



BACKGROUND | Income Assistance Extended Benefits

October 5, 2020

As a response to the global pandemic in March 2020, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) modified the delivery of the NWT Income Assistance (IA) program to meet the needs of vulnerable residents concerned with supporting and protecting themselves and their families. These short-term measures were put in place from April 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020. All decisions were based on the information available at the time, while being responsive to the orders made by the Chief Public Health Officer.

All IA relief measures introduced in March 2020 have been extended until October 31, 2020.

Beginning November 1, 2020, the IA program will begin transitioning applicants back to regular reporting requirements, to include:

- Clients are only participating in the Wellness: Self-Care Productive Choice.
 - This measure will continue until the territory has entered Phase 3 of Emerging Wisely.
- Payrolling applicants who do not have fluctuating income for periods of 3, 6 or 12 months. Typically, these applicants fall under the following categories:
 - Disabled;
 - Seniors/Elders;
 - Parenting and do not receive other earned and/or unearned income.
- Applicants not payrolled will need to apply monthly and complete a Form A – Reporting Form.
- For residents who may have applied, not received, or have delayed benefit payments, we are continuing to exempt Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan benefits as follows:
 - Canada Emergency Response Benefit;
 - Canada Emergency Student Benefit;
 - One-time Special Goods and Services Tax credit;
 - One-time Special Old Age Security;
 - One-time Special Guaranteed Income Supplement;
 - One-time Special payment for certified holders of the Disability Tax Credit;
 - Continue to exempt COVID-19 financial supports from Indigenous Governments and Benevolent Organizations.
- Unearned income from family and friends will be counted in client assessments and no longer exempted.
- Unearned income received from the new Canada Recovery Benefits for workers will be counted in client assessments, which include:
 - Canada Recovery Benefit

- Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit
- Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit

The following measures, introduced in March, will be in place until October 31, 2020:

- Payrolling applicants for a period of three-month intervals (April – June and July – September 2020). This has removed the requirement to report in person on a monthly basis and will provide some sense of financial stability.
- Introducing a new Productive Choice called “Self-Care” that all current and future Income Assistance applicants will be placed into during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure residents are taking care of themselves and their families while participating in physical distancing and when needed to be able to self-isolate. Applicants are not required to report on progress.
- Exempting financial assistance provided by Indigenous Governments, benevolent organizations, family and friends for a period of three-month intervals (April –June and July – September 2020), where these funds are intended to help residents with unexpected expenses as a result of COVID-19.
- Exempting the one-time Special Goods and Services Tax (GST) credit for low- and modest-income residents.
- Exempting the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB).
- Exempting the one-time Special Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) payments.
- Exempting the one-time Special Payment for certified holders of the Disability Tax Credit.

We are mindful that the pandemic continues to rapidly change and affect global economies, social structures and healthcare systems, and we must ensure we are serving the needs of the territory’s most vulnerable residents.

While we celebrate that the NWT is in the position of Phase 2 of Emerging Wisely, ECE is committed to ensuring that our most vulnerable residents are supported during the COVID-19 pandemic, while meeting our legislative and fiscal obligations.