

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze February 12

HSAG February 9

We met, as usual, at South Riverdale Community Health Center at 955 Queens street east, at 1:30. We meet every other Thursday.

We had a poorly attended but interesting meeting, covering a lot of ground.

We talked about getting the Guarantee Living Income brochure printed up and about ways of getting it out to people. Also, how best to connect to other groups, and the purpose of HSAG. We also talked about the possibility of developing a budget education program.

We discussed the problems with the Basic Income movement. There is a lack of clarity. Basic Income Canada Network seems to be trying to “merge in” with the pilot projects, which discredits the BI concept.

One of us is an old veteran of the tumultuous history of the Fair Vote Canada organization. Its problems seem fairly similar to that of Basic Income Canada Network. Only lately has FCV evolved into a somewhat effective organization after long internal struggle. As with FVC, the inability to find out anything about the inner workings of the executive, keeping supporters on the outside, and the inability to form a clear policy, indicate an inability to develop a consensus.

Someone had a pretty good analysis of the present situation with BI in Canada. Prince Edward Island has asked the federal government to look into BI. The feds tell them they are on hold because of Ontario. Ontario is going to take about seven to ten years to conduct and analyze their “pilots”. So Premier Wynne has the BI movement in Canada fairly hamstrung, does she not?

We talked about the naming of the Basic Income concept. It seems the terms keep changing and their meaning keeps getting corrupted.

The button machine does not seem to be functional. It may be better to get buttons made professionally.

Robyn is feeling chipper again and ready to start her education program about a Basic Income. Once there are a sufficient number of people who have understood the concept correctly and are interested in learning to be speaker for it, she will start that.

Robyn has three potential modes of presentation. She might do a powerpoint or a speech. She might do it as a workshop over several days. The question now is venues.

With the cooperation of the Basic Income Toronto Group, Metro Hall might become available. That would be the prestige venue.

Holding an event in Regent Park would be great. That is a centre for underclass activism. The university would be another good choice. We have potential for that, with help from the OISE people who held the event in November.

For my part, I am considering organizing a GLI salon. People who are becoming aware and then knowledgeable about the income guarantees concepts will need a safe space to gather and discuss them. From that, a BI/GLI movement can be built up in Toronto on a sounder footing. The key is that it ends to be at a regular and frequent time and place.

People at the Ralph Thornton centre are interested in helping us print posters and brochures.

It is puzzling that there seems to be some resources around, and plenty of capable people who would like to help with a BI/GLI. But like with any worthwhile cause, there is nothing to plug into. Almost everything gets shut down before it reaches the takeoff point.

We talked about the need for budget education. People do not know how to handle money. It is not taught in schools, which is strange. Business organizations seem to want to fund budget education programs. But there is a trap here; will banks want to use this education to brainwash people to keep buying stocks and other shaky investments?

Further to banks and education, these people are marketing experts, experts in mass psychology. This is used to get people to buy, but also to immobilize people. It is considered atrocious that the finance minister Bill Morneau is telling young people they will not have careers, just a string of jobs. Obviously that is not a permanent state in society and we will eventually get stability back.

We discussed the neighbourhood around SRCHC. Some parts seem to be gentrifying.

The next HSAG is February 23, usual time and place.

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A review of **current documents on the Livingrant web site**

<http://www.livingrant.ch/curdocs/top.html>

Now that the Pilot consultations are over, things have quieted down a bit. Now is a good time to review things which might not have been looked at well enough in all the excitement. There is some interesting reading to catch up on.

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Whatever happened to the BIG push? Comments on building resilient organizations

<http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/comment.pdf>

This is something I wrote awhile back. It is worth looking at again because it adds to the theme of recent weeks, of the need to get an effective organization going, and the pitfalls to watch out for in doing it.

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Submission to the House of Commons Finance Committee Pre-budget Consultations August 3, 2016 Basic income Canada Network

http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/BICN_2017_pre-budget.pdf

There is still a BICN around and here is still a federal government. Any BI/GLI movement needs to be focused on the federal government. There should be more discussion of this, but I can't say I have any problem with the recommendations. They fit reasonably well with the strategy the National food banks body suggests.

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You can see that here

http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/HungerCount_2016_final_singlepage.pdf.aspx.pdf

Get a Basic Liveable Income happening within five years. In the interim, follow all recommendations of provincial poverty reduction advocates.

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The Maytree foundation paper; **Re-framing poverty as a matter of rights** is something which BI/GLI advocates in Canada need to have read. There is a big problem in Canada that social rights cannot be adjudicated. One very good route to getting a BI/GLI would be to get this entrenched in the country's constitution.

<http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/Maytree%20Re-framing%20poverty%20as%20a%20matter%20of%20rights%20-%20Maytree.pdf>

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There are plenty of criticisms of the Basic Income concept around right now. Most are not really very well done. Here is the best one; **'Basic Income' or 'Bait and Switch'?** from Michael Mendelson of the Caledon institute. By the way, Caledon institute just became rolled into the Maytree foundation.

<http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/1106ENG.pdf>

Below are two snippets from Mendelson's opus. He really tells us that a full Monty BI/GLI is affordable but will require a restructuring of the tax system, which he believes is not feasible at present. In other words, the obstacles are political, not economic.

"If the Basic Income guarantee is large enough to eliminate poverty, taxes would have to rise to cover the costs. Although there would be a steep increase in taxes, overall the money would just flow in and out of government, so this plan would also be fiscally neutral. And the increased tax could have the added benefit of decreasing inequality. This is the 'good' Basic Income plan"

"A 'good' basic income that might actually achieve the objectives its proponents seek requires a fundamental restructuring of our tax system. Such restructuring is not on any realistic political agenda, at least not for the next few decades. The search for the silver bullet to once and for all eliminate poverty and increase equality in a single great swoop is seductive, but it leads us away from consideration of practical and incremental steps – 'mini-Basic Incomes' – which are nevertheless radical steps with big impacts that move us closer to the objectives of a 'good' basic income."

Mendelson also does a very good job of demolishing "negative income tax".

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Finally, here is a cartoon explaining the standard far left objection to a BI. If it is something conservatives want, it must be bad.

<http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/mcnaught-gain-comic0001-copy.jpg>

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Next GLI Newsbreeze will be February 19. Happy Valentine's day, everyone.