



Senior Home Heating Subsidy Policy Manual

Updated August 2021



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Purpose

The Northwest Territories (NWT) Senior Home Heating Subsidy (SHHS) provides financial assistance to NWT seniors who are 60 years of age or older, own their own home or are renting a self-contained unit in the NWT and meet a financial income test. It is intended to help low to modest income seniors offset the costs of heating their homes/units.

Definitions

Fiscal year – A fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31.

Primary residence – The place which is considered to be the main living location; where the individual spends the majority of their time.

Recreational lease – A recreational lease gives the occupant the exclusive right to use the land for a specified period of time and allows the lessee to make improvements on the land.

Resident – A person lawfully entitled to be, or to remain in Canada, who makes his or her home and is ordinarily present in the NWT, but does not include a tourist, transient or visitor to the NWT.

Residential lease – A residential lease is required for individuals wishing to build a permanent structure and gives the occupant the exclusive right to use the land for a specified period of time and allows the lessee to make improvements on the land.

Self-contained unit (unit) – It can either be a house, an apartment, or a living unit with its own access that contains a kitchen, bathroom and sleeping facilities.

Delegation of Authority

The Deputy Minister has delegated all decision and policy making authority for the SHHS to the Director, Income Security Programs.



Eligibility

New April 2020

In order to be eligible, applicant(s) approved during the 2019-2020 fiscal year must:

1. Continue to own and occupy their home as his/her primary residence OR if renting, be the leasee of a self-contained unit where heating costs are not included in the rent;
2. Continue to be a resident of the NWT;
3. Not be receiving Income Assistance.

In order to be eligible, new applicant(s) must:

1. Be 60 years of age or older;
2. Own and occupy the home as his/her primary residence OR if renting, be the leasee of a self-contained unit where heating costs are not included in the rent;
3. Be a resident of the NWT;
4. Meet an approved household income test;
5. Substantiate household income;
6. Not be receiving Income Assistance;
7. Submit a completed application and supporting documentation during the fiscal year, which is between April 1 and March 31.

The SHHS can be accessed by **only one person** living in the same unit for the same period.

Fuel benefits may only be accessed through one income security program per household in an assessment month.

For example – A homeowner is accessing SHHS and there is an Income Assistance (IA) client residing with the homeowner. The IA client is not eligible for fuel benefits until such time as the SHHS has been fully used.

Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) may discontinue the subsidy if the applicant does not use it for the purpose intended.

The subsidy can continue for a maximum of three months when the senior is temporarily away from their unit. Absences of more than three months must be approved by the Director. These absences may result in an invoice.

Application Period

Applications will be accepted any time during the fiscal year, which runs from April 1 to March 31 annually.



Applications will not be accepted for prior fiscal years.

Application Deadline Revised February 2020

An application for SHHS must be submitted by March 31 in order to be eligible for that fiscal year. Examples:

- 1. If an applicant applies for SHHS on April 1, 2020 and meets all eligibility requirements- they would be eligible for financial assistance with fuel costs incurred from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.*
- 2. If an applicant applies for SHHS on March 31, 2021 and meets all eligibility requirements - they would be eligible for financial assistance with fuel costs incurred from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.*

Applying

New April 2021

Applicant(s) who were approved for SHHS during the 2019-2020 fiscal year, were automatically assessed and approved for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Further, applicants that were approved for SHHS during the 2020-2021 fiscal year, will automatically be approved for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

- ECE may reach out to current applicant(s) to confirm:
 - they are still residing in the NWT;
 - they are residing in the same household; and
 - if they would like the subsidy issued to the same fuel supplier.

New Applicants

1. Applicants must submit documentation confirming:

- Age
- If the Applicant owns their home, confirmation of home ownership, which consists of **one** of the following:
 - Certificate of Title
 - Mortgage documents
 - Notice of Assessment Municipal Taxation Area
 - Confirmation of homeownership from First Nation Band
 - Confirmation of homeownership from the NWT Housing Corporation
 - Recreational or Residential Lease documents for Territorial or Commissioner's land from the Department of Lands. **Revised February 2020**



- If the Applicant is unable to provide proof of homeownership for reasons that are beyond their control, the Director must be contacted to determine eligibility on a case-by-case basis.
- If the Applicant is renting, confirmation of rental accommodation requiring payment of additional heating costs, which consists of the following:
 - Lease/Rental agreement of a self-contained unit in the Applicant's name **and**
 - Verification that heating costs are not included in the rent
- Net household income of the applicant and his/her spouse for the previous calendar year
 - The following calculation is used to determine net income: **Revised August 2021**
 - Line 23600 of the federal income tax Notice of Assessment (NOA) received from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)
 - Less: Amount for the SHHS in the applicant's zone
 - Less: Amount received for Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits
 - Total: Net income for SHHS purposes
 - If the NOA is not available for the applicant and/or spouse, income can be obtained from the GST rebate cheque stub.

Joint homeownership/ Joint Tenancy Agreements

In cases where a unit is owned or leased by more than one person all income of those named on the homeownership documents and/or lease will be considered for the purposes of calculating eligibility for the SHHS.

Income Information

Income from other adults residing in the unit is not considered in the household income test, unless they are co-owners or joint lease holders.

The Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit shall be exempt from the calculation of household income test. The amount may need to be verified by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

Current Year Reassessment

If an applicant's subsidy has been denied or reduced as a result of their prior year income being too high, they may request a reassessment based on their income for the current calendar year. The applicant and his/her spouse must submit the following:

- NOA for the **previous** calendar year from CRA



- Verification of income for the **current** year, which may include, but is not limited to the following:
 - Pay stubs
 - Pension statements
 - RRSP statements
 - Bank Statements

A current year assessment is based on the current calendar year (January to December). A Client Services Officer (CSO) will use the actual income received to date and estimate for the remainder of the year based on declared monthly income.

Should an overpayment occur as a result of the current year assessment, the applicant will be invoiced, or the subsidy received in the subsequent year will be reduced by the same amount, in accordance with Income Security Programs policies.

SHHS and Income Taxes

Although not taxable, benefits paid under the SHHS are reportable to the CRA. Recipients will be issued a T5007 tax slip. The T5007 slips are issued and mailed at the end of February each year.

Communication

Applicants will receive a verbal or written response to their application within 2 business days of verifying all required documentation.

Applicants must notify their CSO immediately of any changes that may affect their application, which includes but is not limited to, any change in income, sale of their home, or change of residence.

Benefits

The amount of SHHS an applicant is eligible for is based on:

- The zone in which they live; and
- Net income of the applicant and spouse, co-owner and/or joint lease holder if applicable.

**Zones**

| Zone 1 | Zone 2 | Zone 3 |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Behchokò | Fort Liard | Aklavik |
| Dettah | Fort Resolution | Colville Lake |
| Enterprise | Gamètì | Délìne |
| Fort Providence | Inuvik | Fort Good Hope |
| Fort Simpson | Jean Marie River | Fort McPherson |
| Fort Smith | Nahanni Butte | Łutselk'e |
| Hay River | Whatì | Norman Wells |
| K'atl'odeeche | Wrigley | Paulatuk |
| Kakisa | | Sachs Harbour |
| Ndìlò | | Saamba K'e |
| Yellowknife | | Tsiigehtchic |
| | | Tuktoyaktuk |
| | | Tulita |
| | | Ulukhaktok |
| | | Wekweètì |

Benefit Amounts – New April 2020

| | Zone 1 | Zone 2 | Zone 3 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Amount | \$2,900 | \$3,900 | \$4,600 |

Net Income Threshold

| Subsidy % | Zone 1 | Zone 2 | Zone 3 |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 100% | \$56,000 | \$64,000 | \$73,000 |
| 0% | \$56,001 | \$64,001 | \$73,001 |

Applicants may request that payment be issued to one or more supplier(s) for more than one type of heating source; however, the maximum allowable percentage of subsidy cannot be exceeded. For example, a senior who qualifies for 100% subsidy in Zone 2, and requests to have payments made for wood pellets and oil may be entitled to have \$1,950 paid to each supplier (or any combination to the maximum allowable amount).

Under the SHHS available fuel types, “Electricity” is only for hard-wired electric heat sources. Portable, plug-in type heating units are not considered a ‘heat source’ in this program.



Payments

Payments to Suppliers

Direct payments will be made to the applicant's fuel supplier(s) or fuel supplier(s) selected by the GNWT.

Suppliers must be set up in the GNWT payment system in order to receive payment.

There is no requirement for a reconciliation to occur at the end of the fiscal year between the supplier and ECE.

Payments will not be issued for prior fiscal years.

The supplier(s) cannot be changed once payments have been issued.

If the CSO learns that an applicant has passed away after the Subsidy has been paid out to the fuel supplier, no action is required of ECE. Any remaining credit with the fuel supplier vests to the applicant's estate and is not to be recovered by ECE.

Payments to Applicants

Payments will only be made to applicants who are requesting reimbursement of fuel expenses they paid within the current fiscal year. Any subsidy amount above the incurred fuel expenses will be paid directly to the supplier.

Payments will not be made for prior fiscal years.

Applicant's Responsibility

The applicant is responsible to pay any arrears/additional charges with their supplier(s) not covered through the SHHS.

Compliance/Recovery

ECE will conduct periodic compliance reviews to ensure compliance with the terms of these Policies.

Non-compliance may result in applicants being denied subsidy payments, and/or the recovery of any overpayments, and possible legal action.

If there is a change during the fiscal year that eliminates the applicants' requirement for the subsidy it may be recovered from the applicant.



New August 2021

Audits

Headquarters will audit 25% of each region's applications that were automatically assessed and approved in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. These audits will be conducted to ensure that applicants continue to meet the eligibility criteria and qualify for the SHHS.

In addition, applicants that requested a current year re-assessment will automatically require an audit by Headquarters.

If it is determined that the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria it may result in the applicant being denied subsidy payments and/or recovery of overpayments.

Appeals

Applicants who believe their assessment is incorrect can appeal the decision through an appeal process.

Appeals must be made in writing within 30 days of the date of the denial letter. Appeals may be submitted to the Registrar of Appeals or to the local ECE Service Centre.

Appeals must include the following information:

- Name, address and phone number of the appellant and representative, if applicable
- Decision of the CSO/Director/First Level Appeal Committee, whichever is applicable for the appeal
- Grounds for the appeal
- All other relevant information

The first level of appeal is heard through an internal appeal committee comprised of two or more Regional Managers neither of whom are from the appellant's region.

One of the Regional Managers in the internal committee will prepare the decision and send to the Registrar. **Revised August 2021**

The second level of appeal is heard through the Social Assistance Appeal Committee.



The appellant and/or a representative may be present at any appeal hearing.

Appeals are heard within 30 days of receiving the appeal. Appeal decisions are provided to the appellant in writing within one week of the decision date.

If an appellant chooses to withdraw their appeal, they must do so in writing.



Contact Information

Beaufort Delta ECE Service Centre

GNWT Multi-Use Building
106 Veterans Way

Phone: 1-867-777-7365

Toll Free: 1-855-283-9311

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
BAG SERVICE #1
INUVIK NT X0E 0T0

Fax: 1-867-777-7218

Dehcho ECE Service Centre

Chief Baptiste Cazon Building
9802 – 98th Ave

Phone: 1-867-695-7338

Toll Free: 1-833-955-7338

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
BOX 740
FORT SIMPSON NT X0E 0N0

Fax: 1-867-695-7351

North Slave ECE Service Centre

Main Floor, Nova Plaza
5019 – 52nd Street

Phone: 1-867-767-9356

Toll Free: 1-866-768-8145

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
BOX 1320
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 2L9

Fax: 1-867-873-0423

Sahtu ECE Service Centre

Office #106
Edward G. Hodgson Building
1A Raven Road

Phone: 1-867-587-7159

Toll Free: 1-866-814-9840

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
BOX 147
NORMAN WELLS, NT X0E 0V0

Fax: 1-867-587-2612

South Slave ECE Service Centre – Fort Smith

McDougal Square
195 McDougal Street

Phone: 1-867-872-7425

Toll Free: 1-833-926-2110

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
BOX 1406
FORT SMITH, NT X0E 0P0

Fax: 1-867-872-4507



South Slave ECE Service Centre – Hay River

Courthouse Building
8 Capital Drive

Phone: 1-867-874-5050

Toll Free: 1-833-926-2110

8 Capital Drive
HAY RIVER NT X0E 1G2

Fax: 1-867-874-5062

Appeals Office – ECE Programs and Services

Registrar of Appeals
Department of Education, Culture and Employment
P.O BOX 4215
HAY RIVER, NT X0E 1G3

Phone: 1-867-874-2359

Toll Free: 1-855-546-1232

Email: appeals_office@gov.nt.ca

Fax: 1-867-874-2361