



# Income Security Programs

## 2023-2024 Annual Report

December 2024

# Programmes de la sécurité du revenu

## Rapport annuel 2023-2024

Décembre 2024

*Le présent document contient la traduction française du sommaire.*

Government of  
Northwest Territories

K'ákshó got'jne xáda k'é hederi ḡedjhtl'é yeriniwé ni dé dúle.  
Dene Kádá

ɻerihɻt's Dëne Sųliné yati t'a huts'elkér xa beyáyati theɻq ɻat'e, nuwe ts'ën yólti.  
Dëne Sųliné

Edi gondı dehgáh got'je zhatié K'éé edat'eh enahddhé nide naxets'é edahłi.  
Dene Zhatié

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit yinohthan ji', diits'at ginohkhii.  
Dinjii Zhu' Ginjik

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.  
Inuvialuktun

**Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.**  
**Inuinnaqtun**

kīspin ki nitawihtin ē nīhiyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.  
nēhiyawēwin

Tł̄chö yati k'èè. Dı wegodi newo dè, gots'o gonede.  
Tł̄chö

Indigenous Languages  
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## Executive Summary

The 2023-2024 Income Security Programs Annual Report is intended to provide transparency and accountability on program operations and client services. It also highlights the progress made during the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Highlights from the 2023-2024 fiscal year include:

- The Senior Home Heating Subsidy became a monthly subsidy which is provided from September through April each year. This ensures seniors receive regular payments throughout the coldest months of the year and when fuel consumption is highest.
- Introducing a one-time payment to Senior Home Heating Subsidy for the 2023-2024 fiscal year to support seniors to receive up to 80% of the estimated fuel costs associated with heating a home.
- Completed a review of the Income Assistance program to ensure its benefits and delivery support the social and economic aspirations of Northwest Territories residents and to develop a new Income Assistance program tailored towards seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Enhanced the Student Financial Assistance program to ensure benefits and program delivery support students to achieve their post-secondary goals and to remove barriers to post-secondary participation for Indigenous students.
- Changed Client Services Officer to Client Navigator.

In 2023-2024, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment provided the following:

- Nearly \$32.6 million in Income Assistance benefits to 3,171 recipients.
- Over \$21 million in Student Financial Assistance loans and grants to 1,279 recipients.
- Over \$2.7 million in Senior Home Heating Subsidy benefits to 577 recipients.
- Over \$3.2 million in Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefits to 1,373 recipients.
- Over \$2 million in NWT Child Benefits to 1,841 recipients.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment continues to work to provide high caliber programs and services to help Northerners to become as self-reliant as individual capacity allows, to participate fully in community life and to share in the opportunities available to them.

## Sommaire

Le rapport annuel 2023-2024 sur les Programmes de la sécurité du revenu vise à s'assurer que les activités des programmes et les services aux clients sont transparents et responsables. Il fait également état des progrès réalisés au cours de l'exercice financier 2023-2024.

Voici les faits les plus marquants de 2023-2024 :

- La Subvention au chauffage résidentiel pour les personnes âgées est maintenant versée mensuellement de septembre à avril de chaque année. Ainsi, les personnes âgées reçoivent des paiements réguliers pendant les mois les plus froids de l'année, lorsque la consommation de combustible est la plus élevée.
- Pendant l'exercice 2023-2024, on a versé un paiement unique aux bénéficiaires de la Subvention au chauffage résidentiel pour les personnes âgées afin de les aider à payer jusqu'à 80 % des coûts estimés de combustible associés au chauffage de leur logement.
- On a réalisé un examen du Programme d'aide au revenu, pour s'assurer que ses prestations et sa mise en œuvre répondent aux aspirations sociales et économiques des Ténois, et pour élaborer un nouveau Programme d'Aide au revenu adapté aux personnes âgées et aux personnes handicapées.
- On a amélioré le Programme d'aide financière aux étudiants pour s'assurer que ses prestations et sa mise en œuvre aident les étudiants à atteindre leurs objectifs d'études postsecondaires et éliminent les obstacles auxquels se heurtent les étudiants autochtones qui souhaitent poursuivre des études postsecondaires.
- Les « agents des services à la clientèle » sont devenus des « agents-pivots pour la clientèle ».

En 2023-2024, le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation a accordé :

- Près de 32,6 millions de dollars en aide au revenu à 3 171 bénéficiaires;
- Plus de 21 millions de dollars en aide financière aux étudiants (prêts et bourses) à 1 279 bénéficiaires;
- Près de 2,7 millions de dollars en Subvention au chauffage résidentiel pour les personnes âgées à 577 bénéficiaires;
- Plus de 3,2 millions de dollars en prestations de retraite supplémentaires pour les personnes âgées à 1 373 bénéficiaires;
- Plus de 2 millions de dollars en prestations pour enfants à 1 841 bénéficiaires.

Le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation poursuit ses efforts pour fournir des programmes et des services de grande qualité et aider les Ténois, dans la mesure de leurs capacités, à atteindre un degré d'autonomie maximal, à contribuer pleinement à la vie communautaire et à profiter des occasions qui s'offrent à eux.

# Introduction

## Purpose

Income Security Programs include the following programs:

- Income Assistance
- Senior Home Heating Subsidy
- Student Financial Assistance
- NWT Child Benefit
- NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit

This annual report outlines each Income Security Program and provides an overview including statistics on caseloads and expenditures over the previous five fiscal years.

Significant program accomplishments are highlighted, and future initiatives are outlined. Other pertinent program information discussed includes audit and compliance and appeals.

The organizational structure of the Income Security Programs Division is provided and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different units. Staffing statistics are included, and information is given on workplace safety and training initiatives.

## Vision and Guiding Principles

### Vision

Income Security Programs, in combination with developmental opportunities, help Northerners to become self-reliant as individual capacity allows, to participate fully in community life, and to share in the opportunities available to them.

### Guiding Principles

- Encourage self-reliance.
- Treat individuals with respect and dignity.
- Have clear policies and procedures.
- Target benefits to those most in need.

## Service Standards

While delivering quality service in the Northwest Territories is the primary focus, it is also important to maintain residents' confidence and trust in the integrity of the administration and delivery of Income Security programming. Service standards ensure that each person receives the right service(s) and benefit(s) at the right time and for the intended purpose. The service standards are displayed in each Education, Culture and Employment Regional Service Centre.

Service standards for Income Security Programs were developed in 2019 and are regularly reviewed.

## Income Assistance Service Standards

Income Assistance guarantees we will:

- Provide courteous, quality service and answer all your questions.
- Treat you with dignity and respect.
- Protect your personal information and correct your personal information if there has been an error or omission.
- Only use your personal information for the purpose of determining program eligibility.
- Welcome a friend, family member, or advocate to come to meetings with you.

We will achieve this by:

- Providing a response (verbal or written) to your application within two business days of verifying all of your required documents.
  - If approved, we will issue payment within the same timeframe. This does not include time for the bank to process the payment.
- Returning your telephone and e-mail messages within two business days.
- Assisting you with filing an appeal if you do not agree with a decision; and
- Conducting periodic customer satisfaction surveys to ensure optimum service.

## Student Financial Assistance Service Standards

Student Financial Assistance guarantees we will:

- Provide courteous, quality service and answer all your questions.
- Ensure you are provided with information on all available programs and services.
- Treat you with dignity and respect.
- Protect your personal information and correct your personal information if there has been an error or omission.
- Only use your personal information for the purpose of determining program eligibility.

We will achieve this by:

- Seeing you within 10 minutes of an appointment.
- Returning telephone and email messages two business days.
- Providing a written response to your application for benefits within 25 business days of receipt.
- Processing your application within 10 business days after we receive your last required document, but not before the first day of classes.
- Depositing your monthly living allowance by or on the first day of every month, even if it is a weekend or holiday.
- Providing a detailed statement of your loan account, outstanding principal of the loan, the interest rate, the advances and principal payments upon request.
- Performing audits on files to ensure the information provided is correct and current.
- Conducting periodic customer satisfaction surveys to ensure optimum service.

The service standards are displayed in each Education, Culture and Employment Regional Service Centre.

If a client feels that the service standards weren't met, they are encouraged to complete a Client Concern Form.

## Income Security Programs

### Income Assistance

#### Program Overview

The Income Assistance program provides financial assistance to help northerners pay for basic needs, such as shelter, utilities, and food. The program may also provide funds for other needs, such as clothing, childcare and education. Furthermore, additional allowances are provided to seniors and persons with disabilities. The amount of money an individual receives depends on their income, community and family size.

The Income Assistance program further supports clients in returning to the labor force by providing benefits for education and training costs, childcare expenses, and record suspension application fees. Clients can also receive assistance with security deposits needed to occupy a rental unit.

Table 1 summarizes the total number of distinct cases and total expenditures for Income Assistance over the past five fiscal years. Each distinct case includes a single individual or a family (parent(s) and child(ren)).

**Table 1: Income Assistance Statistics**

Fiscal Year	Total Number of Distinct Cases	Expenditures
2019-2020	3,748	\$34,574,370
2020-2021	3,198	\$32,038,449
2021-2022	2,774	\$27,337,589
2022-2023	3,255	\$31,644,695
2023-2024	3,171	\$32,562,939

#### Program Highlights

In March 2024, Income Assistance recipients received a one-time additional benefit to assist residents with the higher food costs. The one-time benefit ranged from \$343 to \$717 depending on the community the recipient lives in.

In April 2024, the following types of income were exempted income from the calculation for Income Assistance in a step towards advancing reconciliation:

- Monies received from Self-Government Agreements, Treaty Agreements, Land Claim Agreements, and Impact Benefit Agreements;
- Monies received as compensation from a Residential School Settlement, an Indian Day School Settlement, or a Sixties Scoop Settlement;
- Monies received on behalf of an applicant's dependants through Jordan's Principle and the Inuit Child First Initiative
- Monies received through Agricultural Benefits for Indigenous Governments; and
- Other monies received from Indigenous Governments, as determined by the Director of Income Security Programs.

### **Income Assistance Review**

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment completed a review of the Income Assistance program to advance the following objectives:

1. Develop a new income assistance program for seniors and persons living with disabilities;
2. Improve the existing IA program to ensure that the types and levels of benefits as well as income exemptions are meeting the basic needs of NWT residents, and to re-profile the program to target those clients who do not qualify as seniors or persons living with disabilities; and
3. Develop a performance measurement plan for new and re-profiled IA programs.

Public engagement on the proposed regulations for the new and revised Income Assistance program took place between June and July 2023. The high-level changes to Income Assistance and the announcement of the new Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Programs were shared publicly in August 2023.

The launch of the Income Assistance program enhancements, considered the final stage of the review, was delayed due to systems development. Recognizing the delay of the enhanced and new program, coupled with the increased cost of food in the Northwest Territories, the Department provided a one-time benefit to eligible Income Assistance recipients in March 2024. The intent of this benefit was to better help residents with the higher costs of food.

The Income Assistance program enhancements are expected to launch in summer 2024.

### **Compliance Audits**

Compliance audits ensure staff are delivering programs consistent with the applicable legislation and policies and to protect the integrity of Income Security Programs.

Audits are completed each year based on the previous year's assessments, legislation and policies. In 2023-2024, Compliance Audits were completed in 11 communities.

## Appeals

Income Assistance clients have the right to appeal decisions made regarding their eligibility and level of benefits. This right provides clients with the opportunity to verify they are receiving the appropriate benefits, and that front-line staff are assessing them in accordance with program legislation.

There are two levels of appeals under the *Social Assistance Act*:

1. The Social Assistance Appeal Committee (the Committee); and
2. The Social Assistance Appeal Board (the Board).

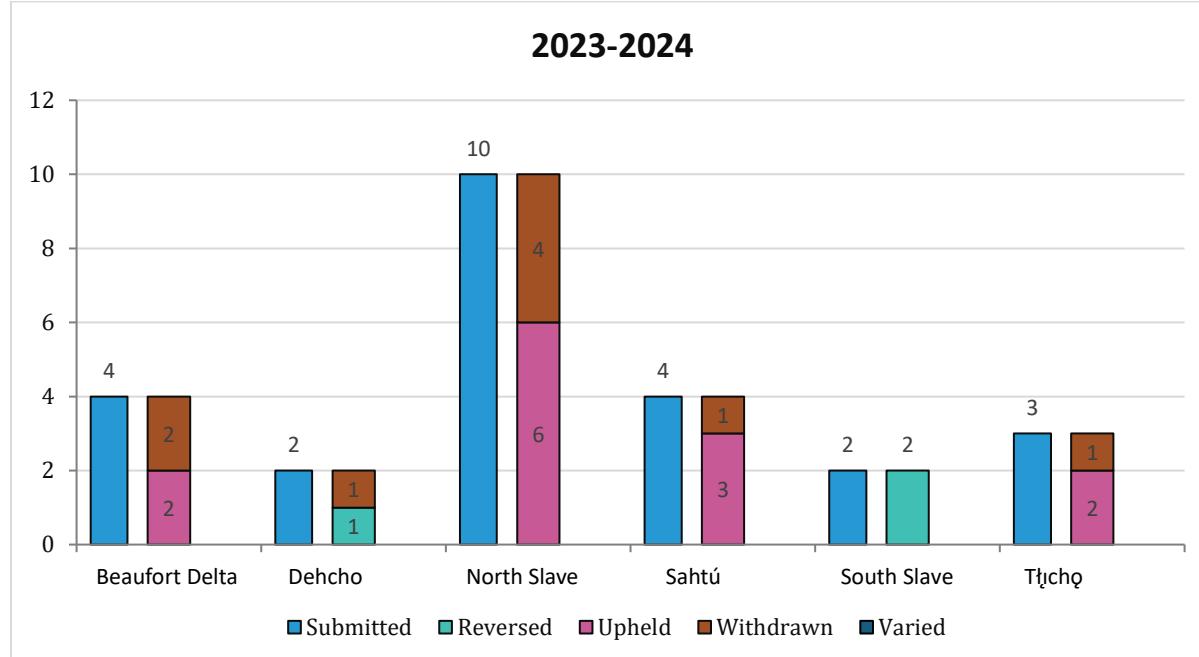
The role of the Committee and the Board members is to ensure the legislation has been properly applied.

There are six regional committees with a total of 19 members that hear Income Assistance appeals for the applicants in their Region. There are five members on the Board. When a decision made by the Committee is appealed, it goes to the Board.

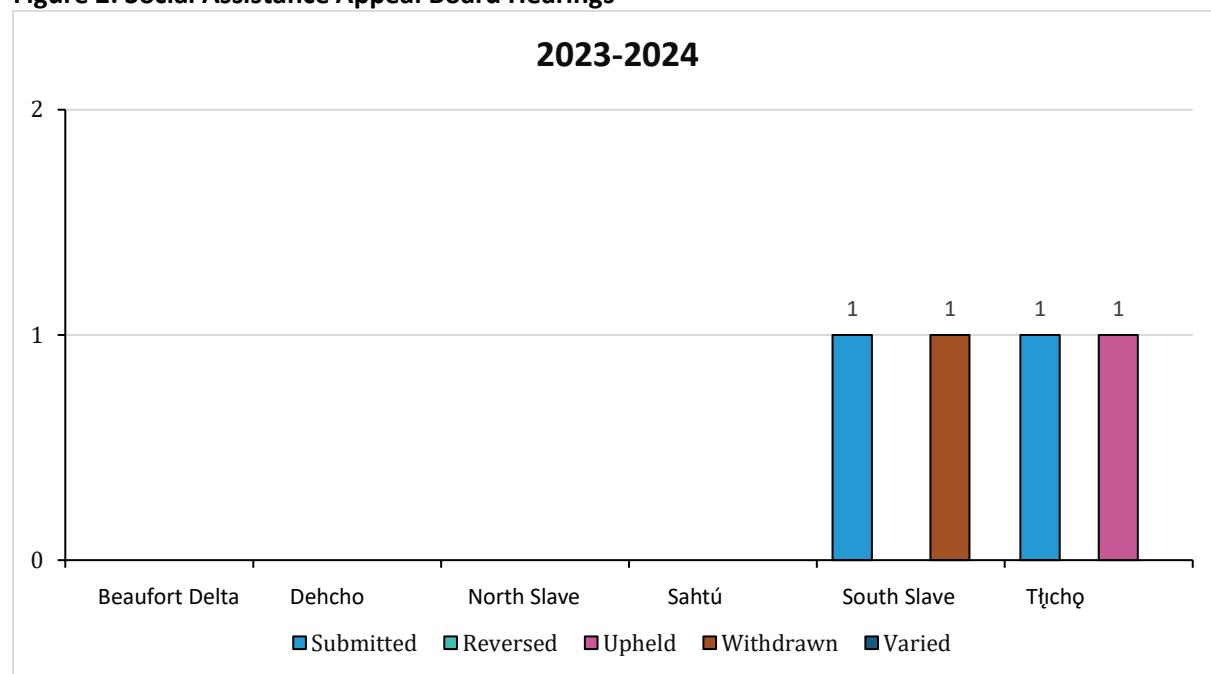
A client has seven days to appeal a decision in writing to the Registrar of Appeals who coordinates the appeal hearing. First level appeal hearings to the Committee must be heard, and a decision rendered within 30 days of the filing of an application to appeal. Second level appeals to the Board have 45 days from the filing to be completed.

Figures 1 and 2 identify the number of appeals heard by the Committee and the Board by Region.

**Figure 1: Social Assistance Appeal Committee Hearings**



**Figure 2: Social Assistance Appeal Board Hearings**



## Student Financial Assistance

### Program Overview

The Student Financial Assistance program assists Northwest Territories residents in pursuing a post-secondary education through a combination of grants and loans. Student Financial Assistance benefits assist with the costs of tuition, books, travel and living expenses. Additional grants are also available to students with permanent disabilities.

The basic principle of the program is that the cost of a post-secondary education is a shared responsibility and is intended to supplement a student's own resources.

Student Financial Assistance provides a variety of grants and loans to Northwest Territories residents attending full-time post-secondary education. The types of benefits that are available are dependent upon the student category. The table below outlines the program benefit types based on student category:

Benefit Type	Northern Indigenous	Northern Schooled	Northern Resident
Basic Grant	✓	✓	x
Supplementary Grant	✓ or ✓	x	x
Remissible Loan	✓	✓	✓
Repayable Loan	✓	✓	✓
Grant for Students with Disabilities	✓	✓	✓

Upon completion of their studies, students are not required to repay the grant funding received from through Student Financial Assistance.

Northern Schooled students are eligible for a semester of the Basic Grant for completing any of grades one through 12 in the Northwest Territories.

Both the Supplementary Grant and the Remissible Loan to help pay for their living expenses, in addition to grants for tuition, book and travel costs. Northern Indigenous students are able to choose whether they want the grant or the loan. Remissible loans were expanded for all NWT residents. Upon completion of post-secondary studies, students can have their Remissible Loan forgiven if they reside in the NWT.

Table 2 summarizes the total number of students who received Student Financial Assistance and total expenditures for the program over the past five fiscal years.

**Table 2: Students receiving Student Financial Assistance**

Fiscal Year	Number of Students	Expenditures
2019-2020	1,295	\$16,149,953

2020-2021	1,176	\$15,072,387
2021-2022	1,341	\$17,357,678
2022-2023	1,233	\$17,184,538
2023-2024	1,279	\$21,094,961

## Loan Repayment

The Student Financial Assistance program offer loan repayment incentives to students who received a Northwest Territories student loan and have completed full-time studies. Loan repayment incentives play an essential role in alleviating student debt and encouraging students to return to the NWT upon completion of their studies. Loan repayment incentives include loan forgiveness on remissible loans, 0% interest, and the Northern Bonus.

## Program Highlights

As part of the 2020-2024 Business Plan, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment committed to reviewing the Student Financial Assistance program to ensure that benefits and program delivery support students to achieve their post-secondary goals, to remove barriers to post-secondary participation for Indigenous students and to ensure benefit levels are in line with the rest of Canada.

Student Financial Assistance program enhancements were launched in July 2024 for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Program changes included:

- Increasing funding for the Basic Grant, specific to tuition and books:
  - up to 80% of the average cost for non-Indigenous residents schooled in the NWT, and
  - up to 100% of the average cost for Northern Indigenous residents.
- Increasing the Supplementary Grant and Remissible Loan, specific to monthly living allowances, so that it is aligned with the Market Basket Measure and that it assists with up to 80% of the average cost.
- Removing semester limits to the Basic Grant and Supplementary Grant for Northern Indigenous Students.
- Removing the semester limit and extending Remissible Loan eligibility to all Northern residents (within the loan limit of \$60,000).
- Removing suspension penalties for withdrawing from or failing a course or program.
- Increasing grants for Students with Permanent Disabilities and expanding supports to students with persistent or prolonged disabilities.
- Removing the Northern Bonus for students with student loans from outside the Northwest Territories.

## Student Financial Assistance Statistics

Table 3 identifies the top 10 institutions that students accessing Student Financial Assistance attend. The table shows that Aurora College is the institution with the most Student Financial Assistance recipients.

**Table 3: Top 10 Institutions**

Institution	Number of Students
Aurora College	251
University of Alberta	104
Mount Royal University	52
University of Victoria	41
University of British Columbia	41
MacEwan University	33
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)	32
Vancouver Island University	31
University of British Columbia Okanagan	29
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)	28

Table 4 identifies the top 10 programs that students accessed in 2023-2024. This table shows that Bachelor of Arts is the program with the most Student Financial Assistance recipients.

**Table 4: Top 10 Programs**

Program	Number of Students
Bachelor of Arts	138
Bachelor of Science	90
Business Administration	79
Nursing	71
Early Childhood Education	50
Education	39
Psychology	34
University and College Access Program	34
Commerce	32

Engineering	26
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Note: 47 Students were enrolled in course reimbursement.

Tables 5 a, b, c, and d outline students who accessed Student Financial Assistance in 2023-2024 by region, gender, ethnicity and age.

**Table 5a: Student Breakdown by Region**

Region	Total Number of Students
Beaufort Delta	162
Dehcho	44
North Slave	887
Sahtu	54
South Slave	179

**Table 5b: Student Breakdown by Gender**

Gender	Total Number of Students
Female	890
Male	430
Non-Binary	3
Not Declared	3

**Table 5c: Student Breakdown by Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Total Number of Students
Dene	345
Inuit	110
NT Metis	81
Non-Indigenous	750
Southern Indigenous	39
Prefer not to Report	1

**Table 5d: Student Breakdown by Age**

Age	Total Number of Students
16-19	169
20-24	587
25-29	206
30-39	228

40-49	82
50-59	40
60 and older	14

## Appeals

All Student Financial Assistance recipients have the right to appeal decisions made regarding their eligibility and level of benefits. This right provides clients with the opportunity to verify they are receiving the appropriate benefits, and that front-line staff are assessing them in accordance with program legislation.

There are two levels of appeal under the *Student Financial Assistance Act*:

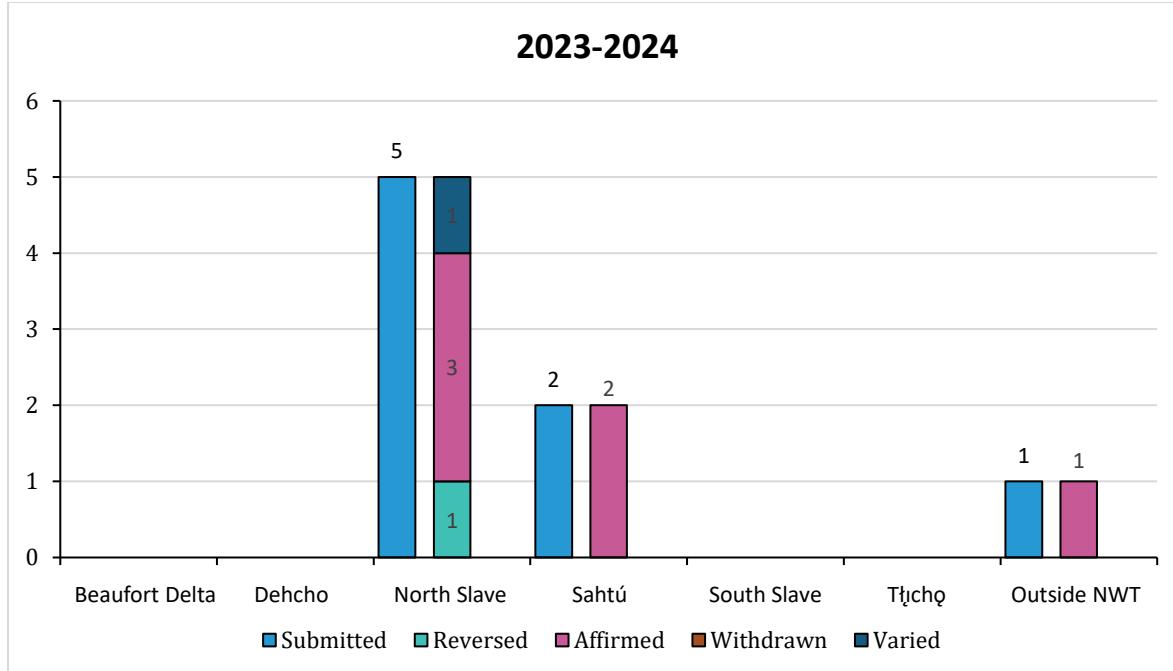
1. Internal Review Committee; and
2. Student Financial Assistance Appeal Board.

The role of the internal review committee and the Student Financial Assistance Appeal Board is to ensure the legislation has been properly applied.

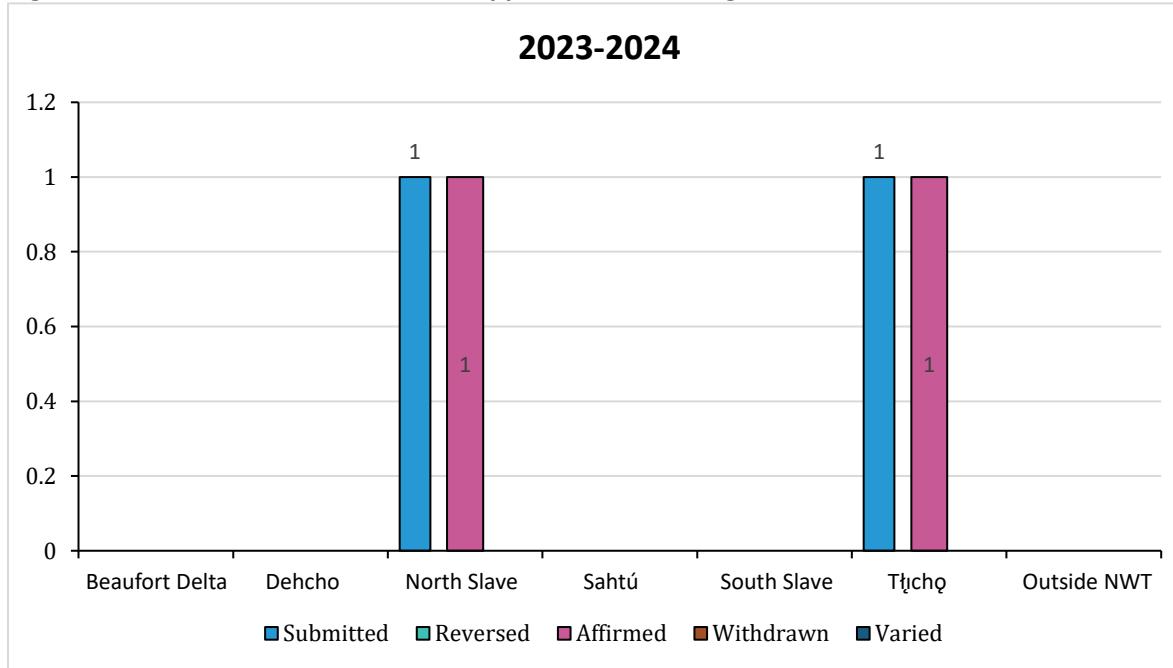
Students have 30 calendar days to appeal a decision in writing to the Student Financial Assistance program office, who coordinates the internal review. First level appeal hearings must be heard, and a decision rendered within 30 days of the filing of an application to appeal. Second level appeals to the Student Financial Assistance Appeal Board have 45 days from the filing to be completed.

Figures 3 and 4 identify the number of appeals heard by the internal review committee and the Student Financial Assistance Board by region.

### **Figure 3: Internal Review Committee Appeal Hearings**



**Figure 4: Student Financial Assistance Appeal Board Hearings**



## Senior Home Heating Subsidy

### Program Overview

The Senior Home Heating Subsidy provides financial assistance to low-to-modest income seniors, 60 years of age or older, to help with the cost of heating their homes.

Eligibility is based on the senior's net household income from the previous calendar year (line 23600 of their Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency).

Table 6 summarizes the total number of distinct cases and total expenditures for the Senior Home Heating Subsidy over the past five fiscal years. Each distinct case includes a single individual or a family (senior and spouse).

**Table 6: Senior Home Heating Subsidy Statistics**

Fiscal Year	Number of Distinct Cases	Expenditures
2019-2020	575	\$1,951,274
2020-2021	637	\$2,192,236
2021-2022	653	\$2,470,655
2022-2023	609	\$2,582,636
2023-2024	577	\$2,741,554

### Program Highlights

The Senior Home Heating Subsidy became a monthly subsidy which is provided from September through April each year. This ensures seniors receive regular payments throughout the coldest months of the year and when fuel consumption is highest. Moving to a monthly subsidy allows seniors to budget their finances and prepare for any additional heating costs not covered by the subsidy.

In September 2023, the Senior Home Heating Subsidy provided an extra \$65 to \$175 per subsidy month for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. This increased funding was in response to the rising cost of living, to ensure seniors received up to 80% of the estimated 2023 fuel cost associated with heating a home.

### 2023-2024 Zones, Subsidy Amount, and Income Thresholds

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3
Income Threshold	\$56,000/year	\$64,000/year	\$73,000/year
Subsidy Amount	\$375/month	\$500/month	\$575/month
Additional Enhancement	\$65/month	\$95/month	\$175/month
<b>Total Subsidy</b>	<b>\$3,520/year</b>	<b>\$4,760/year</b>	<b>\$6,000/year</b>

The Senior Home Heating Subsidy is regularly reviewed to ensure seniors are supported.

## Audit and Compliance

Audit and Compliance standards ensure staff are delivering programs consistent with the applicable legislation and policies and to protect the integrity of Income Security Programs.

Audits are completed each year based on the previous years' assessments, legislation, and policies. In 2023-2024, Compliance Audits were conducted in 11 communities.

## Appeals

All Senior Home Heating Subsidy clients have the right to appeal decisions made regarding their eligibility and level of benefits. This right provides clients with the opportunity to verify they are receiving the appropriate benefits, and that front-line staff are assessing them in accordance with program legislation.

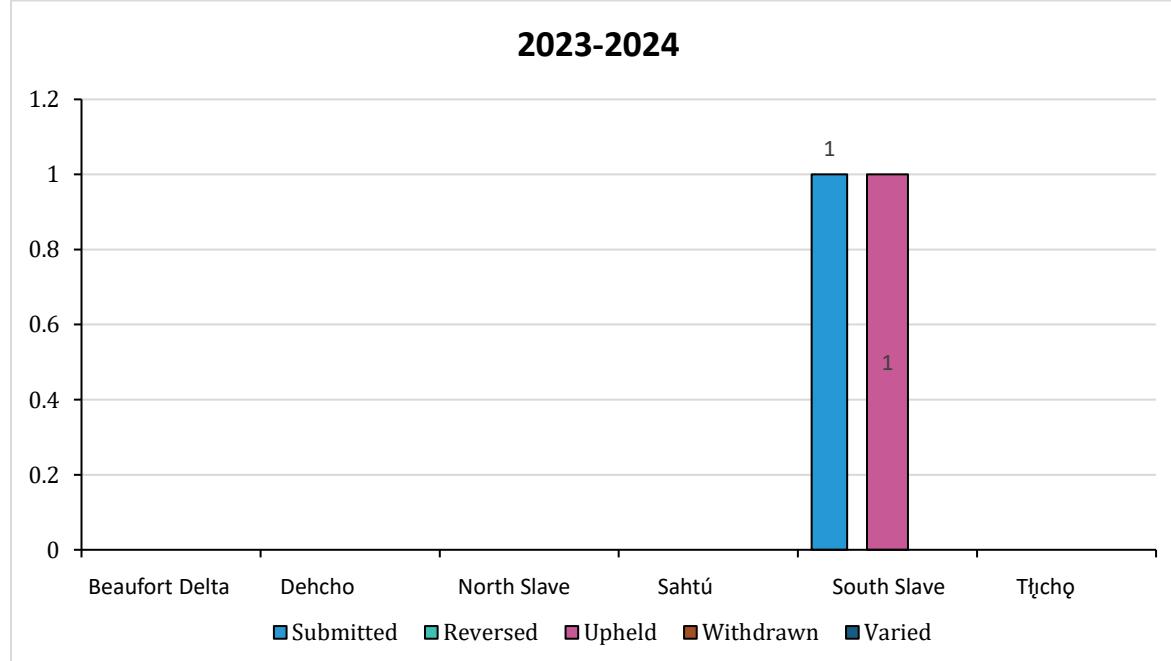
There are two levels of appeal under the Senior Home Heating Subsidy Policy:

1. An internal review; and
2. Social Assistance Appeal Committee.

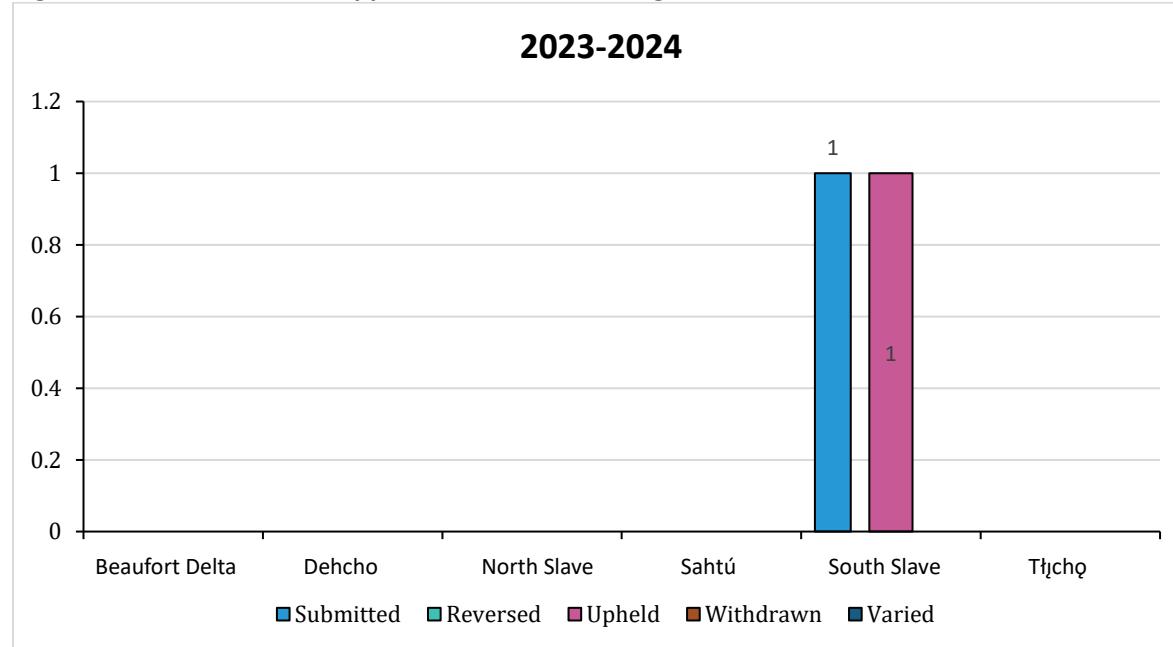
Clients have 30 calendar days to appeal a decision in writing to the Registrar of Appeals who coordinates the internal review. Both levels of appeal are heard within 30 days of receiving the appeal.

Figure 5 and 6 identify the number of appeals heard by the internal review and Social Assistance Appeal Committee.

**Figure 5: Internal Review Appeal Hearings**



**Figure 6: Social Assistance Appeal Committee Hearings**



## Other Income Security Programs

The Income Security Programs Division has additional programs that are administered by the Federal Government. This results in a consistent delivery system and application process for both federal and territorial benefits.

### Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit

The Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit helps offset the high cost of living by providing financial assistance to NWT seniors. A monthly payment of \$196 is paid to low-income seniors who are receiving federal Old Age Security benefits and Guaranteed Income Support or Spousal Allowance.

Table 7 summarizes the number of seniors and total expenditures for the Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit over the past five fiscal years.

**Table 7: Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit Statistics**

Fiscal Year	Number of Distinct Cases Cases	Expenditures
2019-2020	1,181	\$2,787,376
2020-2021	1,309	\$3,084,674
2021-2022	1,330	\$3,074,707
2022-2023	1,328	\$3,138,820
2023-2024	1,373	\$3,223,364

### NWT Child Benefit

The NWT Child Benefit helps low-income families with the costs of raising children. Monthly benefits for eligible families are automatically included in the Canada Child Benefits received from the Federal Government.

Table 8 summarizes the average number of clients and total expenditures for the NWT Child Benefit over the past five fiscal years.

**Table 8: NWT Child Benefit**

Fiscal Year	Number of Distinct Cases	Expenditures
2019-2020	1,181	\$2,437,399
2020-2021	2,102	\$2,414,431
2021-2022	2,200	\$2,256,725
2022-2023	2,200	\$2,172,216
2023-2024	1,841	\$2,026,253

# Income Security Programs Division Overview

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Headquarters

#### Policy and Planning Unit

The Policy and Planning Unit develops policy and conducts research and program analysis to improve Income Security programs. The unit provides strategic support to senior management, facilitates program development and provides guidance to regional program delivery teams.

The Policy and Planning Unit is responsible for the development of all territory-wide communications materials. The unit evaluates and reports on Income Security Programs and participates on multiple teams and committees, including federal/provincial/territorial groups.

#### Divisional Financial Services Unit

The Divisional Financial Services Unit is responsible for managing the finances of the Income Security Program division and providing comprehensive financial planning.

The unit administers the forgiveness and repayment of Student Financial Assistance loans, payments and travel arrangements.

Through the Internal Audit function, the unit provides assurances that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is fiscally responsible and ensures programs are delivered in accordance with current policies, procedures, program guidelines and legislation. In addition, the unit provides verification support services by obtaining confidential information about clients and ensuring the completeness and accuracy of applications.

#### Student Financial Assistance Unit

The Student Financial Assistance unit offers eligible residents a variety of non-repayable grants and student loans to assist with the costs associated with obtaining a post-secondary education.

On average, over 1,200 applications are processed each year with two primary application intakes for programs starting in the fall and winter semesters. Student Case Officers travel across the NWT to provide program information sessions to parents and students. In addition, Student Case Officers liaise with high schools, postsecondary institutions, and Indigenous Governments and organizations.

### Regional Delivery

#### Income Security Programs Regional Employees

Regional Employees are responsible for the delivery of the Income Assistance program and the Senior Home Heating Subsidy. The five regions consist of a Regional Superintendent, Regional Manager and Client Navigators who determine eligibility for both programs. Client Navigators focus on program delivery through a client-centered approach and service management by helping clients achieve self-reliance.

The Regional Service Centres are located in five communities across the Northwest Territories: Yellowknife, Inuvik, Norman Wells, Fort Smith and Fort Simpson.

Communities that do not have a Client Navigator are able to access Income Assistance and Senior Home Heating Subsidy programs through the itinerant Client Navigators who regularly travel into the regions or by telephone, fax or email to a Regional Office.

## Division Structure

Below are the total number of positions within the Income Security Programs Division, which include the following employees:

- Director, Income Security Programs Division
- Administrative Assistant
- Manager, Income Security Programs
- Program Specialist (2)
- Program Trainer
- Manager, Divisional Financial Services
- Finance Officer, Revenue and Collections (3)
- Expenditure Officer
- Program Auditor (2)
- Investigation Specialist (2)
- Manager, Student Financial Assistance
- Student Case Officer (4)
- Student Case Receptionist and Support
- Regional Manager, Income Security Programs (5)
- Client Navigator (29)

## Employee Training

Training is a key component to ensuring Income Security Programs are being delivered consistently and fairly across the NWT. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will continue to provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for employees.

### **Training Highlights**

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, a variety of Income Security Programs training sessions and opportunities took place.

#### **1. Income Security Programs Statutory Training**

Between April 2023 and March 2024, a total of seven staff members received Income Security Programs Statutory Training. This included five Client Navigators, one Regional Manager and one Program Specialist. All individuals successfully completed the training requirements.

Statutory Training sessions occurred in May 2023 and October 2023. Income Security Programs Statutory Training covers the following:

- Income Security Programs overview
  - Overview of GNWT Income Security Programs and history
  - Overview of Income Security Programs specific to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment
  - Code of Ethics for Income Security Programs employees
  - Client Services Officer Resource and Procedures Manual
  - Income Security Program Verification Procedures Manual
- Income Assistance
  - Regulations, Policies and Procedures
  - Forms
  - Activities and scenarios
- Senior Home Heating Subsidy
  - Guidelines
  - Forms
- Case Management Application System training
- How to write out effective Appeal Briefing Notes, Director's Approvals and Case Management Application System notes
- Government of the Northwest Territories Code of Conduct
- Client and Customer service

A final exam is administered on the last day of Statutory Training. Participants must pass the exam with a minimum of 70% in order to be assigned a Social Welfare Officer which enables an individual to deliver the Income Assistance and Senior Home Heating Subsidy programs.

In cases where an individual does not pass the exam, an individual training plan is developed to address specific needs.

## **2. Appeal Committee & Board Training**

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, training was provided to the Student Financial Assistance Appeal Committee members. This took place in May 2024 and was tailored to the specific needs of the Committee members. It included an overview of:

- Membership Information
- Appeal Process and Responsibilities
- Role of Chairperson
- Writing Appeal Decisions
- Interpreting Legislation
- Income Assistance Regulations and Policy

### **Web-based Training and Information Sharing**

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment provides web-based training to staff routinely. This includes training Client Navigators on new procedures and keeping Regional Superintendents and Income Security Programs Regional Managers informed.

Staff also have access to a shared platform that houses all Income Security Programs documents and forms, training materials, a shared calendar, Client Services Officer newsletters, useful links and a discussion board.

### **3. Client Navigator Conference**

A Client Navigator Conference took place on May 15-19, 2023. This conference was attended by 29 Client Navigators, five Regional Managers, five Regional Superintendents and seven Headquarters staff. The focus of this conference was to train all Income Security staff on the new and re-profiled Income Assistance and Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities programs in preparation of launch.

## **Workplace Safety**

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is responsible for ensuring that employees work in a healthy and safe environment. Discussions with clients can be emotional and stressful. Additionally, Client Navigators located in small and remote communities often work in isolation.

In addition to training, several offices are equipped with security measures such as glass partitions, service windows, client interview rooms and alternate exit doors.

The Income Security Programs Division continues to monitor workplace safety to ensure a safe environment for all employees. Safety Guidelines that are specific to the Client Navigators position were developed and distributed in 2018-2019.

## **Conclusion**

The Income Security Programs Division is dedicated to ensuring that residents have timely access to essential services. By enhancing policies, ensuring program compliance, providing training, and conducting evaluations, we aim to create a more transparent and accountable system.

The Income Security Programs Division continually refines policies, procedures, guidelines, and services to ensure the programs are meeting the needs of Northwest Territories residents.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will be launching the re-profiled Income Assistance program along with a new program specifically designed for seniors and individuals with disabilities in July 2024.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment remains strong in delivering the highest quality programs and services to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

## Contact Information

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