

## BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE POSITION PAPER

### Basic Income Guarantee Position Statement

A Basic Income Guarantee will ensure that all Canadians have universal and unconditional access to a regular income that pays for the basic necessities of life, such as food, housing, transportation and clothing, while allowing for full participation in society.

### Background

If you are not personally affected by poverty, it's important to understand that it's not just something that happens to an individual or a family in isolation. Poverty carries significant human and economic consequences for the entire community. In Niagara, these costs are estimated to be 1.38 billion dollars per year.<sup>1</sup>

We believe that a Basic Income Guarantee is a necessary approach whose time has come. Recent attempts at addressing poverty have failed either because the strategies have not been fully invested, or because they are downstream approaches that fail to address the root causes of poverty.

There is overwhelming evidence to support that poverty is a growing epidemic in our community. From increasing dependence on food banks<sup>2</sup>, extremely long wait list times for affordable housing<sup>3</sup>, a rise in social assistance caseloads<sup>4</sup>, and a higher percentage of our community members living in poverty<sup>5</sup>, it's painfully clear that poverty not only persists, but it has deepened.

An inability to escape poverty is not the failings of the individual. Opportunities for gainful, stable employment are few and far between.<sup>6</sup> Instead we are witnessing a steady increase in precarious and involuntary part-time employment<sup>7</sup> coupled alongside of technological advances which are giving way to an ever increasing robotized workforce. With these shifts in the labour market, we can fully anticipate that income insecurity will persist and become a concern for a growing number of people in Niagara.

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<sup>1</sup> Niagara Community Observatory. September 2012. Are the consequences of poverty holding Niagara back? Retrieved from [http://www.brocku.ca/webfm\\_send/23225](http://www.brocku.ca/webfm_send/23225)

<sup>2</sup> Food Banks Canada. 2014. Hunger Count Report. Retrieved from [http://www.foodbanksCanada.ca/getmedia/7739cdf-72d5-4cee-85e9-54d456669564/HungerCount\\_2014\\_EN.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](http://www.foodbanksCanada.ca/getmedia/7739cdf-72d5-4cee-85e9-54d456669564/HungerCount_2014_EN.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf). Number of people utilizing this service remains 25% higher than in 2008. This means that each and every month, 170,000 more people walk through the door of a food bank than was the case before the economic downturn. 19.2% increase from 2008-2014 in Ontario.

<sup>3</sup> Niagara Regional Housing. Affordable housing wait list times. Retrieved from <http://www.nrh.ca/pdf/Wait%20Times%20Chart.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Living in Niagara Report. The average number of Ontario Works cases per year reported by Niagara Region Community Services rose sharply from 7,457 to 8,902 in 2009 and rose further to 9,731 in 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.livinginniagarareport.com/09-economic-development-poverty-prosperity-2011/social-assistance-in-niagara/>

<sup>5</sup> Living in Niagara 2014. 17.1% of women in Niagara live below LICO. 14.7% men in Niagara live below the LIOC. Retrieved from <http://www.livinginniagarareport.com/09-economic-development-poverty-prosperity-2011/the-gap-between-the-rich-and-the-poor-and-for-different-groups-in-niagara/>

<sup>6</sup> Niagara Workforce and Planning Board. December 2014. Reasons for part-time employment. Over 50,000 people in Niagara were interested in working full-time, but could not find full-time work in the last month.

<sup>7</sup> Niagara Workforce and Planning Board. December 2014. The percentage of involuntary part-time employment has increased steadily between 2000 and 2013: 22.3% in 2000 and 32% in 2013.

If we keep doing the same thing we can expect the same results. It's time for a different approach.

A basic income guarantee is an upstream common sense strategy that invests in humans and allows us to honour our commitment to human rights. It is the most effective and efficient way not only to reduce poverty, but to end it.

***Benefits of a Basic Income Guarantee. A basic income guarantee will...***

- Bolster the local economy
- End the stress and instability that results from low wages, uncertain employment and inadequate social assistance rates
- Create a fair system that minimizes government intrusion and requires less bureaucracy to implement than existing social assistance programs
- Allow people to work within their abilities
- Stimulate and support creativity and entrepreneurship
- Reduce the burden on the health care and judicial systems
- Improve mental and physical health
- Reduce domestic violence and family breakdown
- Encourage citizen engagement
- Improves school attendance

BIG Resources:

For a comprehensive listing of BIG resources, visit <http://www.thebigpush.net/resources.html>