

Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) – FAQs

What is LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance?

LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance is a year-round grant program developed by the Ontario Energy Board to assist low-income Toronto Hydro customers who are experiencing difficulty paying their electricity bills. The program, which is funded through the distribution rates of Toronto Hydro, is based on the “Winter Warmth” program and is intended to supplement existing government assistance initiatives, such as the Emergency Energy Fund.

LEAP is available to low-income residents who have recently received a ‘past due’ Toronto Hydro bill and/or recently received a disconnection notice from Toronto Hydro. LEAP is not intended to provide long-term financial assistance. Applicants must be able to maintain their electricity costs after the grant has been received.

Who offers LEAP Emergency Financial Assistance?

All electricity and natural gas utilities regulated by the Ontario Energy Board are required to make funds available for their eligible low-income customers for LEAP. For example, funds provided by Toronto Hydro must only be used for Toronto Hydro customers, or customers of unit sub-metering providers operating in the service area of the City.

APPLYING FOR LEAP

How do I apply?

The first step is to contact the social service agency serving the area in which you reside. The social service agency is responsible for assessing whether you are eligible for LEAP.

Please contact your nearest local access centre:

Albion-North Etobicoke 21 Panorama Court Toronto, ON 416.740.3704	Albion-South Etobicoke 185 Fifth Street Toronto, ON 416.252.5990	COSTI North York Housing Help 1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 114 Toronto, ON 416.244.0480
East York Housing Help Centre 71 Gough Avenue Toronto, ON 416.698.9306	Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services 10 Gateway Boulevard, Suite 104 Toronto, ON 416.424.2900	Neighbourhood Information Post 269 Gerrard Street East Toronto, ON 416.924.8083
Scarborough Housing Help Centre 2500 Lawrence Avenue East, Suite 205 Toronto, ON 416.285.8070	Unison Health & Community Services 1651 Keele Street Toronto, ON 416.653.5400	WoodGreen Community Services 650 Queen Street East Toronto, ON 416.645.6000

In order to determine whether you are eligible, the social service agency will ask you questions such as:

- Are you a customer of Toronto Hydro or unit sub-metering provider?"
- Do you reside at the address with arrears?
- What is your yearly/monthly gross (pre-tax) household income?
- What are your sources of household income? and,
- How many people are in your household?

If the agency determines you may be eligible for assistance, the agency may require you to come to their office for an interview to confirm and verify personal information. Agencies must obtain your consent to release personal information required for the application. Initially, consent may be verbal, but written consent must be obtained when you come to the agency for an in-person interview. You will be asked to sign the Consent to Disclosure of Personal Information form. *No information can be shared with your service provider or agencies without your signed consent.*

If you have issues related to mobility, transportation issues, or geographic distance between your residence and the agency office, telephone interviews are permitted at the discretion of the agency. In these cases, the agency will call to discuss the situation and review documentation. You will still need to provide all required documentation and signatures, which may delay your application.

What documentation will I need to provide?

As part of the application process you will be required to provide the following documentation:

1. Current electricity bills for your residence
2. A Disconnection Notice from Toronto Hydro, if you have received one
3. Identification – two pieces of identification for the main applicant, and one piece of identification for each of the other household members
4. A copy of a rental receipt, lease or mortgage documents
5. Proof of household income - cheque stub, employment letter, and/or income tax return for all adult occupants within the household, and;
6. A copy of your most recent monthly bank statement

Am I eligible?

Whether you are eligible for LEAP will be determined by a social service agency (not Toronto Hydro) following a review and assessment of the required documentation.

To be eligible for a LEAP grant, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be an existing customer of Toronto Hydro or a sub-metering provider
- Reside at the address for which there are arrears; and
- Have a pre-tax household income at or below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-Off + 15%

In addition to the criteria above, social agencies will also consider the following:

- Whether receiving financial assistance will allow you to maintain or reconnect energy service.
- Whether you have demonstrated a prior attempt to pay the bill. The social agency may contact Toronto Hydro to get information about your payment history if necessary. Agencies are expected to consider future sustainability of an applicant's connection in addition to past payment performance.
- Whether you are in threat of disconnection or have been disconnected. Agencies are expected focus on providing *emergency* assistance, but need to balance this with early intervention.
- Whether you have already received assistance. Funding should be accessed only once per year, up to the financial cap.

How much can I apply for?

The maximum grant level is \$500 per household per year. At the discretion of the agency, you may be eligible for a grant of up to \$600 if you live in an electrically heated home.

If you owe *less* than the maximum, the grant cannot exceed the amount owed. If you owe *more* than the maximum, a maximum grant of \$500 (or \$600 for an electrically heated home) may be provided, as long as you will be able to sustain your electricity service following the grant.

Options if you owe more than the maximum to sustain their electricity service include:

- Entering into a payment arrangement with Toronto Hydro for the balance owing, and/or
- Supplementary assistance through other funds for the balance. The social agency may be able to assist you in accessing these other funds.

If these options are not available you may be denied assistance on the basis that you can't sustain your electricity service. You should be referred to other programs for assistance. Grants should not include amounts owed for equipment rental (e.g. water heater) or equipment financing charges.

What happens after I complete the application process?

Once your application has been completed and signed, and the information verified (including Toronto Hydro verification), the agency will decide whether you are approved to receive a grant.

How am I notified if I am approved/denied?

If your application is approved, Toronto Hydro will be contacted and asked to stop any further disconnection or collection action on your account. Grants are issued on behalf of applicants directly to Toronto Hydro.

Similarly, if your application is denied, Toronto Hydro will be contacted and informed of the decision.

If my application is denied, can I appeal?

Social agencies are required to have an appeals process for applicants who are not satisfied with the decision on their application for LEAP. If your application is denied, the agency will inform you about the appeals process and how to access it.