

Yukon Students Financial Assistance Act (SFAA or the 'Yukon Grant') Consultation Questions for Key Stakeholders and First Nations

The Act was last updated in 2002 and in order to help ensure fairness, flexibility and a level playing field for all Yukon students seeking financial assistance to pursue their post-secondary studies, this consultation is focused on clarifying:

- Whether Yukon students can receive financial assistance from **both** the Government of Canada and the Yukon Grant.
- Whether students who achieve high school equivalency in the Yukon should be eligible for the Yukon Grant.
- If there should be a difference in the funding amount for students attending their post-secondary studies outside – versus within the territory.
- Student eligibility categories as defined in the Act.
- The definition of 'continuous residency'.

We will expand on some of these terms and explain them through some scenarios as we proceed through the consultation today.

Please know that the input you provide will **not** be attributed to you as an individual or to the specific <organization/government> you represent.

Today's consultation will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Thank you so much for your time and input today!

Consultation Questions

1. Do you think Yukon students should be eligible for the Yukon Grant, even if they receive financial assistance for their post-secondary studies from the Government of Canada as well?

Preamble: Under the current Act: **No** student is eligible to receive the Yukon Grant if that student is receiving any financial assistance from the Government of Canada for post-secondary education - other than special scholarship awards or loans.

The Government of Canada offers several different grants that support post-secondary participation such as, Canada Student Grants, Children's Benefit, Post-Secondary Student Support Program – or PSSSP - for Aboriginal Students and Employment Insurance.

There is inconsistency however, as depending on the federal program and students' circumstances, some students are receiving funding from both the Government of Canada and the Yukon Government through the Yukon Grant.

An example of this scenario includes:

- An example is a student from Kluane First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, White River First Nation, Liard First Nation OR Ross River Dena Council, as these Yukon First Nations did NOT assume responsibility for post-secondary education funding from the Government of Canada.

A student from one of these five Yukon First Nations can receive post-secondary education funding from EITHER the federal government OR the Yukon Grant, but not BOTH.

Whereas, a student from one of the other nine Yukon First Nations that has assumed responsibility for post-secondary education funding from the Government of Canada can receive funding through his/her First Nation AND can also receive the Yukon Grant.

Q: Do you think Yukon students should be eligible for the Yukon Grant, even if they receive financial assistance for their post-secondary studies from the Government of Canada as well?

Background (if required):

Why are Yukon students allowed to access some grants, but not all?

Re: Canada Student Grants

For several years, Canada Student Grants have been provided to eligible students as part of the Canada Student Loan program. Some students have been receiving both Canada Student Grants and the Yukon Grant. When this was discovered, plans for consultation and review of the *Students Financial Assistance Act* were already underway, so the decision was made to continue funding students as before, until the review is complete and any new direction is given. *NB: To be eligible for any of these Canada Student Grants, a student must first qualify for a Canada Student Loan, which is dependent upon income.*

Re: Children's Benefit

The Children's Benefit was approved as allowable funding by the Students Financial Assistance Committee because the funding, although federal, is not provided specifically for post-secondary education costs.

Re: Post-Secondary Student Support Program for Aboriginal Students (PSSSP)

As mentioned, the *Students Financial Assistance Act* does not allow students to receive the Yukon Grant and also receive funding from the Government of Canada. Some Yukon First Nations provide their students with funding through the Government of Canada (PSSSP). Students from those First Nations must choose whether to take the funding from the Government of Canada or the Yukon Grant – they cannot receive both.

Also as mentioned, some Yukon First Nation students are provided funding **directly** from their First Nation government. Students from those First Nations can receive both First Nation funding and the Yukon Grant.

Students from the following Yukon First Nations must choose between the Yukon Grant OR Government of Canada PSSSP funding:

- Kluane First Nation
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
- Liard First Nation
- White River First Nation
- Ross River Dena Council

Re: Employment Insurance (EI) Benefits

Students who are receiving Employment Insurance – or EI benefits are usually not allowed to attend full-time post-secondary studies, according to regular EI program rules. However, there are EI programs that allow some students to receive EI benefits and attend full-time studies. These students are **not** currently eligible to receive EI benefits and the Yukon Grant.

2. Should the 'Dependent' and 'New Resident' student categories be removed from the Act?

Currently under the Act, there are three student eligibility categories for the Yukon Grant:

- Independent, Dependent and New Resident students.

Since the majority of students (99 per cent) qualify for the Yukon Grant as an **Independent Student**, should we have only one definition in the Act based on the Independent Student criteria?

An Independent Student — on the day post-secondary classes start:

- Is a Canadian citizen or Permanent Resident
- Has completed any two years of high school (between Grades 8-12) in a Yukon high school or in a Yukon-registered home-schooling program (or has previously received financial assistance as a Dependent Student) and:
- Has resided in the Yukon **continuously** for the two years right before classes start.

A Dependent Student – on the day post-secondary classes start:

- Is under the age of 19 and has at least one parent that has lived in the Yukon continuously for the two years right before classes start, and that parent is a Canadian citizen or Permanent Resident; **OR**
- Is 19, has lived in Yukon continuously during the 12 months right before classes start, and has previously received the Yukon Grant as a Dependent Student.
- **Scenario 1 (Dependent Student):** Since the Dependent Student category is based solely on a parent's residency, the student may be eligible for the Yukon Grant even if they have never resided in Yukon or Canada.

At present, if an individual has one parent living in the Yukon, however grew up with another parent outside the territory or even outside Canada, and never lived in the Yukon, and that individual is under 19, he-she is eligible for the Yukon Grant.

A New Resident Student – on the day post-secondary classes start:

- Is a Canadian citizen or Permanent Resident

- Was under the age of 19 when he/she moved to Yukon with at least one parent, as a dependant of that parent, and the student and parent(s) continue to reside in Yukon until the student's post-secondary classes begin.
- Has completed at least one year of high school (Grades 8-12) in a Yukon high school; **AND**
- Begin post-secondary classes before turning 19.

Once a person is eligible for the Yukon Grant as a New Resident Student, the person can continue to be considered a New Resident Student as long as each year, when the student's post-secondary classes start:

- The student and his/her parent(s) have continued to reside in Yukon; **AND**
- The student is less than 24 years old

Scenario 2 (New Resident Student): If an individual moves from another province, territory or country with one of his/her parents and completes one year of high school and goes to a post-secondary institution before the age of 19, and they are a permanent resident or a Canadian citizen, that individual is eligible for the Yukon Grant under New resident.

Should the 'Dependent' and 'New Resident' student categories be removed from the Act?

3. Should there be a clear and consistent definition of residency to determine whether a student has 'continuously resided' in the Yukon?

Preamble: Students, or their parents as is the case of Dependent and New Resident Students, must reside in Yukon to meet eligibility requirements. There are some exceptions however:

Students who are absent for educational purposes (high school and full-time post-secondary) are still considered to be Yukon residents.

Students can be 'absent' (i.e. and not resident) from the Yukon and not in school for one academic year (currently interpreted as 12 consecutive months). This is referred to as the "12-month rule". The Student Financial Assistance Committee can rule whether someone can be absent for extraordinary medical or educational reasons.

Scenario 1 The '12 month rule' allows a person to be absent from the Yukon for up to 12 months, and not be in full-time studies (i.e. working in another province, travelling, etc.) As long as the person returns to Yukon within a 12-month time frame, even for a short visit, he/she can remain eligible for the Yukon Grant. Each time the person returns the 12-month time frame begins again.

Scenario 2 Students and sometimes their families may move away after the student's post-secondary classes start. Even if the student and/or family never return, the Act currently allows the student to continue to receive the Yukon Grant.

Should there be a clear and consistent definition of residency to determine whether a student has continuously resided in Yukon?

Secondary Questions (if not provided in the respondents' initial answer):

If yes, what do you think the definition should be?

For example:

- Should students or their parents (if applicable) be required to file their income tax as a Yukon resident?
- Should students or their parents have to maintain a Yukon address?
- Should students have to maintain health care insurance?

4. Should students who have achieved high school equivalency, by attending adult education or similar programs in the Yukon, be eligible for the Yukon Grant?

Preamble:

Currently one of the eligibility criteria to receive the Yukon Grant requires an individual to complete two years of high school between Grades 8 and 12 in the Yukon Public School System, however, some life-long Yukon residents do not meet this criterion?

Scenario: For example, an individual may have dropped out of high school before completing two years, but goes on to Yukon College for upgrading with the intent of pursuing post-secondary studies.

These students are **not** eligible for the Yukon Grant for their post-secondary studies because they did not complete two years of high school between Grades 8 and 12 in the Yukon Public School system.

Should students who have achieved high school equivalency by attending adult education or similar programs in the Yukon be eligible for the Yukon Grant?

Secondary Questions (if not provided in the respondents' initial answer):

If yes, what criteria should be used to assist these students?

For example:

- Should it be restricted to someone born and raised in Yukon?
- Should the student be required to reside in Yukon during their high school years?
- Should the student be required to complete two years of upgrading at Yukon College?

5. Do you think there should be a difference in funding for students who attend their post-secondary studies outside of the Yukon as compared to those who study in the Yukon?

Preamble: Under the current legislation, students who pursue their post-secondary studies outside the territory are eligible for a \$1,800 lump-sum payment from the Yukon Grant each year to travel to and from their school.

Students from Yukon communities pursuing their post-secondary studies outside the territory additionally receive funding (*over and above the \$1,800*) for the mileage between their home community and Whitehorse.

Students from the Yukon who are pursuing their post-secondary studies at Yukon College in Whitehorse do not receive the \$1,800 lump-sum payment as they are studying within the territory – however, those from the communities do receive mileage between their home community and Whitehorse.

Do you think there should be a difference in funding for students who attend their post-secondary studies outside of the Yukon as compared to those who study in the Yukon?

Why or why not?

Thank you for your time and input today.

Do you have any other comments you would like to put forward about potential changes to the Yukon Grant?

A final report of the feedback received through these interviews, focus groups and an online survey will be compiled and provided to Yukon Education at the end of July.