

Supplementary Report: Overview of the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP)

Date: December 4, 2017

To: City Council

From: General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to Executive Committee's request on November 28, 2017 to report directly to City Council on the supports offered to low income residents by the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP). The report provides an overview of the program which is offered through the Ontario Energy Board, how it can be accessed by low-income residents and how the City is helping Toronto residents take advantage of OESP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are financial impacts associated with this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of November 28, 2017, Executive Committee considered item EX29.41 "Status of Suite Metering in Rental Buildings in Toronto." The report was previously considered by the Tenant Issues Committee on October 13, 2017. It provides comments on the history and current legislative framework for suite metering in residential properties, the impact on rental affordability in Toronto, and information on

programs that can provide emergency energy assistance. Executive Committee requested the General Manager, SSHA report directly to City Council on the supports offered through the OESP.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX29.41>

At its meeting of March 28 and 29, 2017, Toronto City Council adopted item LS17.1 "Toronto's New By-law for Apartment Buildings" which included recommendation 44 requesting the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A report to a future meeting of the Tenant Issues Committee on the status of sub-metering in rental buildings in Toronto.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.LS17.1>

COMMENTS

Overview of the Ontario Electricity Support Program

The Ontario Electricity Support Program is intended to provide support to low-income households through ongoing monthly bill payment assistance. Eligibility for the program is based on the number of people living in the household and the household's total annual after-tax income. Additionally, applicants must have an account with an electricity distributor or suite-metering provider as the OESP provides a credit directly on the electricity bill. In other words, the program is not available to low-income tenants whose electricity costs are bundled within their monthly rent.

The total monthly on-bill credit is also determined by household size and the combined after-tax income. Eligible clients receive credits for two years and then need to re-apply. The credits range from \$45 a month to up to \$75 a month as per the table below:

Table 1: OESP Monthly Credit Amounts by Household Income Level (Effective May 1, 2017)

Household income after tax	Household size (number of people living in household)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
\$28,000 or less	\$45	\$45	\$51	\$57	\$63	\$75	\$75
\$28,001 - \$39,000		\$40	\$45	\$51	\$57	\$63	\$75
\$39,001- \$48,000			\$35	\$40	\$45	\$51	\$57
\$48,001 - \$52,000					\$35	\$40	\$45

Households may qualify for a higher level of OESP assistance, with credit amounts of \$52 to \$113, if their use of electricity is intensive due to reliance on electric heating or electricity-intensive medical devices, or if they are an Indigenous households.

As of May 1, 2017, program changes were implemented to the OESP, increasing monthly credits by 50% and increasing income eligibility thresholds for some household sizes. These changes are reflected in the table above.

Program Access

Households who believe they may be eligible can either apply for OESP online through the OESP website at www.ontarioelectricitysupport.ca or a paper version of the application can be downloaded and mailed into the OESP contact centre. Toronto Hydro refers customers to OESP through its website. The OESP program works with a number of community agencies province-wide to help households complete and submit their applications. In Toronto, several of these intake agencies operate Housing Help Centres, where households can be connected to a range of other supports to increase their housing stability.

How the City is Facilitating Access to the OESP

At Executive Committee, a deputation by the Sub-metering Council of Ontario, a newly formed group of sub-metering companies, signalled that many eligible tenant households were not taking advantage of the OESP.

Previously, SSHA had shared information on the program with its network of over 240 social housing providers. SSHA will recirculate information on OESP to social housing providers and make the information available to Housing Help Centres as well as housing stabilization and eviction prevention programs before the end of 2017.

Additionally, as part of the provincial efforts to connect eligible new Ontario Works (OW) recipient households to OESP, Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) participated in a pilot to facilitate referrals to OESP. The pilot consisted of referring new social assistance recipients at two TESS local offices to the Provincial OESP team through a portal which involves completing some basic referral information, obtaining client consent and submitting the household's electricity bill. Based on feedback from the pilot, this referral process for new OW applicants was refined with an ongoing process launched for all TESS offices in November 2017.

SSHA will also engage with the Sub-metering Council of Ontario as it develops a broader consultation strategy on suite metering as recommended by Tenant Issues Committee and Executive Committee to City Council.

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SIGNATURE

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