



Basic Income Canada Network
Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

Annual Report 2014/15

May 20, 2015

Overview

A basic income guarantee (BIG) ensures everyone an income sufficient to meet basic needs and live with dignity regardless of work status. BICN promotes the adoption of a basic income in Canada.

The period since the AGM in May 2014 has been challenging and productive. Plans under way in the previous year to host the Basic Income Earth Network International Congress in Montreal in late June 2014 were rewarded with great success. Several developments through the year have led to considerable network expansion, new core website content, a contract to build a much more effective website, and other means to connect across the country. Media attention, requests for interviews, well-attended events and inroads into larger organizations are among indicators of a productive year. Financially, we have generated the resources to put us in a good position early in 2015.

We continued to address challenges not uncommon to organizations that depend on volunteer time and money, with the transitions that changes in circumstance require. We also faced the rather unique circumstance of rapid expansion of local interest and action and the need for a creative network organizational model that is more flexible and allows for more autonomy and initiative than more traditional forms.

Looking ahead, the new website, with some French content included, is expected to be completed in the summer, plans are underway for the next North American Basic Income conference (NABIG) to be held in Canada, communications products are being developed for use in promoting better understanding of basic income in whatever form opportunities may arise in a highly unpredictable election year.

The following report provides further details on progress over the past year and an indication of plans and priorities for 2015/16. The Annual General Meeting is planned for Wednesday, May 27, 2015 from 6 to 6:40 p.m. EST, by conference call.

Report on 2014/15

Context and Challenges

- **Balancing common ground and diversity:** In order to garner broader public awareness, interest and support for basic income there is a need to focus on common principles and concerns with wide appeal at a general level. At the level of policy design, however, a greater diversity of viewpoint and expertise emerges in discussion of the details. There are diverse views on strategy for promoting basic income as well. This is both a challenge and a source of richness of debate that reflects Canadian reality.
- **Public policy environment:** Some individuals within political parties, government circles and other spheres of influence have shown interest in basic income, some parties have debated resolutions at policy conventions and prominent people have raised the idea publicly. But

overall, the public policy environment has not been conducive to significant shifts in thinking despite the profound shifts in the economy, technology and society that are taking place.

- Non-governmental capacity: The majority of organizations with objectives broadly in line with ours have lost capacity in recent years. Some have lost government funding, have had to lay off staff, have had their charitable status threatened¹, can no longer get data needed to do their research or have been shut down. Each organization's struggle to survive makes networking harder.
- Internal organization: We faced human and financial resource challenges and experimented with different modes of operating, fund-raising and network cooperation. We had hoped to secure the means to have a staff position but experience determined it is not feasible at this point. We went through two major transitions through this period, which required reallocating responsibilities among busy Board members and volunteers. We were also challenged by success in the form of new and active local groups being formed and volunteers emerging in different parts of the country, thus increasing expectations of BICN. It required us to take stock and work to find a suitable model for a national network that encourages local autonomy, balances our four key functional areas (networking, raising awareness, policy and learning/sharing) and does not have the centralized, hierarchical or constraining structure under which most traditional organizations function.

Achievements

The following provides a sense of progress in the basic income arena over the past year. Some activities are directly attributable to BICN as an organization. For many activities credit is shared widely among individual board members, volunteers, local groups and other people and organizations--they reflect a growing public interest in basic income issues.

2014 BIEN Congress

- BICN organized the 15th International Congress of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) on the theme of "Re-democratizing the Economy" at McGill University, Montreal (Quebec), June 27-29, 2014. This interdisciplinary congress brought together more than 200 activists, scholars and policy-makers from more than 30 countries. Keynote speakers included Prof. Roberto Gargarella (Buenos Aires), Prof. Joe Soss (USA), Prof. Guy Standing (UK), and Dr. Antonio Prado, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and community activists Renana Jhabvala (India), Stanislas Jourdan (France), and Enno Schmidt (Switzerland), the initiator of the Swiss Basic Income Initiative. The Congress discussed a wide variety of issues related to basic income in Canada and the world. Highlights included a keynote talk by Dr. Anna Reid, Past President of the Canadian Medical Association, on the link between income and health, and the initiation of a new international Youth Movement for Basic Income. There was broad coverage of the Congress in both the Canadian and International Press, the results of which included Quebec's Minister for Employment Francois Blais reaffirming publicly, in *Le Devoir*, his support for basic income in the long term.
- A selection of the papers presented at the congress in the conference program (<http://biencanada.ca/congress/congress-program/program-2>).

¹See <http://www.troymedia.com/2014/09/17/why-we-decided-not-to-register-as-a-charity/> for more information on why BICN did not seek charitable status.

- Videos from the keynote speakers at BICN's dedicated YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcaYv8yV1ZlpicDC0okvwUA>).
- Pictures from the BICN 2014 congress at BICN Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/125136781@N03/>).
- A sample of news media can be found at <http://www.basicincome.org/news/2014/07/international-press-react-to-bien-congress-in-montreal/> and <http://www.basicincome.org/news/2014/06/montreal-worldwide-basic-income-congress-gets-underway-at-mcgill-university-june-26-29/>

NABIG 2015

- Together with the USBIG network, BICN participated in co-organizing the 14th annual North American Basic Income Guarantee (NABIG) congress, which took place in New York on February 26 - March 1, 2015 as part of the annual Eastern Economics Association meeting (<http://www.usbig.net/>). Although BICN was a minor partner in organizing the congress in the US, BICN representatives Jurgen De Wispelaere, Sid Frankel and Jonathan Brun gave presentations, while BICN vice-chair Jim Mulvale was one of the keynote speakers.
- The 2014 NABIG congress for the first time expanded its typical format to include more participation from grassroots and welfare rights activists at meetings offsite, which led to the initiation of a number of new regional networks in the US. Also for the first time the whole congress was livestreamed and video is available at <http://liveusbig.basicincomeproject.org/archive/>. A good review is at <http://www.basicincome.org/news/2015/03/opinion-notes-of-discussions-in-the-north-american-basic-income-guarantee-congress-of-2015/>. Members of both USBIG and BICN were interviewed by independent filmmakers from California interested in producing a documentary on the BIG.

BICN Growth

- During the past year, people who have identified as supporters have increased to over 800, with about 10% of those identifying as volunteers. The number of donors has increased from about 15 to well over 90, and while there was a surge in one-time donations for the new website, there has also been significant growth in the number and amount of monthly donations.
- Rob Rainer has been working to link and coordinate the growing number of individuals and local groups across the country that are interested in basic income and want to connect and learn from each other's experience.
- Volunteers have taken on important roles in BICN in areas such as communications, social media, translation, editing and fund-raising.
- BICN responded to 21 media requests in the last year. The news outlets included radio, print, and television: Global (Montreal), Straight Talk (Sun News Toronto), CJAD Radio Montreal, 680 News (Calgary), CTV Morning Live (Regina), the Winnipeg Free Press, and The Source (Sun News Toronto). In addition, individuals have also engaged with the media at the local level or based on particular expertise. Our social media presence is also expanding.
- BICN has been very fortunate to have begun a closer collaboration with Roderick Bennis whose website focused on Leader and Legacies has given prominence to the basic income issue, including through interviews with BICN board and volunteers. See <http://leadersandlegacies.com/2015/04/13/leaders-and-legacies-basic-income-canada-network-join-forces-against-inequality/>.

The wider network

- Local interest and action continues to grow across the country. There is an active and established group in Kingston and groups in Waterloo, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara region and other communities in Ontario. The PEI group has good connections to provincial politicians. Interest in BC is growing in and the new Manitoba group will be important as we gear up for an event in Winnipeg in 2016. The Quebec group has launched a new website at <http://revenudebase.quebec>.
- Many people have been actively working to connect with other individuals and organizations, including Upstream, the Broadbent Institute and other relevant policy organizations, St. Vincent de Paul, various labour unions, poverty reduction groups, politicians and senior public servants at federal, provincial/territorial and municipal level, the Toronto Star editorial board, and concerned doctors and health and social service professionals.

Examples of other activities/events

- In Calgary in the fall of 2014, John Rook and Kelly Ernst organized an event featuring Guy Standing, co-president of BIEN and author of books on precarious work and on basic income. There were 100 people in attendance, including students of Ambrose University's Canadian Poverty Institute, where John Rook is Director. The students, many months later, are still talking about the impact Standing's presentation had on their understanding of the importance of a basic income.
- Also in the fall, the Kingston basic income group organized a public seminar at Queen's University where Alex Himelfarb, former Clerk of the Privy Council, discussed taxation and how we pay for the things we want. One of the chapters in his book, *Tax is Not a Four-Letter Word*, specifically recommends a basic income guarantee as a means to reduce growing inequality. He is a basic income supporter and at a separate meeting with Kingston group members and BICN Chair, Sheila Regehr, he talked more specifically about strategies for promoting and funding a BIG.
- In February 2015, at a symposium entitled, "A Basic Income For Canada and Manitoba: Why Not?", organized by the University of Manitoba (Jim Mulvale and Sid Frankel), Jurgen De Wispelaere gave the keynote lecture. The event featured around 75 participants, a mixture of local activists and policy makers and academics (<http://www.basicincome.org/news/2015/01/event-basic-income-canada-manitoba-not-winnipeg-february-5th-2015/>). Jurgen participated in an evening discussion on basic income with Evelyn Forget organized by the Manitoba Institute for Policy Research (<http://www.basicincome.org/news/2015/02/winnipeg-manitoba-working-towards-basic-income-manitoba-canada/>) and also met the newly minted Manitoba local basic income group. Both events featured in the local news and Jurgen and Sid wrote an op-ed "Has the Time Come to Push Basic Income?" for The Winnipeg Free Press (http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/has-the-time-come-to-push-basic-income-291022211.html?cx_navSource=d-tiles-2)
- In Toronto, on March 16, Sheila Regehr from BICN and Jonathan Sas from the Broadbent Institute shared the podium at an event hosted by Why Should I Care? an organization that fosters constructive dialogue about issues of public interest: <http://whyshouldicare.ca/event/should-we-invest-in-basic-income/>. Sheila spoke of the reasons why we need a basic income and why it is not such a radical idea and Jonathan stressed that we need a basic income ...and... programs like child care and other public services. Attendees included Senator Art Eggleton, who along with former Senator Hugh Segal, is an active proponent of a BIG. New supporters came forward at that event and established good links with the Broadbent Institute.

- On March 19, Jurgen De Wispelaere gave a public lecture at the State University of Minnesota (Mankato) as part of the Ethics of Economic Institutions lecture series, hosted by the Philosophy Department. His talk was entitled “Basic Income: From Justice to Legitimacy” (<https://www.ecet.mnsu.edu/philosophy>). The following day, he talked about “Unconditional Basic Income: Political Obstacles and Strategies” at the initial meeting of the Minnesota BIG network, hosted by Kristine Osbakken and Liane Gale (<http://www.basicincome.org/news/2015/04/minnesota-jurgen-de-wispelaere-of-mcgill-university-lets-talk-strategy-to-achieve-a-basic-income/>).
- At the Ontario Public Health Convention, held March 25-27, 2015, in Toronto, Tim Ellis, head of BICN’s Communications team, was on a panel that included Dr. Michael Rachlis, Brian Hyndman, and Lisa Simon. Entitled "[Guaranteed Annual Income: A Healthy Public Policy Whose Time Has Come?](#)", the panel focused on the public health impact of annual income guarantees, and the conversation ranged from previous and current basic income programs to the political ramifications of pursuing such a policy. The room was full and the audience of public health professionals was keenly aware of the impact of income on health outcomes. The discussion quickly progressed to how to make a basic income a reality and what can be done to support it. The participants learned that the Alberta Public Health Association had passed a resolution calling for a basic income guarantee, and that the national organization was considering one. The Ontario Public Health Association may also do so.
- In April, the PEI group organized public forums to discuss the potential of a basic income in that province. See: <http://www.basicincome.org/news/2015/04/summerside-montague-and-charlotetown-canada-big-community-forums-9-16-april-2015/>
- Also in April, Rob Rainer and Sheila Regehr took advantage of Guy Standing’s having been invited to speak at the Spur Festival in Toronto and asked Guy to also speak beforehand with a group of doctors, researchers, health professionals, and BICN supporters in the region to share his experience, including on precarious work and on the transformative power of basic income policy in India. Discussion followed about the implications for realizing a basic income in Canada. Rob also arranged for Guy to be interviewed by Matt Galloway of CBC’s morning radio show in Toronto. During Guy’s Spur Festival address on precarious work, he talked about basic income as an important strategy for the future and encouraged anyone interested to contact BICN.
- At a national Tamarack summit on poverty held in Ottawa on May 7, Thomas Allgoewer spoke about basic income as part of a World Café program. He and other BICN representatives were also on hand to hear Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi vow to take leadership on the basic income guarantee issue and we hope other Canadian mayors will take up his call.

Financial Report

The board has adopted March 31st as its fiscal year end. Note in the Balance Statement that the vast majority of the \$10,691.75 in accrued income from previous years reflects early fees paid towards the Montreal Congress. Consequently, while there appears to be a deficit in 2014-15, the Congress was run within its planned budget and delivered a small surplus while BICN’s website fundraising drive in March 2015 brought in significant donations to end the year with over \$8500 in assets. Donations from that drive continued well into April to put us in a good position early in the 2015-16 year.

Balance Statement
(3-Apr-14 to 31-Mar-15)

Assets

Accounts receivable 0

Total Assets as of March 31, 2015 **\$8,558.88**

Liabilities

Accounts payable 0

Equity

Accrued income - previous years \$10,691.75

2014-15 -\$2,132.87

Total Equity \$8,558.88

Total Liability and Equity **\$8,558.88**

The following chart provides a financial statement of revenue and expenses, some specifically for the Congress or BICN and some shared. Overall, expenditures for the Congress made up about two-thirds of all expenditures.

Revenue and Expenses

Revenue

BICN (donations, board fees) \$18,017.65

Congress (fees, sponsors) \$17,281.00

Disbursements \$505.56

Total Revenue **\$35,804.21**

Expenses

BICN operating (insurance, banking, phone) \$3,400.83

BICN contracts (secretariat, fundraising) \$4,233.30

Congress meeting expenses \$11,390.35

Marketing (Congress/BICN) \$8,049.31

Travel (Congress/BICN) \$9,034.87

Office expenses (Congress/BICN) \$1,828.42

Total Expenses **\$37,937.08**

Net Surplus/(Deficit) **-\$2,132.87**

Election of Directors of the Board

Of the Board's 10 voluntary positions, five members were re-elected in 2014 for a two-year term from 2104 until 2016: Sheila Regehr (Chair); James Mulvale (Vice-Chair); Jurgen De Wispelaere (co-lead of International Congress in Montreal); Jenna van Draanen (Secretary); Sharon Murphy. Rob Rainer was elected to fill the Board position vacated by Kelly Ernst prior to last year's AGM. Kelly continued to co-lead the International Congress and took on full-time responsibilities as Secretary General for several months. This position was temporary and more voluntary than we had hoped as BICN was unable to secure sufficient, regular funding to fairly compensate the value of the work being done.

Four members whose terms were up in 2015 have been re-elected for another two years: Pierre Stevens (Treasurer), Eleni Bakapanos, Dan Meades, and John Rook. One new candidacy was also received, by Paul Vallee, who was elected subsequent to Rob Rainer resigning in order to enable Paul to join the Board. Rob will continue to play a lead role in website and fundraising development, compensated on a part-time, term basis, in addition to his ongoing voluntary work in support of BICN. Board bio sketches are appended to this report.

Plans and Priorities 2015/16

Context and Challenges

- With this being a federal election year in a highly charged political environment, there are many unknowables. In the lead up to the election, many current and potential BI supporters may devote their attention and energy to more partisan activities this year. The results of the election will no doubt influence longer term BICN planning and strategy. The ongoing challenges faced last year will remain, but our experience, numbers and talents are growing so we will be better equipped to meet them.

Priorities and Expected Achievements

- **Website:** The immediate priority is building a new website, with an expected launch by end of summer 2015. At just over \$6000 for a professionally designed site and Nationbuilder platform, it is a significant one-time cost in the coming year. It will enhance BICN's capacity to facilitate networking, raise awareness of basic income, foster learning and sharing of information and support policy development. It will also support greater ease and effectiveness in conference registration/organization, volunteer coordination and fundraising.
- **NABIG 2016:** A second major priority is the North American Basic Income Guarantee conference. The coming year will be the planning period for this May 2016 event in Winnipeg. It will be organized with US counterparts and we anticipate a forward-looking event that will: foster diverse participation; encourage networking and collaboration with other organizations whose interests have links to basic income (e.g., health and wellbeing, Aboriginal leaders, labour, gender equality); get positive media attention; expand Canadians' knowledge about basic income potential in this country. As per the usual practice for basic income conferences, it will be funded primarily through registration fees and sponsorships.

- Additional priorities include: communications tools and products to support local group action; partnerships to add news and current information more regularly to the website; greater coordination and expansion of a variety of groups and informal or formal networks based on geography (local/regional) or particular interest (e.g., health impacts, precarious work, or design/costing of a BI, other research); fundraising strategies to improve financial capacity.
- Regular, ongoing operating costs are expected be higher than last year with additional conference calling, website maintenance and new communications vehicles and will be covered by some one-time contributions to the fundraising drive and an increase in regular, monthly donations.
- The Board has resolved that prior to the 2016 AGM it will develop measures to improve accountability and transparency, encourage interest in serving on the Board or in other capacities, and invite greater participation in elections and AGMs.

Thank you and acknowledgments

The Board of BICN extends its sincere appreciation to its volunteers, supporters, donors, sponsors and contractors across the country for their valuable contributions. We also extend thanks to researchers, writers, journalists, activists and others everywhere who continue to keep basic income knowledge and conversation growing.

Appendix 1 - Board Bios

Sheila Regehr, Chairperson

Sheila Regehr is a founding member of the Basic Income Canada Network and former Executive Director of the National Council of Welfare. Her 29 years of federal public service spanned front-line work, policy analysis and development, international relations and senior management, with a focus on improving fairness and equality, and on gender and race in particular. She has policy expertise in areas of income security and taxation, such as child tax benefits, child support, maternity/parental benefits, pensions and social assistance. Her insight also comes from experiencing poverty as a young parent. Sheila is grateful, in her retirement, to have resources, time and health to do volunteer work and help care for twin grandsons.

James Mulvale, Vice Chairperson

Dr. James Mulvale is Dean of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. He is a founding member of the Basic Income Canada Network, and is active with the Basic Income Network of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council. Jim's research interests include basic income and the theoretical foundations of Social Work. He teaches Canadian social welfare history, and has an interest in the use of distance and distributed learning to enhance teaching effectiveness and equity in post-secondary education. He has professional social work experience in community development in the fields of developmental disability and mental health. Jim has also been an Executive Committee Member of the Basic Income Earth Network and co-editor of Basic Income Studies.

Pierre Stevens, Treasurer

Pierre Stevens grew up in the Netherlands where he benefitted from a government-funded post-secondary education that would not have been possible otherwise. In Canada since 1973, he taught for 33 years, primarily as a Senior Instructor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Dalhousie University. He has been active in the Faculty Association, serving as an executive member, as treasurer and on the negotiation team. Pierre is guided by his belief that every human being has the right to a fair standard of living, and that as a society, as a community, we have an obligation to make this possible for all. As treasurer, he wants to support the Basic Income Canada Network in achieving its goals, especially eradicating poverty and securing fair income redistribution.

Jenna van Draanen, Secretary

Jenna van Draanen is pursuing a PhD at the University of California Los Angeles, and is a Research Coordinator at the Evaluation Centre for Complex Health Interventions at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Most of her research and evaluation interest and experience are in the fields of mental health, addiction, and homelessness. Jenna became interested in the concept of basic income during her master's degree and continues to advocate in both a personal and professional role for the alleviation of poverty and income security for all. Jenna has worked extensively on research projects with people who have lived experience of poverty, and is personally dedicated to creating a truly inclusive society.

Eleni Bakopanos

The Honourable Eleni Bakopanos has over 40 years experience in public service, including as a Member of Parliament (1993-2006), serving as Parliamentary Secretary for Justice and social economy portfolios and as Assistant Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. She is presently President of the Women's Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada (Q), promoting policies such as social cohesion and inclusion, a guaranteed basic income, immigrant and women's rights. She served as senior policy advisor to Quebec's Premier and the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities. Eleni recently held the position of Senior Director for Government Relations at her Alma mater, McGill University, where she is currently President of the Women's Alumnae Association. Her extensive community activism began in the 1980's as a volunteer on several Boards, including Centraide Montreal (Executive member), the Montreal Council of Women (VP) and the Shield of Athena Family Services (President; Chair of fundraising) which assists women and children facing conjugal violence.

Jurgen De Wispelaere

Jurgen De Wispelaere is an occupational therapist turned political philosopher. He is a Research Fellow at the McGill Institute for Health and Social Policy (IHSP) and lectures in Political Science at McGill University. He has taught or held visiting positions at several distinguished universities, including Université de Montréal, Trinity College Dublin, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Oxford University, Université Catholique de Louvain, and the Australian National University. His work on basic income has appeared in many leading academic journals, such as *Social Service Review*, *Policy & Politics*, *International Social Security Review* and *Political Studies*. Jurgen is a founding editor of the journal *Basic Income Studies* and has recently co-edited *Basic Income: An Anthology of Contemporary Research* (Wiley, 2013). He has organized important events on basic income in the UK, Ireland, and Canada, most recently the 2014 BIEN Congress in Montreal.

Dan Meades

Dan Meades is originally from St John's Newfoundland where he studied English and Business at Memorial University before starting his career in community development and poverty reduction. Dan's work has led him throughout Canada, Europe, the United States and West Africa; all the while his focus has been on community change and civic empowerment. For nearly four years Dan served as the Executive Director of Vibrant Communities Calgary, is a non-profit organization that works collaboratively, with various stakeholders and partners, seeking to engage Calgarians and to advocate for long-term strategies that address the root causes of poverty in Calgary. Currently Dan serves as Provincial Coordinator for the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Sharon Murphy

Sharon Murphy, with a Masters in Social Work and a 30 plus year career, primarily at a mental health clinic in Nova Scotia, has also been active on boards and committees in her province. These include: the Poverty Action Committee in Amherst, which she chaired; a transition house for battered women; the Cumberland African Nova Scotia Association; the Association of Social Workers; and the Affordable Housing Association. She has received awards for her work, including the provincial volunteer of the year award (2006) and a distinguished service award (2007). She was also active at the national level with Canada Without Poverty and Kairos. In

retirement, Sharon continues to work as a community activist. Growing up in a working poor family she is convinced that a basic liveable income is crucial to lifting people out of poverty.

John Rook

Dr. John Rook is currently the Director of the Canadian Poverty Institute at Ambrose University in Calgary, Alberta. He is past President and CEO of the Calgary Homeless Foundation, was previously CEO of Potential Place, Co-Executive Director of The Alex Community Health Centre, and CEO of The Salvation Army Community Services. John was an Associate Professor at McMaster, holds an adjunct faculty position at the University of Calgary, and lectures primarily in areas of poverty, mental illness and homelessness. He brought this experience and knowledge to his role as Chair of the National Council of Welfare (2007-2012) and the Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness (2013-2014).

Paul Vallée

Paul Vallée is a fluently bilingual Francophone and a highly successful entrepreneur. Paul began his career as a data scientist and systems architect, and then in 1997 founded Pythian which has become a global leader in data consulting and managed services, with 400 employees across offices in North America, Europe, and Asia. Paul is Pythian's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. Through his work in the IT sector, Paul is witnessing first-hand the phenomenon of technological unemployment, which has led him to the cause of basic income. Paul's business acumen was recognized in 2011 with an Ottawa Forty Under 40 award and, in 2014, the Trudeau Medal: this medal is the highest honour given by the Telfer School of Management to its University of Ottawa alumni, recognizing leadership, initiative and contributions to the business world, the community and the recipient's alma mater. In addition to social equity, Paul's other community interests include gender equity and immigration.