

Basic Income and Food Security

ReThinking Food Charity: A Community Conversation

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Arriving at Basic Income

My journey to today - converging pathways

Structural Violence & Criminal Social Systems

Poverty in Canada is an act of violence perpetrated by policy that Criminalises and disregards those who live in poverty - food insecurity, along with housing insecurity, is the most visceral and egregious of this violence.

Food Systems & Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is not an isolated phenomenon, and is inextricably linked to our market based food system. Participation in this market, at the individual level, is predicated on ones economic means. Therefore, ones food security is the direct outcome of ones income security and ability to participate in the market.

Understanding Basic Income

What is a basic income in the Canadian context?

A basic income is an unconditional cash transfer from government to individuals to enable everyone to meet their basic needs, participate in society, and live with dignity, regardless of work status.

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

A UBI is a basic income that is paid to all qualified residents of a community (city, province/state, nation).

Everyone receives the same amount.

The amount, or a portion of it, is taxed back as the income of the individual rises (taxable benefit).

e.g. Alaska Dividend

Much more expensive

BICN's Policy Options estimated the annual cost of a UBI (paid to all adults in Canada) at \$637 billion at the outset (the amount declines over time as amounts are recouped through taxes).

Guaranteed Liveable Income (GLI)

A GLI is a basic income that is based on financial need.

Works like a tax credit, an individual with no income would receive the full benefit, which is tax-free. As income from other sources rises, the GLI decreases.

e.g. Ontario Basic Income Pilot, Canada Child Benefit

Cost varies based on program details

BICN's Policy Options estimated the annual cost of a GLI to range from \$134 billion (paid to all adults aged 18 - 64) to \$187 billion (paid to all adults).

Basic Income and Food Security

Implications, benefits, and limitations

- **A well designed basic income can improve food security by addressing the root cause of why people do not have enough nutritious food by:**
 - Increasing their income
 - Being available when it is needed, without cumbersome, intrusive, and demeaning bureaucratic processes
- **Evidence shows that a national basic income could lift Canadians out of poverty:**
 - Analysis from CANCEA (supported by UBI Works) showed that a basic income would lift millions of Canadians out of poverty, increasing the income of the lowest income Canadians by as much as 3 times.
 - Recent analysis from Statistics Canada on the trends in poverty showed that poverty rate in Canada fell to 8.1% in 2020, from 14.5% in 2015 - this was driven by increases in government transfers, such as the CCB and pandemic relief benefits.
- **Basic income promotes dignified access to food, based on personal need and choice**

Basic Income and Food Charity

Imagining what is possible

- Start this discussion with two ideas:
 - There is an idea that food charity is the wrong response to food insecurity and that most, if not all food charities should not exist.
 - The idea that basic income is not the ultimate solution to the food security challenges that we are increasingly facing, which are largely driven by a global, market based food system. A basic income does not necessarily challenge this, but does provide individuals with improved access to it.
 - A basic income provides us, in the community food sector, with a chance to shift our focus away from individuals (at least partially) toward communities.
- The idea of Food as a part of the Commons

What can you do?

The role of food charities in the basic income movement

- Get involved here at home:
 - The recent Health Accord calls for a basic income - understand what this means and start organising to put pressure on elected officials and policy makers to act on this recommendation
- Get involved regionally:
 - There is work happening in PEI to get the federal government to support a provincial basic income pilot (Coalition Canada)
- Get involved federally:
 - Look for campaigns from UBI Works, BICN, and Basic Income Now
 - Support calls for national legislation by engaging your MPs

Thank you!

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