



Basic Income Canada Network Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

Open Letter to federal candidates urging support for a national basic income

As the 2019 federal election approaches, many issues will be debated. A great many of them are linked to income insecurity, which manifests itself in the form of costly symptoms, like anxiety, illness and societal unrest. If the underlying problem is about income, however, then the solution must be too or it will not get better.

That solution is to make unconditional income security more universal; it is essential to Canada's future. It provides the capacity for Canadians themselves, and our economy, to turn hope into accomplishment. Federal leadership on basic income—your leadership—is needed. We hope you will show Canadians that you trust them and that they can trust you.

There is no question that the challenges Canadians face, especially youth, are profound. The impacts of technological disruption, precarious work, climate change and extreme income and wealth inequality are just some of the factors putting livelihoods and lives increasingly at risk. Our social fabric and democratic institutions are also threatened by income insecurity. The public policies our governments create now must be as big and bold as the challenges we face; basic income is such a policy. It is also prudent.

Basic income is proven to work

We know basic income works in Canada because we have experience. The federal government has had remarkable success for decades in running programs that provide unconditional, guaranteed incomes to seniors and to parents with children under 18. Provinces and territories have contributed to national success by adding on their own income benefits. These programs are dignifying. They are proven to prevent poverty, lessen financial crises, improve health and wellbeing, and add to the economy. They enable people to contribute to society and plan for the future.

If 18-64 year olds had guaranteed income security comparable to the 65+ age group, their increased economic, societal and creative capacity could be enormous. No one would be left behind. No alternative comes close. There are options for designing it and many ways to pay for it. Canada spends a great deal on policies that provide little or no help to the majority of Canadians; that could be shifted to better use. And as many of the old symptoms of income insecurity disappear, it won't cost so much to treat them.

Good ideas work better and problems are smaller with a basic income:

- One great example is pharmacare or other health care improvements that reduce the cost of medications. A basic income keeps people physically and mentally healthier so they need less medication and can function better. It's a triple win.
- Another is living wages and other measures to ensure employed workers are treated fairly. A basic income enables them to get by when their hours aren't enough or child care arrangements break down. In addition basic income enables people to further their education, start a business, or take a chance on a new kind of job a key part of staying resilient and adaptable in our unpredictable and rapidly changing labour market.
- Educational programs work better when students are not hungry or worried about how they're going to pay the bills.
- Affordable housing strategies work better when people have income they can count on, don't have to move so often and can plan for the future.
- Action on climate change can benefit from people having a basic income to train for and even create new, green jobs or make more energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly decisions in their households.
- The report of the enquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report>) recommends basic income, highlighting its potential to reduce disadvantage linked to racial and gender discrimination.
- Programs that address community issues, from neighbourhood polarization or lack of financial literacy to gun violence or economic development for struggling small towns and rural areas, could be vastly more effective with a basic income because it has not only individual but positive community effects.

As a former basic income pilot recipient in Hamilton put it: 'The great thing about money is that it allows you to focus on something besides money.'

Others who think basic income is a good idea include the Canadian Medical Association, public health associations, Senators and MPs from all parties, Deloitte Canada in its report on Future-Proofing Canada's workforce, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, mayors and municipal councils, multi-faith groups, 100+ CEOs, the National Farmers Union, and many, many more.

For those of you who are elected and those who will continue in other prominent roles in your communities, the next four years are critical to Canadians across the country who are counting on you to bring them hope for a better future. We urge you to champion a national basic income and we will help in any way we can.

Basic Income Canada Network (BICN) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization promoting basic income in Canada. More information about us and a wealth of resources are available on our website at basicincomecanada.org and you can contact us at info@basicincomecanada.org.