

## Headaches of running a web site

As many of you will have noticed, my Livingrant web site is down. It will be definitely taking Christmas off but should be working again by the New Year. It is hard to do so many things when I am on a pretty limited income and sometimes things just completely break down.

I have to run my web sites from Switzerland to keep them safe from some obsessive stalker types who keep trying to get them taken down. More on that general topic elsewhere in this newsletter. Hostpoint provides a pretty good service and I will be expanding the site soon. More on that topic as well. But they are sticky about payment.

First, they neglected to send an invoice out in a timely manner. So I had to scramble to get money together and send it to Paypal to send off to Switzerland. I discovered that the exchange rate with the Swiss Franc changed again and I needed more money. Then when I actually tried to send the money, Paypal informed me that my account was frozen for security reasons. I eventually got into contact with a very snippy individual who would not tell me anything about it because it might tip off people who are "trying to play with our system".

Hostpoint does not seem to want to give me any break on this. I do not want to pay this by credit card because I have already used that for a couple of emergency type things and I do not want to draw it down any more. The way my credit union works it will take me two or three weeks to get the money back from PayPal and send it into the credit card account.

I don't think I will be using PayPal so much in future.

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**Health & SAG actually does have a web site.** Some one asked about it. It is <http://www.srchc.ca/program/health-and-strength-action-group> although it seems a bit out of date.

I wonder if all the group are even aware it is there. They might want to make some better use of it.

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**The next HSAG meeting is due December 15th.** We are planning a small, potluck type Christmas party. Supporters are welcome. Sue from Social Planning Council will be there to give us a short presentation on the history of social planning with the city government; the betrayals and lack of respect council shows with this "poverty reduction strategy". Also, some pointers on making deputations at city hall.

I think we will get the button making project complete at this time, too. No Sue, we won't dragoon you into making buttons. There is only a little of the components left for button making. Contact [drew@ralphthornton.org](mailto:drew@ralphthornton.org) if you need info.

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**The next Basic Income Toronto Network meeting** is due December 20th. It is not sure yet if they are holding it. Contact [sasha.mcnicoll@gmail.com](mailto:sasha.mcnicoll@gmail.com) or [dynamic@nocturnalcommissions.com](mailto:dynamic@nocturnalcommissions.com) for information.

They group is now mainly focussed on getting on with their lobby campaign to get the Toronto city council to endorse a Basic Income. They hope to have their web site ready before they start that. They are focussed on next council session in January.

There is no actual text yet of the resolution.

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## **building a communications and discussion network**

I have received a few e-mails from people wanting to discuss some aspects of a Basic income campaign. They do not seem to want to engage the group at large about things, no doubt with some good reason. Discussions on the net are difficult and seldom productive. Facilitating discussions that are worth anything is really a time consuming and demanding occupation. Yet few discussions can go anywhere without a knowledgeable and involved moderator.

Without such, discussions go on and on forever without ever getting anywhere. Those who know something, who have something to say, are drowned out by idiots driving an ideological line. Often the worst thing is not the actual “trolls” but people complaining that everyone who does not talk the way they like is a troll.

But there is a real need for discussion that actually analyses an issue, gets to a conclusion, and publishes it. So there is a need for internet discussions which are well run. There is also a need for an announcement board, one place where people can go to see what is happening and announce their own events.

This argues for a discussion board format. That is what I would like to do once ISP payment problems are out of the way for awhile. It is hard to get one started. People do not like to walk into an empty room. Also, people have to develop some confidence about a particular discussion board.

The only real difference between an e-mail list and a board is in the way the postings are presented. It is more public. The messages stay up. People can see more clearly the rules of the particular discussion, the actual topic and what is already said. Thus it remains a much superior format to Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit, where there are no rules or structure.

What really needs to be discussed is serious research on BI. This has little to do with “experiments” and “pilots” and a lot to do with the means of designing, establishing, and maintaining an income guarantee system. That alone is a very big topic.

Next year.

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One discussion someone wanted to have was about Widerquist's talk on the pitfalls of pilots in Winnipeg last May. This guy does not seem to get what I am saying about Pilots, at all. He seems to sometimes have me confused with Widerquist.

As I hope to make clear in this newsletter, the Ontario Liberal government has a long history of using phoney consultations on "poverty reduction" to string anti-poverty groups along and avoid actual doing anything. We have had two five year poverty reduction plans while poverty in the province has continued to grow, there have been further declines in real terms in welfare and disability rates, and other social services are squeezed or dismantled.

A rebellion has been brewing among social activists over this. Anyone critical of these consultations is quietly frozen out while those obsessed with "engagement at all cost" are treated to endless meet ups with nice snacks in fancy surroundings. We get all these glossy brochures from government telling us what they are doing while title rally changes. Especially, nothing that costs the province anything. We have got a few deductible tax rebates from all this.

So, you can understand why anti-poverty campaigners are very cynical about this "pilot" which will take five to seven years to unfold while the poverty crisis deepens. You can understand why I am concerned about the BI activists who are ga-ga about this "pilot" and the fact that somebody in government is actually paying attention to them.

What Widerquist explained was that pilots are useless for designing an income guarantee because they are untestable. For example the Dauphin experiment, and most others, really tested what happens when you pump new money into an isolated community. Pilots are also of limited use in promoting the idea of an income guarantee because they can be used to criticize, as well as support, Basic Income. For example, critics of the Denver and Seattle experiments focused on the fact of total hours worked declining by 12%, creating the idea that 12% of the effected population just quit working and watched TV.

However, Karl says that the pilots are coming, like it or not. He recommended the "inside-outside" strategy of having two groups. One group will say, okay, we support your pilot, but at the end of five years we want to see a real BI rolled out. A pilot is not just an experiment, it is a testing out on a small scale before ruling out the full thing. Another group will say, no, Basic Income now!

One aspect of this Karl does not understand is that we have a federal system in Canada. The province cannot set up a full scale Basic Income on its own. Only the federal government can deliver that. He is an American who lives all over the world.

Another problem is that we just do not seem to have the organizing skills in Canada to be able to carry out a strategy even that complicated.

One other thing I am asked is why I say only the federal government can deliver BI, while I am talking to the city government. I am not talking to the city; the BITO group is. This is what they want to do, to get an endorsement of BI the same way their idols in Kingston, Hamilton, and Waterloo did. It will give them some practice at working together and talking to politicians, which will help when we get to dealing with the province and ultimately the twenty three Liberal party members of parliament from Toronto.

Next year.

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## **Now, about the electoral reform issue**

I assume everyone on this is vaguely familiar with it. I used to be very involved with the voting reform movement, especially Fair Vote Canada. It was frustrating for me for reasons I will discuss in more detail some other time.

Basically, it has had the same problem as the Basic Income movement. A bunch of people who want to have esoteric discussions with each other and have no real interest in building a movement. When a movement suddenly appeared they were more of an impediment than a help. Like the BIEN crowd, they were unwilling to define what they were for, and their opponents have defined it for them.

This is really biting the voting reform movement now. They do not understand what Monsef and the Liberal government are actually saying to them; that there is no real proposal they can act on. Voting Reform people keep talking about the "MMP" (mixed member proportional) system, which works fine in Germany and New Zealand but is not practical for Canada. We have huge sparsely inhabited spaces and a constitution which sets the number of seats for each province, without the flexibility needed to make MMP work.

Once I get my goddam blog back, I will explain this in a lot more detail. For now, I have some advice. This is relevant to B activists for two reasons. One is to hopefully enlighten them to avoid the mistakes of the FVC people. The other is that a more deliberative democracy is a close outrider of the income rights issue, along with the steady state economy. They are the road.

It is depressing that after all this time and all this strife there is still no really good explanation of voting systems in the Canadian context. Here is Fair Vote Canada's latest effort. <http://www.fairvote.ca/proportional-representation/>

But now we have this Federal government survey which is causing so much uproar. The take away for Basic Income advocates from all this should be; don't take consultation at face value, don't assume good faith from govt, and above all don't come with vague concepts, but with fully thought out proposals.

Now, the federal government's web site about their survey is at <http://www.mydemocracy.ca> You have probably also seen the card in the mail.

Here is a good article about the survey and the Liberals misfeasances <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/karl-nerenberg/2016/12/liberals-online-survey-tactic-to-derail-electoral-reform>

The Green party, big voting reform advocates, came up with their own survey

<https://www.greenparty.ca/en/the-real-questions>

Someone has a very good idea of how to respond to the Liberals <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SN4ZQxueqw8>

Leadnow, the best advocacy organization for voting reform, has another response in mind. Come and visit the top Liberal in Toronto at his office next Tuesday. <http://we.leadnow.ca/keepthepromisetoronto>

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**Some reading material for you. Perfect antidote to any “can’t afford it” arguments against BI.** Don’t read the whole report, just the executive summary. Be “executive”

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/loopholes>

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**I conclude this weeks Newsbreeze with a bit of performance poetry from one of our friends.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lo9ZpCLeMBg&feature=youtu.be>

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**Next News Breeze is December 18. It will be the last of the year.**