



Basic Income Canada Network
Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

Annual Report 2016/17

April, 2017

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 by networking, raising awareness, fostering learning and sharing of information, and supporting policy development.

Because not all basic incomes are alike when moving from idea to policy reality, this year BICN agreed on a framework document that more clearly reflects the kind of Basic Income We Want for Canada, one that is progressive and seeks a better mix of income and public service supports, not one that is driven by austerity or other motives. We then worked to promote it to all orders of government and other stakeholders.

BICN and the wider network of supporters have continued to be successful in efforts to connect people across sectors, create and disseminate news, add to the knowledge base, and make expertise and experience available to politicians, the media and the public. The range of activities and connections we undertook this past year have expanded our influence in ways that will continue to grow.

Looking forward, we will build on what works, as well as develop new ideas and opportunities. We want especially to generate broader public awareness and support and, in light of provincial government policy initiatives, to explore potential options for the country as a whole. While volunteer time and talent make so much possible, and donors are giving us improved financial stability, new donors and collaborations are needed to up our game.

This report provides further information on the past year and the upcoming one. The next Annual General Meeting (AGM) is planned, by conference call, for May 23, 2017.

Report on 2016/17

Context

- Plans last year were set in a public policy environment that was changing, with great hope and expectations, given the announcements that Ontario and Quebec governments were launching basic income initiatives and a new federal government was committed to a national poverty reduction strategy. Our priorities included holding the North American Basic Income Guarantee congress (NABIG), putting focus on policy principles and design, growing the organization, and building our [news](#) and [website](#) functions. We also recognized that within the wider basic income movement there was a diversity of views and that concerns of skeptics and others needed to be addressed.

- BICN works in an open network model, with a volunteer Board, volunteerA, a range of supporters and donors, and without a physical office or staff. BICN is connected to local and regional groups and other individuals and organizations through informal associations.

Achievements

The following highlights the wide range of contributions to the basic income arena over the past year. Some activities, such as the website and NABIG, are directly attributable to BICN. For others, credit is also shared among individual Board and Advisory Council members, volunteers, local groups and people and organizations in the wider network. It is impossible in this brief report to identify every activity and accomplishment or to name individuals associated with each, but this is a sign of how much the movement has grown and how much we have to appreciate each other for.

We've been visibly credible as well as quietly influential behind-the-scenes ; we've been pro-active and responsive; we've been collaborative/helpful wherever possible and have also publicly taken on misinformation and faulty arguments; we've been open and flexible but have also managed to tighten our collective views into declarations of the kind of basic income we want.

North American Basic Income Guarantee Congress (NABIG) 2016

This congress was a key priority for BICN and it set a new high bar for these events. The program and participants reflected policy matters and activism on issues critical to basic income dialogue such as: health and well being; practical design details; gender equality; realities for Indigenous peoples, immigrants and racialized minorities; the history of social justice movements; and our high-tech future and changing economy. Total attendance was 150 and we are pleased that we were able to financially support the participation of several people living on low income. The planning committee included our American counterparts, and the local organizing team in Winnipeg was outstanding, ensuring that everything ran smoothly.

Following NABIG, a few Canadians also participated at the **BIEN International Congress** in Seoul, Korea in July, 2016. At that event, the international community took a similar approach to the one Canada took in refining the description of the kind of basic income that is desired. BICN has been affiliated with BIEN for several years and at the Seoul meeting, Revenue de base Québec also became a BIEN affiliate in Canada.

Two Canadians have been working on the planning committee for **NABIG 2017** to be held in New York City in June, 2017. Several other Canadians have been accepted to participate as panelists and presenters.

Communications, News and Website

With BICN's **website** well-established as the leading Canadian site for resources at all levels, and as the premier source of **basic income news** in Canada, we continued to grow our

social media presence. Social media is a key resource for disseminating studies, articles and other information and for taking the pulse of the ongoing discussion around basic income in Canada and globally. It is also increasingly shaping mainstream media coverage of trending topics.

Our communication approach ensured Canadian news was featured on international basic income sites. This, in turn, continued to draw other journalists and members of the public to BICN, including requests for comment about pilot news from other countries, which provided further opportunities to highlight Canadian developments. By the numbers:

- the website progress counter of people supporting the basic income idea grew from about 4,000 last March to over 14,000 by March 2017;
- BICN has well over 1,320 followers on [Twitter](#) and nearly 2,100 on [Facebook](#);
- 24 local and regional groups are now accessible through our website, with 11 in ON and the rest in NS, NB, PE, QC, AB, MB, BC and NWT;
- nearly 200 articles were written or curated by BICN in this past fiscal year, with particular attention being paid to the Ontario pilot. Articles about basic income also appeared in other media sources, such as Saskatoon-based Upstream and the Kitchener-Waterloo Record and other daily newspapers. BICN members contributed letters to the editor, op-ed pieces and other commentary;
- nationally, BICN responded to 39 media requests from Canada, the US, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, Sweden and Japan, and we were able to accommodate 35 of them, slightly up from last fiscal year. We conducted written, verbal, and television interviews in English and French with a variety of sources including both the CBC and the BBC. Some interviews were for longer-term documentary film projects. We also spoke on several local radio shows. In addition, BICN supporters in local groups also engaged with the media. For example, Ottawa organizers engaged CBC's Adrian Harewood to moderate a public panel on basic income.

BICN also worked to develop Communications products that can be used to raise public awareness and generate informed discussion. [The Basic Income We Want](#) flyer was a key such product, to articulate our vision of a basic income, based on values and principles and anchored within the specific Canadian policy context. Work also started on a **primer** on basic income that will cover the essentials of the concept, have several short modules addressing key issues such as basic income and health, existing Canadian policy, and basic income and the new economy. Also in production over the past year by a creative volunteer was a short, [animated video](#), released in April 2017.

Outreach (Public Awareness, Knowledge Building, Policy Dialogue)

This area of activity covers a wide range of events and other initiatives. The majority involved collaboration with both individuals and organizations. BICN and people in the wider network were organizers, invited keynote speakers, panelists, active participants, resource personnel and more – for a variety of events.

All across the country and beyond, many people worked to connect with individuals in their circles and with organizations, such as Upstream, the Broadbent Institute, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Campaign 2000, food security organizations, faith groups, labour unions, poverty reduction groups, health and social service professionals, governments and more. BICN supporters acted as a catalyst and resource for an increasing number of organizations that opened up dialogue on basic income and/or endorsed it in one way or another.

Several initiatives had a federal or national focus:

- BICN Board submitted a brief to the federal Finance Committee during pre-budget consultations and a brief to the House of Commons' HUMA committee studying poverty;
- BICN presented the case for basic income at the Pearson Centre Roundtable on Poverty Reduction in Ottawa that was held with federal Minister Jean-Yves Duclos;
- A student-led initiative that turned into the Canadian Initiative for a Basic Income (CIBI), a petition that very quickly gathered over 20,000 signatures and developed into a collaboration with BICN;
- BICN members helped plan, and participated in the multi-faith, multi-sector Basic Income Initiative, and its October Conference focused on the values underlying a basic income.
- We have also been involved with the planning of an upcoming conference on Basic Income and the New Economy organized by the Centre for Labour Management Relations at Ryerson University.

Internationally:

- BICN participated in a Social Innovation Research project by invitation of a researcher at Maastricht University who is involved in an international research project (funded by the European Commission) studying social innovation initiatives to develop a theory of transformative social innovation. Basic income is one of 20 case studies and the countries being studied on the BI front are Canada, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands.
- The Kingston group organized a meeting between basic income proponents in the region with author and expert Guy Standing, who offered insights from his international expertise to help the Canadian movement.

In the provinces and territories:

- In Alberta, Basic Income Calgary was formed in February 2017 as an official action group of BICN and consists of several local groups and organizations. Vibrant Communities Calgary agreed to provide backbone support to the group and other organization included. Group members include individuals from Social Workers for Social Justice, Engineers without Borders (Calgary chapter) United Way, the Women's Centre, Disability Action Hall, Poverty Talks, MACG, and Momentum. There are also advisors from the City of Calgary and Alberta Health Services. While individuals did not represent the positions of their organizations, interest and cooperation was high with over 30 people in attendance at the last meeting. Also in Alberta, Senator Art Eggleton spoke about basic income at an event last June to a packed house. There was media uptake and many great questions.
- Basic Income Manitoba, in cooperation with Winnipeg Harvest House and the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba, organized a day-long symposium in November on

Basic Income in Canada and Australia: Building Political Support and Designing for the Real World. BI Manitoba is also establishing ties with like-minded social justice and service organizations, and moving towards incorporation.

- The Peterborough local group organized a very successful Ontario-wide workshop in November. Out of that meeting, the Ontario Basic Income Network (OBIN) was formed, with a provisional steering committee from different parts of the province and including First Nations representation. BICN members and supporters in Ontario also presented as well as participated at numerous events, including a meeting of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) of Ontario, the student-led conference of the University of Toronto Dalla Lana School of Public Health; an event in Guelph, a panel in Toronto, a presentation at a Polycultural Centre in Mississauga and telephone discussion on basic income with Alternatives North, a social justice coalition based in Yellowknife.
- In Nova Scotia, basic income proponents organized a very successful mini-conference in April 2016. About 300 people participated from all over the province, including the mayor of Halifax, a federal member of parliament and other elected representatives, with whom contacts have been maintained. There are plans for a second mini-conference in the fall of 2017 and other work has included encouraging the municipality of Halifax to adopt a resolution along the lines of Kingston's and lobbying all levels of government in Nova Scotia (federal, provincial and municipal) to support a Basic Income Feasibility Study for Nova Scotia.

Many events and initiatives revolved around the Ontario pilot consultations:

- Basic income supporters collaborated to ensure that every government-run, in-person public consultation for the Ontario pilot was covered and reports were shared to enable participants at subsequent sessions to be well-prepared.
- Some of us also contributed to an Ontario government technical consultation
- Some organized their own consultations (Ottawa, Regent Park, for example)
- Many provided input through the on-line feedback process
- Because social assistance is administered by municipalities, being invited twice to present to OMSSA (Ontario Municipal Social Services Association) including at its policy convention was a great opportunity (at the latter the Ontario government also ran idea-labs on along the lines of the public consultation questions about design details). This is also a reason why local group activity has focused advocacy on city councils. BICN also continues to participate at the policy level with a small group of organizations led by Toronto City Hall officials.
- Ontario government officials were generally very grateful to people in our network for participating in and organizing consultations and ensuring that there were not just BI supporters but a variety of attendees available to enhance the quality of discussion and input.

Governance and Election of Directors

At the AGM in May, 2016, James Mulvale, Sheila Regehr and Jenna van Draanen were re-elected to the Board for two-year terms and have continued to serve on the executive committee. In addition, new members were elected to an expanded Board: James Hughes, Alanna Makinson, Debbie McGraw, Celina Symmonds, Danielle Takacs.

One week after the 2017 AGM, on May 30, 2017, Board Elections will be held where voting members can cast votes for the nominees. Eleni Bakopanos, Dan Meades, John Rook,

Pierre Stevens and Paul Vallée are seeking re-election; vacant Board positions are also open for election.

BICN's newly created Advisory Council added additional voting members at the 2016 AGM. There are now 24 members on the Advisory Council. See Appendix 1 for list of Directors and members; bios are on the Website.

Also of note regarding governance, BICN wrote to the Canada Revenue Agency as part of its consultation process on **charitable status** and political activity. We wrote in support of modernizing the legislation and recognizing the critical contribution non-profits make to the policy process in a democracy. If this kind of change is made, BICN would be in a better position to provide tax receipts for donations.

Financial Report

BICN's financial picture at the end the fiscal year (March 31, 2017) is solid, but we do recognize the need for greater resources in the coming year and beyond. Of particular note:

- Revenue was up more than \$3,400 over last year, about a 19% increase. Monthly donations contributed \$10,289 to revenue and single donations contributed \$10,712.
- NABIG was made possible, in addition to registrations fees, through the generous financial support of the Conference Sponsorship Program, Office of Vice-President (Research and International), University of Manitoba and the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, as well as the valuable in-kind contributions of the City of Winnipeg Transit, the Neeginan Centre and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

BICN continues to deliver excellent value for money, achieving a great deal with very limited financial resources. Volunteer effort and in-kind contributions are what make this possible. Looking to the future, greater financial capacity would enable us to do much more.

BICN Balance Statement	
Assets	
Accounts receivable	0
Total Assets as of March 31, 2017	\$8993.41
Liabilities	
Accounts payable	0
Equity	
Accrued income - previous years	\$6408.22
- 2016/17	\$2585.19
Total Equity	\$8993.41
Total Liability and Equity	\$8993.41

BICN Revenue and Expenses	
Revenue	
BICN Board	\$5,514
Members	\$2,080
Support (public donations)	\$13,483.20
Congress	0
Total Revenue	\$21,077.20
Expenses	
Operating (insurance, legal, banking)	\$2268.81
Phone/Communications	\$2148.17
News and Networking Projects	\$13,255.85
Website	\$419.18
Conferences/meetings/travel	\$400.00
Total Expenses	\$18,492.01
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$2,585.19

NABIG 2016 Revenue and Expenses	
Revenue	
Registration fees	\$16,948.83
Conference grants (U of Manitoba)	\$6,361.00
Total Revenue	\$23,309.83
Expenses	
Meals for conference attendees	\$10,885.00
Materials, supplies and services	\$8,809.43
Travel and accommodation for speakers	\$3,641.45
Total Expenses	\$23,309.83
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	0

Plans and Priorities 2017/18

Context

- The next 2 or 3 years may be a critical time as the Ontario pilot unfolds, measures in Quebec get introduced and the federal government develops a national poverty reduction strategy. Key elections will be taking place and the impact of the US election last year will continue to have implications for Canada.
- Although there is growing interest in basic income across sectors, many people among the general public are still not aware of basic income ideas, pilots or existing programs. There are also skeptics and voices of opposition, including those concerned that basic income may become part of an austerity agenda or feel it is competition for other important goals like minimum wages or more effective public services. A basic income that competes with established public services is not the kind of basic income BICN wants; we want a better, more effective mix of income and public service policies.
- Our continued advantages are that Canada has experience with seniors and children's benefits; dialogue and cooperation are growing, government action is making discussion more concrete, and in many places, there is an appetite for bolder, more hopeful policy.

Priorities and Expected Achievements

BICN intends to give priority to public awareness and education, building collaboration across sectors and developing concrete policy options for Canada as a whole.

We need to step up our game and build constituencies of support wherever we can, on both moral and practical grounds. We are on a good track and will continue with the type of endeavours that have brought success so far. However, for the coming year and beyond we need to intensify our efforts to 'change the narrative', sharpen messaging, and develop quality, accessible, attractive communications materials (such as the primer and the animated video) that can be widely used by us and a range of audiences for a range of purposes.

We will seek the collaboration and advice of policy experts, especially those with capacity to do statistical modeling of policy options, to develop and promote feasible basic income options that are in line with our goals and principles.

Greater financial resources would enable us to do more to support:

- better, more professional public info materials for anyone in the network to use (design, writing, printing, videos, etc.)
- policy development, related research, dialogue (conference), modeling of concrete options
- ability to get more people and ideas to more places of influence (e.g., travel for BICN key people to get together; for speakers and low income participation at events; entrées into new circles; sponsorships of events to get our logo/brand out there; create-a-thons, other new ideas)

- local and regional groups (who have great ability to influence communities but don't have fundraising capacity)
- stipends and/or contracts to pay people for critical functions in order to provide stability, complement/support voluntary activity but not be so dependent on it
- new, more campaign style web-based and other tools to use as we get closer to election periods and key points of public decision.

Thank you and acknowledgments

The Board of BICN, as always, extends its sincere appreciation to volunteers, supporters, donors, sponsors and contractors across the country for their valuable contributions. We acknowledge and welcome the increasing engagement of people in policy and political spheres - elected and appointed officials, public servants and party members and supporters. We also extend profound thanks to researchers, writers, journalists, activists and others in Canada and around the world, some in this movement for decades and others bringing new energy and diverse insights, to keep us moving forward.

Appendix

Board of Directors 2016/17¹

Eleni Bakopanos (Montreal, QC)

James Hughes (Montreal, QC)

Alanna Makinson (Ottawa, ON)

Debbie McGraw (Saskatoon, SK)

Dan Meades (St John's, NL)

James Mulvale (Winnipeg, MB), Vice Chairperson

Sheila Regehr (Toronto, ON), Chairperson

John Rook (Calgary, AB)

Pierre Stevens (Halifax, NS), Treasurer

Celina Symmonds (Medicine Hat, AB)

Paul Vallée (Ottawa, ON)

Jenna van Draanen (Toronto and Los Angeles, CA), Secretary

Advisory Council Members²

Rhonda Barron, Stéphane Boisvert, Vivian Caron, Mark Chamberlain, Jurgen de Wispelaere, Kelly Ernst, Mike Fletcher, Joe Foster, Sam Frydman, John Green, Tara Kainer, Wanda Macdonald, Jason Marceau, Danielle Martin, Elizabeth McGuire, John Mills, Sharon Murphy, Chandra Pasma, Rob Rainer, Yvonne Stanford, Matt Talsma, Lynn McIntyre, Carter Vance, Maria Wong.

¹ Bios for the new Board will be available on the website following the May 2017 AGM.

² Bios are available on the website.