

Sudbury conference to explore the idea of a basic income guarantee

Ontario plans to support a basic income guarantee pilot project in the near future

September 17, 2016 Jonathan Migneault



A basic income guarantee is an unconditional payment to eligible families or individuals that ensures a minimum level of income. File photo.

With a basic income guarantee pilot program in the works for Ontario, the Northern Policy Institute wants to get ahead of the curve with a Sudbury conference to explore the form of social security.

A basic income guarantee is an unconditional 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.

The province has appointed former senator, political strategist and academic Hugh Segal to write a discussion paper to help inform the design and implementation of the basic income guarantee pilot, on a pro bono basis.

The discussion paper, which is expected to be published this fall, will include advice about potential criteria for selecting target populations and/or locations, delivery models and advice about how the province could evaluate the results of the basic income pilot.

Right around the time Segal's discussion paper should be released, the Northern Policy Institute will host its [Basic Income Guarantee Conference](#) at Sudbury's Hellenic Centre on Wednesday Oct. 5 and Thursday, Oct. 6.

Charles Cirtwill, the president and CEO of the Northern Policy Institute, said he has been interested in the idea of a basic income guarantee since he was in high school.

“I think if you look at the economic theory it makes a lot of sense,” he said.

But Cirtwill said that while a basic income guarantee might be a good idea in theory, many details need to be ironed out before the province's pilot program.

Cirtwill said the provincial government will need to carefully consider the community that will serve as a testing ground for a basic income guarantee, the type of model it should test, and how to assess the impacts from the pilot.

Ontario's pilot program will not be the first time Canada has experimented with a basic income guarantee.

From 1975 to 1978 the federal government and the government of Manitoba supported a guaranteed annual income pilot program, dubbed Mincome, in the town of Dauphin, Manitoba.

University of Manitoba economist Evelyn Forget has recently analyzed the results from the experiment and found that during period Mincome was administered, hospital visits dropped 8.5 per cent, with fewer incidents of work-related injuries, and fewer emergency room visits from accidents and injuries.

The period saw a reduction in rates of psychiatric hospitalization, and in the number of mental illness-related consultations with health professionals.

One of the big concerns around a basic income guarantee is that it could remove incentives for people to work and contribute to the economy.

Forget, who will be speaking at the Northern Policy Institute conference, found that only new mothers and teenagers in Dauphin worked substantially less during the experiment.

But critics have argued that because the experiment was always intended to last only a few years, most people continued to work as much, knowing their incomes would not be supplemented forever.

Cirtwill said anyone can attend the Basic Income Guarantee Conference, although there is a [\\$100 registration fee](#).

Speakers from across Canada will discuss a number of issues, including the possible models for a basic income guarantee system, how much it might cost, whether its worthwhile, and the impact such a system could have on indigenous communities.



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