

Basic Income Guarantee: Cautions for First Nations

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“....income is the most significant determinant for the health of an individual or community....It will take generations to restore our nations to the levels of health and prosperity that existed before residential schools and colonization, even with a guaranteed basic income. But it will reduce the hardships people face, and bring First Nations to the starting line....”

- Max FineDay, nehiyaw (Cree), Sweetgrass First Nation, youth activist

Potential Benefits of a Basic Income Guarantee

- a) Reduce poverty and as a result, improve health
- b) Improve life for low-income and precarious workers
- c) Reduce stigma attached to receipt of social assistance
- d) Save administration dollars and eliminate the 'poverty industry'

4 Questions/Cautions for Program Design

1. First Nations communities differ substantially from municipalities and rural communities – will the possible benefits all transfer?
2. Will eliminating local administration benefit FN communities?
3. Will savings be reinvested back into First Nations?
4. Funding rates for programs in First Nations have historically been lower for FNs. Will this program be different?

FIRST NATIONS IN ONTARIO: A SNAPSHOT



Manitoba

Quebec

Ontario

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF FIRST NATION WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

133 First Nations in Ontario

- 81 have less than 500 people and 113 have less than 1000 Range in size from less than 100 to more than 10,000
- **Urban** (within 50 km of major centre)—32 First Nation communities
- **Rural** (between 50 km and 350 km of major centre)—59 First Nation communities
- **Remote** (over 350km of major centre)—5 First Nation communities
- **Air Access**—31 First Nation communities

From 2001 Census

- 84% more Aboriginal lone-parent families
- 14% fewer Aboriginal people graduated from high school
- 68% fewer Aboriginal people earned a university degree
- **Percentage unemployed** - 145% more Aboriginal people unemployed (14.7% vs 6%)
- **Average individual income for Aboriginal peoples in Ontario is \$11,205 less** than other Ontarians
- **48% more** Aboriginal people considered low-income

(A few) Facts about Poverty in First Nations in Ontario

- In 2014 over half of Ontario's FNs were under 'boil-water advisories' and 10 communities had not had potable (drinkable) water for more than 10 years
- 41.5 per cent of homes on reserves needed major repairs (compared with 7% in non-aboriginal households)
- Funding for children's benefits 7% lower for FN communities
- Life expectancy for FN people is 7.4 years less for males and 5.2 years less for females than non-First Nation people

Northern Ontario

- Aboriginal communities have a higher percentage of youth than the region as a whole;
- Youth out-migration from Aboriginal communities is lower than for Northern Ontario as a whole;
- The labour force participation rates and employment rates for Aboriginal communities are lower than for the region as a whole;
- The unemployment rates for Aboriginal communities are consistently higher than for the region as a whole;

Northern Ontario cont'd

- Youth in Northern Ontario's Aboriginal communities have especially low rates of labour force involvement;
- The industrial structure and occupational structure of Aboriginal communities in Northern Ontario differs from that of the region and Ontario;
- Educational levels in Northern Ontario's Aboriginal communities are lower than the averages for the region and for Ontario; and
- The average income of individuals in Aboriginal communities in Northern Ontario is lower than the regional and provincial average
- Almost all of the "air access"—only First Nation communities in Ontario are located in the North. Isolation is a challenge for these communities, as is access to quality health care, education, affordable and nutritional food, and employment opportunities

Is there a poverty industry in First Nations?

**WILL ELIMINATING ADMINISTRATION
COSTS BENEFIT FIRST NATIONS?**

Program of 'First Response'

-NOT Last Resort

“First Nations have it right. Welfare [Ontario Works] offices need to be the place of ‘first response’ in responding to people’s needs, not the last resort”

-Mike Nadeau, CAO, Sault Ste. Marie
Social Services Board

What do FN Social Services Offer?

- Provides short term financial assistance to individuals and families in need
- Extended Health Benefits
- Provides information to recipients about participation requirements including seeking employment, basic education, volunteer work, or self employment

Participants can access a variety of programs and support services including but not limited to:

- Child Care
- Clothing Needs
- Community Placement Program
- Discretionary Benefits
- Drug Benefits Employment Resource Center
- Employment Start-up Costs
- Enhanced Employment Placement Program
- Learning, Earning and Parenting
- Pay-Direct to Landlord
- Special Diets Allowance
- Transportation
- Funeral expenses

Additionally.....

- Ministry of Community Services has identified a 70% improvement in administration since training program introduced in 2009
- Provides employment to an average of 3 people in each FN, but may employ as many as 20+
- Removing social service delivery from FN may result in a loss of advocacy
- Caution: if these essential services are removed from FN communities, how will they be delivered? Will there really be a cost savings?

**WILL \$\$ SAVED BY RE-INVESTED IN
FIRST NATIONS?**

Long History of Lack of Consultation

- Court battle following introduction of Ontario Works resulted in poor relations between social services in FNs and province of Ontario
- To date, neither First Nations nor Ontario Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA) has been invited to participate in consultations regarding the introduction of BIG
- Deputy Minister Menard did, on Tuesday, announce that a consultation would be undertaken commencing later this fall and ending in June 2017

\$222 M. announced to address health inequities in First Nations

“My job as health minister is to ensure that every person in Ontario has equal access to high-quality, culturally appropriate health care, no matter where they live or who they are, and right now, in this province, that is not the case.”

-Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins, May 25, 2016

BUT.....

- Child Benefit is built along the lines of BIG and is considered one of ‘the most effective new social support programs in Canada’ (Forget, 2011, 6)

BUT

- Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the Canadian Government (INAC) has not demonstrated compliance with the Tribunal’s January 26, 2016 order finding Canada racially discriminates against over 163,000 First Nations children by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and failing to properly implement Jordan’s Principle – results, in part, in 7% lower benefits for children in Ontario FNs

4 Questions/Cautions for Program Design

1. First Nations communities differ substantially from municipalities and rural communities – will the possible benefits all transfer?
2. Will eliminating local administration benefit FN communities?
3. Will savings (if any) be reinvested back into First Nations?
4. Funding rates for programs in First Nations have historically been lower for FNs. Will this program be different?

Thank you! Miigwetch!