

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze December 4 2016.

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On Nov 26, 2016, matthew talsma <matthew.talsma@gmail.com> wrote:

UPDATE on BITO strategy to Lobby Toronto City Council for a BI endorsement

(The first half of this duplicates last weeks. ed)

So for this second stage of the process (collecting the remaining signatures to make 23) we have a lot of preparatory work to do. Mihevc suggested at least 10 - 15-page information package that we need to make nice and professional looking. He showed me some examples of these from other lobby groups that were all flashy with branded portfolios/folders, with business cards, pamphlets, and colour printed and pictured info sheets inside. I dont think we need to do things so fancy, but we definitely need to get some good and professional looking material together.

Putting this information package together for the City Councillors will be a productive exercise in any case because it can also double as content for our website, info sheets we can bring to other events, and also just giving us some material to collectively work with as we go forward.

So this is something we need to work on over the next few weeks. Putting together data sheets, info graphics, pamphlets etc. I am sure there is already some existent material we can work with, so maybe best to start with what material already exists that would be helpful, and then fill in the gaps. Steve Sayer has already worked on a logo and letterhead for us that we can use for these materials.

If you have time to contribute to this effort please let me know and we can put a working group together. Councillor Mihevc suggested we do the city councillor lobby at the next meeting which is Dec 13-15. (city council meeting typically take place over two (sometimes 3) consecutive days).

I think this is a little ambitious, what do you guys think? The next council meeting isn't until the end of January 2017, by which time I imagine we should definitely be prepared.

So please reply if you are able to help on this project

Steps to take:

1 Draft letter and send final edit to Joe Mihevc by Tuesday Nov. 29

2 Put together information package:

 Search for existing material we can use, changing where necessary to refer to TO/
ON/CAN

 Identify remaining necessary info that should be included

 Produce this information

3 Decide if we are ambitious enough to attempt the Dec 13 meeting or the next meeting Jan 31

4 Assemble a team to make the pitch. I am thinking 2-4 members who are able to be at city hall on a weekday afternoon, ideally with professional experience with public speaking/ presentation skills

Best,

Matt

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Here is a paraphrase of one BITO guy who went to the **Scarborough consult.**

He was stunned by the level of commitment, some saying they had read what we had written, both "main and socmed".

He ran into someone from Peterborough as well as two people who ran a web site about BI. But he did not give us an URL for it.

He said; "There was a lot of passion expressed by speakers at the tables. Including tears in one case."

It seems the reps from the ministry looked fairly "haggard and stressed". But they were happy to hear that "we", I guess BITO people, were in attendance. These reps kept emphasizing that we did not have to stay with Segal's report, we could say what we felt.

Our informant contradicted himself a bit. He said people seemed knowledgeable about BI. Yet they did not know the nuances of "different elements" of BI; "especially getting into taxation aspects, how payment would occur with a NIT, etc." Anyone really knowledgeable about income guarantees will find that statement disturbing. Any income guarantee would have little to do with taxation, and a negative income tax hasn't got a damned thing to do with a BI.

This has become the big problem with a BIG; there is so much misinformation going around. The people who actually know how it needs to work are completely drowned out by self styled "experts".

But our informant felt that the people in attendance mostly had previous attachments to BI but had only scanned Segal's report. He liked the quality face to face time that he got, felt that we do not get enough of that in our "modern tech comm". Many people were worried about "falling into groupthink".

He did recognize some limitations to such a consultation. He talked about setting up a "create-a-thon".

To me, what seems odd is it seems there was quite a commotion about the emergency declaration, and a large number of people voted for it. Our informant says nothing about that.

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Put food in the Budget Dec 2

At Friends house, 60 Lowther. (Quaker's house.)

These people have a very good idea about what to do with provincial consultations. They strongly urged people going to all these Basic Income consultations to reject the BI pilot and demand an increase in social benefits.

They noted that the consultations seem to be very poorly organized. They are in hotels rather than community centres. They are in places which are very hard to get to without a car. There is no consultation in central Toronto at all.

The director of Put Food In The Budget, Mike Balkwill, showed us video of the Scarborough get-together. There, the "emergency declaration" was read out. It was made clear that nobody wants some "pilot" which will go on until 2021 and no one knows what will happen after that.

I met one person I had talked with at the Montreal BIEN congress in 2014. She did not have money to get to Winnipeg. She still supports the Basic Income concept but has no use for Pilots. They cannot show anything not already well proven about human nature and political economy.

I got two minutes to make my own pitch at the end and got some people interested. Mr. Balkwill said he did not want me going on any longer than that. They had already had a discussion of BI back in May and did not need to rehash it. That is another BI event that I and most BI people did not hear about. I do not know what conclusions they came to about BI back in May.

I handed out some leaflets and reinforced the Basic message that the province should be told to shove its consultation. I gave out the url to my "pilotless" page. I suggested a strategy derived from Food Bank Canada's proposals; end all Pilots, get the Federal Government to implement a full BI now, and the province can as an interim measure do what the anti-poverty groups are asking.

That is, raise OW and ODSP rates. The rates for both which Segal suggested, would be a good target for rate increases. That is, approximately \$13 000 for OW and \$`18 000 for ODSP for the disabled. Plus, low or no cost transit passes and a resumption in funding for local transit. Also, start getting social housing built.

We also heard about what anti-poverty people are doing outside Toronto. It seems that in some ways, it is easier to build ineffective organization in smaller centres. It is easier to get through to elected officials, fewer barriers in the way.

The Hastings county people seem especially busy. They even created their own gnome troupe for Christmas. They have pretty much convinced their clueless elected representatives that things are not really okay; food banks are not much of a solution.

The PFIB group finished their report of the Scarborough meeting like this; If you have doubts that the Ontario Liberal government has engaged in an endless cycle of consultations on

poverty reduction see Melissa Addison-Webster of the Put Food in the Budget steering committee confronting Teresa Piruzza (then Minister responsible for poverty reduction) in 2013.

Pie in the sky tomorrow will not put food in the budget today. Join us in bringing this message to the Basic Income consultation meetings.

Now, we will see what happens December 13th. If you go, bring a copy of the emergency declaration and make sure it gets read and voted on.

Once again, here is the text of it:

“Whereas Senator Hugh Segal said “It is hard to conclude that the income support that is now available for those living in poverty is adequate in any meaningful way”;

“Be it resolved that the Government of Ontario immediately raise the Ontario Works rate for a single individual to \$1,320 per month and raise ODSP rates by at least \$500 per month.”

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HSAG and Fair Fare coalition at the city executive committee.

HSAG did not hold its usual meeting on December 1. The next will be a part Christmas party and part presentation from Sue Kwong, on December 15th at 955 Queen st. east, Riverdale health centre.

We were expecting to speak soon after 12:30. We were there until almost 11 PM. Most of the Fair Fare people who had been here to depute had to leave. This was deliberate, of course. They could have put us on first. Instead we went through all these petty issues with only a few speakers or none at all waiting. They spend much time debating them.

I was there to the end. I did my "deputation". I made clear I was not impressed with this executive council. I sat down and had a nice long drink of water first just to let them know they were on my time, not theirs. I told them I had seen governance in Toronto steadily deteriorate ever since the amalgamation. The present council is the worst yet; incapable of quality decisions.

This is now heading for the crunch. Public services are starting to break down. The transit system is the most vulnerable and it is breaking down first. People below the "poverty line", disabled and senior, are most effected by this breakdown, and by constantly increasing fares for ever worse service. So we are speaking out.

But it is clear from the contempt with which we are being received that talking is not really getting us anywhere. The executive committees ploy, to offer some fare reductions for selected groups some time in the future, had the Fair Fare group flummoxed, even though they knew it was manipulation.

It is pretty hard to deal with something which divides seniors against low income people and students, both against ODSP and OW recipients, and all against full fare payers who will pay

more to subsidize us all. And of course, there is the old transit users versus car users game. Arithmetically, the 20% decline in month cases and 30% decline in tokens, does not even really help ODSP recipients; it is still unaffordable.

I timed my speech on my own cell phone but still ran out of time before I got to my zinger conclusion. You can't really say much in three minutes. But I explained that the best weapon of poor people against deterioration of transit would be a fare strike. People are talking about that and making some plans. They are doing it right and taking their time developing it.

However, I think an informal fare strike is already under way by the lowest income. I see a lot of people just walking onto streetcars or into subway stations. Most TTC staff do not challenge them at all. Sometimes I do not pay. I could end up with a \$250 fine. I do not think a fine will matter much with people who have no fixed address.

But it was a hard day's night. I arrived two hours late and sat for eight hours. It all reminds me of why I rarely do deputations and consultations anymore, except to see what is going on. I did get to see one of councillor Mammolitti's famous rants. How does an idiot like that get elected?

Pft!

Here is the take away for BITO activists; with some references to Karl Widerquist's warnings to BI activists about cheap support. Politicians just love to have a cheap way to tell people "yes". It then gives them a cheap way to say "no".

Think about that, BITO folks, while you are lobbying this city council to give you a cheap yes, an endorsement of a BI. If they maneuver you right, they may even get something that undercuts poverty reduction plans. They love to get people fighting with each other who should be working together.

If you want to lobby politicians, you really need to start with the federal members of parliament. As I keep repeating, only the federal government can give us BI/GLI.