



For Immediate Release

Will a basic income guarantee be beneficial for First Nations communities in Ontario?

New Report identifies key areas of consideration

May 16, 2017 – As Ontario moves ahead with the implementation of a Basic Income Guarantee (B.I.G.) pilot, it will be critical to consider how this type of program will impact First Nations communities.

The first report of Northern Policy Institute's B.I.G. series, *Basic Income Guarantee and First Nations: Cautions for Implementation*, by Dr. Gayle Broad and Jessica Nadjiwon-Smith, identifies key areas of concern, citing that without pilot-testing, sustained government commitment, and significant engagement with First Nations, the implementation of a B.I.G. may have unforeseen negative consequences for communities already experiencing the highest rates of poverty in the province.

According to Broad and Nadjiwon-Smith, First Nations communities differ substantially from non-Indigenous municipalities, with exceedingly diverse histories, cultures, and contexts – including vastly differing geographies, and remote access to urban centres and services. The report adds that Indigenous peoples in Ontario face different challenges in addressing social, economic and health indicators.

“Due to complexities facing First Nations, the face of poverty in these communities differs substantially from that in other municipalities and rural communities in Ontario,” states Dr. Broad. “Because of this, it is unclear whether First Nations will gain the same benefits from a B.I.G. as other communities in the province might.”

Beyond unique challenges related to poverty, the report identifies social assistance administration and First Nations autonomy as other factors for consideration, arguing the elimination of local administration could lead to a loss of culturally appropriate service provision and limit the range of services available for First Nations community members.

Furthermore, the report cautions that Canadian governments historically have underfunded and sometimes undermined programs in First Nations, and questions what evidence supports the likelihood that the implementation of a B.I.G. would be any different.

Broad and Nadjiwon-Smith conclude that these concerns may only be definitively answered through pilot site(s) testing with a comprehensive evaluation component attached, and proper discussion and engagement with First Nations, cautioning such a commitment should not be extended and then withdrawn, as governments have done in the past.



“Implementing a basic income guarantee in communities that differ so much from other Ontario municipalities requires thoughtful consideration and a great deal of insight that can only be provided through meaningful engagement with First Nations communities themselves,” concludes Broad.

This paper is the first of a series that will explore the various topics presented at NPI's Basic Income Guarantee conference in October, 2016. Report topics include food security issues, potential models for a B.I.G. pilot, tax implications, and the potential impact on social innovators.

To view presentations from the NPI's BIG conference and explore comments and feedback from participants, visit www.northernpolicy.ca/big

Media Interviews: Author Dr. Gayle Broad, and NPI President & CEO, Charles Cirtwill are both available for comment.

To arrange an interview, please contact:

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About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Sudbury. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

About the authors:

Dr. Gayle Broad is an Associate Professor in the Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) program at Algoma University, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, as well as Research Director of NORDIK Institute, a community based research institute attached to Algoma U. Dr. Broad is also a member of Northern Policy Institute's Research Advisory Board.

Gayle's background includes twenty-five years as a practitioner of community economic and social development, working with women, low-income and Indigenous communities.

Her research interests include community economic development; the social economy, and public legal education. Some of Gayle's recent and current work includes research on the social economy in Northern Ontario; working with the “Understanding the Strengths of Indigenous Communities (USIC)” project (a national project involving five First Nations from across Canada); developing a strategic planning toolkit for use with First Nations communities; conducting a community based research project with Nog-Da-Win-Da-Min Family and Community Services.



Jessica Nadjiwon-Smith is a band member of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation and was raised by her grandmother in the community. After leaving home to attend school, she returned to her community to raise her family and work in a grassroots capacity. She is married and has three children. She is a firm believer in life-long learning and supporting First Nations and Indigenous communities through community development at the grassroots level. Jessica has over 15 years' experience and expertise in First Nations management, finance and delivery of social assistance in First Nations communities. She has sat on several Boards of Directors throughout her career in varying capacities from arts to social assistance.

Jessica has been the Executive Director of the Ontario Welfare Administrators' Association (ONWAA) for two years. Before that, she sat on the ONWAA Board of Directors for the organization for several years during her role as the Ontario Works Administrator at Neyaashiinigmiing.

About the Basic Income Guarantee (B.I.G.) Series:

Northern Policy Institute's B.I.G. Series explores various policy topics related to the implementation, and potential economic and social impacts of a basic income guarantee in Ontario. Research and analysis offered in the reports were first presented at NPI's Basic Income Guarantee conference in October, 2016. Report topics explored by multidisciplinary researchers and authors recognized in their field include food security, potential models for a B.I.G. pilot, tax implications, and the potential impact on social innovators and First Nations.

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