



Annual Report 2019/2020

October 2020



Basic Income Canada Network
Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti

Overview

A basic income guarantee assures everyone an income sufficient to meet basic needs and live with dignity regardless of work status. BICN promotes the adoption of a basic income in Canada by networking, raising awareness, fostering learning and sharing of information, and supporting policy development.

*When moving from idea to policy, BICN promotes its framework document, the *Basic Income We Want*, and *Primer* series, to help people new to the issue to effectively engage in the dialogue. BICN and the wider network connect people across sectors, create and disseminate news, add to the knowledge base, and make expertise and experience available to politicians, the media, businesses and the public.*

In this most unusual year, this Annual Report and our Annual General Meeting (AGM) have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular due to its economic impacts on people having created a surge of interest in basic income. That surge gave us the opportunity to get our knowledge and messages out to new audiences and allies. We also played a key role in countering misinformation and confusion and in highlighting that problems like inequality, poverty, racism, and sexism are long-standing ones made worse by COVID and need permanent solutions, not just emergency measures that still leave people out.

*BICN was especially well-equipped to respond to the growing need and interest, having released our state-of-the-art report, **Basic Income, Some Policy Options for Canada**, in January, 2020 just as COVID cases were being detected in this country. We had also been organizing the 2020 North American Basic Income Guarantee Congress, and in the process had been building allies among individuals and organizations involved in other social justice issues and with politicians.*

*BICN's financial position was solid going into major projects like *Policy Options*. We lost some donor contributions due to the pandemic and had to reduce some expenditures for personnel but our balance has given us stability and the ability to withstand some drawing on reserves until the fundraising climate improves.*

Going forward, we will apply for government charitable status, hopefully opening more opportunities to access other funding to support the movement. We will further strengthen BICN's capacity as a credible, trusted source of information and analysis for those new to basic income as well as more experienced activists and influencers. We will expand outreach to connect basic income supporters and wider social justice allies.

This report provides further information on the past year and the upcoming one. The AGM is being held, via Zoom, on October 28, 2020 at 7 pm ET. Board elections will be held electronically prior to the AGM.



Report on 2019/20

Context

- The fiscal year began with focus on the federal government, with the Ontario pilot ending prematurely and with a federal election on the horizon. When a minority government was elected, many basic income advocates saw a new window of opportunity for change. US Democratic leadership hopeful Andrew Yang was running on a basic income platform and many Canadians were listening too.
- BICN priorities were to release its policy options work, contribute to the New York North American Congress (2019) and plan for the Congress in Canada (2020).
- The window of opportunity grew exponentially bigger early in 2020 with the arrival of COVID-19 and it's magnification of long-standing problems of inequality, poverty and insecurity, the murder of George Floyd that inspired massive calls for racial justice, and the revelations of COVID's race and gender-based impacts.
- The Canada Emergency Response Benefit and other measures gave us hope, social justice allies started forming to fight for a better new normal than the one COVID encountered. Interest in basic income grew, the movement grew, and the opposition grew too. This played out in the media, to some confusion at times.
- The Speech from the Throne, rumoured to include a basic income, seemed to represent a resurgence of path dependency—a basic income only for people with disabilities, a focus on the middle class, on income support tied to employment, and no mention of people left out.

Achievements

The following examples highlight the range of contributions to the basic income arena over the past year and a half from April 1, 2019 to October, 2020. Some activities are directly attributable to BICN. For others, credit is shared among individuals and organizations in the wider basic income network and beyond.

North American Basic Income Guarantee Congresses 2019 and 2020

The 2019 NABIG was held in New York City in June; BICN was part of the planning team and several Canadians were featured as plenary and workshop presenters. Andrew Yang was featured by video. In the fall, plans got underway with McMaster University School of Labour Studies, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and community partners in Hamilton and Toronto to build on the success of the 2018 NABIG in Hamilton. Even bigger music and cultural events were anticipated this time. But as the pandemic arrived and spread in the spring, we cancelled before any money had to be spent by us for facilities or participants for travel. Virtual alternatives were discussed but by then interest in basic income was exploding in Canada and beyond, and our other North American colleagues helped us to make the difficult decision to cancel the Congress.

We had planned to have Canadian strategy sessions at the Congress and we had been working to ensure a program rich in expertise and diversity by reaching out to women's organizations, for example, and to key figures behind the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report. These relationships have continued to build.

The Policy Options Project

The result of a challenging two-year priority project, ***Basic Income: Some Policy Options for Canada*** was released in January 2020, as a new minority government was getting under way. Published by BICN in both French and English, it shows options for designing and funding a progressive basic income, that is feasible in Canada, a is a matter of priorities. The Policy Options report got reasonable media coverage at the time and support from politicians who have become basic income champions. Its importance grew rapidly a couple of months later, however, as the pandemic's health and economic impacts hit Canada, the government responded with emergency cash benefits and public attention to basic income surged.

Calls for a basic income were coming from many quarters over the spring and summer of 2020 but there were oppositional and simply ill-informed voices coming out as well, with debate taking place on a conceptual and ideological plane as well as a more technical and policy-oriented one. Policy Options starts from a principled place and provides results based on sophisticated modelling. It is being widely cited including by the Parliamentary Budget Office.

COVID-19

BICN was well-placed to engage with the surge of interest in basic income as the pandemic exposed long-standing problems exacerbated by COVID-19 and government responses both helped and left people behind. For example, we:

- Wrote briefs for House of Commons and Senate Committees studying COVID (both social affairs and finance) as well as a pre-budget submission
- Supported Senators and MPs in their work, including the development of Motion #46 and responding to substantive questions
- Responded to many media requests for interviews and for background information, from social affairs and business journalists, including a debate on CBC television and an interview with Zoomer media
- Canvassed supporters for CERB stories that were featured nationally on CBC radio
- Helped organize and participated in many webinars to educate a wide variety of audiences on basic income
- Worked with partners to develop the women's case for basic income and garner signatures on a letter to political leaders
- Collaborated with international colleagues to design country surveys and develop International Basic Income Week activities
- Issued a statement, with BICYN, on basic income as anti-racist policy
- Kept our supporters informed with regular newsletters featuring articles and events
- Worked collaboratively with regional and local basic income groups as well as other organizations such as Tamarack, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, LeadNow, Black Lives Matter, Just Recovery, Citizens for Public Justice, Social

Canada, the Pearson Institute, CARFAC, MPs and riding associations, and The Energy Mix.

Basic Income Movement Growth

It is noteworthy that during the period of this annual report, there was significant growth in the basic income movement overall in Canada, with new and strengthened local and regional groups. UBIWorks was established, the Basic Income Canada Youth Network, and most recently Coalition Canada: basic income - revenu de base. In addition, because interest and activism around basic income grew among organizations with other mandates and membership, the spheres of activity have expanded greatly. We have also changed the way we interact because of the pandemic, using virtual options for our activities, and this has facilitated a large increase in the frequency and volume of meetings that we have been able to have with other partners in the movement.

BICN has convened regular, informal meetings of leaders from a variety of organizations in the basic income movement during the pandemic. In October, 2020 we convened a National Forum, bringing together people across the country in different basic income organizations to begin the strategic thinking about the future that had been planned for NABIG, now in a very different context with movement growth, still in the midst of a pandemic and following a Speech from the Throne that did not mention basic income.

Governance and Election of Directors

The BICN Board has 13 director positions. There are six positions open for election in 2020 for two-year terms (just over a year and half in this case, due to COVID). Nominations were sought in September/October, 2020. Board members seeking re-election are Tara Kainer (Kingston, ON), John Mills (Hamilton, ON), Sheila Regehr (Toronto, ON), and Jenna van Draanen (Vancouver, BC). Two positions became vacant since last elections. The continuing members are, Stéphane Boisvert (Ottawa ON), Stephen Brown (Brampton, ON), Karen Monnon-Dempsey (Halifax, NS), John Rook (Calgary, AB), Pierre Stevens (Halifax, NS), and Paul Vallée (Ottawa, ON).

With the growth of the movement, the voting members of BICN now include representatives of regional and local groups across the country along with key individuals and continuing Advisory Council members. There will be further evolution of these and possibly new structures over the coming year. Following elections, the new Board will determine executive roles among its members. Please check the website following the AGM for new Board bios.

Financial Report

BICN's financial picture shows we were fortunate to have built up equity going into this fiscal year thanks to our committed donor base and very high attendance at NABIG 2018. This enabled us to continue major long-term projects like Policy Options and enhance our newsletter capacity. It gave us the ability to bring in paid expertise and services, like professional translation and graphic design for Policy Options so we could rapidly release it following the election of a minority government. This amplifies our effectiveness and complements the

invaluable work of volunteers. The equity also enabled us to manage, with adjustments, as we lost some donations due to the pandemic.

BICN Balance Statement 2019/20	
Assets (Pay Pal and Cash in Bank)	\$36,361.60
Accounts receivable	0
Total Assets (31/03/2020)	\$36,361.60
Liabilities	
Accounts payable	0
Equity	
Accrued income - previous years	\$52,628.87
- 2019/20	(\$16,267.24)
Total Equity	\$36,361.60
Total Liability and Equity	\$36,361.60

BICN Revenue and Expenses 2019/20	
Revenue	
BICN Board	\$17,539.00
Members	\$2,505.00
Support (public donations)	\$20,418.05
BIEN Congress in India (IDRC)	\$27,000.00
Total Revenue	\$67,462.00
Expenses	
Operating (insurance, legal, bank fees)	\$2962.87
Phone/Communications	\$461.76
Nationbuilder	\$4,896.14
Website	\$738.78
NABIG 2020 Planning	0
Personnel	
General Manager	\$8,800.00
Website News	\$9,000
Newsletter/Communications	\$10,800.00
Social Media	\$2,100.00

Youth Coordinator	\$3,000.00
Projects	
Policy Options Report	\$9,189.74
NABIG 2019 (participant subsidies)	\$750.00
BIG-NS Conference	\$500.00
'Cases' for BI/ON lobby day (through OBIN)	\$3,500.00
BIEN Congress in India	\$27,030.00
Total Expenses	\$83,729.20
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$16,267.24)

With regard to expenses, note that there is no expense line for NABIG 2020 as we made the COVID-related decision to cancel the congress before any money was spent on facilities or fees requested from registrants. Nonetheless much of our General Manager's work for several months was devoted to NABIG work.

Also note that BICN was able to help with the Basic Income Earth Network Congress in Hyderabad, India in the summer of 2019. As a registered Canadian corporation and BIEN affiliate we were in the unique position of being able to work with the International Development Research Centre and Indian colleagues to secure funds for the Congress to transfer to organizers in India.

As of October 14, 2020, we are further drawing down on assets and will have to make adjustments, for example a potential fund-raising drive despite the pandemic, and enlisting greater volunteer help with some of our functions to reduce our expenses where we can.

Plans and Priorities 2019/20

Context

- A second wave of COVID-19 means that future of our health and economy are uncertain. Vaccines are unlikely to be available for several more months. There are mixed signals in from the government about whether more permanent policies like a basic income are still on the table as temporary benefits roll out over the coming year. But it appears that people who do not qualify for these benefits will face increasing hardship in the coming winter. The problems, like racism and extreme inequality, that have been magnified by the pandemic still seem to be going unaddressed.
- There is concern that the window of opportunity to contemplate and effect more transformational change is closing and that government will remain path dependent on old programs. Also, with a minority government there is always the possibility of an early election being called.

- The Throne Speech identified two policy areas of special relevance—an income guarantee for people with disabilities and tax simplification measures.

Priorities and Expected Achievements

BICN has fostered depth and expertise, and that will continue to be valuable as we push for government policy development. There is also an identified need, however, to promote more general and plain language information for the many people who are new to basic income. This kind of material will be especially important for the media and voters if we face another election where basic income is more a ballot issue than it has been in the past. We have plans to significantly revamp our website to aid in this effort to reach new audiences.

On the policy front, being engaged in the development of the disability basic income mentioned in the Speech from the Throne will be important. It could either help set precedent for a more universal basic income guarantee or reinforce the notion of deservedness that undermines universality, depending on design. Measures to simplify tax administration and make it more automatic could also work in the interests of delivering a basic income.

Other more detailed priorities may come out of our National Forum strategizing, but it is certain that continued ally building will be important. We will need collective action with environmental and anti-racist groups, for example, to push for transformational change.

BICN will apply for charitable status this year. If granted, we can provide tax receipts for donations and hopefully gain access to other funding, for example from governments and foundations.

Thank you and acknowledgments

The Board of BICN, as always, extends its 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 champions in both the House of Commons and the Senate. We also extend profound thanks to researchers, writers, journalists, activists and others in Canada and around the world, some of whom have been in this movement for decades and others bringing new energy and diverse insights, to keep us moving forward.

We acknowledge that the lives of many people who struggled most before the pandemic arrived have become even harder and that emergency benefits are only for some. We will keep up the fight for a basic income for everyone!