

**STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPEALS  
BOARD**

ACTIVITY PLAN

April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014



## Chairperson's Message

March 31, 2011

Honourable Joan Burke  
Minister of Education  
West Block, Confederation Building  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 4J6

Dear Minister:

I am pleased to submit a three-year Activity Plan for the Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board. This plan covers the period April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014. The board recognizes the vision and mission of the Department of Education and is committed to its supporting role in the education system of ensuring that post-secondary students have reasonable access to an appeal process for student financial assistance. The board has reviewed all strategic directions from the Minister of Education and has prepared this plan in accordance with the applicable component.

My signature below is on behalf of the Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board and indicative of the board's accountability for the development of this plan and the achievement of its objective.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Garland, Ph.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

**John Garland**  
Chairperson

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## Overview

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board is established under authority of section 11 of the *Student Financial Assistance Act*. The board was established in November 2004 and holds regularly scheduled meetings. The board has regulated service standards establishing time limits during which it must hold hearings and communicate subsequent decisions.

The board currently consists of a panel of seven persons appointed by the minister and includes:

- one representative from Memorial University, Mr. John Garland;
- two students attending educational institutions in the province, Mr. Daniel Smith and Mr. Michael Walsh;
- one representative from the College of the North Atlantic, Ms. Shirley Woodward;
- one representative from a private educational institution in the province, Mr. James Loder currently replacing Ms. Pricilla Rose who is on maternity leave;
- two employees of the government of the province, Ms. Ramona Cole and Ms. Virginia English.

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board members serve without remuneration as per section 18 of the Student Financial Assistance Administration Regulations. Appointments to the appeals board are for three year terms, and no member of the appeals board can serve for more than two consecutive terms. Incidental expenses incurred by the board are minimal and are covered in their entirety by the Department of Education. The board is not required to prepare financial statements.

Appeals board meetings are held at the Confederation Building in St. John's or Student Financial Services Office at Coughlan College. Appellants may participate in person or via telephone.

### **Appeal and Review Process:**

A person who is not satisfied with a decision respecting the amount of financial assistance for which she or he is eligible may apply to the minister in writing for a review of that decision and the review will take place within 14 days. The applicant will be immediately notified of the outcome in writing once the review takes place. If a person is still not satisfied with this decision, they may contact the appeals board for a hearing.

The board is required to hear and consider an appeal not more than six weeks after receiving a request. A person who makes an appeal to the board has the right to be present, with or without representation, or to be represented by a person of her or his choosing. Decisions of the appeals board are made by a majority vote of members present at the meeting in which the decision is made. The board will notify the appellant of its decision, including the reasons for the decision, in writing not more than ten days

after the appeal is heard. Decisions from the board regarding appeals are final and binding.

## **Mandate**

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board's mandate is established under section 12 of the *Student Financial Assistance Act*, as follows:

- (1) A person may make an appeal to the appeal board with respect to a denial, term, condition, amount of a student loan, financial assistance, interest or payment relief made or established under this Act.
- (2) Appeals made under subsection (1) shall be made in accordance with the regulations.
- (3) The appeal board or a committee of the appeal board shall, in writing and not more than 10 days after the hearing and consideration of an appeal, notify the appellant of its decision and the reasons for that decision.
- (4) A decision of a committee of the appeal board and of the appeal board on an appeal is final and binding.

## **Values of the Department of Education**

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board performs its duties within the core values established by the Department of Education:

- Awareness:** Each person identifies their role in accordance with government's strategic vision for the province.
- Excellence:** Each person endeavors to apply the highest professional standards when carrying out assigned duties.
- Cooperation:** Each person respects the knowledge of others and actively seeks support from colleagues to achieve the department's mandate.
- Responsiveness:** Each person actively engages opportunities to assist stakeholders.
- Accountability:** Each person is conscious of their responsibilities and performs every task with openness and integrity.

## **Primary Clients**

The primary clients of the Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board are students who wish to appeal their student loan.

## **Vision and Mission**

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board is committed to supporting the vision and mission of the Department of Education by ensuring that all individuals in the province, who require financial assistance to access post-secondary education, have access to an appeal process to verify proper entitlement.

### **Vision of the Department of Education**

The vision of the Department of Education is citizens with the values, knowledge and skills necessary to be productive and contributing members of society.

### **Mission of the Department of Education\***

By March 31, 2017, the Department of Education will have increased the accessibility and responsiveness of the provincial education system to improve opportunities for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

\*Please refer to the Department of Education Strategic Plan 2011-2014 for the complete mission statement.

## **Objective**

### **Issue One: Hearings**

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board is a quasi-judicial body established to ensure due process with respect to student financial assistance. In accordance with the strategic direction provided by the minister, included in appendix A, an enhanced post secondary system benefits those seeking higher education, the board meets as required upon receiving a request for an appeal hearing. To ensure a timely response for the appellant, the board is required to hear and consider an appeal not more than six weeks after receiving a request, and has to communicate their decision no more than ten days after the hearing. This process provides clients of the student aid system access to an appeals process which supports the affordability of post-secondary education.

With respect to the Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board, the following objective is the focus for each of the fiscal years ending March 31, 2012, 2013, and 2014. This objective will be reported upon in each of the respective annual reports.

**Objective:**

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board will have met regularly to hold hearings for students accessing the student loan program who have appealed their eligibility, and rendered decisions in a timely manner.

**Measure:** Heard appeals upon request

**Indicators:** Number of hearings held  
Number of decisions rendered

## Conclusion

The Student Financial Assistance Appeals Board is committed to supporting the mandate of the Minister of Education and will continue to do its part to further the vision and mission of the department. The board will achieve this by ensuring that post-secondary students who require financial assistance have access to an effective and fair process of appeal during which individual circumstances can be examined in accordance with the *Student Financial Assistance Act* and Regulations. All hearings will be conducted in accordance with the appropriate time frames.

## Appendix A

### Strategic Directions

Strategic directions are the articulation of desired physical, social or economic outcomes and normally require action by more than one government entity. These directions are generally communicated by government through platform documents, Throne and Budget Speeches, policy documents, and other communiqués. The *Transparency and Accountability Act* requires departments and public bodies to take into account these strategic directions in the preparation of their performance-based plans. This action will facilitate the integration of planning practices across government and will ensure that all entities are moving forward on key commitments.

**Title:** Higher Education

**Strategic Direction:** An enhanced post-secondary system benefits those seeking higher education.

This outcome supports the policy direction of government. It requires systemic intervention by the department and its entities in the areas of:

Components of Strategic Direction	Being Addressed by Other Entities Reporting to the Minister	Being Addressed in the board's activity plan
1. Adult literacy	<b>X</b>	
2. Affordability		<b>X</b>
3. Programming	<b>X</b>	
4. Apprenticeship opportunities	<b>X</b>	
5. Marketing/promotion	<b>X</b>	
6. Fast-track opportunities	<b>X</b>	
7. Post-graduate opportunities	<b>X</b>	