



C-BIG COMMUNITY FORUM REPORT

Rustico, Prince Edward Island

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ORGANIZERS (Working Group for a Livable Income)

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PARTICIPANTS

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I.0 Goal and Objectives of the Forum

Forum Goal

- *to strengthen our plan for a BIG pilot project and to explore ways in which people can become involved.*

Forum Objectives

- *to present information about BIG*
- *to hear from people what they think of the idea of BIG & what kind of benefit they think it may have to their communities*
- *to identify concerns/fears would be around BIG*
- *to gather ideas about how to promote the idea/increase understanding/engage people in their communities*

The forum in Rustico took place in both official languages, with thanks to Natalie Pendergast for translation support.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

following a presentation about poverty in PEI and BIG possibilities

- Why basic income instead of fixing the existing systems?
- BIG could help eliminating disincentives to work and earnings
- BIG will transform ideas about income
- BIG offers more dignity, freedom, choices
- Are we talking about replacing existing programs? If so, which ones?
- BIG will change the culture and the way we think about prosperity
- BIG will reduce suffering of our neighbours
- Need new solutions when social assistance is in surplus while people are visibly suffering
- BIG will offer access to activities (social inclusion and participation)
- The income tax system is not fair now – with breaks for corporations and the wealthy while people in low income still pay taxes
- BIG will mean more people warm, fed, looked after
- Models and systems in other countries, even less rich countries, work to support people (participant shared examples from the Netherlands)
- The systems here are unbelievable
- We have seasonal work and a seasonal place in PEI
- Access to work is complex
- When people are sick, they are not paid and the supports are not adequate
- People pay taxes to support benefits for the collective good
- Vacation time is not properly valued here, and neither is work

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS – BENEFITS OF BIG

from small-group discussion

- BIG could eliminate food insecurity
- Increase productivity, decrease stress
- Better education outcomes (less stress at home = better ability to learn = HOPE)

- It would be easier to manage BIG (from an administrative viewpoint) if it applies to everyone
- No need to decide who receives assistance
- Convincing government with the wisdom of the community: why propose a pilot of 1,000 and how to choose? Preference for an all-Island pilot, supported by “la grand voix” from the people
- Help local economy = volunteers, artists, food producers, more freedom
- Reason for young people to stay – more choice
- Stability for people
- Less energy on where to find the next meal = more productivity
- Less burden on health system (physical and mental health)
- Children’s health will be better in households with enough income = lifetime effects for children as they grow to adulthood
- Poverty is hard on small business community and the economy
- BIG could encourage an increased birth rate and less delayed maternity
- Flexibility for caregiving to children and elders
- With BIG, people might not choose between medication and food, so there might be lower health costs
- People with more ability to participate in local Island culture (music, activities)
- Build in indexing in BIG
- Babies! more babies to revitalize families and communities
- Concern about division in communities if there is a pilot of 1,000: Why not aim for 19,000 out of poverty?
- A pilot with a cross-section of society would have a better chance of uptake by government
- Five years might not be long enough for a pilot to see health and education benefits

NEXT STEPS

from full-group discussion

- Start identifying MLA advocates in the provincial legislature willing to be assertive and to continue following up (private members' bills, questions in the legislature, etc.)
- Gather relevant facts, evidence (Dauphin MINCOME example), surveys
- Lay out the case in a simple way
- Benefit from Dr. Forget's findings and bring them to the public and the government
- There's NO BETTER PLACE than PEI for a pilot project (right scale, right infrastructure and institutions)
- Tap a foundation for money for the C-BIG Campaign
- Reach out to service clubs to give presentations to them (change mindsets)
- One small group also added:
 - Social justice and human rights connections and perspectives
 - Prove that BIG reduces crime
 - Help people see personal benefit and the benefit to the community
 - People need to see the economic benefit to society

EVALUATIONS

This evening I liked...

- the video documentary on poverty.
- great discussion, great group!
- the discussion by groups
- participation by most present
- very informative opinions were expressed well
- the openness of the group
- how everyone had a passionate perspective
- the round table approach
- the opportunity to discuss this very important topic
- discussion was welcomed and information was well presented
- the concept as proposed in the the basic income guarantee

- discussion of varied ideas
- ability to ask questions in non-threatening atmosphere
- knowledge and passion of facilitators
- short but sweet
- the openness of the people by sharing their thoughts
- I really liked the discussion and the topic. (TR)
- I have the soul of an artist and I would like to be able to choose my way of life, but more importantly, I find it unacceptable that we're not capable in our "evolved" society to take care of people who are poor. (TR)
- the positive discussions and attitudes
- the small groups
- "la rencontre bilingue"

This evening I learned...

- that many are supportive of this concept.
- about the Netherlands approach [to supporting citizens]
- the difference between different forms of support
- more information why basic income is important
- about different options for restructuring how we take care of our people
- more about C-BIG and the proposed pilot project for PEI
- added to my own thoughts about guaranteed annual income
- some other ways of looking at the same thing
- greater appreciation for certain benefits of BIG (arts and culture community/industry)
- that this project is still at the beginning stage
- that the goal must not be only to save expenses but to improve lives (TR)
- how BIG would work

I would like to know more about...

- how you could actually set it up
- other studies based on this idea

- how to convince the government to give C-BIG a chance
- the model – I'm interested in helping out on the committee if you need more people
- I would like to be kept informed
- data from other studies
- results of Dr. Forget's work
- more details of current BIG proposal
- the outcome at the end
- how to influence governments to come into the program

For another time, let's

- get more community participation
- more time for discussion
- have more time for discussion
- make arguments for why all 19,000 poor people in PEI should be part of the pilot project
- expand the contact list to include service groups and churches to increase awareness
- more public presentations to enlist ambassadors/advocates
- might be good to articulate some of the problems with the current system (i.e., tax benefits/refunds etc only go do benefit those who least need it) both at the provincial level and federal level
- have a longer session
- involve MLAs, etc.
- contact local service groups to come out to meetings