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## **NPI conference explores guaranteed basic income**

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THUNDER BAY -- Northern Ontario's think tank believes the province should pilot its guaranteed minimum income project in the region and it plans to hold a conference in October to discuss the project's potential.

The Northern Policy Institute announced it will bring together voices that can monitor progress of the prospective policy in Sudbury on Oct. 5-6.

"There's lots of skill and experience here in the north," said NPI president Charles Cirtwell.

"We have social workers, economists, lawyers, people who do economic development. We've got the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, lots of research in that area. Of course, a basic income program has impacts across the board: economic impacts, health impacts, social impacts.

"You need to have that inter-disciplinary capability and certainly, it exists in spades here."

The basic income guarantee pilot was introduced as a line item in Ontario's 2016 budget. It would provide a payment to eligible families or individuals that ensures a minimum level of income. The core idea behind this policy means that everyone would be guaranteed some basic amount of money upon which to live.

Cirtwell said he's confident the conference's timing will suit the province's timeline as Northern Ontario demonstrates the analytic capacity that exists in the region to observe many aspects of the income guarantee rollout, should a regional site be chosen.

"We need to understand and discuss what are the metrics we want to look at when we want to assess basic income," he said.

It's not just a cash exercise. It's not just, 'how much do we spend on a basic income and how much do we save on cutting some of our existing social service programs?' It's also about the health impact, the long-term savings in terms of justice costs, the long-term savings in terms of people going to work, getting a job and paying taxes."

NPI has [previously suggested](#) a mid-sized city by regional standards be selected for the basic income guarantee pilot, such as North Bay (population: 64,000), Kenora (population: 15,000) or Kapuskasing (population 8,200).

Registration is now open for the conference, which will be held October 5-6th at the Hellenic Centre in Sudbury, Ontario. To register, visit [www.BIG2016NPI.ca](http://www.BIG2016NPI.ca)

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