

Energy assistance funds for low-income consumers

Emergency Energy Fund

The Ministry of Community and Social Services allocates monies from the provincial Emergency Energy Fund (EEF) to municipalities to help to low-income Ontarians (including social assistance recipients), facing energy-related emergencies. The fund is used to pay for utility arrears, security deposits and reconnection costs for electricity, natural gas, oil and other forms of energy. Municipalities deliver this program directly or through a contracted third-party service provider. Each municipality sets its own eligibility criteria, and can be contacted for more information.

Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB)

CSUMB is for people who qualify for social assistance and are about to lose their housing because they owe rent or utility payments. To prevent a utility or heat disconnection, CSUMB may be issued to a recipient who has received a notice to disconnect due to utility or energy arrears. In addition, CSUMB may be issued to pay for utility or energy reconnection costs where the utility or energy was disconnected due to arrears. To apply, OW or ODSP recipients should speak to their case worker. In addition, **discretionary benefits** may be available to assist OW/ODSP recipients with the cost of utility arrears, deposits and reconnection fees.

The Winter Warmth Fund

Eligible low-income households that have energy bills that are currently in arrears or about to go into arrears can receive assistance from the Winter Warmth Fund. Funding is provided by participating utilities (Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc., Union Gas Ltd., and local distribution companies such as Hydro Ottawa, Enersource Hydro Mississauga, PowerStream and Toronto Hydro). The United Way administers the program through a network of community-based agencies across the province. Funds are credited directly to the electricity or gas account. To determine eligibility for assistance, customers should contact their nearest community agency participating in the program. In Toronto, call Neighbourhood Information Post at 416-924-2543. For information on program availability outside of Toronto, contact one of the participating regional agencies - for a list, visit www.enbridge.com/winterwarmth or call 416-495-5662).

The Heat and Warmth Program (THAW)

The THAW program provides low-income families who reside in the City of London with emergency financial relief for utility arrears. Households must be pending disconnection or currently disconnected, from their utility service and are eligible once every 2 years for assistance. The program begins each year on January 2nd and operates until funds are exhausted. THAW is administered by Housing Support Services at The Salvation Army Centre of Hope. Applications are completed at satellite sites throughout the City of London and at The Salvation Army Centre of Hope. Applicants can call 519-661-0343 ext. 300 for more information.

Fund for Utility Service Emergencies (FUSE) - Peterborough Utilities Services

Peterborough Utilities Services has a program called FUSE which is funded by them as well as by donations provided by local households through direct contributions added to their monthly PUS bill. This fund directly assists people in retaining electricity, water and sewage services and assists in avoiding evictions. Low-income PUS customers may apply for FUSE if they are at risk of losing their utilities or need help to restore service. FUSE funds can be used for PUS utility arrears and security deposits. Assistance may be available to individuals or families a maximum of once per year except in extraordinary circumstances. Maximum levels of assistance may vary according to availability of funds. FUSE is administered by the Housing Resource Centre, a program of the Community Counselling and Resource Centre. Call 705-743-9122 for more information.

Heat Bank - Waterloo Region

The Heat Bank is a local heating assistance program administered by Social Services of the Region of Waterloo, with funding provided by Cambridge North Dumfries Hydro Inc., Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro Inc. and Waterloo North Hydro Inc. The Heat Bank can provide residents one time per year emergency assistance with heating bills when they have exhausted assistance through Regional Social Services. The Heat Bank application line can be accessed through Regional Social Services at 519-883-2100 and selecting option # 2. Further information on heating assistance programs can be obtained by calling Lutherwood's Rent Bank and Eviction Program at 519-743-2460.

Keep the Heat - Windsor & Essex County

Keep the Heat provides energy assistance to eligible low-income households experiencing financial difficulties and/or in receipt of a notice of termination of utilities. The public and affected families are also educated about energy conservation and provided with tools such as window insulation kits. Contact the Unemployed Help Centre at 519-944-4900, or Housing Information Services at 519-254-4824 to find the location closest to you - or visit www.uhc.ca

Shelter Fund - Toronto

This fund is available to OW or ODSP recipients in Toronto who have one or more dependent children under the age of 18. This benefit, up to a maximum of \$1500, may be received in addition to CSUMB to assist with last month's rent deposit, fuel and electricity security deposits (i.e. establishing new account for services), rental, utility, or fuel arrears. To apply, OW or ODSP recipients should speak to their case worker.

Hamilton Utilities Arrears Program

The City of Hamilton has established a fund to help low-income households, OW and ODSP recipients pay for utility arrears, disconnection and security deposits. Families with children are eligible for up to \$1,500 in assistance per year. Singles and couples without children can receive up to \$799 in assistance per year. To apply, OW and ODSP recipients should contact their case worker directly. Individuals or families not receiving social assistance may contact Special Supports at 905-546-2590. For more information visit www.hamilton.ca/support.

Housing Emergency Loan Program (HELP) - Hamilton

Operates its own loan program as well as the Provincial Rent Bank. Interest-free loans are available for people in a number of situations, including people who are behind in their rent or utilities. Contact 905-527-7479.

Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board - Prevention of Homelessness and Advocacy

The RRDSAB Prevention of Homelessness and Advocacy will provide advocacy and support in maintaining necessary heat and utilities to ensure that persons can remain in their homes. This program is funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services under the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Plan. Access to Homelessness Funding for utilities and heat is "once in a lifetime" funding. Qualifying applicants residing in the Rainy River District are given support to ensure that all other resources have been exhausted prior to applying for Homelessness funding. Households must be pending disconnection or currently disconnected and all funds are paid directly to the electricity or gas account. The program is funded annually and operates until funds are exhausted. Applicants can call 807-274-5349 for more information.

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★ Note: This summary is not an exhaustive list. It represents LIEN's best efforts to identify available programs to assist low-income consumers and will be updated regularly.