

Income and Employment Support Appeal Board

Annual Report 2025-26

Chairperson's Message

Hon. Chris Tibbs
Minister
Department of Social Supports and Well-Being
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

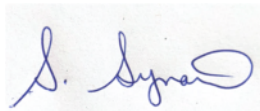
Dear Minister Tibbs:

I am pleased to submit the Income and Employment Support Appeal Board Annual Report for 2025-26, which covers the period of April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026. The Board is a Category 3 Provincial Government entity and has prepared this annual activity report in accordance with the requirements under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. This report reflects the activity for the third year of the 2023-26 Activity Plan.

The Board is primarily governed by the **Income and Employment Support Act** and hears appeals and renders decisions on behalf of any person affected by a finding or decision of an Internal Review, respecting income or employment support. Where appropriate, a finding or decision of an Internal Review dealing with the **Health and Community Services Act**, or the **Pharmaceutical Services Act** may also be reviewed by the Board.

My signature below is on behalf of the Board and is indicative of the Board's accountability for the actual results reported.

Respectfully submitted,



Sam Synard
Chairperson

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Overview

The **Income and Employment Support Act** (the Act) authorizes the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to appoint an appeal board. The Income and Employment Support Appeal Board (the Board) is an independent, arms-length body authorized to hear appeals on decisions regarding the Income Support program, as well as eligibility for employment supports funded by the Provincial Government. The Board is primarily governed by the Act; however, it is also responsible, where appropriate, for appeals relating to the **Health and Community Services Act** or **Pharmaceutical Services Act**.

The Board is comprised of a Chair, Vice-Chair and a Member, one of whom must be a current or former recipient of income or employment support. Three alternate members are also appointed, one of whom must also be a current or former recipient of income or employment support. Each member is appointed for a three-year term by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council and is eligible for re-appointment.

As of March 31, 2026, the members of the Income and Employment Support Appeal Board were:

- Sam Synard, Chair
- Brittany Keating, Vice-Chair
- Gail Hickey, Member
- Bernice Pritchett, Alternate Member
- Jeannette Lundrigan, Alternate Member
- Vickie Morgan, Alternate Member

Members are appointed from the general public through the merit-based process for agencies, boards and commissions' appointments through the Public Service Commission.

Board members receive remuneration in accordance with Provincial Government and Treasury Board guidelines and policies. The remuneration, travel expenses and costs associated with the work of the Board are included in the budget of the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being, under General Administration. In 2025-26, the Appeal Board's total expenses, including remuneration, travel and other related expenses, were \$39,529.81

The Board has an Executive Secretary who is an employee of the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being. This position provides program and administrative support to the Chair and members, to enable the Board to deal promptly and effectively with all appeals. The Executive Secretary has no voting privileges.

The first formal level of appeal for an Income Support client or a provincially-funded Employment Support client is a request for an Internal Review. These reviews are completed by government employees and are outside the mandate of the Board. During 2025-26, the department received a total of 356 applications for Internal Review. During the Internal Review process, 63 of these cases were formally resolved, five were overturned, 60 were not heard (the appellant withdrew, or the request was submitted outside the 60-day timeframe), and 228 cases were upheld. The second formal level of appeal is a request for an appeal hearing with the Board. There were 48 appeal hearings throughout this fiscal year, all of which were related to the Income Support program (see Table 2 below for a breakdown of these appeals by region and outcome). This is an increase from the 28 hearings that were held in 2024-25.

During the 2025-26 fiscal year, four of the 48 appeals heard were granted a partial approval, which is presented as 'Varied' in Table 2. An example of a partial approval is that during deliberations the Board members may decide to uphold an overpayment decision; however, request an adjustment to the covering period based on the evidence provided. This may result in a revision to the overpayment amount that is collected from the appellant's basic Income Support benefits.

Table 2: Appeals Heard by Region – 2025-26

	Appeals Heard by Region 2025-26				
Region	Upheld	Overtaken	Varied	Total	% Upheld
Eastern	28	4	4	36	77.8%
Western	11	1	0	12	91.7%
TOTAL	39	5	4	48	81.3%

Board hearings are typically scheduled every three to four weeks with board members meeting in-person, and the appellants joining via teleconference. An in-person appeal may be possible upon request by the appellant. In 2025-26, the average waiting period for a hearing was 23 business days.

Vision

The residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are treated in a fair and timely manner to ensure the maximum entitlement allowable under the applicable legislation.

Mandate

The Income and Employment Support Appeal Board hears appeals and makes decisions on behalf of a person who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an Internal Review of a decision relating to the **Income and Employment Support Act**. Where appropriate, appeals are also heard relating to the **Health and Community Services Act** or **Pharmaceutical Services Act**.

Lines of Business

The Board administers one line of business, which is to deliver an appeal.

Appeal Board Process

Those who are dissatisfied with the Internal Review outcome (the first level of an appeal) may proceed to the second formal level of appeal, which is requesting an appeal hearing with the Board. Applicants must submit an Application for Appeal in writing to the Board within 60 days from the date of the Internal Review decision letter. Appeals must be heard within 30 days of receipt of the appellant's application and are generally conducted via teleconference. Board hearings are typically scheduled every three to four weeks.

Additional information regarding the appeal process can be found at

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/sswb/the-appeal-process/>.

Report on Performance

The Income and Employment Support Appeal Board Activity Plan 2023-26 identified the objective below to assist both the Board and the public in monitoring and evaluating success of the Activity Plan. Throughout the 2025-26 fiscal year, the Board ensured the efficient and timely administration of the provincial income and employment support appeal process. The Board was successful in meeting all its performance objectives during the final year of the 2023-26 Activity Plan.

Objective: By March 31, 2026, the Board will have demonstrated ongoing adherence to legislative timeframes pertaining to the appeal process.

Indicator 1: One hundred per cent of hearings are scheduled within thirty days of receiving an application.

Results: In 2025-26, all 48 applications that were accepted for appeal were scheduled for a hearing within 30 business days.

Indicator 2: One hundred per cent of notifications are communicated to the appellant and relevant parties at least seven days prior to a hearing.

Results: In 2025-26, all 48 appellants and relevant parties were contacted via telephone or e-mail to confirm dates and times of hearings in advance of receiving their written notification seven days prior to the hearing.

Indicator 3: One hundred per cent of decisions are communicated to the relevant parties within five days of the conclusion of the hearing.

Results: In 2025-26, all 48 decisions were communicated to relevant parties within five business days of the Board's decision.

The 2025-26 Annual Report marks the third year of the planning cycle for the 2023-2026 Activity Plan. Fifty-one cases came forward in 2025-26 for a formal appeal, 48 of which resulted in an appeal hearing. The Executive Secretary also coordinated work for the other three appeals; however, these appeals were either resolved, cancelled, or clients chose not to proceed. Appellants cancel their appeals for various reasons, including changes to appellants' circumstances or acceptance of the department's decision by the appellant. All hearings were scheduled within 30 days of receiving the application. All 48 appellants, and relevant parties, received notification of the hearing at least seven days prior to the hearing. All 48 decisions were communicated to relevant parties within five business days of the Board's decision. During this period, the Board met its objective of ongoing adherence to appeal process timeframes.

Opportunities and Challenges

In 2025-26, the Board sought to reduce the number of in-person meetings for board members, where possible and practical to do so. This has proven to have no impact on service delivery but provide cost savings to the department. It also ensures hearing schedules are minimally disrupted due to weather and travel conditions.

Two out of the 13 appeal hearing meetings were held via teleconference by the Board members and the appellant. For the remaining eleven hearings, Board members met in-person while the appellants joined via teleconference, as per usual practice.

A strategic planning activity will be planned for 2026-27 to document key processes and procedures to ensure operational continuity.

Financial Statements

The Income and Employment Support Appeal Board is not required to submit audited financial statements.