



**The National Council of Women of Canada  
Le Conseil National des Femmes du Canada**

*FOUNDED 1893  
(INCORPORATED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT)*

*IN FEDERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN*

**Pre-Budget Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance  
August 5, 2016**

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## National Council of Women of Canada

### *Preamble*

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) is pleased to present our Pre-Budget Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Founded in 1893, the National Council of Women is a non-profit and non-partisan organization of women, representing a large number of Canadians of diverse occupations, languages, origins and customs and reflecting a cross-section of public opinion. NCWC is a non-governmental organization (NGO) comprised of Local Councils, Provincial Councils, and Nationally Organized Societies.

NCWC is a federate of the International Council of Women (ICW), an international non-governmental organization holding Consultative Status (Category 1) with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Founded in 1888, the ICW is composed of National Councils in 74 countries.

NCWC holds Consultative Status (General) with ECOSOC, enabling NCWC to bring a Canadian perspective to the work of the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women. NCWC also participates as an Observer Non-Governmental Organization with the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States.

NCWC is an organization of local, provincial and national organizations which are closely connected with issues at those levels, and which also has a firm grasp of international issues and Canada's commitment to them. For this reason, NCWC is uniquely qualified to approach our Government with suggestions and recommendations which are based on carefully researched and democratically approved policies for improving the quality of life of Canadians.

For the past 123 years, the National Council of Women has worked to improve the quality of life in Canada through education and advocacy. In 2005 the Hon. Stephane Dion announced the unveiling of an Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque commemorating the national historic significance of NCWC in Allan Gardens, Toronto, the site of our first meeting. "The National Council of Women of Canada has worked tirelessly for more than a century to expand opportunities for Canadian women," said Minister Dion. "Having the courage to break down barriers and challenge existing conventions so that women from coast to coast could participate in and influence our society, the Council paved the way for political equality and full citizenship for women throughout the nation."

## *NCWC Pre-Budget Brief*

Poverty results in the marginalization and social exclusion of a large portion of our population. On November 24, 1989, Parliament passed an all-party resolution, unanimously, to eradicate child poverty within ten years and years later supported the adoption of the UN Millennium Goals. However, no appreciable progress has been made in eradicating poverty. Therefore, the National Council of Women of Canada strongly urge the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and territories to consider, investigate, and **develop a national basic income guarantee program.**

A basic income guarantee would ensure everyone an income sufficient to meet basic needs and live with dignity, regardless of work status. The Basic Income Network states that a good basic income design is one that:

- Enables individuals to have both (1) autonomous income to use as best meets their own needs; and (2) access to public services that benefit all of us.
- Need not replace income programs that are working fairly well, such as forms of basic income already available to children (0-17) and seniors (65+), or programs designed for other purposes, e.g., Employment Insurance, Canada and Quebec pension plans.
- Replaces income provided through social assistance systems that impose paternalistic and stigmatizing conditions not applicable to other Canadians.
- Provides the security of an income floor that increases over time with the cost of living, declines gradually as other income increases, and is enhanced in particular circumstances such as disability and lone-parenthood, consistent with the recognition such circumstances receive now in the tax system and other programs.
- Leaves no one receiving income support worse off than before a basic income program was implemented, substantially improves the wellbeing of those in deepest poverty, and to these ends changes services currently tied to social assistance receipt to ones that are geared to income.
- Works together with universal public services such as health care, education, child care and pharmacare, and over time reduces the volume of need for services that treat the consequences of poverty and exclusion.
- Does not substitute for minimum wage or pay equity laws or other measures that ensure the paid labour market operates fairly, nor for the creation of new and better jobs; nor does good basic income program design remove the need for an affordable housing strategy, and the need to combat racism, other forms of discrimination and other factors linked to inequality.
- Is based on fair and progressive taxation.

(Basic Income Canada Network, [www.basicincomecanada.org](http://www.basicincomecanada.org))

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 25, part 1, states: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

The National Women’s Liberal Commission, in Policy Resolution 97 stated: “Be it Resolved that the Liberal Party of Canada advocate for a federal pilot of a basic income supplement in at least one Canadian town or city, in cooperation with the appropriate provincial and municipal government(s).”

The Standing Senate Committee Report “In From the Margins” (2009) made 72 recommendations, one of which was that the federal government examine a basic annual income based on a negative income tax.

“In From the Margins” states that even when programs are working, the resulting income often still keeps people living in poverty, and at their worst entraps people in poverty. Some of the Senate Report conclusions were:

- Employment is no longer a sure route out of poverty.
- Past studies on mental health and population health have shown how health and poverty interact.
- Fundamentally, people do not want to live better in poverty, they want to get out of poverty. (Tom Gribbons)
- Poor people are excluded from opportunities most take for granted.
- Income programs are a patchwork, with “hoops, mazes, and barriers.”
- Lifting people out of poverty has to be the goal of policies and programs.
- We need to raise incomes of families raising children, to get children out of poverty.
- Many poor people are employed, but do not earn enough to support their families.
- More and more jobs – 40% of the total – are part-time or temporary.
- People cannot afford to live on the minimum wage the way it is.
- Even when programs are demonstrated to be successful and to meet identified community needs, too many resources are allocated to getting, keeping, and reporting on funding from government at all levels.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk (Professor from the School of Labour Studies and the Department of Economics, McMaster University; Lead Investigator, Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) addressed the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, April 8, 2014, on behalf of PEPSO which is a joint university-community research group based at McMaster and United Way Toronto. Their research led to a report titled “It’s More than Poverty” in 2013, which *“documented the social implications of changing work patterns.”* Lewchuk stated: *“If, as many now argue, we are moving away from a labour market where the majority of workers are employed in stable long-term employment relationships to one of less permanent short-term employment relationships, then the findings in “It’s More than Poverty” foreshadow a very different society than the one we live in today.....When speaking of youth employment.....last month, 13.6% of young people aged 15 to 24 were unemployed, double the national average.....It is this shift to precarious employment that was the focus of “It’s More than Poverty.”*

In Halifax in 2016 at a Conference on a basic income guarantee, Dr. Lewchuk, who described himself as more of an economic historian rather than a pure economist stated that today’s economy versus the economy of the 1970s is vastly different. In the 70s, there were lots of good high-paying manufacturing jobs, job stability, and jobs that could support a household. Today we have a precarious job market – where many jobs are temporary, contract, short term, or even longer term – but not permanent. People shouldn’t expect to have a pension and cannot expect to stay in a job for a lifetime. Poverty has two dimensions: 1) low income and 2) variable income. Because of the labour market and time-limited jobs, many people are stuck with irregular income and the social implications of this.

Speaking to the 2014 Standing Committee on Finance, Dr. Lewchuk stated: *“If you think about the change that’s taking place in our economy, it’s in the media, in the arts, in education – much of university teaching is now done by contract workers – and in health care. We’ve seen real*

*growth in these middle-income jobs, but these are jobs that are time-limited. They may be six-month jobs or one-month jobs. They often are jobs that don't have any benefits beyond the wage. So what we have is a growing group of what we would call middle-class Canadians, but they're not in the kinds of jobs that middle-class Canadians had 20 or 30 years ago, so that once you had that job, you expected to keep that job for 20 or 30 years. Nowadays people are moving from job to job. There's uncertainty. Part of it is just the result of rapid technical change. ....Employers are also hiring a smaller core of permanent workers and surrounding that with a much larger ring of contract and temporary workers. Sometimes these are very well-paid jobs, but they're not permanent, and I think that is what we need to deal with as a society.....I think there's also just the stress inside the household of not knowing what income you're going to have in six months...."*

In 1976 Canada signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Right; Canada has fundamental legal obligations in the field of social and economic rights. Those rights include adequate housing, water and sanitation, work and related rights, adequate food, and an adequate standard of living. People on income assistance (IA) are woefully underfunded and live below the poverty line; in addition they have to relinquish privacy, knowing that their actions can come under surveillance in the name of deterring fraud. "You can count on being well and truly impoverished if you have to go on welfare." (Michael Mendelson, In From the Margins) Many consider the welfare system to be "broken" and believe that the time is right to replace it with a basic income guarantee – ensuring that "everyone has sufficient income to meet basic needs and live with dignity, regardless of work status." (Basic Income Canada Network)

In addition to those mentioned above, single seniors are also among those most often living in poverty as they subsist on the OAS and CPP, supplemented with the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

The cost of poverty is often quoted as \$75 billion/annually; the human cost of living in poverty is much harder to measure but we know the devastating results. In Dr. Martin Luther King's 1967 book Where do we go from here: Chaos or Community? he advocated for a guaranteed annual income. "The time has come for us to civilize ourselves by the total, direct and immediate abolition of poverty." (Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr's, Solution to Poverty, Jordan Weissman, [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com), January 20, 2014) Dr. King also stated: "The dignity of the individual will flourish when the decisions concerning his life are in his own hands, when he has the assurance his income is stable and certain, and when he knows that he has the means to seek self-improvement."