



What We Heard Report

Proposed Student Financial Assistance Regulation Amendments

June | 2026

Government of
Northwest Territories

K'áhshó got'íne xədə k'é hederı Ɂedłhtł'é yerınıwə ní dé dúle.

Dene Kədə

ʔerıhtł'ís Dēne Sų́łné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theɁą Ɂat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yółtı.

Dēne Sų́łné

Edı gondı dehgáh got'íe zhaté k'éé edatł'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahłı.

Dene Zhaté

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijáhch'uu zhit yinoththan jı', diıts'at ginohkhii.

Dinjii Zhuh Ginjik

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququagluta.

Inuvialuktun

ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ ᑕᑦᑭᑦ.

Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

kīspin ki nitawihtīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

nēhiyawēwin

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

Tłıchq

Indigenous Languages

request_Indigenous_languages@gov.nt.ca

Une version française de ce document est disponible.

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Executive Summary

The Government of the Northwest Territories wants to ensure that it is supporting students with the costs of obtaining a post-secondary education. The following changes will be made to make the program clearer, fairer and more aligned with how it is delivered today:

- Allowing the Student Financial Assistance (SFA) program to fund up to two semesters of private pilot licence training when it forms part of a pathway toward a Commercial Pilot Licence. The two-semester limit applies only to the Private Pilot Licence portion and does not affect the semesters available for Commercial Pilot Licence training.
- Allowing the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) to request proof of attendance when a student withdraws, ensuring that benefits were issued appropriately and supports accurate assessment of eligibility and overpayments.
- Allowing loan remission for students who withdraw so that students who received Remissible Loans and withdraw during a semester may still qualify for remission.
- Extending travel benefits to a student's spouse, when the spouse resides with the student at the place of study, aligning with the treatment for students and their dependents.
- Clarifying terminology related to course expenses and programs of study to improve administrative clarity.

To support these changes, amendments were required to the *Student Financial Assistance Regulations*. In May 2026, ECE invited the public to provide input on the proposed amendments to the *Student Financial Assistance Regulations*. This report summarizes the findings from responses.

Methodology

Information on the engagement opportunity and how to provide feedback on the proposed amendments to the Regulations were publicly posted on the GNWT's public engagement website. Additional tactics used to inform the public of the engagement included a public service announcement and social media advertising.

The GNWT website had supporting materials to help inform interested participants such as:

- A copy of the Proposed Student Financial Assistance Regulations;
- A link to the current Student Financial Assistance Regulations
- A link to the Student Financial Assistance Act

Feedback could be provided by emailing SFARegulations@gov.nt.ca.

When the engagement period ended, ECE staff reviewed the feedback to determine if there were significant concerns about the proposed Regulations. ECE staff thoroughly reviewed and discussed interpretations of responses for quality assurance and analyzed the feedback. All findings are presented in this report so that no one person can be identified.

What We Heard

ECE received 17 responses from the public, which included individuals who self-identified as users of the SFA program.

Private Pilot Licensing

What are the Changes?

The Regulations were amended to allow students enrolled in a pilot training program leading to a commercial pilot's licence to be eligible for up to two semesters of funding for the private pilot licence portion, when it is a part of the program.

Respondents shared mixed responses on allowing funding under the private pilot license. While some respondents felt that this change would better support students wishing to pursue a career in aviation due to the high costs, other respondents questioned why the change was only made to private pilot training as there are other career paths that are equally important. It was noted that it is not a post-secondary program and is not delivered in semesters.

Proof of Attendance for Withdrawals

What are the Changes?

The Regulations were amended to allow ECE to request proof of attendance up to the date that a student withdrew from their studies.

ECE received mixed feedback on allowing ECE to request proof of attendance. Some noted that this measure would support program integrity. However, others emphasized that it should be used cautiously to avoid placing undue burden on students, particularly those facing challenging circumstances. Respondents also noted that obtaining proof of attendance may be difficult, as not all institutions maintain such records, and suggested that the requirement could be perceived as reflecting a lack of trust in students.

Loan Remission for Withdrawals

What are the Changes?

The Regulations were amended to allow a remissible loan to be forgiven under the Loan Repayment Incentives up to the date a student withdraws from their program of study.

ECE heard that respondents were appreciative of this change and noted that it would reduce the consequences associated with a student withdrawing from their studies.

Travel Benefits for Spouse

What are the Changes?

The Regulations were amended to allow a student's spouse to be eligible for travel benefits when travelling to the institution with the student.

One respondent indicated that extending travel benefits to a spouse shifts the focus away from the program's core purpose of supporting students. They suggested that this benefit instead be considered only in exceptional circumstances, such as when a student has young children.

Another respondent expressed support for the change and recommended that travel benefits be extended to a student's actual place of study.

Course Reimbursement Clarification

What are the Changes?

The Regulations were amended to provide clarification that students must provide receipts for the payment of course-related expenses.

No feedback was received in relation to this proposed regulatory change.

Additional Benefits and Increased Funding

What are the Changes?

There were no amendments to the Regulations specific to adding additional benefits or increasing current rates.

Respondents brought forwards concerns that the changes to the Regulations did not reflect additional costs that students are facing and felt that the amount of the monthly living allowance is not keeping pace, one respondent felt that there should be consideration to the rates for students who attend school within the Northwest Territories. Additionally, some respondents suggested funding for childcare while students attend practicums.

Respondents also requested that academic upgrading be provided under the SFA program, specifically for the courses that are not offered in the NWT (examples were Chemistry or Physics 20 and 30). Alternatively, it was suggested that additional funding be provided to Aurora College to offer these courses.

General Findings

Some feedback that was provided did not relate directly to the changes to the Regulations. Some respondents requested to have an online portal available, both for applications and forms, and some noted that the new priority hiring policy has made it difficult for non-indigenous northerners to come back to the NWT to work and earn remission on their student loans.

There were also responses requesting that prior changes to the regulations be made retroactive, that the formula for the Repayable Loans be revisited and that the NWT SFA program should align more with the Canada SFA program.

Next Steps

ECE would like to express gratitude for the participation and perspectives shared by the Respondents.

While the feedback was valuable, it did not result in immediate changes to the Regulations due to either being out of scope or requiring additional financial investment. However, it will assist ECE as it continues to review the SFA program to ensure that it is meeting the needs of students pursuing post-secondary education.