



Basic Income Canada Network
Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

Annual Report 2023/24

April 22, 2024

The Basic Income Canada Network is a registered non-partisan, non-profit organization working for a stronger, healthier Canada where a basic income ensures everyone is able to meet their basic needs, participate in society, and live with dignity regardless of their work or other status. See more at basicincomecanada.org in English and French.

We are dedicated to being a credible source of information and analysis, a connector of ideas and people in Canada and beyond, and a catalyst for action with partners and allies. We are involved in public awareness, knowledge transfer, policy development and network building.

Overview

The basic income movement continues to face challenges as the need for a basic income grows. Systemic problems that the pandemic exposed have not been remedied. Climate change, inflation, war and high levels of poverty and inequality are among major issues driving hardship, stress and uncertainty.

BICN's hope for the future persists, alongside its many allies. The work is more important than ever. Canada has the capacity to show that societies, economies and governments function better when basic needs are met and people can be part of solutions to other problems.

BICN's highlights of 2023/24 include:

- *Organizing the inaugural pan-Canadian **Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Forum** being held May 23-26, 2024 in Ottawa (and virtually) and other movement and ally building work.*
- *Submitting briefs for federal budget consultations, and multiple efforts to support S-233, the national framework bill for a guaranteed livable basic income in the Senate, and the twin bill in the House of Commons, C-223.*
- *Communicating basic income news and developments to supporters and the public , including through building relationships with partners and allies.*
- *Representing BICN and Canadian developments abroad at the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) Congress in South Korea and a research workshop in New Orleans.*

At BICN and within the movement, we've learned to spell each other off at times, and to keep embracing new people, ideas and skills while respecting the accomplishments and resilience of those who have been on this journey longer.

BICN's financial position is more precarious than we would like in order to meet our aspirations and others' demands on us, and to ensure greater sustainability. Our charitable status application is still in progress with the Canada Revenue Agency.

*The **AGM is being held at the University of Ottawa (CRX building) and via Zoom on May 26, 2024 at 12:15 ET.** Board elections will be held electronically prior to the AGM.*

Report

April 2023 to March 2024

Context

- We believe we made the most of another challenging year, delivering on plans, and taking on a major new unplanned project.
- Since the onset of the pandemic, it has been difficult for smaller non-profits to sustain their work, especially in the policy sphere. The need grew for direct help for food, shelter, physical and mental health, and other services to meet emergency needs.
- The more hopeful longer-term upside is that many more civil society organizations involved in front line work were advocating for a basic income guarantee because they know they cannot meet the demand and that the people who come to them deserve better from their governments. Also encouraging was growth in municipal support and provincial interest in basic income and inquiries into various issues the included basic income as a solution.

Achievement Highlights

The following are examples of contributions to the basic income arena in the past year. Increasingly, in leadership and supporting roles, BICN has been a key part of effective collaborations.

2024 Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Forum Organizing

- The Forum being held in Ottawa (and virtually) May 23-26 has been the major focus of our work over the past 12 months, working with Tracy Smith-Carrier at Royal Roads University, who led the successful application for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Grant, Wendy Gifford and Pier-Luc Turcotte, our partners at the University of Ottawa where the Forum is being held, and many others who have been part of the planning.
- We've got several important and generous sponsors, such as the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Canadian Association of Social Workers, great key speakers like Dr. Danielle Martin and Yves-Marie Abraham, diverse presenters who submitted group and individual proposals to us, sessions organizers are planning, graduate students helping us reach out to stakeholders, media attention, and allies like Tamarack and Small Change doing promotional webinars, podcasts and other outreach.
- Registration opened in March. Check out all the details on the Forum website at <https://forum2024.ca/>
- One of BICN's other priorities from last year was to further the work on the links between mental health and the design of income programs. This analysis will be presented at a Forum session and feedback will be taken into account in finalizing a policy paper on this issue.

Basic Income Movement and Ally Building

- BICN convenes national forum meetings three times per year, in collaboration with movement groups. This forum is not an event or an organization but a space for national, regional and local basic income groups, independent academics and other individuals, and allied organizations to come together to explore possibilities for collective initiatives. Rob Rainer, an independent municipal leader, co-organized and chaired meetings in the fall of 2023 and in February this year. The Consensus Statement that BICN featured last year and continues to promote <https://basicincomecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Consensus-Statement-Final.pdf> is a product of the forum and its strategy group. The BIG Forum, the first-ever major basic income event focused on Canada also had its roots in the strategy group, with the leadership of Tracy Smith-Carrier.
- BICN also participates in meetings of the Atlantic basic income group supported by the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement.
- We supported the work of organizations pushing for the Canada Disability Benefit, including through a brief to government <https://basicincomecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CDB-Brief-w-logo.pdf>, letters, an interview with Disability Without Poverty's Rabia Khedr in our news, joining webinars and promoting support in our newsletters. In addition we signed on to "Rights-Based Regulations for the Canada Disability Benefit" initiated by Citizens for Public Justice submitted to the Office for Disability Issues, Employment and Social Development Canada by Citizens for Public Justice & Partners.
- BICN's Chair was invited to speak at the first Canadian Caregiving Summit held in 2023 <https://canadiancaregivingsummit.ca/> as a member of a panel discussing income and care. Amanda McKenzie, ED of the March of Dimes and a leading advocate for the new Disability Benefit was a co-panelist. Basic income is inextricably linked to the many dimensions of care from the view of those requiring extra self-care and care from others, to the wages and working conditions of paid care providers, especially racialized and immigrant women, to the unpaid care provided by family, friends and the voluntary sector.
- Sid Frankel and Sheila Regehr were part of the extensive collaborative process of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's *Alternative Federal Budget* (AFB). AFB 2024 <https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2023/08/AFB%202024%20Eng.pdf> proposes four unconditional income security pillars, with improvements to the two existing pillars for seniors and children, and the addition of a Canada Livable Income (CLI) for working age year adults in deep poverty along with the fourth pillar, the new Canada Disability Benefit. The CLI benefit amount is a smaller than a full basic income and it does not include students but it represents a significant collective step towards a basic income to meet the needs of those who have least access to conditional benefits.
- The final report of the [Green Resilience Project](#) was released in 2022, linking climate transition, income security and community resilience issues and solutions. BICN continues in a collaborative role with new Green Resilience projects conducted by our allies at Energy Mix Productions with both government and foundation funders.
- BICN has continued to mentor undergraduate nursing students completing their population health promotion practicum at Vancouver Community College in healthy public policy advocacy. Over this past year BICN mentored three cohorts of students within a Canada Emergency Response Benefits (CERB) literature review, which shed important insights,

including how CERB improved food security and also how people on disability fared worse than those on CERB. This work has been described as life-changing for these nursing students and inspired one of the VCC students to go on to focus on policy advocacy for her final practicum within her undergraduate program.

- BICN Board members and others on our team are engaged in cooperation and ally building in their own regions and communities of interest. As just a few examples of many Shari Laliberté, whose students were involved in the CERB work, is also connected to BC regional and national health networks, Damon Johnson in MB is a leader in urban Indigenous coalitions, and Karen Thompson in ON is also active in an environmental organization.
- In Alberta, Hannah Pazderka and John Rook developed an article on "The Conservative Defense of Basic Income" <https://www.ubi4all.org/post/guest-article-the-conservative-defence-of-basic-income> that challenges the notion that Basic Income (BI) is solely a progressive concept by illustrating its alignment with conservative values. It argues that BI supports family values by alleviating financial pressure on caregivers and enabling them to uphold traditional roles. Moreover, BI fosters community resilience by empowering individuals to respond effectively to crises and participate in civic duties. BI is also seen as a means to cultivate social capital and security, streamline bureaucratic processes, stimulate economic growth, and empower individuals to pursue meaningful opportunities. Ultimately, the article contends that BI transcends political divides and offers a pragmatic solution to address poverty while fostering a stronger, more prosperous society.

BICN Political Engagement

- We have been working actively to support Senator Kim Pate and Member of Parliament Leah Gazan, the authors of twin bills S-233 and C-223 on a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income. The focus for several months has been on the Senate bill which has been the subject of hearings by the Finance committee. The hearings have not been as extensive as we hoped with witnesses limited to economists and politicians, not civil society organizations or people with lived experience of a basic income. Sheila Regehr and former ON pilot participant Jessie Golem nonetheless decided to go to Ottawa when Evelyn Forget, Jiaying Zhao and Kathleen Wynne were witnesses. We were able to meet and speak informally with committee members and following the subsequent press conference Jessie was interviewed for a CBC article.
- BICN provided an initial brief to the Committee in September 2023 <https://basicincomecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/S-233-Brief-BICN.pdf> and also added written follow up to the committee once hearings started, including with our perspective on the later testimony of David Green, a co-author of the BC report that was not supportive of an unconditional basic income. We especially challenged the BC report's concept of 'reciprocity' that fails to recognize power imbalances in our society. Reciprocity is a mutual agreement, not one where the privileged set the rules and the disadvantaged are compelled to follow. A basic income, by being unconditional, overcomes some of that power imbalance.
- We anticipate developments soon on the bill in the House of Commons. BICN is an official endorser of C-223 and we are working to increase public support for it.
- We made submissions to federal budget consultations, with the brief to the Department of Finance expanding on the urgent need for federal income support in the 2024 budget for those facing hardship and on developments across the country that can be helpful to the intergovernmental work of creating a lasting national basic income guarantee <https://basicincomecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Brief-w-logo-to-Fin-Dept.pdf>.

- We also maintain ongoing participation in federal All-Party Anti-Poverty Caucus meetings and alliances with other civil society participants.
- BICN's chair, director Karen Thompson, and BIG Forum co-lead Tracy Smith-Carrier had a constructive meeting with Minister Jenna Sudds' senior political staff that we anticipate that will result in the participation of political and public service staff attending the Forum in May.
- At the municipal level, BICN is supporting and providing expertise to an initiative led by Rev. Tina Conlon of the Davenport Perth Community Ministry. She recently organized a meeting of community representatives with Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow's staff. BICN's Sheila Regehr is a Toronto resident. Josephine Grey, long-time basic income activist and community organizer in the St. Jamestown area of Toronto, added her expertise as well. This is a step towards municipal support for a basic income from the City of Toronto. Rev. Conlon has also garnered the support of councillor Alejandra Bravo and Davenport MP Julie Dzerowicz.

Communications

- We devote a significant portion of our financial resources to communications activities and products and that's because information in the hands of many thousands of supporters, amplified by media and by allies, and accessible to the public, is far more powerful than keeping it to ourselves. It's especially important when there are campaigns running, to support federal basic income bills, for example.
- It's a team effort that includes Roderick Bennis (timely website news), Darryl DeSouza (periodic newsletters) and Katy Jonker (website design and maintenance), Ben and Sheila. Other board members and people beyond BICN also make sure we know about articles and insights they have found interesting so we can disseminate widely. We have followers outside Canada too and recently got kudos for best BI newsletter from Guy Standing, acclaimed author and founding member of the Basic Income Earth Network.
- We also are aided by partners such as Tamarack, who periodically do webinars related to basic income. We have had good success with getting coverage from diverse media and getting opinion pieces and letters to the editor published, including a recent one submitted to the Hamilton Spectator https://www.thespec.com/opinion/contributors/basic-income-is-not-a-unicorn-it-s-a-workhorse/article_1ab46a61-cae7-5ab6-8ba3-e77f62d1bce1.html.

Beyond Canada

- While our focus has been on a uniquely Canadian BIG Forum and our own policy context, we benefit greatly from staying connected to work around the world. Ben Earle, BICN's general manager, presented at the BIEN Congress in Seoul, South Korea <https://biencongress2023.org/>. BIEN leadership believe South Korea to be well advanced on basic income and there is much we can learn from each other (Chloe Halpenny from BICYN also presented).
- BICN director Sid Frankel and BICN founding member Jim Mulvale were featured at a research workshop in New Orleans <https://www.guaranteedincomenola.org/> (the United States is particularly rich in municipal pilot experience).

Governance and Election of Directors

The BICN Board is mandated to have up to 13 director positions, and we currently have one vacancy. Our executive team includes Sheila Regehr, Pierre Stevens, Enrique Garcia and Sid Frankel, supported by our general manager Ben Earle.

There are eight two-year term positions open for election in 2024. BICN's members who are eligible to vote include directors, independent advisors and representatives of regional basic income groups. Nominations for directors are accepted in late April/early May. Voting takes place electronically just prior to the AGM in May.

Continuing directors are Brian Einarson (BC), Sid Frankel (MB), John Rook (AB), and Pierre Stevens (NS). Directors seeking re-election are Enrique Garcia (ON), Amal Khan (SK), Andrew McCann (ON), Hannah Pazderka (AB), and Sheila Regehr (ON). Karen Thompson (ON) and Damon Johnston (MB) were appointed to fill partial terms of departing board members so they are up for election in May as well. Please check the website after the AGM for election results.

We want to express our sincere appreciation and best wishes to John Mills (ON), an invaluable basic income advocate wearing several hats, who had to step away from the Board for health reasons. Shari Laliberté (BC), who was re-elected last year, is also stepping back from the Board, due to other work and teaching demands, but we are so pleased that she will continue to bring her knowledge, insights and connections to BICN through ongoing committee work.

As we work towards charitable status we continue to enhance our governance policies. There are different models of governance in non-profits. The BICN Board is a hybrid involved in visionary leadership, management, and general operations. We have wonderful part-time personnel but no regular employees. That means we need directors with different skill sets and significant accountability, with flexibility and time to participate in the work.

In our work on strategic planning, political engagement, stakeholders/partnerships, fundraising, and communications, we are increasingly bringing in people from the wider network to provide advice and help as they are able with projects that serve mutual goals. We are very grateful for their participation. We also want to express our deep appreciation to all our emeritus directors over the years. Many are still very active in their own way and continue to respond to calls for support and guidance when we ask.

Financial Report

BICN, like many non-profits, lost funding during the pandemic. The challenges continue with the affordability and insecurity crises many Canadians are facing. People who can donate are giving to meet immediate needs, at food banks for example, which is necessary but will not solve the income problem that is driving insecurity and hardship. And expenses are going up. We continued to draw down assets last year (\$9,453.63). The road ahead will not be easy but there are positive signs.

BICN's application for charitable status is in progress. That status would allow us to provide tax receipts and gain access to other funders. It could help provide stability and opportunity. BICN remains the sole nationally-registered, non-profit organization dedicated to basic income. We have been fortunate to be part of collaborative projects with other organizations and funders that advance basic income goals, and they do bring us some administrative overhead revenue.

We continue to do excellent work. Our major initiative for this period, and the next few months, is The BIG Forum. We and our partners are very grateful to several generous sponsoring organizations that are contributing to its success (these are designated funds being administered by BICN, with University of Ottawa and Royal Roads University also administering some funds). As the Forum is being held in the next fiscal year and involves several partners, full financial statements will be provided separately in 2024/25 reporting.

BICN Balance Statement (March 31, 2023)	
Assets (Pay Pal, Cash in Bank)	\$63,179.46
Accounts receivable	0
Total Assets (31/03/2024)	\$63,179.46
Liabilities	
Accounts payable	0
Equity	
Accrued income - previous years	\$27,512.63
(\$9,453.63 deficit 2023-24)	\$35,666.83
Total Equity	\$63,179.46
Total Liability and Equity	\$63,179.46

BICN Revenue and Expenses (April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023)	
Revenue	
BICN Board	\$2,412.00
Members	\$3,500.00
Public donations	\$18,189.12
NWT project funders	\$21,117.00
Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Forum sponsors	\$48,544.25
Other	\$100.00
Total Revenue (\$51,199.46 in 2022/23)	\$93,862.37
Expenses	
Operating (insurance, legal, bank fees)	\$3,196.98
Phone/Communications	\$1,498.00
NationBuilder	\$4,118.61
Website Maintenance/Admin	\$1,630.81
Personnel	
General Manager	\$13,000
Website News	\$9,000.00
Newsletter	\$5,200
Projects	
NWT Project	\$16,125.35
Conference travel	\$1,000.00
The BIG Forum (designated funds)	\$3,923.79
Total Expenses (\$59,126.46 in 2022/23)	\$58,195.54
Net Surplus/(Deficit) (BICN deficit of \$9,453.63)	\$35,666.83

Plans and Priorities 2024/25

Context

- A federal election is on the horizon. We are in the midst of a poly-crisis. A basic income could go a long way to being the transformative change we need to resolve crises and prevent worse from happening. However, if the current government arrangement does not result in any commitments or steps towards a basic income and does not offer concrete hope and relief to the many Canadians who are struggling, we can anticipate the political landscape leading into and following an election will become more fractious and less hospitable to constructive change. Disinformation campaigns are already a part of the landscape.
- Since BICN was founded in 2008, we have been through several waves of change. A first, few people had heard of basic income, some scoffed at it. They didn't realize that seniors and children actually had a partial one and it wasn't an overly idealistic pipe dream. They were tough times for proponents. In 2015, there were high hopes for a more open relationship with the federal government that would help advance work on basic income and more high hopes for the Ontario pilot in 2017. The 2019 early cancellation of the pilot was crushing, but we were again buoyed in a bizarre way by the federal response to the pandemic in 2020 that rapidly ushered in direct cash benefits that enabled many Canadians, and the economy, to survive. We thought this might be a tipping point. But the flaws in the pandemic benefits got the headlines and benefits were quickly withdrawn even as Covid lingers and factors like inflation are undoing the pandemic-period reductions in insecurity, inequality and poverty.
- An enormous amount of public awareness, research, evidence, attention to policy design options, learning from program and pilot experience and from modelling and costing has been accomplished at this point. Support has grown. We are so close to making it work in Canada. But it looks like it could be very challenging again.
- For BICN, that means we take what's been built and persevere, pivoting if needed where different strategies show promise.

Priorities and Expected Achievements for 2024/25

The **2024 Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Forum, May 23-26** will be our priority taking us into summer and early fall as we work on reporting, disseminating results, following up on ideas generated during the gathering in May and exploring future strategies. Check the website for all the details at <https://forum2024.ca/>.

Also during this time, Ben and Sheila will be presenting their successful proposals for the upcoming BIEN Congress in August in Bath, UK <https://www.bien2024.net/>, sharing Canadian experience and learning from other countries.

From then on, while continuing with communications, ongoing support for Bills in Parliament, pursuing charitable status and funding, and other regular work, our emphasis will be on working in collaboration with allies, building and strengthening relationships for common goals. We want to work in coalitions, across the silos and disjointed policies and programs that too often prevent the holistic and synergistic solutions we need to big, wicked problems.

There are some possibilities that we are already working on:

- BICN has formally supported an application for federal funding from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) co-ordinated by Tracy Smith-Carrier as Canada Research Chair, Advancement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The proposal is for a two year project to lay the groundwork for a **Centre of Excellence on Income Security**. This would help consolidate research and knowledge that often exists in silos as a foundation for future income security policy, enabling comprehensive analysis of successes and gaps. If successful, funding would be for hired people to do the work over two years. BICN would, among others, play an advisory role.
- BICN is also supporting another application made by Citizens for Public Justice to the same ESDC fund. This project, named **We Go Together**, would bring together organizations in diverse sectors (e.g., food, health, housing, labour, income security) with common goals, taking a human rights and justice-based approach to public policy rather than a charitable approach of giver and receiver or one that divides people into deserving and undeserving categories.
- We are exploring an opportunity to build the capacity of BICN directors and team as well as affiliates to increase our capacity to lead, advocate, organize and campaign for greater impact. The Institute for Change Leaders is interested in working with us to secure funding and provide its highly successful training based on the Harvard Kennedy School's Ganz framework.

Thank you and acknowledgments

The Board of BICN, acknowledges that much of what many people enjoy today is built on exploited land and labour, that inequalities and injustices persist, and that, in our work, we share the goals and commitment to action of many other civil society organizations for a happier, healthier and more sustainable future.

As always, we extend our sincere appreciation to volunteers, supporters, donors, sponsors, and contractors across the country and beyond, for their valuable contributions. We acknowledge and welcome the increasing engagement of people in policy and political spheres—elected and appointed officials, public servants, and party members and supporters. We are thrilled to have tenacious political champions at all levels of government. We also extend profound thanks to researchers, writers, journalists, and activists, from students to grandparents, and others in Canada and around the world. Some of us have been in this movement for decades and others bring new energy and diverse insights to keep us moving forward. Our governments in Canada have the capacity to empower everyone.