



OMSSA's Response to the Basic Income Pilot Consultation

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Item 9.2 - OMSSA's Response re Basic Income Guarantee
To OMSSA Board - January 25, 2017

It will be important to clarify how the Basic Income pilot fits with other income security initiatives, and how it coordinates with other provincial transformations in healthcare, housing, and community safety. The respondents are clear that introduction of basic income guarantee is not a zero sum game. To make it a success, other social supports need to be in place throughout the course of the pilot.

The best way to crucially leverage the knowledge and expertise in the social assistance field is to engage municipal governments and, in particular, CMSMs and DSSABs in the governance structure in an advisory capacity. Persons with lived experience should also be part of the governance structure. Both representative groups can critically assess what constitutes a positive outcome.

The following summarizes the views of our members for each of the specific questions posed:

Specific Technical Questions:

Determine eligibility for the Pilot

1.1 Are there specific groups of people or populations who should be targeted in the Pilot, such as the under-employed, social assistance recipients, or newcomers? Why?

If the purpose is to more effectively reduce poverty, income levels should be used to determine eligibility. Persons with an income level below a certain threshold should be eligible. Eligibility should not necessarily be restricted to those on OW or ODSP but also include other low income individuals living in poverty.

1.2 What should the Pilot use to determine eligibility? Should eligibility be based on an individual's income, or should eligibility be determined by total family income? Why?

The basic income pilot should be as unconditional as possible. For instance, assets should not be considered in determining eligibility. Considering that the Child Benefit, which operates similarly to how a Basic Income could, does not consider assets, neither should a Basic Income scheme.

Family income (taking into account also non-traditional families) rather than individual income should be used to determine eligibility.

Select the sites

2.1 What are the most important things to think of when selecting a Pilot location? Why?

The most important factor when selecting a pilot location is its representativeness across the province. A randomized control trial would be representative and should be used as part of the pilot. Municipal/District support for the pilot is a second important factor.

2.2 How do you think Pilot sites should be selected?

Pilot sites should be selected by the Province that meet objective criteria that are conducive to a pilot and effective evaluation.

work is needed outside of the BI pilot to transform existing services, in particular those intended to help achieve better employment outcomes.

3.3 What elements of Ontario Works and ODSP should Basic Income replace? What about other benefits outside of Ontario Works and ODSP, such as help with childcare, employment start-up benefits to help cover the costs of trade tools, uniforms, etc., or drug and dental benefits? Why or why not?

The question should not be about what elements of OW and ODSP that can be replaced but rather: "What do we need to ensure that a Basic Income Guarantee is a success?"

The services required for self-sufficiency in addition to income will differ for different people. Continuity of employment services, case management, and referrals to community services would be important an important municipal CMSM and DSSAB function. However, the requirement to use these services should be voluntary, not a condition of receiving a Basic income.

Overall, services should continue to be available. The pilot should evaluate whether the demand for services drops as a result of people receiving higher levels of income. Decisions about whether and what services could be removed, if any, could be considered after the evaluation. The pilot should seek to answer also how responsive the services are.

Delivery agents for benefits may change. For example, drug benefits could be provided by the Trillium Drug Plan.

3.4 What other factors should be considered when determining the Basic Income level. Why?

It would be important to consider whether a person's income received through a Basic Income would impact their housing or childcare supports. If those benefits are geared to income, it would pose an additional barrier to self-sufficiency.

Deliver the basic income pilot project

4.1 The Discussion Paper recommended a NIT model for the Basic Income. Do you agree with this recommendation? Why or why not? If not, what model would you prefer?

A NIT model is reasonable and seems feasible to implement. It will however, change the role of municipal CMSMs and DSSABs in delivering social assistance payments as they currently do. This will have labour relations implications but CMSM's and DSSAB's could partner with the Province to work through those changes.

4.2 Should the Pilot consider delivering payments in an alternative method to the Canada Revenue Agency delivery system proposed in the Discussion Paper, if they are available?

CRA delivery seems logical with a NIT model.

community does not have available jobs and suitable available housing for individuals who may have enough income to move towards supporting themselves through the basic income pilot.

5.2 Do you think that data and evaluation results should be made public in an ongoing basis?

Reporting on results throughout the process is not advisable unless if it is possible to fully analyze and distribute accurate information before a full evaluation takes place. More important would be ongoing strategic communications to the public to inform them of what Basic Income is and what is going on with the pilot. For example, the public will need to understand the distinction between Basic Income and a minimum or living wage. A full communications plan with a thematic approach over a multi-year period will help the Province as the pilot rolls out so the public can understand the purpose and intent of the pilot.

5.3 What changes in behavior would you expect to see with a Basic Income? What kind of results should we see from the Pilot to call it a success? Why?

Success will be determined by the outcomes achieved, which may include a reduction in poverty, advancements in the social determinants of health as listed in Question 5.1, and the changes in demand for social services.

In terms of behavior, the question should be 'What behaviours do we expect or want to undo'? For example, psychosocial changes should occur i.e. feelings of dignity, social inclusion and belonging. Employment or participating in caregiving or volunteer activities may be changed.

It is important to understand that many behavioural changes are long term, and may not be measurable during a three-year pilot, for example, health outcomes. One consideration is to define a group of participants that go beyond the three-year pilot.

Another important consideration is that the process of evaluating change through participant interviews and/or surveys may result in the same invasive and stigmatizing effect as that of the social assistance system, which the pilot aims to address.

5.4 What strategies can we use to encourage people to participate in the pilot?

Increased support provided through the Basic Income pilot should be sufficient in attracting participants. Prioritization of applicants may be necessary if the program is oversubscribed.

It is important that the program result in a net benefit for participants. If other ancillary programs terminate or face reductions to fund the Basic Income pilot, this may not leave participants better off.

Another important consideration is that when recruiting participants, candidates must fully understand the implications of participating, including their rights and responsibilities, and all other details of participation upfront so they can provide informed consent.