

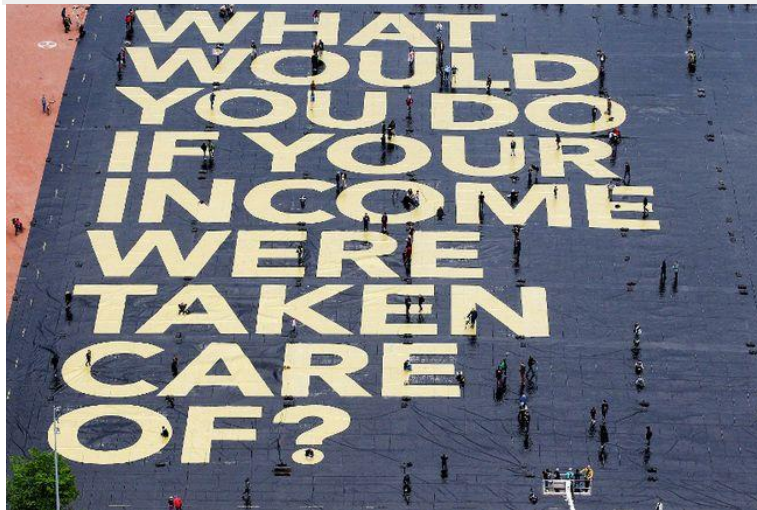


## NEWS LOCAL

### Sudbury conference stresses need to consult

By [Mary Katherine Keown](#), The Sudbury Star

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A huge poster reading "What would you do if your income were taken care of?" is pictured on the Plaine de Plainpalais square in Geneva, Switzerland. (File photo)

A guaranteed income would go a long way in helping out the poor, participants heard this week at the Basic Income Guarantee conference, hosted by the Northern Policy Institute.

Gayle Broad, an assistant professor in the community economic and social development program at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, believes those benefits could be extended to people living in Aboriginal communities.

"We heard some very compelling evidence about the benefits of a guaranteed income transfer of some sort and certainly when it comes to health care (and) completion of high school -- there's some very good evidence about great improvements," she said Thursday. "But so much depends on the way it's delivered."

Broad believes a guaranteed income would help Indigenous communities, but she said consultation is vital for the success of any program.

"It's not that I don't think they should do it. I think they should do it, and I think it could be done very well and have some benefits, but I also think that for a First Nations community, they're very different from municipalities and other rural communities, so the government needs to consult with them very closely, even before they introduce or pilot it."

Without consultation, the benefits may not be realized, Broad argued.

While she speaks in generalizations, for the purposes of making the information manageable, she reminds listeners that factors and living situations vary across reserves.

For example, Broad says 47 per cent of the housing in Indigenous communities needs repairs, whereas outside First Nations communities, that number is only seven per cent. There are boil water advisories in place across the country and child benefit rates are seven per cent lower than in non-Aboriginal communities.

"The government provides less money for the education of First Nation students than they do for other students," Broad also said. "These things -- the rates, the benefits -- they have to be looked at very carefully to see if they're going to address the poverty circumstances of a First Nations community. I'll say again what I said at the beginning -- consultation is really crucial."

Consultation is set to begin in November and should run through June 2017. But Broad said it has to be completed in a real and participatory way.

"What's this consultation going to look like? Is it going to be a consultation that First Nations communities can really participate in? Who's going to be invited from First Nations communities to participate in it? Are they going to listen to everyone from front line workers to treaty representatives," Broad asked. "The design will take into account the fact there is a real diversity in First Nations communities themselves."

The income guarantee would address some of the most severe impacts of poverty, Broad said, including food insecurity, housing and water.

"A basic income guarantee cannot necessarily address all of those things, so in my mind, if you want to address poverty within First Nations communities, you not only have to provide a basic income guarantee, but there has to be a lot of other programs and services delivered along with it."

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