

# Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze

## March 19, 2017



There is a group called “Why Should I Care?” that keeps holding public discussions on interesting topics in a restaurant. This makes it hard for people with limited funds to participate, although the topics are often very interesting to anti-poverty and Basic Income proponents.

The topic on March 20 is political parties for city council. If you have watched the progress of the last city budget, and the stone wall up against anything remotely “poverty relief”, like lower transit fares or reduced recreation fee, you would be impressed by the need for a structural reform of city government. This will be a topic in future for this newsletter.

But why is this interesting to BI/GLI proponents? You cannot silo the Income Guarantees issue. We have to ally with other progressive initiatives which are able to get out of the box of “what is, is all that can be” thinking. BI is naturally part of a triad of reforms, along with a deep democracy and a “steady state” economy. I will talk a lot more about this in future.

In the meantime, you might want to attend;

### **Introducing Political Parties to City Council**

March 20 at 7:30pm At the Madison Avenue Pub, 14 Madison avenue in the annex.

You get more details and RSVP at:

<http://whyshouldicare.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=49814f037bc23c56222deca06&id=865949a37d&e=09c1c1f2eb>

Although it does not seem really necessary to RSVP. It is often standing room only. You can get some fries for \$4.



## **Suppose we held a Salon and nobody came....**

The attendance at the March 18 salon was exactly one; me. No doubt the snowstorm scared a lot of people off.

I am going to hold a series of six of these and see if I can get a serious group together, before I give it up. If so, the last would be May 13. I don't really need a huge turn out either, so I have adopted a strategy of promoting it weakly at first, then more aggressively.

I know some people who have succeeded in putting effective groups together for various things. It often takes a while to get some people coming. So you need a space you can use repeatedly for awhile.

Getting something like a good working group on a GLI will be an uphill battle in Toronto. People do not like to get involved in new groups because of the hyper partisan behaviour that tends to go on in this city. What are wanted are adherents to the party line and campaign workers who come out when called, not people with other approaches to suggest.

Also, fewer people have the ability to participate; it is a divided city of the precariate and the privileged. In a city which most needs a GLI, it is hard to find people with any time to support it or even learn about it.

But beyond that, as a few other GLI people have noted, the powers that be have done a pretty good job of neutralizing discussion or activity toward an income guarantee. A good part of the problem has been the BI movement itself, which has never spelled out what they mean by a BI. Thus, we have people using the same language to talk about different things, mostly bad things for the precariate.

The Basic Income Canada Network has endorsed the two provincial pilot projects, thus alienating the kind of people it should be trying to attract to its cause. This has been a problem with the post 1986 BI movement; it is made up of philosophy and social science professors. Such people have the idea they must accommodate to all possible positions about an income

guarantee, unable to grasp that some are totally contradictory. But their core belief centres around the “welfare reformer” version of BI.

I will elaborate on this below, as I discuss a very interesting article which I will pass on, comparing it with something I wrote awhile back.

But The Pilot has all discussion of BI “checkmated”. People need relief now, but all welfare reform will wait until The Pilot gets played out and the results analyzed, maybe ten years from now. In order to have any credibility with the anti-poverty movement, the key constituency which BI advocates need to reach, we are forced to separate ourselves from BICN. The Pilot locks in a “Negative Income Tax” model of BI, something very bad for low income people.

As well, it immobilizes the federal government. The Liberal government keeps talking about a “poverty strategy” but it has a doctrine of provincial “partnership” with itself on social programs. And they say they will not look into a BI plan themselves until provincial pilots are played out.

The federal Liberals are holding national consultations on a poverty strategy, but as far as I have been able to determine, nobody is talking to them about an income guarantee, least of all BICN. This is really sad.

It is also sad that we cannot get a good group of people together to use such a perfect meeting place. It is a nice little space with a view out onto Queen street. Across the hall is a kitchen facility which we could also use. It has whiteboards, a projector screen, and a computer connection.

It is easy to get to. It is on the Queen streetcar line at Broadview just across the river.

I even brought some juice and cookies. It was not wasted. I shared it with the girl’s dance class using the room next door.

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Yes, the conversation is a mess. I can give some pretty good insights into why it is a mess, but first read this article below.

## **The Conversation About Basic Income is a Mess.** Here's How to Make Sense of It.

<http://economics.com/basic-income-conversation-make-sense-charlie-young/>

Here is my grandly titled "**Statement about Policy and Strategy for Basic Income Canada Network**". I can't believe I wrote it four years ago now. My thinking has evolved a lot since then and so has the territory. But the basic ideas are still valid.

<http://www.livingrant.ch/rede/statement%20BICN.pdf>

Now, I will have to update this soon and try to condense it into a brochure which we can, we hope, print up in some quantities and start getting it out to anti-poverty groups and such BI people as have some doubts about the way the conversation has gone.

What Charlie Young has described are;

1. The Miltie Friedman/libertarian decoy response to BI, which was developed in response to the initiatives of the 1960s and has not changed much since then. I pity the idiots who think libertarian is a viable proposition. I say "idiotes" as in the ancient Athenians who thought democracy was interfering with their private lives and would not participate in it. It is the source of the modern English word "idiot".
2. The recalibrated welfare state. He describes this pretty much right. It is going to make welfare easier to administer. It is not really going to help any real people.
3. He is confused by all the "funny money" people who swarm around the Basic Income debate, obsessed by their hobby horse monetary schemes and charlatan theories. They really have nothing to do with the debate and generally no understanding or interest in the point of a BI. But yes, an income guarantee is ultimately about sharing equitably the common wealth of the earth's resources and the results of human scientific and technical achievement.

He misses a big motive behind fake BI schemes; getting a subsidized labor force. That is, a wage top up so people can be made to work for less.

But what the Income Guarantee movement is really about, before it gets coopted by all this other shit, is about human rights. It is about making a world worth living in for future generations. We are at the point where capitalism has effectively collapsed and we are entering an interval during which we will decide whether to sink into a new form of feudalism, or rise to true socialism.

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**The next HSAG meet up** is at the usual time and place. Thursday, March 23, 1:30 to 3:30 South Riverdale Community Health Center, 765 Queen street east. We will hear about Paul and his harm reduction speech at Herzing, and maybe get some planning done on applying for a grant, etc.

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For what it is worth, here is the **Province's summary of The BI Pilot Consultations.**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/basic-income-consultations-what-we-heard#section-4>

It is pretty dismal reading. Of course, these consultations never agreed with the idea of a pilot project. From the information I have been able to assemble about how they went, people really demanded more information. There was at least one occasion where several tables revolted and demanded a Demogrant.

What these consults were about was a mild application of the Delphi technique. There is a lot of information on the net about this unethical method of creating an appearance of consensus and agreement. Much of it comes from far right groups, some from far left groups, and not enough left

from moderate activist groups. But below is a link to one of the more moderate and clear explanations of the Delphi technique and how to defeat it.

<http://www.vlrc.org/articles/110.html>

The report gives a single paragraph to “comments beyond Basic Income”, mentioning only “Put food in the budget”. It did not mention that at every single consultation the assembled group voted to support PFIB’s statement about raising OW and ODSP rates to what was recommended in Segal’s report.

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## **Hold the Presses!**

Just got a message from Robyn, about something written by a BI “expert” and the general situation. Yes, the forces against universality and adequacy are formidably arrayed, but at least the scoundrels are showing their true faces. We can start to regroup the movement toward a Universal, Livable, income.

Hi Tim,

I've attached a copy of the article Evelyn Forget wrote and published last year in Alberta Views.

<http://www.livingrant.ch/curdocs/Forget%20-%20Guaranteed%20Income.pdf>

She, of course, is famous for her work on retrieving and publicizing the results of the MINCOME project. In her article she seems to focus tightly on the idea of a basic income as a replacement for social assistance, with a few exceptions. She is not clear on the amount of this income and hints that it might well be less than the poverty line (shades of Hugh Segal).

She advocates a clawback approach on payments, which to my mind represents a 50% tax on earnings beyond the amount paid by a basic income programme. Why we can't leave the regular tax system to handle things is beyond me. Clawback seems to add an additional bureaucratic feature that isn't necessary.

Forget uses the word "universal" at least once, but what she's advocating isn't universal; it's only for the "poor" however defined. She also seems hung up on the idea of not discouraging people from seeking jobs.

As a recognized expert in the field, she will be listened to by our policymakers. Hugh Segal is certainly being listened to. And the key people at BICN seem to be tripping over each other for joy at the limited "pilot" approach the Ontario government is proposing (with a provincial election now a year-and-a-half away).

Obviously, the whole universal and livable income approach has now become a major uphill battle in this province and in this country. The forces now arrayed in support of something less than universal and less than livable are now mighty indeed.

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**Next GLI breeze is due March 26.**