



PROGRESS ON BASIC INCOME PROGRAM IN CANADA

The National Advocacy Circle is comprised of Vincentians from across Canada that are interested in Social Justice. Our intention is to identify advocacy issues for our fellow Vincentians and suggest actions we can take for the benefit of our neighbours in need. We have presented starting January 11, 2023, a series of four articles promoting the consideration of a Guaranteed Basic Income to address the needs of Canadians living in poverty. Please share this information with your conferences, councils and parishioners.

Since the writing of our Basic Income articles, the Québec Government has implemented a Basic Income Program and Newfoundland and PEI are at various stages exploring the possibilities. Here is the latest news!

Who is eligible for the Quebec Basic Income program¹?

As of January 1, 2023, people that are already receiving benefits under the Social Solidarity Program and **have severely limited capacity for employment** for at least 66 months over the previous 72 months. They do not have to apply; they will be notified of their inclusion in the Basic Income Program.

As of January 2023, this program will reach 84,000 people.

How does Québec's Basic Income Program work?

The basic benefit for one person is \$1,211 per month, which is \$14,532 for a period of one year. It will be adjusted for inflation each January 1.

This basic amount is also subject to adjustment depending on the income entered on Québec's income tax return for the previous fiscal year. One can earn up to \$14,532 per year without decreasing the benefit.

If one has earned more than this amount during the year, the benefit will be reduced for the following year. Every dollar earned that exceeds \$14,532 will decrease the annual benefit by 55 cents (\$0.55).

Other income may affect your basic benefit, including the following:

- A retirement pension (e.g., Old Age Security pension) or the amounts received under a pension plan.
- Benefits paid by the Régie des rentes du Québec, the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail or the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec and other government programs.
- Maternity, paternity or adoption benefits, parental benefits, caregiving benefits or Employment Insurance benefits.

¹ <https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/social-assistance-social-solidarity/basic-income-program>

- A spouse's income if it exceeds \$28,000 per year.

Adjustments can be added to the basic benefit, such as:

- An adjustment for a single person (\$337 per month, for a total of \$4,044 per year)
- Adjustments for dependent children (\$20 per month for a minor child and \$345 per month for a child of full age who is attending a postsecondary educational institution)

This is great improvement for many beneficiaries of the Social Assistance in Québec. The Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul of Québec, with many other organizations, sent a letter to the Minister of the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité Sociale to recognize the positive impact that this program will have on the lives of people living in severe poverty. The letter also requested from the Government to extend this program to everyone that is admissible to welfare, in order to give them the financial means to make choices that will help them get out of poverty with dignity and respect of their capacities.

PEI and Newfoundland

Although not a Basic Income Program per se, Prince Edward Island launched an Inflation Support Payment program in January 2023. Most PEI families will receive a one-time payment of \$500 to \$1000 to help offset the rising cost of living.

Basic Income advocates point to the simplicity and transparency of this program as a model for how easily Basic Income could be implemented. Eligibility is based on the previous year's income tax return and the program administered jointly by CRA and the province.²

Newfoundland has established an all-party committee to study the feasibility of implementing a Basic Income program in that province. They are expected to release their findings by mid-2023. In the interim the province has established a limited Basic Income Program targeting youth between the ages of 16 and 21 that are receiving government support.

Slowly the idea of a Basic Income Program could become a reality for many. We believe that this initiative should be discussed during Conference and Council meetings and proposed to politicians in every part of the country to make it a reality.

Denise Ouellette, Danny Bourne

Members of National Advocacy Circle

² <https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/opinion/commentary-prince-edward-island-is-ready-for-a-basic-income-guarantee-100796457/>