



Basic Income Canada Network Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

The Basic Income We Want

Basic income, guaranteed annual income, demogrant, negative income tax and similar terms are capturing headlines. There is little inherent in these names, however. Many variations are possible, with different costs and benefits: having a constructive conversation about them depends on understanding design issues and the principles that guide them.

A basic income guarantee (BIG) ensures everyone an income sufficient to meet basic needs and live with dignity, regardless of work status.

Design issues include (among many others) the benefit level, how payment is made, how frequently it's paid and how other income is treated. Design also addresses critical issues such as what programs the basic income is intended to replace, on what grounds, and what other programs are important to keep, strengthen or build.

For BICN, a basic income guarantee is one that ensures everyone sufficient income to meet basic needs and live with dignity, regardless of work status. We believe principles including universality, non-conditionality, security, autonomy, dignity, and economic and gender equality should guide basic income dialogue and design.

A good basic income design for Canada is one that:

- Enables individuals to have both (1) autonomous income to use as best meets their own needs; and (2) access to public services that benefit all of us.
- Need not replace income programs that are working fairly well, such as forms of basic income already available to children (0-17) and seniors (65+), or programs designed for other purposes e.g., Employment Insurance, Canada and Québec pension plans.
- Replaces income provided through social assistance systems that impose paternalistic and stigmatizing conditions not applicable to other Canadians.
- Provides the security of an income floor that increases over time with the cost of living, declines gradually as other income increases, and is enhanced in particular circumstances such as disability and lone-parenthood, consistent with the recognition such circumstances receive now in the tax system and other programs.

- Leaves no one receiving income support worse off than before a basic income program was implemented, substantially improves the wellbeing of those in deepest poverty, and to these ends changes services currently tied to social assistance receipt to ones that are geared to income.
- Works together with universal public services such as health care, education, child care and pharmacare, and over time reduces the volume of need for services that treat the consequences of poverty and exclusion.
- Does not substitute for minimum wage or pay equity laws or other measures that ensure the paid labour market operates fairly, nor for the creation of new and better jobs; nor does good basic income program design remove the need for an affordable housing strategy, and the need to combat racism, other forms of discrimination and other factors linked to inequality.
- Is based on fair and progressive taxation.

Basic income is not a silver bullet, nor is it risk free. But we believe the weight of evidence is clearly in its favour. Our options are to continue on our current path as poverty and insecurity get worse.....or to do something different and much better.

About Basic Income Canada Network

Basic Income Canada Network is a voluntary, non-profit, non-partisan organization that originated in 2008 in affiliation with Basic Income Earth Network at the international level. BICN is composed of people interested in basic income issues and who come from many walks of life. We include people who are struggling to meet basic needs and those who are financially well-off. We include researchers, activists, policy analysts, professionals, business people and other people of diverse backgrounds, interests and skills. We respect that everyone brings different talent, viewpoints and experience to the basic income conversation and that the input of all is valuable.

To learn more and to support our work for a basic income guarantee for everyone, please contact us:

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