



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

**BY E-MAIL AND WEB POSTING**

August 29, 2024

**To: All Rate-Regulated Electricity Distributors  
All Rate-Regulated Natural Gas Distributors  
All Licensed Unit Sub-Meter Providers  
Financial Assistance Working Group Members  
All Other Interested Parties**

**Re: Notice of Hearing for Cost Awards  
Low-income Energy Assistance Program - Emergency Financial Assistance  
Review  
Ontario Energy Board File Number: EB-2023-0135**

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The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) recently made changes to the Low-income Energy Assistance Program - Emergency Financial Assistance (LEAP EFA Review, under OEB file number [EB-2023-0135](#)). The changes help to ensure that the program continues to provide an appropriate level of assistance to vulnerable consumers in a timely and effective manner. The changes were announced by [letter](#) dated February 12, 2024 and came into effect March 1, 2024.

The OEB has determined the following participants in the consultation process to be eligible for cost awards (eligible participants):

- Consumers Council of Canada (CCC)
- Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN)

The OEB is now giving notice to the eligible participants that they may submit cost claims in respect of:

- a) The preparation and participation in a virtual meeting held on August 16, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (up to 8 hours).
- b) The review and submission of written comments on the OEB Staff Report on the LEAP EFA Review (Report) issued on November 21, 2023 (up to 5 hours).

## **Background**

By [letter](#) dated July 19, 2023, the OEB gave notice that it would be initiating the LEAP EFA Review. The letter set out the scope of the review and described OEB staff's engagement of the Financial Assistance Working Group (FAWG), which is made up of distributors, community agencies and consumer representatives. The letter indicated that cost awards for up to 8 hours would be available to eligible participants under section 30 of the *Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998* (OEB Act) in respect of the prescribed eligible activities described in paragraph a) above. The letter also stated that costs awarded would be recovered from rate-regulated licensed electricity distributors and rate-regulated natural gas distributors.

On November 21, 2023, the OEB issued the Report and a [letter](#) inviting comment on the Report. The Report outlined OEB staff's recommendations for enhancements to LEAP EFA. In response, the OEB received nine letters of comment from various stakeholders including distributors, a representative for low-income consumers, and a social agency involved in the delivery of the program.

The November 21 letter noted, among other things, that eligibility for costs would be determined in accordance with the [Practice Direction on Cost Awards](#) (Practice Direction) and that cost awards for up to 5 hours per participant would be available to eligible participants in respect of the activity described in paragraph b) above. FAWG members were also reminded that those who had been deemed eligible for cost awards in previous OEB consultations were deemed eligible for the purpose of this consultation (and would not need to reapply).

## **Notice of Hearing**

The OEB is initiating a hearing on its own motion to determine the cost awards to the eligible participants for the eligible activities, as described above.

The decision on costs will be made by an OEB staff member with delegated authority under section 6 of the OEB Act. The hearing will follow the process set out below.

1. Eligible participants that intend to seek a cost award shall submit their cost claims by **September 6, 2024**. The cost claim must be filed with the OEB, and one copy is to be served on each rate-regulated licensed electricity distributors and rate-regulated natural gas distributors. The cost claims must be completed in accordance with section 10 of the OEB's [Practice Direction](#).

2. Rate-regulated licensed electricity distributors and rate-regulated natural gas distributors will have until **September 13, 2024**, to object to any aspect of the costs claimed. The objection must be filed with the OEB, and one copy must be served on the eligible participant against whose claim the objection is being made.
3. An eligible participant whose cost claim was objected to will have until **September 20, 2024**, to file its reply submission, if any, with the OEB, with a copy of the reply submission to be served on the objecting party.
4. The OEB will then issue its decision on cost awards.

The OEB will use the process set out in section 12 of the Practice Direction to implement the payment of the cost awards. The OEB will therefore act as a clearing house for all payments of cost awards in this process.

### How to File Materials

Stakeholders are responsible for ensuring that any documents they file with the OEB **do not include personal information** (as that phrase is defined in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*), unless filed in accordance with rule 9A of the OEB's [Rules of Practice and Procedure](#).

Please quote file number **EB-2023-0135** for all materials filed and submit them in searchable/unrestricted PDF format with a digital signature through the [OEB's online filing portal](#).

- Filings should clearly state the sender's name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address.
- Please use the document naming conventions and document submission standards outlined in the [Regulatory Electronic Submission System \(RESS\) Document Guidelines](#) found at the [File documents online page](#) on the OEB's website.
- Stakeholders are encouraged to use RESS. Those who have not yet [set up an account](#), or require assistance using the online filing portal can contact [registrar@oeb.ca](mailto:registrar@oeb.ca) for assistance.
- Cost claims are now filed through the OEB's online filing portal. Please visit the [File documents online page](#) of the OEB's website for more information. All participants shall download a copy of their submitted cost claim and serve it on all required parties as per the [Practice Direction on Cost Awards](#).

All communications should be directed to the attention of the Registrar at the address below and be received by end of business, 4:45 p.m., on the required date.

With respect to distribution lists for all electronic correspondence and materials related to this proceeding, parties must include Daniel Kim, at [Daniel.Kim@oeb.ca](mailto:Daniel.Kim@oeb.ca) and OEB Legal Counsel, Richard Lanni, at [Richard.Lanni@oeb.ca](mailto:Richard.Lanni@oeb.ca).

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**ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD**

Brian Hewson  
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