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August 5, 2020

Statement on Guaranteed Liveable Income

Poverty and economic instability have profound effects on the health, education, social engagement and inclusion, and future economic prospects of those who experience them. Poverty disproportionately affects children, women and racialized and marginalized communities including those with disabilities. In 2018, 8 percent of all children, and 1 in 4 children living in families with single mothers, were living in poverty.

The statistics are far worse for Indigenous communities. The Assembly of First Nations reported in 2019 the following statistics for children living in poverty: 47% of Status First Nation (53% for those living on reserve and 41% for those living off reserve); 25% of Inuit children; 22% of Métis children; and 32% of non-status First Nations children.

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that all Canadian residents, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, deserve to live with dignity. In our affluent country, no one should be forced to make choices between adequate housing, nutritious food or medical needs.

Through their responses to COVID-19, the Government of Canada and the provincial governments have already acknowledged the importance of income stability to help Canadian residents and their families, as well as the Canadian society at large, navigate economic shocks. Our governments' swift reaction and universal programs allowed Canadian residents to meet their basic needs and protected those who saw their income disappear. This compassionate and universal response should become our national standard.

Canada has experience with the success of guaranteed income programs. The Mincome program, piloted in Dauphin, Manitoba in the 1970s, demonstrated that a guaranteed liveable income increased school retention and graduation rates, and reduced the community's number of hospital visits.

We call on our governments to include a sustained, universally available guaranteed livable income component to the post-COVID-19 response plans to protect our individuals, our economy and our shared way of life. Governments have the opportunity to evaluate and overhaul the complicated patchwork of existing programs and replace them with initiatives grounded in equity and dignity which can lift people out of poverty.

Specifically, we call on the government to:

- develop guaranteed livable income programs in consultation with organizations with anti-poverty expertise, and;



- to implement creative solutions to maximize social engagement and minimize barriers for those with lived experience, and;
- pay particular attention to our most vulnerable communities including those living with disabilities, new immigrants, and racialized people, particularly those in the far north and Indigenous people living on reservations. Improving the economic prospects of those who live with poverty will have a positive ripple effect in our economy and our society.

In 2015 Canada, along with 192 other member countries, adopted the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals and committed to achieving them by 2030. While we commend Canada's commitment to achieving the goals, which include eliminating poverty and hunger and ensuring good health and wellbeing for our citizens, we know that the political will and infrastructure now exists to accelerate the implementation of a Guaranteed Livable Income to achieve these goals. Canadians living in poverty should not be required to wait until 2030 to experience a life with economic and social dignity.

~ From the CUC's National Voice Team: UU Ministers of Canada President, Rev. Anne Barker; CUC Board President, Margaret Wanlin, and Executive Director, Vyda Ng.

Contact: communications@cuc.ca

Please find additional information below.



Definitions:

Universal basic income: A basic income ensures that everyone can meet basic needs and live with dignity regardless of their work status. It is unconditional income from government sent directly to individuals, providing:

- financial security;
- freedom to decide how to best spend your own time and money;
- a foundation for health, wellbeing and a better life.

There are two general models for universal basic income:

The demogrant, or Universal Basic Income (UBI), refers to a model where everyone receives the same basic income amount no matter how much other income they have. Higher income earners will see it effectively taxed away.

The refundable tax credit or Negative Income Tax (NIT) model provides payment to people whose income falls below a certain threshold. People who have sufficient income won't get it but they have security knowing it's there.

From Basic Income Canada Network: [The Basics of Basic Income](#), Autumn 2017

Living Wage

A living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in their community.

A living wage is not the same as the minimum wage, which is the legislated minimum all employers must pay and is set by the provincial government. The living wage reflects what people need to earn to cover the actual costs of living in their community. The living wage draws on community-specific data to determine the expenses to a family with two working adults and two children. Living wage employers voluntarily decide to pay a living wage and maintain their certification as new rates are calculated for their area.

From Ontario Living Wage: [What Is The Living Wage?](#)

Guaranteed Livable Income

This term is often used interchangeably with Universal Basic Income but can hold a slightly different meaning. The term 'Livable' was chosen in the late 1990's by grassroots groups on both the east and west coast of Canada. In discussions on the west coast, 'livable' was seen as having more vision and dignity than 'basic' or 'adequate.' It also solved the problem that an "annual"



income technically could be a penny a year (a guaranteed starving income). It was strongly felt that 'Livable' emphasized what we need to stay alive, that health and happiness would be possible, whereas 'basic' and 'adequate' did not have this connotation.
From <https://www.livableincome.org/Intro.htm>

Resources for Education and Reflection

What is Universal Income? A short animated video explains the central ideas around basic income issued by RSA, a UK organization advocating for social change.
<https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/rsa-shorts/2016/what-is-universal-basic-income>

Global News story from 2016 outlining how guaranteed annual income might work in Canada
<https://globalnews.ca/news/2529009/how-would-a-guaranteed-annual-income-work-in-canada/>

Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy issued by the federal government in August 2018
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html#h2.14>

Basic poverty statistics issued by Canada Without Poverty.
<https://cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/>

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which Canada has committed to achieving by 2030 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Vice Magazine article about the basic income experiment which ran in Dauphin Manitoba in the 1970s. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/nze99z/the-mincome-experiment-dauphin

United Church: Create a Universal Basic Income Program
<https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/create-universal-basic-income-program>

Below find a sample letter for writing to your [Members of Parliament](#). Please copy and past this sample letter into a new document.



Dear [salutation and name of MP],

Because of COVID-19, Canada has an excellent opportunity to rethink how we support one another through social programs to ensure all Canadians can live with dignity and security. Our government's swift response to implement universal programs to mitigate Covid's economic impact allowed Canadian residents to meet their basic needs and protected those who saw their income disappear. This compassionate and universal response should become our national standard.

I urge your government to include a sustained, universally available guaranteed livable income component to the post-COVID-19 response plans to protect our individual residents, our economy and our shared way of life.

Specifically, I call on the government to:

- evaluate and overhaul the complicated patchwork of existing programs;
- develop guaranteed livable income programs in consultation with organizations with anti-poverty expertise, and;
- implement creative solutions to maximize social engagement and minimize barriers for those with lived experience, and;
- pay particular attention to our most vulnerable communities including those living with disabilities, new immigrants, and racialized people, particularly those in the far north and Indigenous people living on reservations. Improving the economic prospects of those who live with poverty will have a positive ripple effect in our economy and our society.

We know poverty disproportionately affects children, women and racialized and marginalized communities including those with disabilities. In 2018, 8 percent of all children, and 1 in 4 children living in families with single mothers, were living in poverty. The statistics are far worse for Indigenous communities. The Assembly of First Nations reported in 2019 the following statistics for children living in poverty: 47% of Status First Nation (53% for those living on reserve and 41% for those living off reserve); 25% of Inuit children; 22% of Métis children; and 32% of non-status First Nations children.

I believe that all Canadian residents, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, deserve to live with dignity. In our affluent country, no one should be forced to make choices between adequate housing, nutritious food or medical needs.

Sincerely,