

# Livable Basic Income Guarantee Municipal Advocacy Toolkit Atlantic Canada

This advocacy tool kit is designed to assist fellow Atlantic Canadians in asking their municipal governments to pass a resolution in support of a livable basic income guarantee (BIG). If you don't know whether your municipality has passed a resolution, [here](#) is a complete list of municipalities that have.

## What are we Trying to Achieve?

The **long-term goal is a livable basic income guarantee (BIG) for all Canadians**. A BIG is an unconditional cash transfer from government to individuals who need it to enable everyone to meet their basic needs, participate in society and live with dignity, regardless of work status.

The **short-term goal is to increase the number of municipalities in Atlantic Canada that pass a resolution in support of a BIG**. Together we can make a difference!

What can you do to help achieve these goals? Work with your municipality to pass a resolution.

## Why is it Important to Work with Your Municipality?

The [Case for Basic Income and Municipalities](#) provides a strong argument for why municipal voices are important.

Municipalities are the front line of elected government and are therefore a voice that needs to be heard.

Municipalities are not responsible for poverty reduction and wealth redistribution. However over the years the responsibility for maintaining essential public and social services has been increasingly downloaded onto municipalities from other levels of government.

As Mayor Savage of Halifax, Nova Scotia clearly stated [at the 2022 Atlantic Canada Basic Income Summit](#): “The feds have the money, the province has the jurisdiction, and the city [i.e., “municipalities”] have the problems”.

## What is the Process?

Download [this checklist](#) to help you advocate.

- The process starts with you!
  - Think about why YOU are passionate about a BIG. Be ready to explain it to the people you talk to. Think about why having your municipality take action on a BIG important to you.
  - You will be asked questions that you probably won't be able to fully answer, that's OK! Acknowledge that you can't speak to all the intricacies of federal and provincial income policy development and go back to your passion reason.
- Decide who you might work with (individuals and groups have been successful).
  - Consider approaching like-minded individuals or organizations.
- Seek a champion within the municipal council (highly recommended).
  - Having someone working "on the inside" can be very helpful.
  - How do you find a champion on council?
    - Attend council meetings and/or read meeting minutes to learn about councilors' interests. Consider things like the motions each councilor makes and which committees they sit on.
    - Connect with councilors and the mayor/warden/reeve of your municipality.
      - Share your personal interest and passion for a BIG and leave each person with printed information.
- If you find a municipal council champion:
  - Decide who will bring the request to the council.
  - Discuss and write down the process and timeline for bringing a request to council.
  - Work with the champion to draft the suggested resolution to be brought to council for consideration.
    - [Examples](#) of resolutions to consider can be found in the What Do I Ask For (The Resolution)? section of this toolkit.
    - Be open to tailoring the proposed wording as needed.
  - If the champion is taking the lead, become a good teammate (meet regularly and provide encouragement, follow-up, help, etc.).
  - If you are the lead, have regular check-ins with the champion.
- If you do not find a champion from municipal council:
  - Meet with the municipality's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or another staff person, e.g. Clerk.
  - Find out and write down how to bring a request to the municipality and the timelines.

## What is the Process? (*continued*)

- Whether you have a champion or not, some considerations include:
  - You do not want a resolution/request to come to a vote before it is properly considered and tailored.
    - Address any questions and concerns raised by councilors before presenting to the council.
    - Ask questions ahead of time to help inform the request of the council (i.e. work with your municipal champion, connect with staff, connect with councilors, etc.).
  - Throughout the process, offer additional resources that answer questions, concerns, etc.
  - Offer to do or coordinate presentations (e.g. to Committee of the Whole or appropriate sub-committees; see sample presentation [here](#)).
  - If allowed, attend every meeting where the request is on the agenda (even if you are unable to speak at the meeting).
  - Consider reaching out to individuals or groups for their support by:
    - Asking them to send a [Community Champion letter](#) to councilors before the request is made of council. Find an adaptable template [here](#). This will help demonstrate evidence of constituents' support. Ask each champion to send you a copy of their letter.
    - Using the UBI Works' [newmode form](#). This tool asks constituents who are registered with UBI Works to send a letter to their municipal representatives in support of a resolution.
    - Inviting them to attend council meetings when the request is on the agenda.
  - Reach out to BIG-NS for support. They are happy to assist you with additional information, by presenting to council, or by finding experts to answer specific questions. Contact: [bignovascotia@gmail.com](mailto:bignovascotia@gmail.com).
- If the resolution passes.
  - Confirm that the request has been completed (e.g. letter(s) have been sent).
  - Ask for a copy of the letter(s).
  - Publicly thank your council at a meeting.
  - Let the media, BIG-NS, community champions (if applicable), and others know.
  - Consider attending future council meetings to provide updates on progress toward a BIG.
- If the resolution does not pass.
  - Do not lose hope! This has happened before. This could mean “not yet”.
  - If you have a municipal council champion, strategize next steps together.
  - Talk to individual councilors and answer their questions.
  - Provide additional information to the council.
  - If necessary, modify the request/suggested resolution.
  - Show the council that there is support in their municipality through community champion letters and/or the UBI Works' [newmode form](#).
  - When you think it is appropriate, bring your request to council again.

## What Do I Ask For (The Resolution)?

The process starts with identifying what you want from your municipal council.

Below are examples of specific 'asks'. Ideally, we recommend choosing all 3.

- 1.** Municipal resolutions consistently have wording asking the mayor/warden/reeve to write letters calling on federal and provincial elected officials to work together to create a national BIG.
  - Wording example: "That the Mayor/Warden/Reeve write letters to the Prime Minister and Premier asking for federal and provincial/territorial governments to work together to create a national basic income."
- 2.** For each respective Atlantic Canadian province, we recommend including a statement supporting the creation of a provincial all-party committee to research and design a BIG.
  - Wording example: "That the Mayor/Warden/Reeve write a letter to the Premier and all MLAs, with copies to the PM and NB MPs, requesting that the province establish an all-party committee of the legislature to research and design a BIG for all of New Brunswick."
- 3.** Some resolutions have asked other municipalities to also pass a resolution.
  - Wording example: "That the [municipality] encourages other cities and regions to advocate for a Guaranteed Liveable Basic Income to their MPs and MLAs and at both Association of Municipalities of [province/territory] and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)."

Many municipalities across Canada have already passed resolutions. Here is a [current list](#) and [here](#) are some examples of the motions they passed.

## Progress toward a BIG

There is a groundswell of support for a BIG right across Canada - in community and in all levels of government.

### Provinces & Territories

Following a [2020 all-party report](#), the PEI Legislative Assembly unanimously agreed, "That the Government of Prince Edward Island begin immediate negotiations with the Government of Canada for the development and implementation of a basic income guarantee program for Prince Edward Island". Further, the legislature stated, "Our province's small size makes it an ideal



## Progress toward a BIG (*continued*)

testing ground for a basic income program before scaling it up to a national scale." Creating a province-wide BIG continues to be [supported by all party leaders](#) and [Indigenous chiefs in PEI](#). A new [report](#) developed by economists, public servants, politicians and advocates presents a basic income model for a fully-funded 5- to 7-year demonstration program in PEI, which could serve as the impetus for a Canada-wide rollout.

A BIG was a key recommendation of Newfoundland and Labrador's 2022 [Health Accord document](#). Following this, the Newfoundland/Labrador legislature unanimously supported establishing an all-party committee to review basic income models and approaches and assess their viability and potential for reducing poverty. On November 8th the Premier [announced](#) a new poverty reduction plan, which included a basic income for adults 60-64 years of age who already receive support through the Department of Health and Community Services.

Quebec has implemented a [basic income program for individuals with disabilities](#). Health professionals throughout the province have [called for the program to be extended](#) to all those living in poverty.

Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and British Columbia have also studied basic income guarantees.

### Federal Government

Parliamentary Budget Office: The PBO has completed three reports on BIG, in [2018](#), [2020](#) (plus [additional analyses](#)), and [2021](#), which costed and studied the effects of BIG.

House: On December 16th 2021, Manitoba NDP MP Leah Gazan introduced a private member's bill in the House. [Bill C-223](#), An act to develop a national framework for a livable basic income. It has not yet reached second reading.

Senate: Later that same day in the Senate, an identically worded bill, [Bill S-233](#), was introduced by Independent Senator Kim Pate. This bill has completed first and second reading and was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance which has interviewed witnesses (view the [video](#) and read the submitted [briefs in support of the bill](#)).

### Indigenous Groups

The Commission on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls [Calls for Justice](#) identified the need to provide a "guaranteed annual livable income", or BIG, for all Canadians (#4.5) and for a model "recognizing the right to income security" to be developed and implemented in Inuit Nunangat (#16.20). The Cree Income Security Program was established in 1976 by Quebec to provide permanent income support for James Bay Cree hunters and trappers, as partial compensation for flooding Cree and Inuit lands without consultation when the dam was built.

# Additional Resources to Support Your Advocacy Efforts

## 1. The BIG We Want

As you read more about BIG, you will run into different phrases and acronyms which have similar but not identical meanings. These include basic income guarantee (BIG), guaranteed livable income (GLI), universal basic income (UBI), and a citizen or social dividend. Several of these terms are differentiated nicely in the [FAQs](#) developed by Coalition Canada. Many organizations are working toward a BIG at the local, provincial, regional, and national levels.

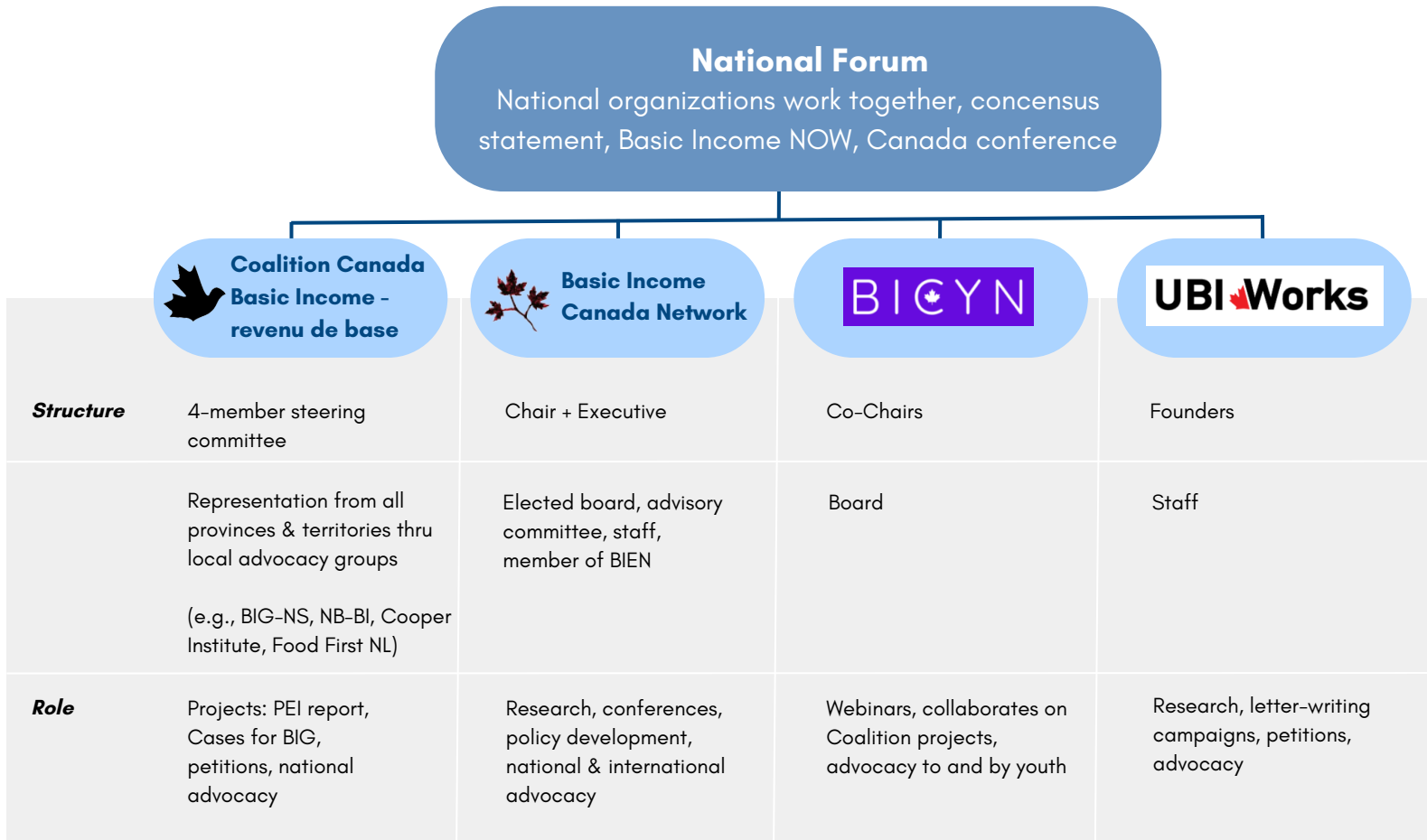
Basic Income Nova Scotia ([BIG-NS](#)) has educated and advocated for BIG in NS since 2015. In that time they have held 5 one-day conferences on basic income.

[Basic Income NOW, Atlantic Canada](#) is a coalition of Atlantic Canadian organizations and individuals working in solidarity to implement a national BIG. Their first action was to develop a consensus statement to allow them to ‘speak with one voice’. Their [consensus statement](#) defines BIG as: “a regular payment, made to people who need it, and distributed with minimal bureaucracy. A BIG is an essential component of a just society but must not replace the social supports and services that currently exist, and which, in many cases, should be strengthened.” It sets out 7 principles that should guide the implementation of a basic income guarantee:

1. Universally accessible. Everyone who needs it gets it.
2. Unconditional. Subject only to income and residency requirements. Migrant workers and refugee claimants are eligible.
3. An essential component of a broad social safety net of universal supports and services. A full, adequate BIG replaces income assistance but not other vital social programs. Housing, childcare, education, disability, addiction, mental health, and other supports should remain. BIG should coexist alongside efforts to strengthen social supports in other ways, such as implementing a livable minimum wage, pay equity, affordable housing options, corporate regulation, and universal pharmacare, dental care, and vision care.
4. Sufficient. Set at a livable level, above the poverty line, enhanced for those with disabilities, and indexed to the cost of living.
5. Responsive to changing circumstances. Simple to access. Delivered monthly or biweekly.
6. Respectful of autonomy. Payable to individuals to be used at their sole discretion. No intrusive and degrading application or oversight processes.
7. Respectful of Indigenous self-determination. Respecting autonomy and 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.

## 2. National Advocacy Organizations

Below is a chart of national Canadian organizations that are working toward a BIG. These organizations recently collaborated to develop a [consensus statement](#) outlining principles that should define a national BIG. These principles are completely consistent with those in the Basic Income NOW, Atlantic Canada consensus statement.



## 3. Some Reasons Why We Need a BIG

"The primary factors that shape the health of Canadians are not medical treatments or lifestyle choices but rather the living and working conditions they experience", that is, social determinants of health" ([Raphael et al., 2020](#)). Income is the most impactful [social determinant of health](#). Income inadequate to meet basic needs causes toxic stress, physical and mental health problems. It also leads to higher rates of chronic disease and earlier death.

A livable BIG would improve health and [reduce stress on our health and justice systems](#).

A livable BIG is a health promotion and prevention strategy.

### 3. Some Reasons Why We Need a BIG (continued)

The nature of [work](#) is changing. Gig work, task work, part-time work, on-call work, etc. makes employment/income precarious.

Wages are not keeping pace with cost-of-living increases, especially housing, food, heating, and gas.

It is ethical and socially just. If we are comfortable with private inheritance we should implement social inheritance, hence, social dividend and citizen dividend.

Minimum wage is not a [living wage](#). Working full-time does not ensure a person will not live in poverty.

We already have a basic income guarantee for seniors ([OAS/GIS](#), McIntyre et al., 2016), for children ([CCB](#)), for individuals and families who are working and earning a low income ([CWB](#)). Why not a livable BIG for everyone who needs it?

Artificial intelligence (AI), increased automation, and the need to transition to a greener economy has, and will, displace large numbers of workers. A basic income could provide a much-needed floor below which no one can fall.

[Poverty](#), [homelessness](#), and [food insecurity](#) are rising. More and more people are unable to meet their basic needs or are on the brink.

Income assistance is inadequate and the process acts as an impediment to people becoming employed. Families can get caught in an intergenerational cycle of poverty.

If you give people a BIG they will spend it locally, thus benefiting their local economy (e.g., CCB, [CANCEA](#)).

## 4. Responses to Questions & Concerns

Councilors or mayors/wardens/reeves may know very little about BIG, so in your discussions with them you will likely need to help educate them. Below are some questions or concerns that you may encounter and possible responses:

Concern	Response
A basic income is not the responsibility of municipalities.	True. But Municipal voices can be powerful and the effects of poverty are felt strongly by municipalities. The <a href="#">Case for Basic Income and Municipalities</a> provides additional reasons that municipalities need to raise their voices.
People will stop working.	Trials of BIG all over the world do not support this assertion. Modest decreases in work force participation, in the cases where they have been found in Canadian pilot studies, are largely related to taking time off work for training/education or to take care of family. The Conference Board of Canada hosted an excellent <a href="#">podcast with the Late Honourable Hugh Segal</a> dispelling this myth.
A livable BIG is too expensive.	The cost will depend on how the BIG is designed and how it interacts with existing programs e.g., savings from elimination of provincial income assistance programs. Canada's % of GDP spent on social programs is one of the lowest among <a href="#">OECD</a> countries at 17.3% (Denmark - 28%, France- 31.2%).
Everyone who can work should work.	<p>You may agree or disagree with this position: however, a BIG will help separate work and money. We need to recognize that not all work is paid work. A BIG will free people up to work less if they need to, to take jobs they want even if the wage is less than they need, to volunteer, etc. A majority of people who have inadequate incomes work.</p> <p>It must also be noted that paid work does not mean all the expenses can be met. In 2021, 20% of food bank users in Canada were in the labour force (<a href="#">FoodBanks Canada Advocacy Toolkit</a>).</p>

## 4. Responses to Questions & Concerns (Continued)

Concern	Response
<p>It will increase my taxes.</p>	<p>Probably not your taxes! Our current tax system is inequitable. The wealthiest Canadians and large corporations do not pay their fair share. Canada does not have wealth, gift, or inheritance tax. It has the lowest G7 corporate tax rate. Canada taxes wages at a higher rate than capital gains and dividends. There are a large number of tax breaks that benefit only the wealthiest Canadians. Corporate taxes have declined in Canada over the last decades.</p> <p>A BIG could be paid for by making our tax system more equitable.</p> <p><a href="#">BICN</a> and <a href="#">UBI Works</a> have proposed progressive ways to modify the tax system and pay for a BIG.</p>
<p>If you give people a BIG many services will be lost.</p>	<p>A BIG will become another essential <b>component</b> of our social safety net. It should replace provincial and territorial income assistance programs (welfare). Housing, childcare, hospitals, addiction services and many other government programs will have to remain, and in many cases should be improved.</p>
<p>If we give people a BIG, landlords and businesses will just raise their prices.</p>	<p>This did not occur when OAS/GIS, CCB and other income supports were introduced. It also does not occur when minimum wages increase. “High inflation is driven by ... strong demand, post-pandemic economic recovery, geopolitical unrest, and supply chain disruptions” (<a href="#">Rush, 2022</a>, KPMG), not income transfers to those who need it. Corporate greed also contributes (<a href="#">MacLaughlin, 2022</a>, Ecojust). BIG could be complimented by rent control and other government regulations to control costs.</p>



## 4. Responses to Questions & Concerns (Continued)

Concern	Response
If you give poor people more money they'll just spend it on more "temptation items" like alcohol.	<p>Parents are given Canada Child Benefits and not asked to account for how they spend this "government money".</p> <p>A <a href="#">BC study released in Summer 2023</a> showed that homeless individuals given a large lump sum of money (\$7500) retained more savings (\$1,160) and increased monthly spending more (\$429) on average than control participants. Specifically, they spent more on durable goods (e.g., furniture, car), rent, food, and transit. Importantly, spending on temptation goods (i.e., alcohol, drugs, cigarettes) was not different between them and the control group who received no money.</p>

Regardless of the issue raised, you can always acknowledge it and refer to the fact that the province will have to work out the details of a BIG with the federal government. You can also gather additional information and distribute it after the meeting. And, of course, you can return to YOUR passion reason - why YOU care about a BIG.

## 5. Additional Helpful Resources

The following resources may be helpful to you and your champion(s) as you prepare to speak about BIG:

- Presentation examples to municipal councils
  - [Powerpoint slide examples](#)
  - [Waterloo](#) city council meeting video (BIG presentation starts at approx. the 2:00 hr. mark and lasts approx. 15 mins.)
- Sample speaking notes (*under development*)

These resources have proven to be particularly useful for sharing with municipal officials:

- Coalition Canada [FAQs](#)
- [The Case for Basic Income and Municipalities](#)
- Atlantic Provinces [Consensus Statement](#)

## 5. Additional Helpful Resources (continued)

Other resources you may want to use:

- **About BIG**
  - [The case for basic income series](#)
  - Senator Kim Pate: [A comprehensive BIG bibliography](#)
  - The Stanford University [Basic Income site](#)
- **Webinars & Conferences**
  - [Atlantic Summit videos](#)
  - [BIG-NS conference videos](#)
  - [Conversation with Herb Emery](#)
- **Funding**
  - [Policy Options document](#), BICN (costs and proposes method to pay for BIG)
  - UBIworks offers two methods of funding a BIG. One is characterized as realistic, [BIG, Who Pays? Probably not you!](#) A second as aspirational, [8 Ways to Pay for Recovery UBI](#).
  - The Parliamentary Budget Office has completed three reports on BIG, in [2018](#), [2020](#) (plus [additional analyses](#)), and [2021](#), which costed and studied the potential effects of a BIG.
  - Two non-traditional methods of funding a BIG that are often researched are [land value taxation](#) and [sovereign wealth funds](#).
- **Governmental Bills**
  - House of Commons [Bill C-223](#)
  - Senate [Bill S-233](#)
- **Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Reports**
  - [Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in NS](#)
  - [The cost of poverty in the Atlantic Provinces](#)
  - [Living wage](#)
  - The impacts of [CERB](#)
  - [Can't Afford the Rent](#)
- **Other Resources & Reports**
  - Jim Stanford, [Centre for Future Work](#)
  - [The Green Resilience Project](#)
  - CANCEA: [The economic impact of CCB](#)
  - [PROOF](#): Food insecurity
- **Advocacy Groups**
  - [BIG-NS](#)
  - [Basic Income NOW, Atlantic Canada](#)
  - [BICN](#)
  - [Coalition Canada](#)
  - [BICYN](#)
  - [UBI Works](#)



As you can see, you are part of a large national chorus singing the praises of a BIG and moving us closer to the day that all Canadians have a basic income guarantee.

Your work will help your municipality join the choir!

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