



Next Premier of Prince Edward Island to Promote BIG

It is welcome news that the next Premier of Prince Edward Island is committed to exploring a Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) program for Island citizens. It is understood that this will be in the form of a demonstration project of at least five-to-seven years.

During the Leaders' Forum on Women's Issues held April 14, 2015, at Holland College, each one of the party leaders endorsed a Basic Income Guarantee program as a poverty reduction strategy. Members of the PEI Working Group for Livable Income (WGLI), a community group actively promoting BIG, were extremely pleased to hear the four party leaders state their commitment to BIG. Whichever party forms the next government after May 4, there is no doubt that they will be exploring BIG as a long-term program to eliminate poverty in PEI.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of the Forum was the explicit endorsement from PC leader Rob Lantz, who stated, "I am going to advance the idea that we should explore a pilot project based on this idea of a Basic Income Guarantee... (BIG) would give people resources and the ability to live with dignity... There are economic benefits that would reach across the province... We are the perfect location for this type of pilot project."

Liberal leader Wade MacLauchlan also voiced the support of his party and went so far as to call for a model program, not just a pilot, with potential for long-term established benefits: "We'd be actively interested in pursuing that (Basic Income Guarantee)... I'd call it a model program and build in a commitment to evidence-based research and action-based research."



Green leader Peter Bevan-Baker, PC leader Rob Lantz, forum moderator Jill Lightwood, Liberal leader Wade MacLauchlan, and NDP leader Mike Redmond at the Leaders' Forum on Women's Issues, April 14, 2015. Photo credit: Dawn Wilson.

The Green Party of PEI has Basic Income Guarantee enshrined in its policy platform, *Real Change 2015*, in which they call for establishing a Commission to recommend a model of BIG. Leader Peter Bevan-Baker pointed out that the Greens have been advocates of BIG for many years, "Basic income guarantee is a wonderful idea... It is an absolute priority of a Green government." He also added, "A Basic Income Guarantee provides freedoms for people... It allows them to make choices."

NDP leader Mike Redmond has also endorsed Basic Income Guarantee since the idea was first floated as a policy for PEI a few years ago. Redmond also noted that in addition to implementing BIG, there are many other social programs that need to be strengthened or revamped to provide Islanders with adequate supports and services, including transportation, housing, food security, and livable wages.

The PEI Working Group for Livable Income (WGLI) has held in-depth consultations on BIG in Island communities for the past two years. The most common attitude of participants has been enthusiasm for a real

long-term solution to poverty; what we have now is not working. WGLI will continue to represent the voice of the community in whatever processes the government will put in place to prepare for implementation of a BIG demonstration project, a model program, in Prince Edward Island. Furthermore, the Working Group for a Livable Income, with the support of the wider community, will mentor the content and process of BIG every step of the way.

– Marie Burge, Working Group
for a Livable Income

C-BIG
CAMPAIGN FOR A BASIC INCOME
GUARANTEE FOR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

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