



Indigenous Community Energy Symposium Post-Event Report

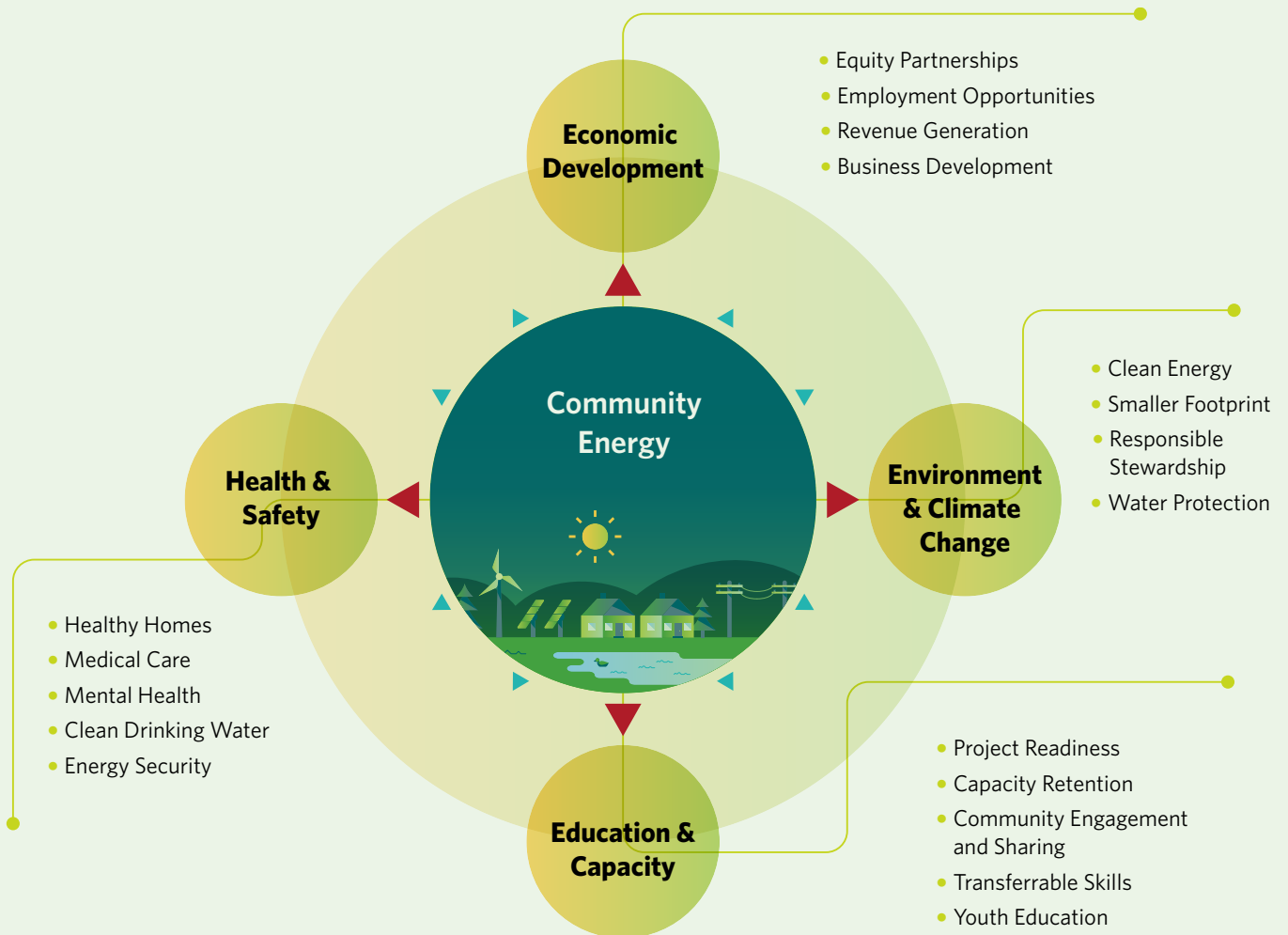
February 2018

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Energy: Powering Change in Indigenous Communities

Energy is one of the cornerstones on which prosperous, sustainable communities are built. We have had many conversations with communities that reinforce the strong linkages between energy and social, economic, environmental and health outcomes. This graphic is a visual representation of what we heard and is intended to depict some of the ways in which energy supports community development and wellbeing. We will refine this graphic further as we continue to support communities in achieving their energy goals.



Message from the Organizing Committee

On behalf of the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and the Ontario Ministry of Energy, thank you to all who attended our Indigenous Community Energy Symposium. This milestone event was designed to spark a province-wide dialogue on ways that energy can be used to support and empower Indigenous communities on their path to continue to become stronger, more sustainable and innovative.

Energy plans are important tools for communities. They establish baseline energy use data; outline the necessary steps to identify and implement community-identified energy priorities; present options for energy generation, storage and conservation; and most importantly, the program is intended to provide an opportunity to engage and involve community members in important decisions about their energy future.

One of the key drivers of the Symposium was to create an opportunity for learning – not just for attendees but for the IESO and the Ministry of Energy as well. Over the two-day Symposium, more than 300 attendees shared ideas, experiences and expertise related to community energy planning. Many travelled to Toronto from distant communities to develop new relationships, share their knowledge, celebrate each other's successes and identify the necessary steps to implement a comprehensive energy plan in their respective communities.

We heard stories from communities around the province, each with unique circumstances and perspectives. We heard speakers at the Symposium describe how they had overcome obstacles standing in the way of community development. Our hope is that everyone left with new tools, new insights, new connections and a new sense of optimism, which can help bring energy plans to life and put Indigenous communities on the path to a sustainable, prosperous energy future.

The Symposium served another important purpose. In addition to creating a venue for attendees to share ideas and information, the Symposium also enabled the Ministry of Energy and the IESO to gather first-hand feedback on the reach and effectiveness of existing energy support and conservation programs for Indigenous communities. People shared their opinions about the programs with great candour, providing us with valuable input for aligning the programs more effectively with local needs. These recommendations, along with feedback heard at various other forums, will support the evolution of new programs as part of the IESO's Implementation Plan, which builds on the province's [Long-Term Energy Plan](#).

Did You Know...

- **92%** of survey respondents found the Symposium to be beneficial or very beneficial
- **34 out of 36** survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the Symposium

It was truly gratifying to see the Symposium come to fruition. Hearing the animated conversations taking place among attendees made all the hard work worthwhile. On behalf of the Organizing Committee, we hope you left the event feeling as energized as we did. Discussions held over the two days of the Symposium are shaping the plans we make and the work we do. Our programs will reflect the feedback we received, and the lessons we learned will be embedded in our practices and principles.

As we continue on with our work, informed by our learnings from the Symposium, we welcome your feedback and look forward to working with you. The Ministry of Energy and the IESO are both committed to continuing the energy conversation and helping to ensure Ontario's Indigenous communities are well positioned to achieve their energy-related objectives and reach their full potential.

Chi-miigwetch.

Overview of the Event



Responding to the momentum and interest about energy matters in Ontario's Indigenous communities, the Ministry of Energy and the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) co-hosted the Indigenous Community Energy Symposium in October 2017.

This two-day conference brought together Ontario First Nation communities, First Nation youth representatives, industry stakeholders and leading community energy experts to facilitate discussions, share learnings, encourage collaboration and promote community-based energy planning across the province.

More than 300 attendees travelled to Toronto from First Nation communities across the province to participate in both formal and informal discussions about energy. In addition to learning tools and techniques for effective community energy planning, they were encouraged to share their ideas and experiences related to the IESO's conservation and energy support programs with a view to identifying opportunities to better align future programs with community needs, objectives and priorities.

To encourage information sharing through different formats, the Symposium featured a combination of keynote addresses, panel discussions, facilitated workshops and 11 small group break-out sessions. This commitment to variety also supported the different learning needs and preferences of Symposium attendees, who included all age groups, including Elders and youth. Elders

opened and closed the Symposium and speakers included senior representatives from the Ministry of Energy and the IESO as well as representatives from First Nation organizations and community members, who provided first-hand descriptions of their experience with community energy planning.

Formal presentations were only one aspect of the Symposium. Informal information exchanges – over meals, during breaks and at small-group workshops – brought people together in a deeper, more personal way. One of the objectives for the event was to create an environment in which attendees could celebrate community achievements. They came together in a spirit of collaboration and support to learn about each other's projects, especially those projects involving renewable energy, microgrids, net metering and conservation. They identified ways to overcome existing barriers and challenges, both geographic and financial. They shared workable solutions that reflected local circumstances and conditions. And they paid tribute to communities that are successfully harnessing the transformative power of energy.



WHAT WE HEARD:

"I left feeling much more informed."

Both of the host organizations encouraged attendees to make suggestions on how and when it is best to engage with Indigenous communities, recognizing that for these relationships to work, community preferences and priorities must be considered. Together, the Ministry of Energy and the IESO recognize the importance of working with Indigenous communities to both enable their communities to be energy-sufficient and secure, but also to continue to be a vital part of the energy sector province wide. This important work must never happen in isolation. Both organizations confirmed they would continue to seek ideas and input from Indigenous communities on decisions and recommendations. This will be an ongoing dialogue. Representatives from the Ministry of Energy and the IESO reminded attendees to share their ideas and opinions on how to advance Indigenous interests and implement viable, appropriate and cost-effective solutions.

Several recurring themes and recommendations came up over the course of the two days:

Improve communications to increase awareness of existing programs and funding opportunities

Attendees felt strongly that the Ministry of Energy, the IESO and other ministries and agencies could coordinate their activities better, implement more targeted approaches and communicate more effectively with Indigenous communities, especially about available funding and programs. They also advocated for the creation of an accessible platform for communities to share information with each other about energy planning, conservation programs, funding opportunities and energy projects.

Improve the energy support program application process and program design

Among other objectives, the organizers saw the Symposium as an opportunity to gather feedback on the Energy Support Programs offered by the IESO as part of an ongoing effort to evolve and better align programs with communities' needs and priorities. During two breakout sessions, participants provided feedback and insight on the performance of the programs and offered valuable suggestions on how to improve them. Participants encouraged the IESO to simplify program design and application processes. They suggested other improvements such as providing basic training on community energy planning, short, plain language documents, checklists and/or workshops to guide applicants through the energy planning process and templates and sample plans as an example. Attendees also identified a number of ways to improve peer-to-peer information sharing so that communities could learn from each other.

Revamp the funding process

In addition to providing feedback on program design and implementation, attendees made other recommendations related to the funding process. They specifically called for more flexible timelines for funding intake periods to ensure funding is available for community projects when it's needed. Attendees also suggested that application intake schedules consider cultural priorities – including hunting and fishing seasons –

and accommodate local needs and challenges. They also recommended that access to funding and application processes reflect the realities of project management in northern and remote parts of the province, where weather can be a complicating factor, shipping costs are significantly higher, energy projects tend to roll out over a longer term and long breaks may occur between project stages.

Improve the overall energy programs and services

Much of the feedback to improve programs and services focused on the need for better coordination and collaboration between the federal and provincial governments on energy matters. One recommendation that came up repeatedly was for a single platform to be created, with information on all applicable programs, eligibility criteria, requirements, deadlines, etc. Attendees also encouraged the creation of specialized energy conservation programs and options for schools, water treatment plants, homes and large, community-owned buildings (e.g., band offices, community centres, nursing stations, etc.), especially in remote, rural or small communities.

Improve community engagement and outreach for energy planning and conservation

Attendees encouraged the Ministry of Energy and the IESO to continue engaging in meaningful dialogue with communities, including Chiefs and Councils, youth, Elders, residential and business electricity consumers, economic development officers, among others, about energy planning and conservation. This ongoing, meaningful engagement will result in projects that are more likely to deliver optimal value to the community and, where possible, to the province. Participants told the Symposium organizers that to enhance program awareness, understanding and uptake, outreach and engagement should be tailored to specific groups where feasible, and include a range of communications methods (for example, printed material, social media, door-to-door visits, information sessions and interactive options like plays, exhibits, mobile displays and other activities.)

WHAT WE HEARD:

“Loved the plenaries. Keep this going! Best conference I have been to in a while with youth, leadership, experts, and technicians. Loved the Women’s Plenary.”

WHAT WE HEARD:

“I really enjoyed seeing a youth-focused breakout session.”

Increase youth participation in energy planning

Informed, engaged youth can be highly effective advocates for change. To boost awareness and understanding among this demographic, and to expand the energy dialogue beyond adult participants, the Ministry of Energy and the IESO made a concerted effort to include a youth dimension to the Symposium programming. This decision was very well received, with several dozen young people attending the event. The youth representatives shared their unique views and perspectives on energy resilience, sustainability and social responsibility. Some speakers and attendees suggested that communities would benefit from support to empower their youth to become energy and conservation leaders, as well as active participants in the energy planning process.

Develop community capacity and pre-qualify consultants

Most Indigenous communities are keen to develop skills and capabilities from within their own communities, so that the knowledge acquired over the life of an energy project can continue to be leveraged and additional economic development opportunities can be realized. These skills may relate to general business concepts, financing options, project management, negotiation, strategic planning and more. At this time, however, the reality is that communities often need to hire external service providers and consultants because the





WHAT WE HEARD:

“Very helpful to cover all travel costs, otherwise it wouldn’t have been feasible for so many communities to be represented. Thank you.”

WHAT WE HEARD:

“Excellent opportunity for networking. Great ideas on how to develop and improve community energy plans.”

internal capacity is not yet sufficiently developed. The feedback delivered at the Symposium suggested that communities are looking to the Ministry of Energy and the IESO to work with First Nation organizations to pre-screen consultants and/or provide lists of trusted, recommended vendors. This step could help ensure communities have access to qualified, reliable service providers with whom to create tailored, community-driven energy plans and to work towards broad community energy goals. Communities are also looking for increased flexibility with respect to how funding can be spent. For example, they would prefer to hire the most suitable consultant regardless of location – even if the associated travel costs are substantially higher than hiring a local consultant.



More than 300 attendees travelled to Toronto from First Nation communities across the province to participate in discussions about energy.

Communities indicated the Ministry of Energy and the IESO have a role to play in building partnerships between Indigenous communities and the electricity industry. This could enable training, mentorships and local opportunities for community members and employees to work on community energy plans. The Ministry of Energy and the IESO were also encouraged to



develop a formal information-sharing network through which communities could work collaboratively on community energy plans, leverage energy data, celebrate success stories, discuss effective community engagement methods and share problem-solving techniques.

Respect and support Indigenous rights, ownership, traditional knowledge and teachings in energy decisions and program design

Ownership of resources came up in several discussions at the Symposium. Communities want to support local energy projects – especially when they involve renewable resources. Communities also expressed an interest in having greater decision-making powers and accountability for results, and increased access to the benefits and rewards of equity stakes in planned development projects. Energy projects are commonly viewed as an important contributor to economic development and self-sufficiency in First Nation communities. Attendees reinforced the importance of considering the social impacts of a project early on to ensure they are consistent with community values. They also advocated that traditional knowledge and values, including the seven generations principle, be integrated into the energy planning process.

Attendees also supported the idea of energy independence. At the community level, independence could potentially be achieved through microgrids and related technologies. At the individual level, rooftop solar panels and integrated energy storage solutions could support increased energy independence.

WHAT WE HEARD:

“An annual conference would be great!”

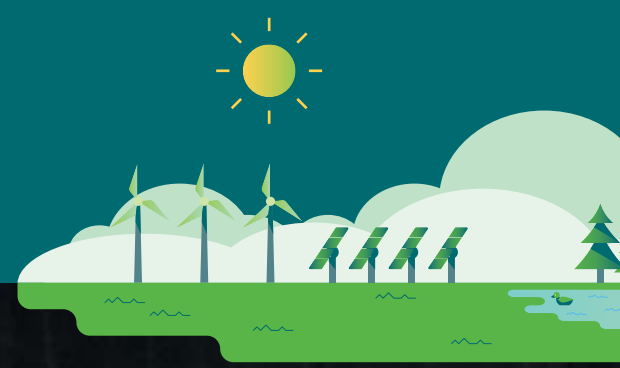
Create and foster an energy-conscious culture

Energy conservation can deliver short- and long-term benefits to Indigenous communities. When communities embrace energy efficiency – in all its incarnations – conservation has the potential to become as routine as recycling. Attendees suggested that developing and promoting a culture of conservation can take place at home, at school and in the workplace. As more community members start to see the relationship between conservation, cost savings and environmental protection, it becomes easier to secure community buy-in, build momentum and achieve results.

Consider linkages with housing and energy affordability issues

The urgent need to improve housing conditions in many First Nation communities has been well documented. The intersection with energy, however, has received less scrutiny. Attendees urged the Ministry of Energy and the IESO to work with other government and non-governmental organizations to streamline and coordinate funding processes related to both housing and energy, including conservation and energy efficiency, where possible. In that way, housing deficits could be corrected and living conditions bettered – both of which could deliver significant improvements in environmental, financial, social and health outcomes.

Case Study



The Symposium was in part driven by the idea of knowledge sharing among community members, industry speakers and subject matter experts at the Ministry of Energy and the IESO. One of the most in-depth sessions at the Symposium was a panel discussion featuring representatives from Conservation on the Coast (COTC) and the local distribution companies owned by Fort Albany, Attawapiskat and Kashechewan First Nations.

With the support of the IESO and the First Nation-owned transmission company, Five Nations Energy Inc., the three small local utilities delivered two programs - Home Assistance Energy Retrofits and Small Business Lighting Retrofits - with a view to creating a sustainable and energy-efficient future for generations to come. COTC speakers candidly described some of the challenges associated with conservation efforts in remote northern communities, including the condition of local homes and buildings, lack of local skills and capacity, cost and timing requirements to ship tools and materials and the lack of awareness of energy conservation opportunities.

To counter this lack of awareness, COTC placed a strong emphasis on marketing and education related to energy efficiency. To help community members understand the need and value of energy conservation, and to increase local participation levels, COTC used a number of communications methods, including

COTC Facebook pages for each community; posters, postcards, bill inserts and other printed material; calendars with energy-efficiency tips, artwork and photos; information sessions; radio ads; and a COTC website.

Community coordinators served as COTC's local champions. They answered questions and promoted the programs to residents and business owners. When certain skills were found to be in short supply locally, COTC considered unconventional approaches for program delivery - such as partnering with the Mennonite Central Committee, which provided volunteer electricians to do lighting retrofits.

By the end of 2017, COTC crews had retrofitted approximately 30 homes per community (90 in total). They anticipate conducting energy retrofits on at least 60 more homes by 2020. Conservation results to date have been impressive. On average the energy retrofits are lowering energy bills by 25 percent, with some homes experiencing a 40-percent reduction in energy costs. While it seems counter-intuitive, there were a few situations where energy consumption actually rose once the retrofits were complete. In some cases, community members with newly retrofitted houses had extended family move in so they could share in the increased home comfort, resulting in more energy being used for heat, lighting, cooking and laundry.

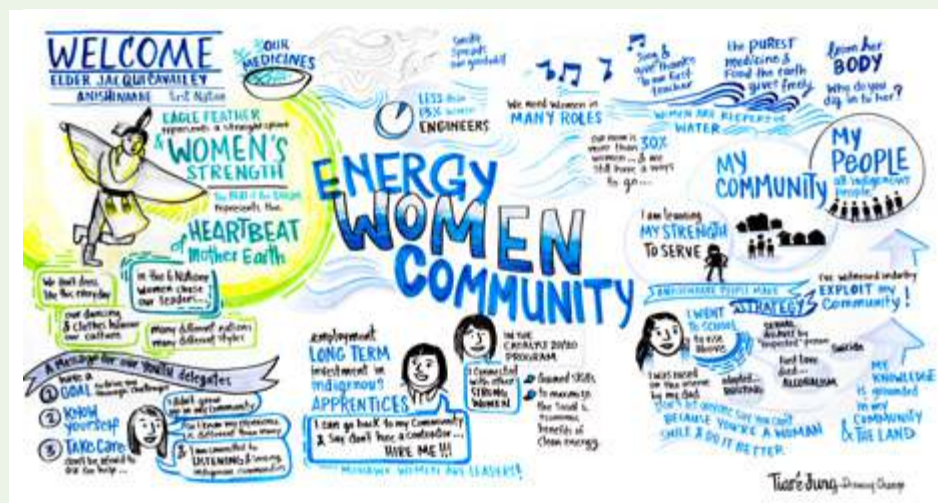
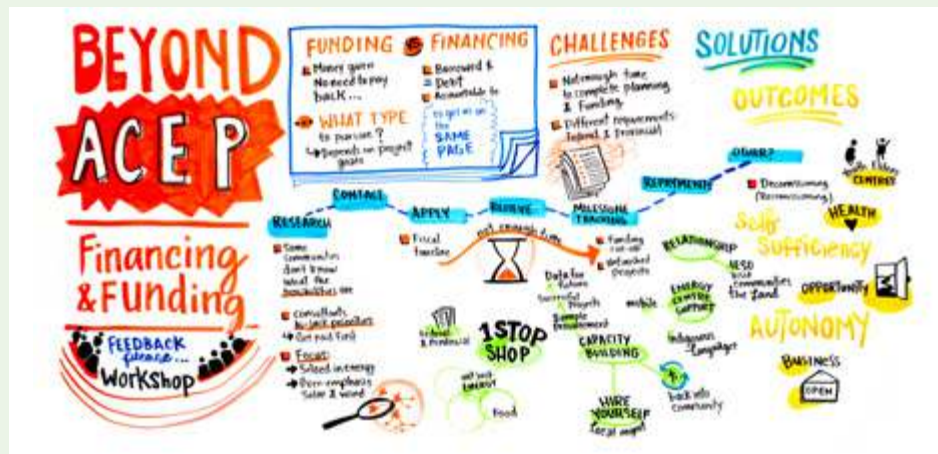
COTC website: conservationonthecoast.com

COTC/IESO video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki90leBnrFw>

Graphic Recordings



Tiaré Jung of Drawing Change was contracted to create graphic recordings of some of the key sessions at the Symposium. In real time, she created compelling illustrations that reflect the ideas and opinions she heard expressed by attendees, speakers and Elders. These visuals were immensely popular as they captured complex discussions in an engaging, accessible, memorable way.



Commitment Plan



The many insights, observations and suggestions we received over the course of the Symposium and the IESO's Regional Forums held in October and November 2017 will be invaluable to our work going forward. We are pleased to make the following commitments to Indigenous communities, which will complement the commitments made in the Ministry of Energy's Long-Term Energy Plan:

- Demonstrate collaborative leadership by working with funders and policy-makers in the public and non-profit sector to develop a more coordinated approach.
- Communicate and engage more often, more effectively and in more culturally respectful ways.
- Include a range of community voices - with a particular emphasis on youth - in the ongoing evolution of our programs.
- Design more flexible, responsive and community-appropriate programs.
- Develop plain language program guidelines, communications and reports.
- Design a more user-friendly application process.
- Support ease of access to program information.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation protocols to ensure program effectiveness and inform ongoing improvement.
- Strive to better understand, acknowledge and incorporate into our work the unique cultural contexts of communities.

Resources



Community Energy Resources and Funding

Indigenous Community Energy Symposium webpage
ieso.ca/en/get-involved/funding-programs/indigenous-community-energy-symposium/2017-symposium-details

IESO Funding Programs
ieso.ca/get-involved/funding-programs

IESO Regional Planning
ieso.ca/get-involved/regional-planning

Ministry of Energy Programs
energy.gov.on.ca/en/

Green Ontario Fund
greenon.ca

Aboriginal Loan Guarantee Program
ofina.on.ca/algp/

Natural Resources Canada
nrcan.gc.ca/energy/funding/4943

Conservation Programs

Save on Energy: Home Assistance Program
saveonenergy.ca/Consumer/Programs/Home-Assistance-Program.aspx

First Nations Conservation Program
hydroone.com/saving-money-and-energy/residential/first-nations-conservation-program

Conservation on the Coast
fivenations.ca/index.php/conservation/conservation-3

Union Gas Home Weatherization Program
uniongas.com/residential/save-money-energy/rebates-promotions/weatherization

Enbridge Home Winterproofing Program
energy-savings-programs.ca/winterproofing-program/

Ontario Home Energy Conservation Incentive Program
ohecip.ca/en/

Save on Energy Small Business Lighting Program
saveonenergy.ca/Business/Program-Overviews/Small-Business-Lighting.aspx

Bill Assistance Programs

Ontario Energy Board, Ontario Electricity Support Program
ontarioelectricitysupport.ca/

Ontario Energy Board, Low-Income Assistance Program
oeb.ca/rates-and-your-bill/help-low-income-consumers/ontario-electricity-support-program

Northern Ontario Energy Credit
fin.gov.on.ca/en/credit/noec/index.html

The IESO and the Ministry of Energy welcome your feedback and your questions.

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