the timelines I need to know?

- Awareness campaign and support materials for social agencies, elected official offices, utilities, etc. – program is coming
 - August / September
- Agency training on application intake
 - September / October
- **Application intake and more targeted communications launch**
 - **Estimated to be last week of October**
- Communication of eligibility to applicants
 - Beginning in late November
- OESP credit on eligible consumers' bills
 - Beginning in January 2016

