

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto News Breeze

January 22, 2017

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The Put Food in the Budget campaign gives us an excellent blog post which continues accounts of the “consultations”

I love the title; **“Asking us where to hold the Basic Income pilots feels like the Hunger Games”** http://www.putfoodinthebudget.ca/the_hunger_games

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Green Party and submitting comments on the BI Pilots.

The Green party of Ontario has had BI as part of its platform for some time. Unfortunately, the web page linked to here <https://secure.gpo.ca/content/reduce-poverty-basic-income-guarantee> shows they do not understand the concept well. They invite supporters to submit a form letter to the provincial government. The contents of this letter are offensive to any long time and serious campaigner for an income guarantee.

First of all, they are totally focused on “eliminating poverty” but only “on the long term”.

Second, they advise the province to set up some sort of an advisory committee. Of course this committee will have some token “lived experience” types on it. Some will be professional poor people and some will just be naive about what they are getting into. The committee will be controlled by social agency apparatchiks with an interest in maintaining the funding and prestige of the organizations and networks they work for.

Third, they repeat the same gibberish as is in the province’s media releases and from some of the above said social agency people. That is, about “testing outcomes” and “prioritizing Key Indicators” about establishment social engineer topics like “employment” and “community well being”. A “pilot” like this cannot “test” anything. Looked at just as social research it is “Junk Science”.

We have until January 31st to send in a response. I will send in the blog about it I did way back in September.

<http://blog.livinggrant.ch/2016/09/08/a-position-on-the-ontario-basic-income-pilot-project/>

If I have the time I will send something pithier as well as more recent.

The Green Party's abuse of the Income Guarantees issue is a reminder of the need for a party which promotes a real Income Guarantee and the issues that comport with it. Toward that, a BI/GLI activist should also be supporting a proportional representation system provincial and federally. And of course, public funding of political parties.

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Excellent Letter

I got a really good message copied to me this week. I am not exactly sure which committee this was addressed to. I hope it was the Federal government's budget committee. It is the perfect response to all this "work effort"

With Respect

I urge the Committee, in considering the basic income experiments underway in Ontario and Finland, to consider whether, if such a program did reduce work effort, that would be a bad thing in a society full of complaints of the ravages of workaholism destroying families and lives and long hours wearing people out.

Perhaps, as a complement to a basic income, the government could use some of the money now spent on job creation, the pointless multiplication of toil, on counselling and other therapy for workaholics.

Yours Sincerely,
Xxxxx

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Got another interesting Letter

Somebody likes this newsletter, but thinks the colour of the print is hard to read. I used blue because I think it is easier on the eyes. I will try cranking up the opacity and see if that helps.

I chose bluish colours generally for this because of the theories about color references and personality. "Blue" people are calm and reflective. Yellow people are socially outgoing. "Red" people are impulsive and adventurous. Blue and Yellow people are most needed in a social movement such as for a BI/GLI.

My Livingrant site is still up at www.livingrant.ch I think it is getting pretty good. I hope everyone likes the new background. The BITO demonstration site does not seem to be up anymore, even as a demonstration site.

And so it goes....

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Now I have a link to another very interesting article which BI people not only should, but need to, read. If they don't want to know what the article is telling them about "BI pilots", they need to get out of the BI movement and go back to the "welfare reformers".

The UBI Bait and Switch from Jacobin Magazine.

https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/01/ubi-finland-centre-party-unemployment-jobs/?utm_source=ISAC+Media+%26+Policy+News&utm_campaign=72f93d6292-Media+and+Policy+News+emails&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_342c280cba-72f93d6292-140445945

(By the way, Jacobin is the best political ideas magazine around these days.)

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There is a new group which can be a potential ally of a GLI movement. **The Decent Work and Health Network** is made up of health professionals of all kinds. They have a web site at

<http://us14.campaign-archive2.com/?u=23dfbf988b1a5775904d5a393&id=b7b79edf03&e=53f8b81166>

They are interested in doing presentations with other groups, to built up support for ... "Decent Work"! They do not seem to have this "Decent Work" trope really worked out yet. So it would be good if they could get together with some people really knowledgeable about the income guarantee concept.

Both groups could learn from each other. From that they might be able to collaborate on common goals. The trouble with that is, there is not really a well developed income guarantee group in Toronto; one with a good grasp of the object of a BI/GLI.

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January 18 was a busy day for serious Basic Income people like me. The alternative consultation on the BI pilot was held in the afternoon at the Christian Resource Centre at 40 Oak in Regent Park. In the evening the Basic Income Toronto Organization held its latest meeting at Metro Hall, 55 John street.

40 Oak.

It was an almost full house and the people there were highly involved. They were mostly Regent Park people with a good idea of their own interest, and how the world really works. They were often unaware of some aspects of a BI/GLI they needed in order to form good opinions about some aspects of BI.

But they knew what a Low Income Measure is (LIM), and how it is different from the Low Income Cutoff, and why the LICO is not suitable as a marker for social policy. How nice of some economists to come up with LIM for us. The LIM, by the way, is \$1820 a month for a single person in a big city. That is \$22000 a year.

What about zones, with people in low cost areas getting less money from a GLI? These people were bright on this as well. You do not want small cities subsidizing big ones. People should be encouraged to move to where it is cheaper to live if they do not have a particular reason to be in the expensive population centres.

The only problem I had was that there was a lot of background noise. My ears are getting old. This was held in the cafeteria room and each table was pretty close together. That is why I had some trouble with the topic of money to "families". Of course, Demogrants go to individuals and a child grant goes to the mother. Sending money to "family units" means letting the husband dominate the wife, a real "1950s" idea. The idea of splitting one income among two people living together seems to be about bringing that back in by stealth. I ended up arguing with someone about this before I figured out over the noise that she was really agreeing with me on this point. I think.

As for how the "pilot" should be run, someone thought test subjects should be chosen "randomly", not from a given area. It was also brought up again that the \$1350 proposed by Segal would not be enough. Someone who really likes the idea of tying a BI to the local cost of living, brought that up again.

We got to how a BI would really be delivered. Someone thought there should be a caregiver grant as well, but there was strong agreement that this was redundant if the caregiver is already getting a BI. Also, that there should be a disability grant to go with a BI, but not as in Segal's \$500 a month idea. Some people will not need it, others will need much more. The disability grant should be customized to the individual. Amen to that.

Some bright bulb chipped in that regarding disabilities, money may not solve people's problems. Alas, we were only here to talk about getting money to people. Someone will have to pay social workers to deal with people's non monetary problems.

A very good question was; what if you have a problem while receiving income from the "pilot" and need to appeal a decision? Who do you go to? The social assistance tribunal? The Labor Relations Board? Human rights Tribunal?

Another issue was; the Negative Income Tax versus the Demogrant. There is some scepticism about whether either of these would help those who "really need it". There

was concern about whether the Demogrant will mean that the available money will be spread too thin. This is unfortunate as it comes from the “scarcity” delusion.

If a Demogrant goes to everybody without condition, then will get to everybody. Or, at least everybody who wants to be got to. It should even be able to reach homeless people. At least people know that the Demogrant exists as an option. I found I could not get into this discussion as I would have liked because I just could not hear clearly.

What would a successful Pilot look like? Indicators include; health, life choices, education, and administrative efficiency. As for this latter, I assume as compared to social assistance. One perceptive individual said she did not want to see a “life choice police.” Other points; people should not be treated as guinea pigs. What will happen to the study subjects when all this is done? How will people in the control group be treated? How will the privacy of all participants be protected?

Shiela from BICN

As this event concluded, I ran into Shiela Regehr from Basic Income Canada Network. We chatted a bit about how they are doing. No idea of when the next Canadian forum will be held. She said one was going on in The States this summer. Alas, she is still committed to this relationship with the U.S. group, and alternating congresses in the US and Canada, despite it becoming obvious at the congress last May that the two country’s BI groups have little in common. As well, they are moving further apart. Not many Americans even came up here.

She is worried that BICN cannot raise money for anywhere. No funding agencies are interested. Something is really missing with BICN and I am not sure exactly what. That is partly because the board is so secretive.

55 John street and BITO

However, I know exactly what BITO is missing; a chair and secretary. As one of my favourite organizers, someone who has helped start many new groups has said; any new group needs someone to get it going. There has to be a commitment there; she says you have to be able to spend at least twenty hours a week to keep any volunteer group running.

I have watched BITO flounder since it was started two years ago in someone’s living room. It is being run by some people who think they can do it all on the fly over their cellphones. They are too busy trying to get their arts projects going to make any commitment.

The usual time of a BITO meeting is the third Tuesday of each month. The December meet up was cancelled due to Christmas. This month it fell on the 17th but they could not get through to the Metro hall staff in time so it came on the 18th.

So four people showed up. The leader of BITO, who arranged the meeting, sent regrets. One of the convenors breezed in late and as we got talking about the need for some organization, he assured us he was a well qualified organizer and wanted to help us get organized. However, we would have to wait until he finished an organizing job he had going on out of town.

Nonetheless, we had a pretty good hour long discussion. We noted the irony of having a need to appoint some officers to the group, who can keep the basic structural stuff going, but how do we do that if there is never a quorum? And how many people is a quorum, anyway? How many people qualify as members of the group? Everyone on the e-mail list even if they have never been to a meeting? Hm...

The most interesting person at the table was the lady from Niagara who works two days a week in T.O. She talked about making a deputation to the Niagara regional council about a BI. You get ten minutes to talk there, instead of the five or even three minutes allowed by the Toronto city council. She subsequently answered questions from councillors for 45 minutes.

But from that she came away with a clear understanding of the BI movement's problem. We have never worked out the mechanics. If you want people to agree with you they have to know what they are agreeing to.

Where the BITO group goes from here, I really do not know.

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Lastly, the feisty folks of **HSAG, soon to be renamed SHAPE**, are still in the battle. The next meeting will be this coming Thursday, January 26, at the usual place; 955 Queen street east, Riverdale Community Health Network, at the usual time; 1:30 to 3:30.