



May 20, 2022

Dear members of the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples,

We, the undersigned members of Coalition Canada Basic Income - revenu de base, submit this document in support of the Call to Action 4.5 of The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, to establish a guaranteed livable income (GLI) for all Canadians, including Indigenous Peoples. This subject was recently discussed before the Committee during its April 25, 2022, meeting, and we felt it would be useful to provide more information regarding basic income, or Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI), within the context of this committee's work and specific lens. Coalition Canada brings together provincial and territorial basic income advocacy organizations across the country to advocate for a basic income as a poverty elimination strategy and necessary step towards a just society.

What is a GLI? [Coalition Canada advocates for a progressive GLI](#) defined as a regular payment, made to people who need it, and distributed with minimal bureaucracy. It is based on the premise that all people have the right to have their basic needs met and to live a dignified life. A BIG must be an essential component of a just society, not a replacement for social supports and services. We believe the following principles must guide the implementation of a GLI:

- **Universally accessible.** Everyone who needs it, gets it.

- **Unconditional.** Subject only to income and residency requirements. Not means tested.

- **An essential component of a broad social safety net of universal supports and services.** Replaces income assistance but not other vital social programs. Housing, childcare, education, disability, addiction, mental health, and other supports should remain. GLI should coexist alongside efforts to strengthen social supports in other ways, such as through a livable minimum wage, pay equity, corporate regulation, and pharmacare.

- **Sufficient.** The benefit set at or above the poverty line. Enhanced for those with particular needs or vulnerabilities. Indexed to the cost of living.

- **Responsive to changing circumstances.** Delivered monthly or biweekly.

- **Respectful of autonomy.** Payable to individuals to be used at their sole discretion.

- **Respectful of Indigenous self-determination.** Respects the rights of Indigenous people to determine whether a basic income is delivered in their communities and, if so, what form it will take and how it will be implemented.

The Indigenous context: In recent years, interest in a basic income or GLI has grown, in part because of the difficulties encountered during COVID. The pandemic highlighted gaps and inequities in Canada's social support systems, even as governments scrambled to provide relief for people who lost earned income from work. Many of the most vulnerable in our society were left behind. A GLI would provide protection against the impacts of current and future crises.

Indigenous people are far too familiar with the systemic inequities that exist in Canada. Colonial and racist policies and practices since first contact have had a devastating impact on traditional economies and the physical and mental health and well-being of Indigenous people.

This harmful legacy has resulted in much higher poverty rates in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities compared to the general Canadian population. Poverty further damages the health and well-being of Indigenous people and their communities.

GLI is supported by several Indigenous groups and individuals. For example, the [Calls for Justice](#) of the Commission on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls identified the need to provide a “**guaranteed annual livable income**”(another term used colloquially for GLI) for all Canadians (**call to action 4.5**) and for a model “**recognizing the right to income security**” to be developed and implemented in Inuit Nunangat (**call to action 16.20**). Working to implement a basic income also falls in line with prioritizing Indigenous rights when developing budgets & government activities (**Call to action 1.3**). Support for the call for a basic income in these calls to action was re-iterated before this committee by witnesses Natan Obed (President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), Cassidy Caron (President, Metis National Council), and Julie McGregor (Director of Justice, Assembly of First Nations) in response to a question by Senator Bernadette Clement (APPA, April 25, 15:44:58). All three witnesses testified to the need for further study of a GLI and its implementation and impacts in Indigenous Communities. Such is a goal of Bill S-233, and an actionable item of this committee. A GLI is an area of current interest for Indigenous organizations such as the National Association of Friendship Centers, the First Nations Information Governance Centre, and the [Native Women’s Association of Canada](#). Leah Gazan (Winnipeg), an Indigenous MP, speaks beautifully to the need for a GLI throughout Canada in this [video](#). She presented Motion 46 “A Guaranteed Livable Basic Income” repeatedly in Parliament, ultimately as a unanimous consent motion. More recently, MP Gazan introduced [Bill C-223](#) in in Parliament, while Senator Pate introduced [Bill S-233 in the Senate](#), both titled *An Act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income*.

Indigenous scholars have highlighted the critical importance of maintaining and enhancing current social supports if a basic income is to be implemented (Naiomi Metallic, 2021; Broad & Nadjiwon-Smith, 2017)—a belief shared by Coalition Canada. It is of critical importance that Indigenous groups and individuals, such as those who have appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, be part of the conversation so that barriers can be identified and addressed in developing a basic income.

What the research says: We know a lot about the benefits of a GLI. Canada already has implemented several forms of basic income, for children and the elderly. Old Age Security plus the Guaranteed Income Supplement together have dramatically reduced poverty in seniors (e.g., [Stats Canada, 2012](#)). We also know that basic income is a necessary tool to help communities combat the ever-worsening impacts of climate change ([Green Resilience Project, 2022](#)). Further, providing income to those in poverty stimulates local economies (<https://www.cancea.ca/CCB>). Basic income pilot studies have shown that a basic income dramatically improves people's life circumstances, reduces health care costs, increases the ability of people to make decisions for themselves, allows people to stay in school or pursue higher education, and has little effect on involvement in paid work (e.g., Forget, 2020). [The Canadian Medical Association](#) estimates that only 15% of what makes Canadians sick is a result of our biology. The rest stem from our life circumstances—notably, social determinants of health.

Affordable, revenue neutral, models for funding a GLI have been developed by the Basic Income Canada Network, funded through a more equitable distribution of federal and provincial tax credits ([Pasma & Regehr, 2019](#)). The Parliamentary Budget Officer has also costed a GLI using other methods (e.g., [Nov. 2020](#)). The PBO also found that [a GLI would reduce poverty rates measured by the MBM by 49% nationwide](#).

Towards implementation: The BICN models demonstrate that a GLI could be distributed through the federal tax system, akin to what was done with CERB, who's myths about causing labour shortages have been thoroughly debunked. ([Robertson, 2021](#)) However, implementing it in this way creates a barrier for many who do not file federal income tax returns. Barriers such as these must be addressed in any roll-out of a GLI.

Some provinces and territories have taken steps to implement a GLI. Most notably, the government of PEI, who's legislature unanimously supported the call for the implementation of a basic income. [PEI](#) could be the starting point and could pave the way for other provinces to follow, just as Saskatchewan was the starting point for universal health care.

If GLI is to be implemented, APPA and Indigenous governments and organizations ought to participate in the discussions. If we raise our voices together, there may be an opportunity for real change to take place to the benefit of Indigenous Peoples and settlers alike. Should the committee wish to hear more about basic income within this lens, we would be happy to write further or appear before the committee at its discretion.

Sincerely,

Wil Robertson (wilhr@outlook.com), Susan Abells (susan.abells@gmail.com), Luc Gosselin (lgosselin@revenuebase.quebec), and Mandy Kay-Raining Bird (rainbird@dal.ca)

Members, Coalition Canada Basic Income - revenu de base.

