

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2020

Basic income holds promise as part of a ‘robust social safety net’

Despite growing popularity for the idea, providing a “basic income” as a way to deal with emerging societal challenges—the rise of the gig economy, artificial intelligence and other technological changes in the workplace, and high levels of unemployment and precarity—is unlikely to be a panacea in the absence of a well-funded social safety net, according to a new report released today by the University of Alberta’s Parkland Institute.

In *A Basic Income for Alberta*, co-authors Alison McIntosh and Rebecca Graff-McRae provide an overview of the historic and contemporary debate on the merits of providing all citizens with a guaranteed minimum income floor intended to cover their basic needs. Despite claiming adherents as diverse as anti-poverty activists, US presidential hopefuls, and the heads of social media corporations, there is little consensus on how to best design and implement a basic income program.

“While the concept of providing a basic income as a way of addressing growing economic and employment insecurity claims widespread support across the political spectrum, the reality is that there is very little agreement about the concept,” McIntosh explains. “Even if the terminology being used is the same, a basic income aimed at poverty reduction looks a lot different than one intended to provide some income stability to allow entrepreneurs to pursue their latest idea.”

The report contrasts the main mechanisms suggested to deliver a basic income—including social-assistance-style payments, refundable tax credits, and a negative income tax—and analyzes the two large-scale Canadian attempts at implementing a basic income: Manitoba’s Mincome experiment from the mid-1970s and Ontario’s 2018 pilot program, which was in place for less than a year before being cancelled by the incoming Ontario PC government of Doug Ford.

“The main thing our research reveals is that a basic income could form part of a robust social safety net,” McIntosh says. “Basic income would be a valuable and tangible support for people experiencing poverty and precarious work. However, its success in ensuring long-term prosperity for Albertans hinges on it being part of a suite of programs which also includes things such as a progressive tax system, adequate funding for public services, and a just transition and economic diversification plan that puts workers and communities first.”

Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. *A Basic Income for Alberta* is available for [download on Parkland Institute’s website](#).

-30-

For more information or to arrange interviews:

Scott Harris
Parkland Institute Communications Coordinator
Tel. 780-492-3952 | Cell: 780-710-2025
sgharris@ualberta.ca