



Basic Income Canada Network
Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

Annual Report 2017/18

April, 2018

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, BICN promoted its framework document, [the Basic Income We Want](#), and produced a Primer in the form of a series of fact sheets to help people relatively new to the issue to be able to effectively engage in the dialogue. We see this as an important tool for informing the public, especially in election years.

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 have undertaken continues to expand our influence.

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 continue to improve effectiveness.

This report provides further information on the past year and the upcoming one. The next Annual General Meeting (AGM) is planned, at McMaster University and by conference call, for Sunday, May 27, 2018 at noon.

Report on 2017/18

Context

- Plans last year were set in a public policy environment that included the beginning of Ontario's basic income pilot program, announced in April, 2017, upcoming elections in that province and a federal election in 2019.
- BICN's 2017/18 priorities were to raise public awareness and education, build collaboration across sectors, develop concrete policy options for Canada, and plan the 2018 North American Basic Income Guarantee (NABIG) Congress.
- BICN works in an open network model, with a volunteer Board, volunteer advisors, 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, ending March 31, 2018. 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. The examples provided offer an indication of how the movement is growing and developing.

The focus of this year's report is on four main areas: the Primer; the Policy Options Project; NABIG; Communications.

The Primer

In response to demand from many proponents, BICN developed a plain language primer on basic income that is both brief and comprehensive in covering the essentials of the concept. The first module provides an overview, the second looks at the Canadian context, and ten other short modules address specific issues such as how basic income relates to health, the new economy, public services and gender.

The Policy Options Project

It is a key priority for BICN to be able to develop and promote feasible basic income options that are in line with our goals and principles. It is being accomplished by volunteer expertise among a small group along with the services of an economist to do the technical modelling required. In February, 2018, BICN brought together an outstanding group of policy experts for a day, especially those with capacity to do statistical modeling of policy options. We explained the background and conceptual framework for our project and sought their advice on our work to date. We are in the process of making some modifications as a result and writing the report of the project.

North American Basic Income Guarantee Congress (NABIG) 2018

NABIG planning has been underway since late summer of 2017, by BICN, its American equivalent USBIG, McMaster University and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, with the support of the Mayor of Hamilton. We invited proposals under its two themes - 'the converging paths leading to basic income as a key solution to many societal problems' and 'making basic income a reality'. We received a record number of proposals and were struck by their high quality as well as the number that address the 'reality' theme, including financing and costing proposals. This is an indicator that the 'why' of basic income is becoming more accepted with more detailed attention now being devoted to 'how' to get it done.

Our planning is also informed by NABIG 2017 in New York City in June, 2017. Several BICN representatives and other Canadians attended as presenters and participants. One plenary session BICN organized included panelists from federal and Ontario governments and a human rights advocate working with low-income Canadians. BICN was also represented at the BIEN International Congress in Portugal, along with other Canadians, including government officials working on the Ontario pilot.

Communications, News and Website

BICN's [website](#) is well-established as the leading Canadian site for resources at all levels, and as the premier source of basic income news in Canada. But there are ways we can improve and work has begun to revamp the website to ensure it meets the needs of people who are just discovering an interest in basic income as well as those who are established proponents looking for new and in-depth resources to further their work.

New resources this year, in addition to the [Primer](#), included a wonderful short, animated [video](#) released in April 2017, which has since also been adapted by its Canadian creator and US collaborators into an American version. In January of 2018, BICN released a [comic](#), another important tool to convey our messaging in multiple formats.

We also developed the [150-words campaign](#), marking Canada's 150th anniversary, which enabled about 600 people to tell their own stories of the difference a basic income could mean to their lives, their loved ones, and their society even if they themselves were financially well-off. The collection was released on our website and sent to the Prime Minister and other federal policy-makers.

Other planned improvements to the website and our communications generally will benefit from our collaboration with a group of senior Carleton University Journalism students and the recommendations of their report, especially with regard to reaching younger people whose future is most at stake if our society doesn't move towards a basic income.

Additional information by the numbers:

- 27 local and regional groups are now accessible through our website, with 13 in ON and the rest in NS, NB, PE, QC, AL, MB, SK, BC and NWT;
- approximately 650 articles were shared on the website, with more than 2000+ followers on Twitter, with 1,247 tweets made about basic income;
- nationally, BICN spokespeople responded to 30 media requests in French and English from outlets including the CBC, TVO, the Toronto Star, Global News, Vice, BuzzFeed, and international news agencies in France, South Korea, and the UK.

Other Activities

BICN and people in the wider network were variously organizers, invited keynote speakers, panelists, active participants, advisors and resource personnel in a range of meetings, events and initiatives, such as:

- The Premier's event announcing the Ontario pilot and subsequent information sessions;
- The creation of the Ontario Basic Income Network (OBIN) and both public and OBIN meetings held in Lindsay, ON, one of the pilot sites;
- A federal government poverty reduction strategy conference in Ottawa;
- Meetings with Senators and Members of Parliament, with federal officials, and with other social policy organizations, co-organized with Deloitte;
- A discussion panel with the director following a screening of the documentary *The Free Lunch Society* at Hot Docs in Toronto;
- A scholarly, multi-faith conference on theological teachings underlying basic income concepts;

- A conference on The Future of Work called “Reframe Work” organized by Simon Fraser University in BC which included participation in a two-day invitation-only discussion, a public debate on basic income, and a roundtable on basic income for freelance workers at a Skillshare event;
- A conference on Basic Income and the New Economy organized by the Centre for Labour Management Relations at Ryerson University;
- The 2017 BIEN International Basic Income Congress held in Lisbon, Portugal;
- Several other university conferences, some student organized, on subjects including human rights, the social determinants of health, radical politics, and one that used basic income as a focus for generating collaboration between academic researchers and policy-makers, as well as other student or youth focused meetings;
- Meetings of organizations that arranged panels and discussion in order to develop a basic income position for the organization.

Local action across the country is very important and is taking place in too many communities to list. The example of Basic Income Calgary Action Group (BIC Action Group) highlights local potential:

- Formed steering committee of representatives from 10 community organizations and professional associations, including Poverty Talks and Disability Action Hall (people with lived experience), and advisors from City of Calgary, Alberta Health Services, and United Way.
- Became a stakeholder collaborative of Enough for All, Calgary’s poverty reduction strategy, stewarded by Vibrant Community Calgary;
- Adopted a consensus document on Basic Income: What we Believe, defining our principles of adequacy, universality, individuality, complementarity, and a step forward;
- Developed strategies to build our movement by -
 - Hosting a community conversation on basic income and food insecurity; close to 200 people attended
 - Hosting quarterly network meetings to educate the community about basic income and mobilize action; the network has over 200 people signed up; 70 people attended our last network meeting, which was hosted by the Alex Community Food Centre
 - Seeking funds to implement a project designed to build a formal network of basic income action groups across Alberta (Basic Income Alberta)
 - Utilizing our community network to engage our new city council
 - Reaching out to Indigenous communities, and by initiating connections with students at University of Calgary to form a campus BI group.

Governance and Election of Directors

The BICN Board has 13 director positions. At the May, 2017 AGM, Eleni Bakopanos, Stephen Brown, Alanna Makinson, Debbie McGraw, John Rook, Pierre Stevens, Lorna Turnbull, Paul Vallée and Maria Wong were elected as Directors for two-year terms. Floyd Marinescu was added by decision of the existing Directors when a vacancy arose during the year.

In April, 2018, six people stood for election or re-election for six available positions and were thus acclaimed. Returning to the Board are Floyd Marinescu (Toronto, ON), Sheila Regehr (Toronto, ON), and Jenna van Draanen (Vancouver, BC). New members are Stéphane Boisvert (Ottawa ON), Tara Kainer (Kingston, ON) and John Mills (Hamilton, ON). The other seven continuing members are Eleni Bakopanos (Montreal, QC), Stephen Brown (Brampton, ON),

John Rook (Calgary, AB), Pierre Stevens (Halifax, NS), Lorna Turnbull (Winnipeg, MA), Paul Vallée (Ottawa, ON) and Maria Wong (Vancouver, BC). The new Board will determine executive roles among its members.

We wish to express our special appreciation to James Mulvale (Winnipeg, MA), a founding member of BICN and its Vice Chair for several years, who is stepping off the board to allow opportunities for new members but will continue to actively work in other capacities for BICN and its goals.

BICN's Advisory Council membership has changed throughout the year, as individuals' circumstance change and with non-members also actively participating in sharing information and action across the country. This body may evolve as we explore further ways to expand the basic income movement and support diversity of experience and perspective.

All Directors and Advisory Council Members whose fees were paid for 2018 were eligible to vote for Directors, had elections been required. Please check the website following the AGM for Board member bios.

Financial Report

BICN's financial picture at the end the fiscal year (March 31, 2018) is significantly improved over previous years and signs are positive going forward. Even greater resources would enable us to extend our reach and influence more broadly to the public. Of particular note:

- Our net surplus at the end of March 2018 is over four times that of the previous year and revenue has doubled. Most importantly, this has enabled us to undertake longer-term, in-depth projects and to bring in the expertise they require.
- The planning of NABIG 2018 was made possible by funding and in-kind support from McMaster University, the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction and USBIG as well as BICN. A full accounting of NABIG will be done following the Congress in late May, 2018.

BICN continues to deliver excellent value for money, achieving a great deal with 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. We hope that it will not be too long before more institutional donors, foundations and governments will see the wisdom of investing in basic income policy development and supporting and engaging civil society.

BICN Balance Statement	
Assets	
Accounts receivable	0
Total Assets as of March 31, 2018	\$20,271.08
Liabilities	
Accounts payable	0
Equity	
Accrued income - previous years	\$8,993.41
- 2017/18	\$11,277.67
Total Equity	\$20,271.08
Total Liability and Equity	\$20,271.08

BICN Revenue and Expenses	
Revenue	
BICN Board	\$7,823.00
Members	\$988.00
Support (public donations)	\$34,539.00
NABIG Congress	0
Total Revenue	\$43,350.00
Expenses	
Operating (insurance, legal, bank fees)	\$2,572.22
Phone/Communications	\$1,550.52
Projects (News, Policy Options, Primer)	\$16,896.32
Website	\$3,410.75
NABIG 2018 Congress Planning	\$4,520.00
Other conferences/meetings/travel	\$3,122.52
Total Expenses	\$32,072.33
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$11,277.67

Plans and Priorities 2018/19

Context

- As we plan for the coming year, it is with the hope that the outcome of the Ontario provincial election in June will not change the course of the pilot. Quebec's measures have been disappointing, not meeting the principles of a true basic income and it is unclear what British Columbia's plans are. Most basic income proponents in any event see this as a national policy issue, where the federal government is necessarily involved.
- The lead up to the federal election in 2019 will thus be a pivotal time to promote basic income. Young voters had significant influence on the 2015 election and we anticipate they will again be a political force. Work will be needed to move basic income resolutions from policy books to party platforms and/or public electoral debate.
- Canada has successful experience with seniors and children's benefits and yet they are not well understood as forms of basic income, something we hope to help change; it may help satisfy an appetite for bolder, more hopeful policy without seeing it as unduly radical or risky.

Priorities and Expected Achievements

As our major projects are multi-year ones, they will remain a priority for work in 2018/19. The Primer will be a key tool in helping improve understanding of basic income in the lead up to the federal election and enable many more people to effectively engage candidates and voters on the issue. The Policy Options Project will include a presentation at NABIG and culminate in a published report later in the year, demonstrating how a basic income could work at a national level. All indicators are that NABIG will be highly successful and that the networking, collaborating, knowledge transfer and strategizing will lead to ongoing action. Website revamping, tightening messaging and framing, and a focus on students and young people in the labour force will continue, and other initiatives to advocate for a basic income among this demographic and others may be pursued as resources permit.

Thank you and acknowledgments

The Board of BICN, as always, extends its sincere appreciation to volunteers, supporters, donors, sponsors and contractors across the country, and beyond, 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.