

# Safer at Home Programs Provide Relief to Ontario Families

## Province Expands Support for Learners Program and Lowers Hydro Bills

December 22, 2020

[Office of the Premier](#)

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Toronto — The Ontario government is providing new financial supports for individuals, families and small businesses, as they do their part to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the province's health care system during the Provincewide Shutdown. The province is expanding the Support for Learners program to include secondary school students and lowering electricity prices to a discounted off-peak rate 24/7 for all time-of-use and tiered customers.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, and Bill Walker, Associate Minister of Energy.

"We are asking people to make greater sacrifices to help contain this deadly virus, whether that's staying home or asking their employees to work from home where possible," said Premier Ford. "In response, our government is providing people and businesses with additional financial relief to help them get through this very difficult period."

In January 2021, students aged 13 through Grade 12 will be eligible for funding under an expanded Support for Learners program. Parents or guardians will receive a one-time payment of \$200 per eligible student to help offset education expenses. Support will be available for those who attend a public or private school or who are homeschooled.

As part of the Provincewide Shutdown, elementary students will be studying virtually until January 11, 2021. Secondary students in Northern Ontario will be studying virtually until January 11, 2021 and secondary students in Southern Ontario will be studying virtually until January 25, 2021. This additional funding will provide support for families impacted by these [recent restrictions](#). While transmission in schools remains low, these approaches will help further limit community spread of COVID-19.

"While Ontario schools remain safe, we won't take any chances following the holidays — we will pivot to teacher-led online learning to help protect against the spread of COVID-19 in our communities," said Minister Lecce. "We are providing direct financial support to parents of elementary and now high school children to help them get through this pandemic."

Application instructions will be available on the [Support for Learners web page](#) starting in January 2021. Secondary school student applications will be open from January 11, 2021 to February 8, 2021. The application deadline for Support for Learners for children or youth aged 0 to 12 and for children or youth aged 0 to 21 with special needs is being extended to February 8, 2021.

This support is part of over \$900 million in direct financial support that the Ministry of Education has provided to parents since the start of the pandemic.

To support people as they stay home during the Provincewide Shutdown, the government will hold electricity prices to the off-peak rate of 8.5 cents per kilowatt-hour for all time-of-use and tiered customers on a temporary basis starting January 1, 2021. This low rate will be available 24 hours per day, seven days a week for a 28-day period. The off-peak price will automatically be applied to bills of all residential, small business, and farm customers who pay regulated rates.

"As we enter a Provincewide Shutdown, our government is ensuring that all households have stable and predictable electricity bills when they need it most," said Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, Minister of Indigenous Affairs. "Staying home means using more electricity, especially during the day when electricity prices are usually higher. We will continue to support hardworking families and small businesses doing their part by staying home."

The province is also making it easier for families and businesses to get the support they need to help pay their energy bills through the [COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program \(CEAP\)](#). Any residential, small business, or registered charity customer with an overdue electricity or natural gas bill will now be eligible to apply. A residential customer can receive up to \$750 to help

cover their electricity bill and an additional \$750 for their natural gas bill. Small businesses can receive up to \$1500 for each. Newly eligible customers can apply for these enhanced benefits through their local utility, starting in January 2021.

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## Quick Facts

- Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover provides a total of \$13.5 billion in direct support for families, workers and employers, in addition to \$11.3 billion in cash flow support.
  - As part of the commitment to keep students safe, the government made available \$1.3 billion to support the safe reopening of schools - the most robust and comprehensive plan in the entire country. This includes an additional \$381 million from the federal government's Safe Return to Class Fund.
  - To date, the new Support for Learners program has received almost 1.3 million applications and provided more than \$175 million in funding to support over 850,000 children and students since November 30, 2020.
  - According to data reported by school boards as of Friday, December 18: approximately 99.64 per cent of students in Ontario have not reported a case of COVID-19; approximately 92 per cent of schools across the province have had either no cases or one case reported within the last 14 days; and approximately 80 per cent of schools do not have a reported case of COVID-19.
  - In March, the government suspended time-of-use electricity rates, holding electricity prices to the off-peak rate of 10.1 cents-per-kilowatt-hour 24/7 for time-of-use residential, small business, and farm customers for a period of 45 days.
  - From June 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020, the government introduced a new fixed COVID-19 Recovery Rate of 12.8 cents per kilowatt hour to provide relief to time-of-use customers.
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## Additional Resources

- [Apply for Support for Learners or get more information](#)
  - [Learn about 2020 Ontario Budget/Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover](#)
  - [Visit Ontario's website to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19](#)
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## Related Topics

### Education and Training

Learn about Ontario's early years, education and training systems. Includes information on child care, elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities, skills training and financial aid. [Learn more](#)

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