

# Have your say in Ontario's Basic Income Pilot

A Community Facilitator's Guide

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Created by



With support from



**Regent Park**  
COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

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## INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

The ODSP Action Coalition, with the support of the Regent Park Community Food Centre (CFC) and the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO), has developed this community consultation guide to assist people on Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to participate meaningfully in Ontario's Basic Income Pilot consultations.

Basic Income is an issue that has been on the radar of many countries for a long time. There are currently several countries around the world that will be testing various forms of Basic Income to see if they are feasible to implement. Canada has done one other comprehensive pilot which took place in the 1970s in Dauphin and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

As part of their income security reform work, the Ontario government asked former-Senator, the Honourable Hugh Segal, to develop his recommendations about what a Basic Income Pilot in Ontario could look like.

The Discussion Paper which he prepared was released to the public in November 2016 and can be found here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/finding-better-way-basic-income-pilot-project-ontario>

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is currently consulting with the public about the recommendations in Mr. Segal's paper to organize the Pilot.

Consultations will take place until January 31<sup>st</sup>, and a plan for the Pilot should be released by April 2017, with implementation following.

We've developed this community consultation guide to assist people on OW and ODSP, advocacy groups and community organizations to facilitate their own consultations to deliver feedback to the province.

The government has developed a consultation guide which can be found here for your reference: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-guide-basic-income-pilot-project>. Our questions are similar to those in the official facilitation guide however we've adapted these to reflect a broader definition of Basic Income and to get at the issues that advocacy groups and people on OW and ODSP want to talk about.

Included at the back of the guide are some tips on how to compile the notes from the consultation into a report. We would appreciate getting a copy of your consultation report, which you can email to us at [odspactioncoalition@gmail.com](mailto:odspactioncoalition@gmail.com).

## Who We Are

The ODSP Action Coalition is a province-wide network of people with lived experience on ODSP, disability organizations, community agencies, anti-poverty groups and community legal clinics. We push for improvements to the Ontario Disability Support Program so that people with disabilities can live with justice and dignity.

The Regent Park Community Food Centre is a partnership between CRC and Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC), a national organization that's driving the development of Community Food Centres across the country. It builds on CRC's history of serving the community by expanding its meal, advocacy, food skills, park coordination, and gardening programs. And it uses the principles of the Community Food Centre model of creating a space where the community can come together to grow, cook, share, and advocate for good food. Consistent with CRC's mission, "building lives, creating community, together", it provides community members with access to high-quality food in a dignified setting that doesn't compromise their self-worth. It provides the space and tools to develop cooking and gardening skills and experiment with new foods. And it provides the opportunity for participants to find their voices on the issues that matter to them, to make friends, and to find supports.

SSO is a charitable health organization that supports individuals, families, caregivers and communities affected by schizophrenia and psychosis across Ontario. For over 30 years we have made positive changes in the lives of people affected by schizophrenia, by building supportive communities, through services and education, advocating for system change and conducting research into the psychosocial factors that directly affect mental illness.

To find out more about the ODSP Action Coalition, the Regent Park CFC and SSO, check out our websites:

ODSP Action Coalition: [www.odspaction.ca](http://www.odspaction.ca)  
Regent Park Community Food Centre: [www.tcrc.ca](http://www.tcrc.ca)  
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario: [www.schizophrenia.on.ca](http://www.schizophrenia.on.ca)

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The facilitator's guide is divided into four sections:

- Set up for the community consultation
- Suggested agenda and introduction
- Community consultation questions
- Addendums
  - Writing the community consultation report
  - Hosting a backgrounder session
  - Fact sheets
  - Resources

The ODSP Action Coalition, Regent Park CFC and SSO are committed to supporting people on OW and ODSP to play leadership roles in our advocacy efforts and their own communities. We encourage you to ask people on OW or ODSP to co-facilitate this workshop with you.

To facilitate this community consultation, you will need to have the following documents:

- Discussion Questions: Pages 10-21 of this guide (one copy per facilitator)

These handouts are also available on the ODSP Action Coalition website:

[www.odspaction.ca](http://www.odspaction.ca)

- Membership Form: ODSP Action Coalition
- ODSP Action Coalition and the Income Security Advocacy Centre – Ontario's Basic Income Pilot Consultations: Key issues for people on OW and ODSP

## SETUP FOR THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The community consultation is designed for between ten and 25 participants and is two hours long.

In addition to the session you may choose to host a backgrounder session which could be held before the consultation to provide additional information and context about the proposed Basic Income Pilot project (See Addendum 2 for more information on hosting a backgrounder session).

We recommend using **one facilitator and one note-taker** (who are assigned this task before the workshop) for each small group. It will be very important for the note takers to take good notes, as they will be the source of the information you use to prepare your workshop report for MCSS.

### Room Set-up:

#### Groups of 10 participants or less:

- For a smaller group of 10 people or less, the community consultation questions (pages 10-20 of this guide) can be discussed together as one group with one or two facilitator(s) and a note-taker.
- The best set-up for a group this size is up to 5 people seated around tables in a semi-circle facing the front of the room.



- Ensure the space is wheelchair accessible and scent-free.

### **Groups of more than 10 participants:**

- The best set-up for this participatory workshop is small groups of 5 to 7 people seated around tables.



- Each table should have a print out of the community consultation questions (pages 10-21 of this guide). There are 18 questions to discuss in just one hour and 40 minutes. To do all of them may be challenging. Here are three ways to consider for how the meeting could proceed:
  - Allow each table to decide which questions they are interested in discussing most and then work through as many as they can.
  - Facilitators may want to decide in advance which questions you want to focus on and either not ask the others or give them less time.
  - Assign each table to focus on certain topics and questions, and invite people to choose to sit at the table that deals with the questions they are most interested in.
- Because participants will not be reporting back on every question, it is very important that there is a note-taker at each of the tables taking detailed notes. This will be the information that is used to make your workshop report to MCSS.
- **Don't forget to pick up the notes afterwards from each table.**
- Note-takers may also want to help move conversation along so that all of the questions are discussed in the limited time available. If only a few people are dominating discussion, encourage others to share their ideas too.
- Each table should have a print out of the community consultation questions – depending on the number of tables you have, you can assign each table to focus on certain topics and questions. Once assigned, you can invite people to move to another table if they are more interested in a specific category of questions.
- Ensure the space is wheelchair accessible and scent-free.
- Ensure there are accessible power outlets for your laptop and projector.

### **Registration:**

- Collect names / telephone number / email / mailing address on a sign-in sheet
- Provide name tags for participants

**Supplies – make sure you prepare these in advance to have for the workshop:**

- Registration sheet /contact list
- Name tags
- Flip chart stand(s) and paper (per table for groups over 10 participants; or one for the front of the room for groups of 10 people or less)
- Agenda already written on one sheet of flip chart paper
- Masking tape
- Large-sized odorless markers (for facilitators)
- 1 set of fine-tipped odorless markers for each table
- Pens and paper for note takers

**Handouts – photocopy these in advance:**

- 10 copies of the Basic Income Pilot consultation discussion paper to have on hand at the back of the room
- One set of community consultation questions (pages 10-21 of this guide) for each table (at least)
- Optional – one for each person who attends the workshop:
  - Membership Form: ODSP Action Coalition
  - ODSP Action Coalition and the Income Security Advocacy Centre – Ontario’s Basic Income Pilot Consultations: Key issues for people on OW and ODSP

## **SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR A 2-HOUR WORKSHOP**

1. (10 mins) Welcome, Introductions & Agenda
2. (15 mins) Section 1: Eligibility
3. (10 mins) Section 2: Selection Sites
4. (40 mins) Section 3: Designing the Benefits
5. (10 mins) Section 4: Delivery of the Basic Income Pilot
6. (25 mins) Section 5: Evaluation
7. (10 mins) Wrap-up

## **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND AGENDA**

**Time:** 10 minutes

**What you need:**

- Agenda on Flip Chart Paper on Stand

What to do:

1. Welcome the group and announce that the community consultation is starting.
2. *Introduce yourselves and your organization or group and why you are holding the workshop:*
  - Earlier this year the Ontario government asked the Hon. Hugh Segal to develop recommendations about how a Basic Income Pilot project could work in Ontario.
  - There is no single definition of Basic Income. It generally refers to a payment to individuals and families that provides some minimum level of income, and doesn't come with all the rules that social assistance imposes. People who advocate for a Basic Income believe that it can help:
    - Lift people out of poverty.
    - Simplify the income security system and help people spend less time navigating a complex system.
    - Improve people's health, empower people to get jobs and help people afford housing.
  - On the other hand, there are legitimate concerns that have been expressed about the potential risks related to Basic Income. These include:
    - Basic income can be used to eliminate other benefits while not providing an adequate amount of income, which would leave people worse off and dismantle the social safety net even further.
    - A taxed-based Basic Income program has the potential for excluding certain groups that may receive OW and ODSP, such as non-status Canadians or people who don't file income tax returns.
  - Mr. Segal's Discussion Paper, called *Finding a Better Way: A Basic Income Pilot Project for Ontario*, was released to the public in November 2016.
  - The provincial government is currently consulting with the public about the recommendations in Mr. Segal's Discussion Paper to create a Basic Income Pilot project.
  - Consultations will take place until January 31<sup>st</sup>, and the final plan for the pilot should be released by April 2017, with implementation following.

- Although we have concerns and questions about how the pilot project would work and whether and how much it would benefit people on social assistance in the long run, we believe it is positive that the Discussion Paper is generating a lot of discussion about the costs of poverty and the need to radically change the punitive, intrusive income system we have now.
  - The government has developed a consultation guide with their own questions. If you haven't yet read the government's consultation guide or Mr. Segal's Discussion Paper, there are some hardcopies available here today.
3. The workshop has been designed by the ODSP Action Coalition, with support from the Regent Park Community Food Centre and the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. These are all advocacy groups working with people on social assistance to improve OW and ODSP.
  4. For the next couple of hours, we are going to get into the issues, ask you a number of questions, and get your feedback on what's in the Discussion Paper.
  5. We will then use this information to put together a report that we will send to MCSS. No participant names will be included in the report.
  6. House-keeping (*Provide house-keeping information including: location of washrooms, space in the venue for people to step out if they need to, handouts people will find at their table*).
  7. Briefly review the agenda and ask if there are any questions.

# Community Consultation Questions<sup>1</sup>

**Time:** 1 hour and 40 minutes

## What you need for each table:

- ❑ Flip chart paper
- ❑ Odorless markers
- ❑ Community consultation questions (pages 10-20)
- ❑ Pens and paper for note-taker

## About this section:

In this section, we have maintained the five sections from the provincial consultation guide and drew heavily on the guide for a backgrounder on each category.

However in some places we have removed questions or altered questions to fit more closely to reflect a broader definition of Basic Income and to get at the issues that advocacy groups and people on OW and ODSP want to talk about.

The ODSP Action Coalition and the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) have highlighted key issues that should be raised during consideration of some of these questions, and those issues will be included in the appropriate sections below

Each category looks at a specific aspect of the Pilot's design. You can use this as a starting point for your discussions and recommendations.

We encourage you to develop your own questions as they arise from the discussion and include that information in your consultation report.

## Section 1: Eligibility

Determining who is eligible to participate in the Basic Income Pilot is one of the first things the government must decide. For example, the Pilot could be designed to include anyone who qualifies based on their current income, with very few other eligibility criteria, like age or residency (where one lives). Or eligibility could be more narrow, targeting specific groups or populations (such as people who are under-employed or newcomers). Broad eligibility criteria may lead to more general results – this means that the results of the Pilot would likely be seen in other parts of Ontario if the Pilot is repeated in other locations. Broad eligibility criteria may also result in more people being included in the Pilot.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Ministry of Community and Social Services (2016). *Consultation Guide for the Basic Income Pilot project*. Retrieved from [https://files.ontario.ca/bi\\_pilot\\_consultationguide\\_nov02.pdf](https://files.ontario.ca/bi_pilot_consultationguide_nov02.pdf)

The Discussion Paper recommends that eligibility to participate in the Basic Income Pilot would depend on:

1. Age – individuals aged 18 to 64 years
2. Residency – individuals who have lived in the Pilot sites for at least one year.

Participation in the Pilot would be voluntary and consent based. No one would be forced to participate. An assessment would still be required to determine whether they qualify, based on their current income. The Discussion Paper highlights some additional ideas like how to include those without a fixed address, and suggests including non-citizens.

### Coalition / ISAC Key Issues

OW and ODSP currently use total family income to determine eligibility. Concerns have long been raised by the Coalition, ISAC and others about the impact that this has on the ability of single people on social assistance (nearly half of all recipients) to enter into relationships and about the financial dependency that this may create for people.

We support testing eligibility based on the individual's income. In this way, people with disabilities will be able to form relationships and still have an income without expecting their partner to fully support them. We also support tracking relationship formation / dissolution to better understand how having an individual source of income impacts on people receiving the Basic Income.

However, if family income is used rather than individual, we support the Mr. Segal's suggestion of that benefit payments should be divided equally and paid to all adults in the family. This would at least give everyone an independent source of income and financial autonomy. However, it would not resolve the problem of people with disabilities who need independent incomes but are ineligible for benefits due to their family's net income.

We agree with Mr. Segal's recommendation that people who are "not yet citizens" should not be excluded from the Basic Income Pilot, but feel this should be expanded to include all those whose immigration status has not yet been regularized but who are currently eligible for OW or ODSP.

We also support Mr. Segal's recommendations around ensuring that Indigenous peoples are offered the opportunity to take part in a Basic Income Pilot, and that any Indigenous pilot that occurs is designed under the prerogative of Indigenous representatives.

Mr. Segal recommends that people with disabilities and those who are caregivers of people with disabilities should receive an additional \$500 per month, on top of the base

Basic Income amount. We feel strongly that the test for whether or not a person qualifies as “disabled” in order for them or their caregiver to get the extra money should be the same as the current test for ODSP.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1.1 Are there specific groups of people or populations who should be targeted in the Pilot, such as the under-employed, social assistance recipients, or newcomers? Why?

1.2 What should the Pilot use to determine financial eligibility? Should eligibility be based on an individual’s income, or should eligibility be determined by total family income? Why?

**Section 2: Site Selection**

A key part of the Pilot’s design will be determining where in the province the Pilot will run. Where they decide to run the Pilot could determine what they are able to measure, and what they can learn from this Pilot.

The Discussion Paper highlights two different types of test sites that could be used for the Pilot: Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT) and saturation site studies.

How RCT Pilot sites would work:

In an RCT study, Pilot participants would be randomly selected to receive the Basic Income benefit. There would also be a control group that would not receive the benefit.

In this consultation guide, we’re going to be using words and acronyms like “Randomized Controlled Trial” or “RCT.” Here is an explanation of those terms:

**WHAT IS A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL?**

A Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) is considered the “gold standard” of research design. Trial participants are randomly selected to receive a treatment or intervention (in this case, the Basic Income benefit), and observed changes of this group are compared against a control group (i.e., participants who don’t get Basic Income).

**WHAT IS A SATURATION SITE STUDY?**

A saturation site study is a research design in which all individuals living within a selected test community are eligible to receive the treatment or intervention (i.e., the Basic Income benefit). This type of study can capture changes at a community level.

The control group would be studied over time to help understand the impact that the Basic Income benefit has on other groups. Mr. Segal recommends an RCT in one large urban area of the province, compared to all of Ontario. This may help to control costs and to make the Pilot more simple.

The Discussion Paper suggests three key considerations when considering a RCT test site:

- 1) It should accurately represent Ontario's population including members of Indigenous communities, racialized communities, immigrants, social assistance recipients, and low income workers. This would ensure that results from a Basic Income could be replicated in other areas of Ontario.
- 2) It should not have large, stabilizing employers, such as large government offices because this could affect how a community responds to the Basic Income Pilot compared to most locations in the province which don't have the same employment opportunities.
- 3) It should have strong support from local, community, and municipal leadership, and delivery partners.

How Saturation Sites would work:

In a saturation site study, all eligible individuals living within a selected test community would be able to receive the Basic Income benefit. Unlike the RCT, this can help to capture how communities and people change and behave when people receive basic income.

The Discussion Paper proposes implementing three saturation sites, in three different areas of the province.

The areas proposed are:

- 1) One saturation site in southern Ontario: This site would be representative of the population in southern Ontario.
- 2) One saturation site in northern Ontario: This site would be as representative as possible of the communities in northern Ontario, according to the criteria above.
- 3) One saturation site in an Indigenous community: The Pilot could consider offering an opportunity to develop a Basic Income Pilot adapted to the realities of Indigenous communities. This would be done in a culturally appropriate manner, to acknowledge the unique circumstances of First Nations peoples. In these saturation test sites, all individuals who meet the established age and residency requirements would be eligible to receive the Basic Income benefit.

## Coalition / ISAC Key Issues

The Coalition / ISAC document has not taken a position on the issue of the selection of test sites, as per the “key issues” document.

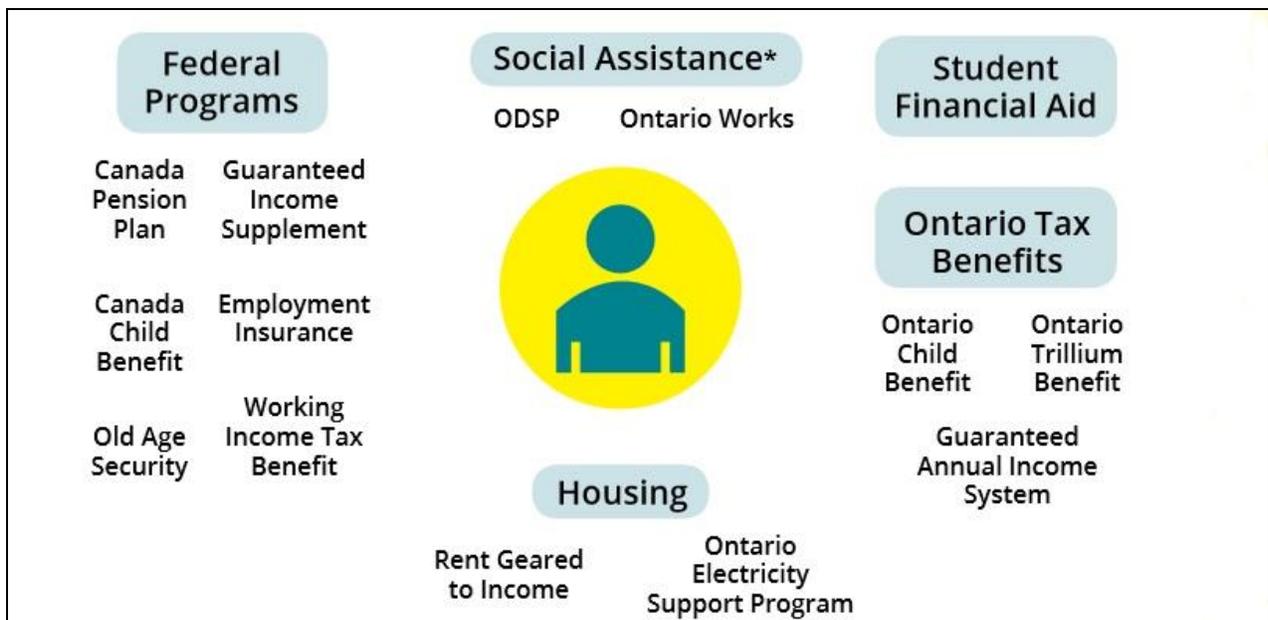
## Questions for Discussion

2.1 What are the most important things to think of when selecting a Pilot location? Why?

2.2 How do you think Pilot sites should be selected?

## **Section 3: Designing the benefits**

Determining the Basic Income benefit amount will require very careful consideration. There are many income support programs in Ontario delivered by the different levels of government.



Graphic from the Ontario Basic Income Consultation Guide

Folding these other benefits, such as the Ontario Child Benefit and federal income support benefits, into the Pilot may increase the complexity of the administration and evaluation of the Pilot. The same is true of other benefits and services, such as subsidized housing and employment training assistance.

In all of the Pilot tests, the Discussion Paper recommends linking the Basic Income benefit amount to a percentage of the Low Income Measure (LIM), a common indicator

used to define poverty, and makes suggestions for four different possible ways of doing this.

Depending on which pilot sub-group a person is in, this means they would receive:

- 75% = about \$1,360/month
- 100% = about \$1,820/month

In each suggestion Pilot participants with a disability (and their caregivers) could receive the Basic Income and an additional \$500 per month. This amount could be adjusted based on re-assessments of the costs of living with a disability.

- $\$1,360 + \$500 = \$1,860$  / month

#### Maintaining Supplemental Benefits:

The Discussion Paper recommends that the Pilot tests replacing existing OW and ODSP income supports with a Basic Income.

Current recipients of OW and ODSP receive supplemental benefits such as prescription drug coverage, dental care, assistive devices, vision care, special purpose allowances for things special diets, etc.

The Discussion Paper proposes that participants in the Pilot who were previously on OW and ODSP **would continue to receive supplemental benefits, and maintain their eligibility for subsidized housing.**

#### Coalition / ISAC Key Issues

The goal of a Basic Income Pilot should be to lift people out of poverty. If the government wants clear evidence on how providing “adequate” incomes affects health and educational outcomes, food security, housing, and other issues, then the pilot project must provide a level of benefits that is adequate enough to make a real difference. As well, Basic Income should provide a sufficient level of benefits to allow people who are not able to work or who can only work sporadically due to disability to live with health and dignity. This means the level of benefits should be at least 75 per cent of the Low-Income Measure.

People with disabilities require a supplement in recognition of the additional costs arising from their disability, the often long-term nature of their need for income support, and the recognition that many will not be able to supplement their income with work. We support Mr. Segal’s recommendation of \$500 for this supplement, but feel that the Basic Income Pilot should test whether \$500 per month is adequate to meet the real needs of people with disabilities.

Currently people on OW and ODSP can receive additional supports for health- and employment-related expenses. These benefits are provided either through financial allowances (e.g., reimbursement or coverage of costs associated with working) or through the “in-kind” provision of goods or services (e.g., drug, dental and vision coverage). As Mr. Segal recommends, all special benefits should be retained during the pilot. These benefits are provided for special purposes, not for ordinary daily living expenses like food and shelter. The Basic Income cannot be expected to cover these special needs. As Mr. Segal also recommends, eligibility for subsidized housing should remain.

Many advocates have long called on the province to ensure that drug, dental, vision and other health benefits are extended to all low-income people in Ontario, with no loss of benefits for those on OW and ODSP. In 2014, the Ontario government committed to creating a Low-Income Health Benefit for both children and adults. No progress has yet been made. The province should pursue the creation of this benefit independently of a Basic Income program.

### **Questions for discussion**

- 3.1 Do you believe that 75% of the Low Income Measure (LIM) is “a fair and affordable benefit amount that has a meaningful impact on people living in poverty?”
- 3.2 Do you think a \$500 top up for those currently on ODSP is enough of a top up? What disability-related costs should the government consider when determining how much the top-up should be?
- 3.3 Should the Basic Income benefit amount be enough to get people out of poverty or do you think earnings should be taken into consideration? Why or why not?
- 3.4 Beyond money, what other services and supports (e.g. employment, mental health, housing, etc.) are needed to accompany the Basic Income? Which are most important?
- 3.5 Should other benefits, programs and services be taken away from those who get basic income? Why or why not?
- 3.6 What other factors should be considered when determining the Basic Income level. Why?

## Section 4: Delivery of the Basic Income Pilot project

How the Basic Income payment is delivered will depend on which model is chosen for the Pilot. Mr. Segal recommended testing a Negative Income Tax (NIT) model.

### Payments

The Discussion Paper notes that implementation of a Negative Income Tax (NIT) and delivering the payment through the tax system will require that the provincial and federal governments work together. Ontario would need to rely on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for this.

#### **Negative Income Tax (NIT) program model**

With a NIT model of Basic Income, benefits are provided to those whose income falls below a minimum income level.

Under this system, people earning below a certain income level receive financial support from the government, instead of paying taxes.

Individuals would be guaranteed an income equal to a portion of the Low-Income Measure which would not be taxed. Then, for each dollar of earned income above that amount, benefits are reduced until they are paid back in full.

A tax-back rate is the percentage that a benefit is reduced, as a recipient's earned income increases. The Basic Income Pilot could test one or multiple tax-back rates.

The main advantages of this model are that:

- It is less costly because not all Canadians receive it, or the same amount of it
- Only those below a certain income level receive any benefit
- It is seen as providing an incentive for work as income from work is not clawed back until it reaches a relatively high level

The main disadvantage is:

- It may not reduce or eliminate stigma, as it is targeted to people with low-income only.

The Discussion Paper recommends that payments be issued monthly, and that participants be allowed to disclose changes in their household (e.g. marriage, change in earned income/job status, birth of a child, etc.) throughout the year, so that their Basic Income can be adjusted.

The Discussion Paper recommends developing specific strategies to engage with groups of people without bank accounts or a fixed address, or those who don't file income tax returns.

### Coalition / ISAC Key Issues

The Negative Income Tax appears to be a reasonable way to provide a basic income, given that other provincial benefits like the Ontario Child Benefit are provided in this way. However, certain considerations must be taken into account:

- As noted in the consultation guide, there will need to be a way to adjust benefits if income drops or family size increases during the year. We have not yet done a full analysis to make a specific recommendation on this issue.
- As Mr. Segal recommends, appeals should go to the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) rather than the Federal Tax Court, as the SBT is more accessible and has expertise in the issues affecting low income people.

### Questions for discussion

- 4.1 The Discussion Paper recommended a NIT model for the Basic Income. Do you agree with this recommendation? Why or why not? If not, what are some of the challenges you see with this model?

## **Section 5: Evaluation**

Ontario wants to be able to measure how well the Pilot program is working to decrease poverty and make the income security system simpler.

To be able to measure and evaluate the Pilot, participants would need to provide their consent to sharing their personal information to evaluators. Participants would be informed about how their information would be used and about their rights to confidentiality and privacy.

The Discussion Paper proposes measuring the following ten outcome areas:

- Health
- Life choices
- Education
- Work behaviour
- Community-level changes (e.g. crime rates, local labour market)

- Administrative efficiency compared to social assistance
- Food insecurity
- Perception of citizenship and social inclusion
- Housing stability and quality
- Interactions between Basic Income and other benefits, such as Ontario Child Benefit.

## Data and Evaluation

There are several methods for collecting data and information from participants:

- Administrative data (data about individuals that is collected by all three levels of government through benefit programs like OW, ODSP and the Canada Pension Plan [CPP])
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Questionnaires
- Focus groups

The Discussion Paper recommends that participants provide consent for access to certain personal information, such as tax information, employment history, and prescription drug usage, to the evaluators. They would also need to consent to access to their individual records, for a minimum of two years before the Pilot begins and after the Pilot ends. Participants will be asked to provide this consent as a condition of participation in the Pilot.

## Information Privacy, Confidentiality and Access

The Discussion Paper recommends that participant data would always be protected. Only aggregated data (data that is grouped together with no information that would identify a specific person) and evaluation results would be made public on an ongoing, transparent basis.

To ensure this is done effectively, before collecting any data, the Discussion Paper recommends that permission and approvals from both federal and provincial privacy commissioners be obtained, and from any applicable research ethics review boards.

## Coalition / ISAC Key Issues

The pilot project should include testing whether the Basic Income amount provides enough income to cover the actual costs of decent housing, nutritious food, transportation, communication and other basic needs. Evaluation must include evidence

on how well the amount of benefits provided meets the real needs of low income people.

Privacy and ethical concerns with the amount of data collection being recommended are significant and government must ensure that these concerns are adequately met. There may be great value in the future of having all of this research to support the ongoing fight for adequate incomes for all.

Nonetheless, ODSP Action Coalition members have serious concerns about having a Control Group consisting of OW and ODSP recipients who get only their current benefits but still share all the information that the government can collect on them. They feel strongly that there is already much information that can be collected about the costs of poverty without the additional burden being placed on a group of recipients with no immediate return. Some sort of honorarium should be paid to those recipients who are sharing information in the course of participation in surveys or focus groups, for the time and effort they will be contributing.

### **Questions for discussion**

5.1 The discussion paper recommends measuring ten outcome areas. Rank these outcome areas in order of importance:

- Health
- Life choices
- Education
- Work behaviour
- Community-level changes (e.g. crime rates, local labour market)
- Administrative efficiency compared to social assistance
- Food insecurity
- Perception of citizenship and social inclusion
- Housing stability and quality
- Interactions between Basic Income and other benefits such as Ontario Child Benefit

List any other outcomes you think should be measured.

5.2 Do you think that aggregate data (i.e., grouped information that is non-identifying) and evaluation results should be made public in an ongoing basis? If you are a Pilot participant, should you receive results prior to any public report release?

5.3 What kind of results would make the Pilot a success? Why?

5.4 How can the government encourage people to participate in the Pilot?

5.5 To measure outcomes, the government would need people to share their personal information. How can the province make participants feel that their information is secure?

5.6 So that evaluators can compare the outcomes of Basic Income to the status quo, they would need participants to share their personal information, even if they are in the control group that didn't receive the Basic Income. Would you be comfortable with this so that the province can understand these differences?

## WRAP UP

**Time:** 10 minutes

### **What you need:**

- Gather any notes from groups

What to do:

1. Thank people for participating.
2. Let people know next steps:
  - Remind participants that you will be writing up a report with information from the notes that were taken during the consultation.
  - Remind people that their names will not be included in the report and that any information shared will not be associated to any single person.
  - The report will be shared with MCSS by January 31<sup>st</sup>, and the report will be shared with the ODSP Action Coalition.
3. Let people know how they can access the final report that is submitted (*i.e., you can email or mail this to them; you can post on your website; they can contact you if they want a copy*).



## **ADDENDUM 1: WRITING THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT**

As soon after your community consultation as possible and while the information is still fresh in your mind, it will be important to write up the report. The MCSS is taking feedback until January 31<sup>st</sup>, but it's best to submit your report as soon as you are able.

The format for your community consultation report will depend on a number of factors, including how much time you are able to spend on it and how much analysis of the information gathered from the participants you want to do to give it a framework or context.

There are at least three ways that you could compile the information into a submission:

1. You could simply write up the notes from the community consultation, almost word-for-word.
2. You can compile all of the notes that were taken and write up answers to the questions under each of the five categories.
3. You could summarize the notes from the workshop into a formal workshop report
  - This would mean writing an introduction that summarizes things like:
    - Who your group is and what work you do;
    - What community you are from;
    - Who the participants in the workshop were; and,
    - Why you held the workshop in your community.
  - There may be other things you think are important to include in the introduction, such as some background on the situation of people on OW / ODSP and other low-income people in your community.

You can send your submission to [basicincome@ontario.ca](mailto:basicincome@ontario.ca). Remember to send the submission by January 31, 2017.

**And please send us a copy too!** Email it to [odspactioncoalition@gmail.com](mailto:odspactioncoalition@gmail.com).

## **ADDENDUM 2: HOSTING A BACKGROUNDER SESSION**

In order to help people fully participate in this session, it may be helpful for them to have a background on the concepts related to basic income. These include areas such as:

- What does Basic Income mean?
- What are the common models of basic income?
- What are the main advantages and disadvantages for these different models?

Being familiar with these ideas can help participants be better prepared to contribute to the Basic Income Pilot community consultation.

There are three ways that you can distribute this information to participants before your consultation session:

1. Send participants pre-read materials (e.g., the fact sheets contained in Addendum 3 of this facilitation guide; summary of the Discussion Paper)
2. Host an in-person backgrounder session a week before the consultation
3. Host an in-person backgrounder session the same day of the consultation with a break between the session and the consultation

Options 2 or 3 would give people the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarity when needed. The backgrounder session would be between 1-1.5 hours long.

We have provided three fact sheets which can be used for the backgrounder session (see pages 20-23). You can also use the following resources:

- Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) webinar, entitled “Basic Income: What is it and what could it mean for social assistance?”, on the Your Legal Rights website: <http://yourlegalrights.on.ca/webinar/basic-income-what-it-and-what-could-it-mean-social-assistance>
- MCSS Basic Income video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEGB3J5nS9Y>
- ISAC publication: “Basic Income: The Devil’s in the Details”: <http://incomesecurity.org/publications/other/ISAC-Laidley-Basic-Income-The-Devils-in-the-Details-Oct-2016.pdf>

## **ADDENDUM 3: FACT SHEETS**

## Fact Sheet – About Basic Income\*

There is no single definition of Basic Income. It generally refers to a payment to individuals and families that provides some minimum level of income, and doesn't come with all the rules that social assistance imposes. People who advocate for a Basic Income believe that it can help:

- Lift more people out of poverty.
- Simplify the income security system and help people spend less time navigating a complex system.
- Improve people's health, empower people to get jobs and help people afford housing.

Some people also have concerns about the Basic Income including:

- Basic Income can be used to eliminate other benefits while not providing an adequate amount of income, which would leave people worse off and dismantle the social safety net even further.
- A taxed-based Basic Income program has the potential for excluding certain groups that may receive OW and ODSP, such as non-status Canadians or people who don't file income tax returns.

Typically, a Basic Income cash transfer has “no strings attached”. Recipients are not required to work, look for work, or participate in education or training to receive the payment.

### Two common models of Basic Income.

**Universal Demogrant** – benefits are paid to everyone, regardless of income level. This model can be accompanied by a progressive income tax system, like Canada's, which can “recover” the benefit from higher income households. Thus people with higher incomes would end up paying back this benefit in taxes.

The main advantages of this model are that:

- It removes stigma as every citizen is getting the same amount of money, which some have suggested would lead to increased social cohesion.
- It is simpler and less expensive to administer.
- It is harder to cut because everyone is receiving it.

The main disadvantage of this model is that the up-front costs to this type of program could be very high.

**Negative Income Tax program** – benefits are provided to those whose income falls below a minimum income level. Under this system, people earning below a certain level

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\* Adapted from Community Food Centres Canada. (2016). *Guaranteed Annual Income*.

receive financial support from the government, instead of paying taxes. Then, for each dollar of earned income, benefits are reduced by less than a dollar (less than 100% tax back rate), until benefits are paid back in full. The Basic Income Pilot could test one or multiple tax-back rates. A tax-back rate is the percentage that a benefit is reduced, as a recipient's earned income increases.

The main advantages of this model are that:

- It is less costly because not all Canadians receive it, or the same amount of it
- Only those below a certain income level receive any benefit
- It is seen as providing an incentive for work as income from work is not clawed back until it reaches a relatively high level

The main disadvantage is:

- It may not reduce or eliminate stigma, as it is targeted to people with low-income only.

## Fact Sheet: About the Basic Income Pilot

A pilot project is intended to help:

- Gather evidence about whether Basic Income is a better way to reduce poverty than current income security programs (i.e., Ontario Works and ODSP)
- Get more people talking about the costs of poverty and inadequate incomes to the government (i.e., health care costs) and to society (e.g., community, civic participation, family life)

### Background on the Discussion Paper

- Earlier this year the Ontario government asked former Senator the Hon. Hugh Segal to develop recommendations about how a Basic Income Pilot project could work in Ontario.
- There is no single definition of basic income. It generally refers to a payment to individuals and families that provides some minimum level of income, and doesn't come with all the rules that social assistance imposes.
- Advocates of Basic Income believe that it can help:
  - Lift more people out of poverty.
  - Simplify the income security system and help people spend less time navigating a complex system.
  - Improve people's health, empower people to get jobs and help people afford housing.
- On the other hand, there are legitimate concerns that have been expressed about the potential risks related to Basic Income. These include:
  - Basic income can be used to eliminate other benefits while not providing an adequate amount of income, which would leave people worse off and dismantle the social safety net even further.
  - A taxed-based Basic Income program has the potential for excluding certain groups that may receive OW and ODSP, such as non-status Canadians or people who don't file income tax returns.
- Mr. Segal's Discussion Paper, called *Finding a Better Way: A Basic Income Pilot Project for Ontario*, was released to the public in November 2016.
- The provincial government is currently consulting with the public about the recommendations in Mr. Segal's Discussion Paper to create a Basic Income Pilot.
- Government consultations will take place until January 31<sup>st</sup>. The final plan for the pilot should be released by April 2017, with implementation to follow.
- Although we have concerns and questions about how the pilot project would work and whether and how much it would benefit people on social assistance in the long run, we believe it is positive that the Discussion Paper is generating a lot of discussion about the costs of poverty and the need to radically change the punitive, intrusive income system we have now.

## **Fact Sheet – Highlights of Mr. Segal’s recommendations**

### Objectives and purpose

- The main purpose of a Basic Income Pilot project is to test replacing OW and ODSP with a modestly more generous basic income, distributed to those living beneath a certain income threshold.
- The main objective of the pilot project is to test ways to reduce poverty.
- The secondary objectives are to see if cost savings can be found and to see if labour market participation can be increased.

### Who could be eligible to be part of the Pilot

- Age 18-64
- Incomes below certain level
- Permanent residency in test area for at least one year
- No requirement to work or take education / training
- Assets not part of eligibility calculation
- People could voluntarily withdraw from pilot at any time

### What model would be tested

- Negative Income Tax model
- Not a “universal demogrant” (one amount to everyone)
- Benefit amount goes down as earned income goes up

### Benefit amounts

- 75% or 100% of Low Income Measure – After Tax (poverty line) – recommendation is to measure both of these benefit amounts
- Depending on which pilot sub-group a person is in, this means they would receive:
  - 75% = about \$1,360/month
  - 100% = about \$1,820/month
- Paid to individuals
- \$500 supplement for people with disabilities (ODSP definition) and caregivers with dependents who have a disability
  - $\$1,360 + \$500 = \$1,860$  / month

### Impact on other benefits

- No change in health benefits for those on OW/ODSP
- No change in eligibility for rent amounts in Rent Geared to Income housing
- Amounts from other non-taxable benefits (i.e., GST credits, child benefits, etc.) would not be counted as earned income for tax-back/reduction rate

## ADDENDUM 4: RESOURCES

- Mr. Segal's Discussion Paper, called *Finding a Better Way: A Basic Income Pilot Project for Ontario* can be found here:  
[https://files.ontario.ca/discussionpaper\\_nov3\\_english\\_final.pdf](https://files.ontario.ca/discussionpaper_nov3_english_final.pdf) Coalition's position
- A summary of his recommendations is here:  
[https://files.ontario.ca/mcss\\_basic\\_income\\_discussion\\_paper\\_exec\\_summary\\_english.pdf](https://files.ontario.ca/mcss_basic_income_discussion_paper_exec_summary_english.pdf).
- ODSP Action Coalition / Income Security Advocacy Centre: Basic Income Consultations: Key Issues for People on OW and ODSP is here:  
<http://www.odspaction.ca/resource/will-basic-income-be-way-out-poverty>
- Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) webinar, entitled "Basic Income: What is it and what could it mean for social assistance?", on the Your Legal Rights website:  
<http://yourlegalrights.on.ca/webinar/basic-income-what-it-and-what-could-it-mean-social-assistance>
- ISAC publication: "Basic Income: The Devil's in the Details" can be found here:  
<http://incomesecurity.org/publications/other/ISAC-Laidley-Basic-Income-The-Devils-in-the-Details-Oct-2016.pdf>
- Webinar: Basic Income: What is it and what could it mean for social assistance – Jennefer Laidley, ISAC can be found here: <http://incomesecurity.org/public-education/basic-income-what-is-it-and-what-could-it-mean-for-social-assistance/>
- CFCC basic income backgrounder:  
<http://cfccanada.ca/sites/default/files/documents/CFCC%20-%20Basic%20Income%20Backgrounder.pdf>