

# ***Peterborough Food Action Network***

October 22, 2018

The Hon. Maryam Monsef, MP, Peterborough-Kawartha  
417 Bethune Street, Suite 4  
Peterborough, ON K9H 3Z1  
[Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca)

Dear MP Monsef:

As members of the [Peterborough Food Action Network](#), a working group of the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network, we are deeply concerned about the cancellation of the Government of Ontario Basic Income (BI) Pilot Project.

There is considerable evidence demonstrating that a BI decreases hospitalization rates, food insecurity, work-related injuries, emergency department visits and mental illness. Many economists and researchers consider the BI to be an effective policy option that has the potential to reduce the number of programs and their associated costs, and to streamline poverty reduction strategies. It is predicted that a BI will cost less than the current amount spent on social programs, housing, justice and health care.<sup>1,2</sup>

The Ontario government's decision to cancel the BI pilot is deeply concerning to participants and to those of us who had a keen interest in learning the outcomes. In a letter to the Ontario Premier, University of Manitoba health economist and [Mincome researcher](#) Evelyn Forget stated, "Not only is the cancellation inconsistent with international best practices, but it violates your own Canadian policy for the ethical conduct of experiments involving humans." More than 20 researchers and stakeholders participating in basic income initiatives around the world signed this letter. The [world is watching](#) Canada and wanting to learn from this pilot.

Participants in the pilot expressed how the BI has improved their lives. They were able to enroll in classes to better their education, pay for day care or rent a safer apartment. Other participants stated that they could afford to buy fresh fruits and vegetables and new shoes for walking to work. A [Toronto Star article](#) puts a face to the participants and outlines some of the significant benefits experienced by those in the pilot project.

We were heartened by the Federal government's new poverty reduction strategy, and believe that a BI can help achieve the goal of reducing poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030. In addition, BI would complement the Canada Child Benefit, which is also an income-tested program. **We believe that the pilot should continue and be evaluated as planned to provide the evidence needed to design a program that addresses the roots of poverty.** At the opening of the [73rd Session of the General Assembly of the UN](#) last month, the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, spoke in favour of Universal Basic Income. The 1,745,900 Ontarians living in poverty deserve this investment, as the findings of the pilot will lead us to crafting a more just and equitable society.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by***

Rosana Salvaterra, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health  
Chair, Peterborough Food Action Network

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cc: Minister Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

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<sup>1</sup> Hon. Hugh D. Segal, 2016. Finding a Better Way: A Basic Income Pilot Project for Ontario. Retrieved October 16, 2018 from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/finding-better-way-basic-income-pilot-project-ontario>

<sup>2</sup> Valerie Tarasuk, 2017. Implications of a Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity. Retrieved October 16, 2018 from <http://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Paper-Tarasuk-BIG-EN-17.06.13-1712.pdf>