



Income Security Programs 2022-2023 Annual Report

December 2024

Programmes de la sécurité du revenu Rapport annuel 2022-2023

Décembre 2024

Le présent document contient la traduction française du sommaire.

K'áhshó got'jne xadā k'é hederi ʔedjht'é yerinuwę ni dé dúle.
Dene Kádá

ʔerihth'ís Dēne Sų́iné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔą ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yóthı.
Dēne Sų́iné

Edı gondı dehgháh got'je zhatié k'éé edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahıfı.
Dene Zhatié

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijáhch'uu zhit yinothtan jı', diits'át ginohkhii.
Dinjii Zhu' Ginjik

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.
Inuvialuktun

Č'đđ ǀǀᵇᵇΔᶜ ḂᶜLᵂAᶜ Δ.ᵇᵇǀᵂᵂᶜᵇᵇᵂᵂᵇ, ᵂᶜᶜᵇᶜᵇᶜ ᵂᶜᵇᵇᶜᶜᵇᵇᵂᵂᶜ.
Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.
Inuinnaqtun

kīspin ki nitawihthın ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsınān.
nēhīyawēwin

Tłjchq yatı k'èè. Dı wegodı newq dè, gots'o gonede.
Tłjchq

Indigenous Languages
request_indigenous_languages@gov.nt.ca

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Sommaire.....	5
Introduction	6
Purpose	6
Vision and Guiding Principles	6
Service Standards.....	6
Income Assistance.....	9
Student Financial Assistance	13
Senior Home Heating Subsidy	18
Other Income Security Programs	21
Income Security Programs Division Overview	22
Roles and Responsibilities	22
Division Structure	23
Employee Training.....	23
Workplace Safety	25
Conclusion.....	26
Contact Information.....	26

Executive Summary

The 2022-2023 Income Security Programs Annual Report is intended to provide the public with information on program operations and client services. It also highlights the progress made during the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Highlights from 2022-2023 include:

- Issuing a one-time additional payment to Senior Home Heating Subsidy recipients for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, ranging from \$400 to \$800 depending on the community the recipient lives in.
- Continuing 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.
- Completing a review of 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.

In 2022-2023, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment provided the following:

- Over \$31 million in Income Assistance benefits to 3,255 recipients.
- Over \$17 million in Student Financial Assistance loans and grants to 1,233 recipients.
- Nearly \$2.6 million in Senior Home Heating Subsidy benefits to 609 recipients.
- Over \$3 million in Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefits to 1,328 recipients.
- Over \$2 million in NWT Child Benefits to 2,200 recipients.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is committed to improving accountability and transparency of program administration and taking a collaborative approach to improving Income Security Programs. Our commitment is 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 2022-2023 sur les Programmes de la sécurité du revenu vise à fournir au public des informations sur les activités des programmes et les services offerts aux clients. Il fait également état des progrès réalisés au cours de l'exercice financier 2022-2023.

Voici les faits les plus marquants de 2022-2023 :

- Pendant l'exercice 2022-2023, on a versé un paiement supplémentaire unique aux bénéficiaires de la Subvention au chauffage résidentiel pour les personnes âgées, dont le montant variait de 400 \$ à 800 \$ selon la collectivité de résidence du bénéficiaire;
- On a continué l'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 Téois, et pour élaborer un nouveau Programme d'aide au revenu adapté aux personnes âgées et aux personnes handicapées;
- On a effectué un examen du 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.

En 2022-2023, le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation a accordé :

- Plus de 31 millions de dollars en aide au revenu à 3 255 bénéficiaires;
- Plus de 17 millions de dollars en aide financière aux étudiants (prêts et bourses) à 1 233 bénéficiaires;
- Près de 2,6 millions de dollars en Subvention au chauffage résidentiel pour les personnes âgées à 609 bénéficiaires;
- Plus de 3 millions de dollars en prestations de retraite supplémentaires pour les personnes âgées à 1 328 bénéficiaires;
- Plus de 2 millions de dollars en prestations pour enfants à 2 200 bénéficiaires.

Le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation s'engage à administrer les Programmes de sécurité du revenu de manière plus responsable et plus transparente et à adopter une approche collaborative pour les améliorer. Notre engagement est de fournir des programmes et des services de grande qualité pour aider les Téois, 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

This annual report includes program progress and updates, as well as review the organizational structure of the Income Security Programs Division. The dedication of a service-oriented team, guiding principles and vision are some of the tools that contributed to the continued support and growth of a self-reliant Northwest Territories.

Income Security Programs consists of the following programs:

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

For each Income Security Program, an overview is provided that includes statistics on caseloads and expenditures over the previous five fiscal years. Significant program developments are highlighted and future initiatives are outlined. Information on audit and compliance and appeals is also included.

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 NWT 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 Level Commitments ensure that each person receives the right service(s) and benefit(s) at the right time and for the intended purpose.

Income Security Programs strives to provide quality customer service to all residents. 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 as well as allowances 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 labour 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 the Income Assistance program 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
2018-2019	3,685	\$31,044,827
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

The statistics show that the number of distinct cases and expenditures decreased in 2021-2022. This may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the COVID-19 benefits available to residents through the Federal Government. The number of distinct cases increased in 2022-2023, which could be a result of the Federal COVID-19 benefits ending.

Income Assistance Review

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment conducted public engagement on the Income Assistance program between February 11, 2022 to March 11, 2022. Following the engagement, the department published a What We Heard Report – Income Assistance Program Review in December 2022.

Stakeholder engagement activities, including virtual focus group discussion sessions, client interviews and an online survey, were carried out with the aim of gathering information to help inform:

1. The development of a new Income Assistance program for seniors and persons with disabilities; and
2. Improvements to the existing Income Assistance program.

A total of 363 people participated, representing:

- Indigenous Governments and Organizations
- Non-Government Organizations
- Vendors (utility providers and landlords)
- GNWT employees
- Current and past Income Assistance clients
- General public

Office of the Ombud Review

In September 2022, the Northwest Territories Ombud provided a final report on an own-motion investigation into the Income Assistance program that began in February 2022. In this investigation, the Ombud looked at how the Department of Education, Culture and Employment receives and responds to Income Assistance client complaints and concerns about service delivery, how it monitors service quality and looks for ways to improve, and how it supports its staff to provide impartial and people-centered service. The Ombud provided 11 recommendations primarily aimed at improving the accessibility, efficiency, accountability and responsiveness of the process for Income Assistance clients to bring concerns to the department's attention, and ensuring Income Assistance staff have the support they need to provide fair service.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment accepted all 11 recommendations and, as a number of the recommendations are connected to the completion of the Income Assistance program review, ECE committed to addressing all recommendations with the launch of the reprofiled programs.

COVID Measures

In response to COVID-19, Canada transitioned eligible clients who were in receipt of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to the Employment Insurance program. Clients that did not meet the eligibility criteria for Employment Insurance, were eligible to apply for the new Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit, Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit and the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit. The department notified all clients that benefits received through these programs would be counted in the calculation of Income Assistance benefits and must be declared when applying.

Through an Information Sharing Agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada, the department received a breakdown of NWT residents who received Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit, Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit and the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit .

Letters were sent to Income Assistance clients identified in the report from Canada, who had not previously declared income, requesting a detailed breakdown of these federal payments received in 2020 and 2021 to ensure they were reported in the Income Assistance assessments.

The Income Assistance program encourages people to make productive choices, allowing them to achieve self-reliance. A productive choice is an activity or program an applicant must take part in to continue receiving Income Assistance. In response to COVID-19, all Income Assistance clients were enrolled in the Productive Choice called “Wellness Self-Care” to ensure residents are taking care of themselves and their families. Clients are not required to report on progress. To date, clients continue to be enrolled in the wellness self-care productive choice.

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 2022-2023, Compliance Audits were conducted in nine 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 Board members is to ensure the legislation has been properly applied.

There are six regional committees with a total of 24 members that hear Income Assistance appeals for the applicants in their Region. There are six members on the Social Assistance Appeal 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

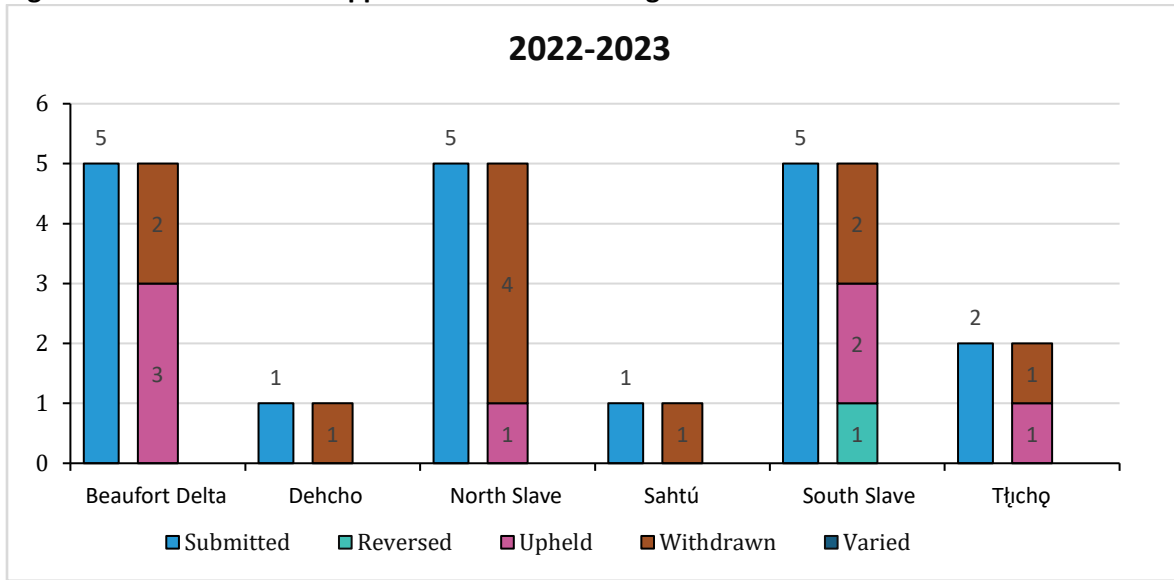
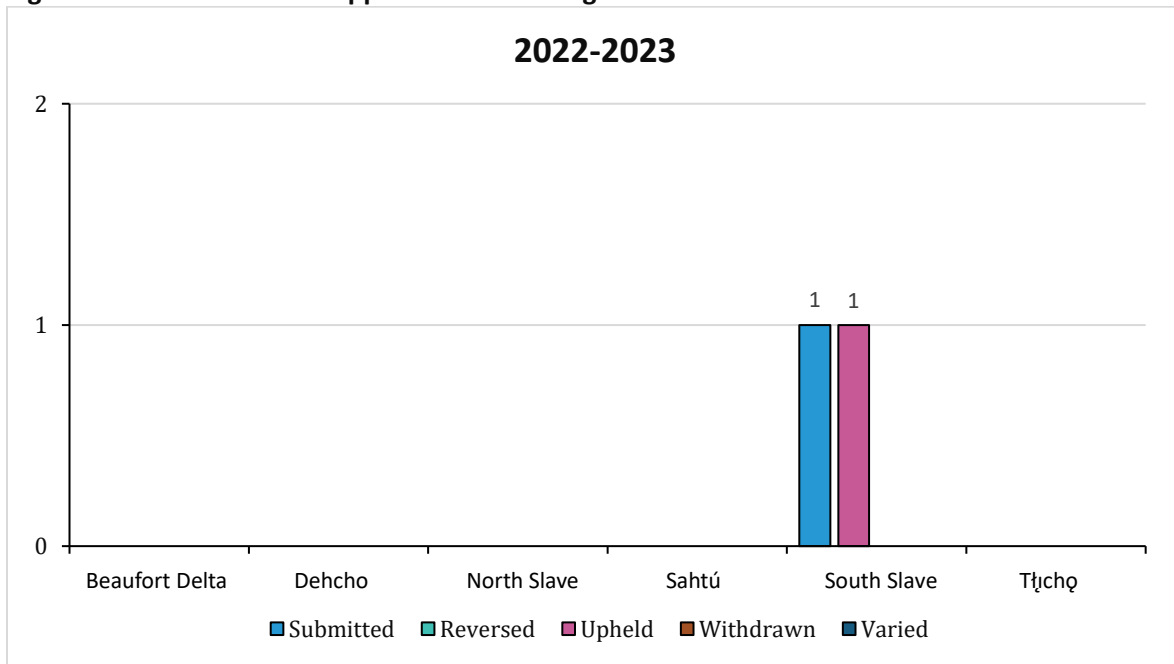


Figure 2: Social Assistance Appeal Board Hearings



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 associated with 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	✓	x	x
Remissible Loan	or ✓	✓	x
Repayable Loan	✓	✓	✓
Grant for Students with Disabilities	✓	✓	✓

Upon completion of their studies, students are not required to repay the grant funding received from 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 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. Upon completion of post-secondary studies, students can have their Remissible Loan forgiven if they reside in the Northwest Territories.

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
2018-2019	1,331	\$16,986,100
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

COVID Measures

Student Financial Assistance introduced two COVID-19 non-repayable grants in 2020 to assist with additional costs of obtaining a post-secondary education during the pandemic. The COVID-19 Technology Grant (\$750 to assist with the cost of technology equipment) and the COVID-19 Support Grant (\$100 per month to assist with the cost of internet fees). These grants continued to be available for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Loan Repayment

The loan repayment incentives component of the SFA program plays 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.

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	306
University of Alberta	69
Mount Royal University	44
University Of Victoria	38
Athabasca University	34
University Of British Columbia Okanagan	31
University Of Lethbridge	29
Vancouver Island University	26

Thompson Rivers University	25
Yukon University	25

Table 4 identifies the top 10 programs students accessed in 2022-2023.

Table 4: Top 10 Programs

Program	Number of Students
Bachelor of Arts	121
Business Administration	78
Bachelor of Science	70
Early Childhood Education	54
Nursing	53
Education	36
University and College Access Program	33
Psychology	32
Personal Support Worker	28
Counselling	26

Note: 136 students were enrolled in course reimbursement.

Tables 5 a, b, c, and d outline students who accessed Student Financial Assistance in 2022-2023 by region, gender, ethnicity and age.

Table 5a: Student Breakdown by Region

Region	Total Number of Students
Beaufort Delta	166
Dehcho	35
North Slave	811
Sahtu	49
South Slave	188

Table 5b: Student Breakdown by Gender

Gender	Total Number of Students
Female	884
Male	360

Non-Binary	2
Not Declared	3

Table 5c: Student Breakdown by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Total Number of Students
Dene	300
Inuit	112
NT Metis	73
Non-Indigenous	731
Southern Indigenous	32
Prefer not to Report	1

Table 5d: Student Breakdown by Age

Age	Total Number of Students
17-19	60
20-24	599
25-29	223
30-39	236
40-49	96
50-59	30
60 and older	5

Student Financial Assistance Review

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 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.

Public engagement on the proposed Student Financial Assistance Regulations is planned for May 2023 with changes from the review anticipated to come into effect for the 2023-2024 academic year.

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 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

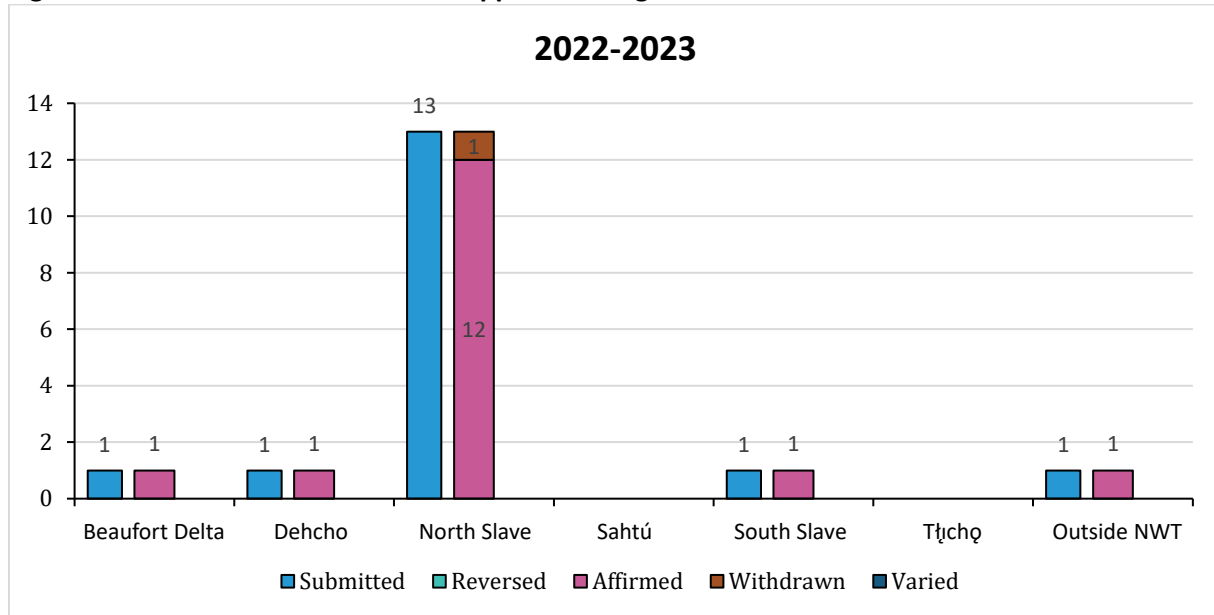
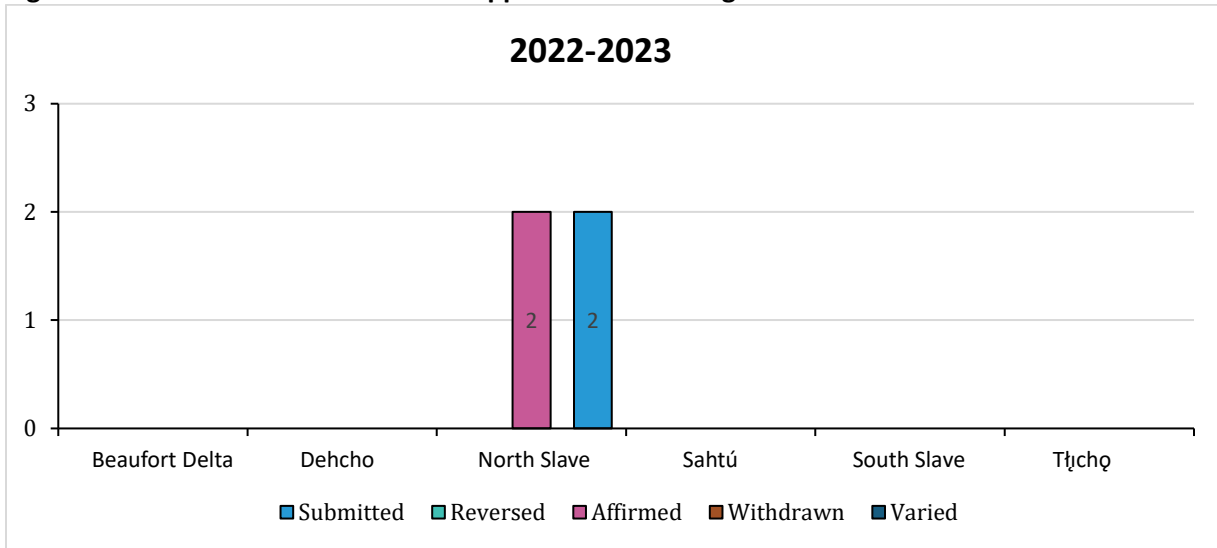


Figure 4: Student Financial Assistance Appeal Board Hearings



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.

The Senior Home Heating Subsidy program runs on a fiscal year of April through March each year. 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
2018-2019	579	\$1,902,916
2019-2020	575	\$1,951,274
2020-2021	637	\$2,192,236
2021-2022	653	\$2,470,655
2022-2023	609	\$2,582,636

Program Highlights

In recognition of the rising cost of living, the Senior Home Heating Subsidy provided a one-time additional payment to recipients in 2022-2023, ranging from \$400 to \$800 depending on the community the senior lived in.

This provided seniors with up to 80% of the estimated 2022 fuel cost associated with heating a home.

2022-2023 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	\$2,900/year	\$3,900/year	\$4,600/year
One time additional payment	\$800	\$600	\$400
Total Subsidy Amount	\$3,700/year	\$4,500/year	\$5,000/year

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 2022-2023, 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.

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

Figure 5: Internal Review Appeal Hearings

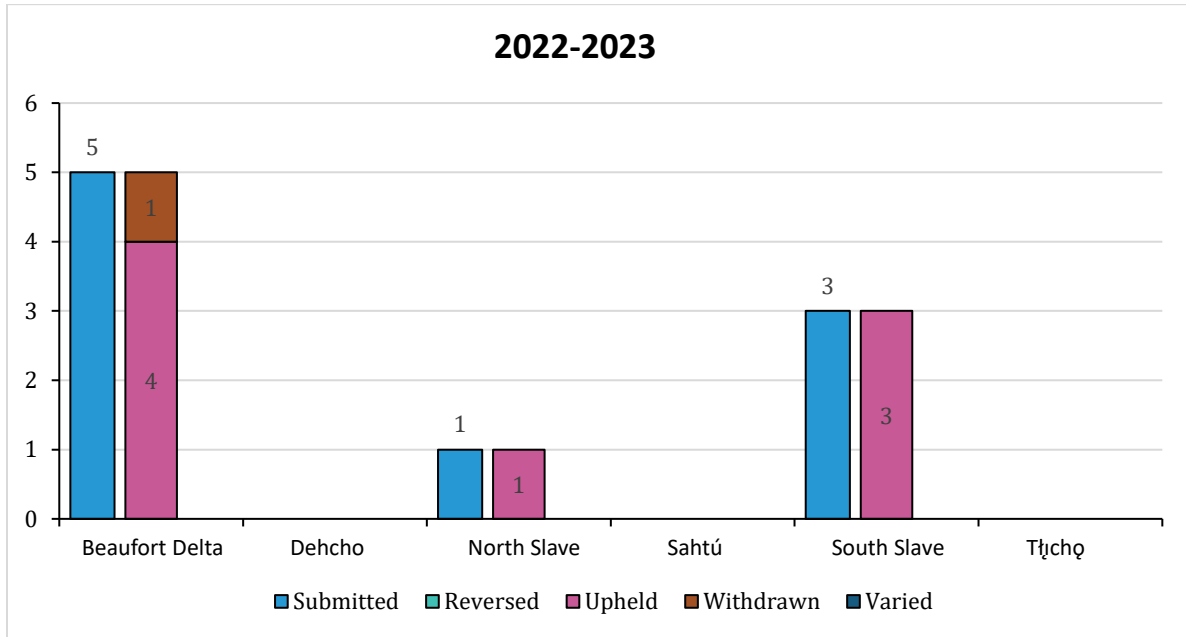
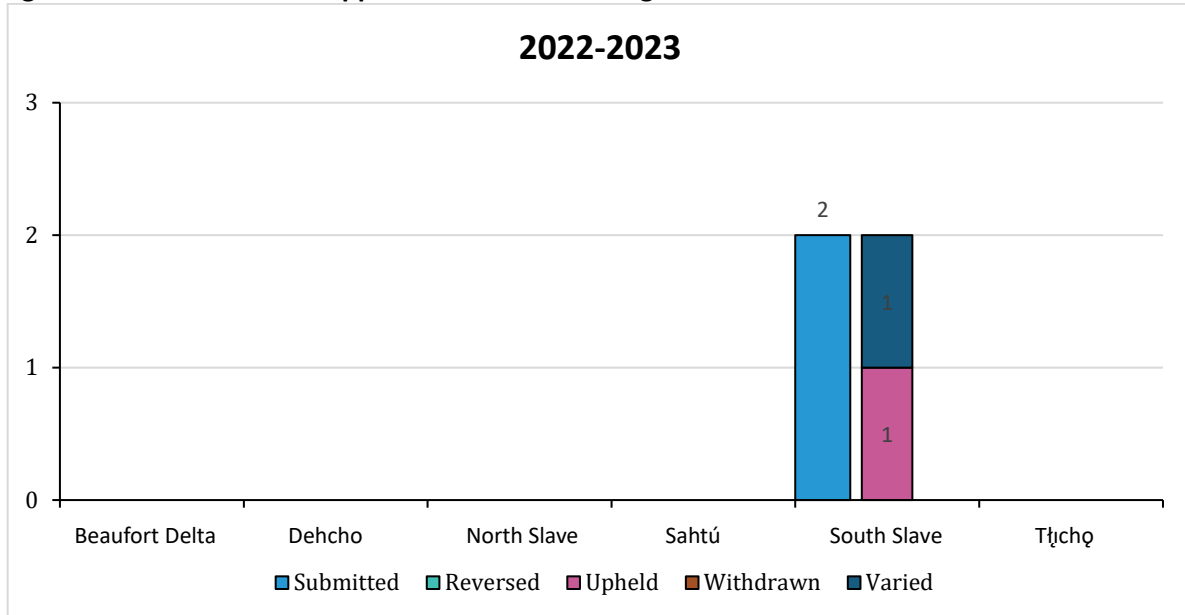


Figure 6: Social Assistance Appeal Committee Hearings



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 Northwest Territories seniors. A monthly payment of \$196 is paid to low-income seniors who are receiving federal Old Age Security benefits and Guaranteed Income Supplement or Spousal Allowance.

Table 7 summarizes the number of seniors and total expenditures for this benefit over the past five fiscal years.

Table 7: Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit Statistics

Fiscal Year	Number of Distinct Cases	Expenditures
2018-2019	1,152	\$2,754,916
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

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 Benefit received from the Federal Government.

Table 8 summarizes the 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
2018-2019	2,173	\$2,450,887
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

Income Security Programs Division Overview

Roles and Responsibilities

Headquarters

Policy and Planning Unit

The purpose of the Policy and Planning Unit is to develop policy, conduct 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 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 also administers the forgiveness and repayment of Student Financial Assistance student loans, including loan repayment incentives, as well as SFA 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 is responsible for the delivery of the Student Financial Assistance. Student Case Officers are responsible for assessing applications, ensuring legislation and regulations are properly applied and are the primary contact for students and the public regarding the program.

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. Student Case Officers liaise with high schools, post-secondary institutions and Indigenous Governments and organizations.

Regional Delivery

Income Security Programs Regional Employees

Regional employees are responsible for the delivery of Income Assistance and the Senior Home Heating Subsidy. The five regions consist of a Regional Superintendent, Regional Manager and Client Services Officers who determine eligibility for both programs. The Client Services Officers focus on program

delivery through a client-centered approach and service management by helping clients achieve self-reliance.

The Regional Education, Culture and Employment Service Centers are located in five communities across the NWT: Yellowknife, Inuvik, Norman Wells, Fort Smith and Fort Simpson.

Communities that do not have a Client Services Officer are able to access Income Assistance and Senior Home Heating Subsidy programs through the itinerant Client Services Officers 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 (2)
- Program Specialist (2)
- Program Trainer
- Manager, Divisional Financial Services
- Senior Finance Officer
- Finance Officer, Revenue and Collections (3)
- Expenditure Officer
- Program Auditor (2)
- Investigation Specialist
- Manager, Student Financial Assistance
- Student Case Officer (4)
- Student Case Receptionist and Support
- Regional Manager, Income Security Programs (5)
- Senior Client Services Officer
- Client Services Officer (29)

Employee Training

Training is a key component to ensuring Income Security programs are being delivered consistently and fairly across the NWT. ECE will continue to provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for employees.

Training Highlights

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, a variety of Income Security Programs training sessions and opportunities took place. These training sessions included in person, virtual and a hybrid of both in person and virtual for the delivery of Statutory Training.

1. Income Security Programs Statutory Training

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 22 staff members received Income Security Programs Statutory Training. This included 16 Client Services Officers, two Regional Managers, two Regional Superintendents, and two Program Specialists. All individuals successfully completed the training requirements.

Statutory Training sessions occurred in July 2022, August 2022, September 2022, October 2022 and February 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 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 effective Appeals, Briefing Notes, Request for Director 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% to be assigned a Social Welfare Officer number which enables an individual to deliver the Income Assistance program.

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

2. Appeal Committee and Board Training

In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, training was provided to the Student Financial Assistance Appeal Board members. This took place in March 2023, and was tailored to the specific needs of the Appeal Board members. It included an overview of:

- Membership Information
- The Appeal Process and Responsibilities
- Role of Chairperson

- Writing Appeal Decisions
- Overview of Student Financial Assistance Policies

Web-based Training and Information Sharing

The department provides web-based training to staff routinely. This includes training Client Services Officers 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 Services Officer Newsletter

The Client Services Officer newsletter is used to share information, best practices and to reinforce important program changes. The quarterly newsletter also provides helpful reminders and health and wellness strategies.

4. Regional Manager Face-to-Face

The Regional Manager Face-to-Face took place from November 15-17, 2022. This conference was attended by five Regional Managers and six Headquarters staff. The focus of this conference was to provide training on the expectations of a Regional Manager and to provide an overview of the Income Assistance Review and seek input on policies and procedures for the development of the revised Income Assistance program and the new Income Assistance for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities program.

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 Services Officers located in small and remote communities often work in isolation.

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 Services Officer position were developed and distributed in 2018-2019.

Conclusion

The Income Security Programs division works diligently to ensure that residents have access to the services they need when they need them. Improvements in policy, program compliance, training and program evaluation are steps toward providing a more transparent and accountable set of programs.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment continuously makes improvements and necessary changes to policies, procedures, guidelines and services to better suit the needs of all Northwest Territories residents and ensure they receive the support they need and all benefits that they are eligible to receive.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is continuing to work on the Income Assistance program review which will be re-profiling the existing program for adults and creating a new program geared towards seniors and persons with disabilities.

The Income Security Programs division continues to be committed to delivering the best programs and services possible to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Contact Information

Income Security Programs Division

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
Government of the Northwest Territories
Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

1st Floor Lahm Ridge Tower / 4501-50th Avenue

Telephone: 1-867-767-9355 (extensions below)

Toll-Free: 1-866-973-7252