

RESEARCH UPDATE

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REVIEWED BY AGATHA BRIGLIO

Evelyn L. Forget, an economist at the University of Manitoba, examines how to best provide economic security in a rapidly changing world through analysis of previous projects and posing questions.

In the 1970s, Manitoba ran a basic income experiment in Dauphin called “Rediscovering Mincome,” whereby participants were offered a basic income for three years. The cost was shared by the provincial and federal governments. Data was incomplete, as the experiment was stopped by government prior to the final analysis.

Forget went back years later to the archives of Dauphin and discovered a direct relationship between basic income and social benefits such as: significant increase in its high school completion rate, improved overall health of residents, and a decrease in hospital visits.

In the current Canadian landscape no one is immune to unexpected economic events or health challenges. Persistent poverty is an issue — for those who currently are not poor may become poor at a moment’s notice. Approximately 300,000 women with a university degree who have children are not working for wages; approximately 235,000 people in Canada experience some form of homelessness, only a small portion represent the core of homelessness.

What follows is a brief synopsis of Forget’s arguments in favour of a basic income.

What is basic income? Basic income provides assurance against income uncertainty for everyone.

Fundamentally, basic income must be unconditional and participants are free to decide how to allocate their time: working for pay, volunteering, or creating art — with no obligation to work, to seek work, or to work a certain number of hours.

There are two forms of basic income: Universal and Benefit Based on Financial Need.

(1) Universal: Everyone is entitled to receive the same amount of money as a taxable benefit. The recipients receive cash and use it to purchase goods and services according to their needs.

(2) Benefit Based on Financial Need: similar to a tax credit, an individual with no other income would receive the full benefit, tax-free. As income from other sources increase the benefit amount would gradually decrease.

In Canada, Forget proposes that basic income would not replace other social programs such as public health insurance or education. Individuals with particular challenges would still have access to funding (e.g. mental health and housing support). Basic income has most often been discussed as a non-taxable benefit targeted toward low-income earners. Sixty-one percent of Canadians work low-income jobs and may not qualify for income assistance programs.

Who would benefit? Basic income has different effects on different people — women, Indigenous, newcomers, residents in remote locations, visible minorities, people with disabilities, and youth. Basic income ensures every working-age adult has an income sufficient to meet basic needs.

What are the financial implications? Basic income reduces future costs to government associated with poverty and social programs by investing in people.

If basic income was offered to everyone, why would anyone work? Work is not motivated solely by money — people do their best when they live in ways that affirm their individuality and are treated with dignity.

Publication Source:

Evelyn L. Forget (October, 2018). Basic Income for Canadians, the key to healthier, happier, more secure life for all. Retrieved from:

https://books.google.ca/books/about/Basic_Income_for_Canadians.html?id=HQ9xDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Agatha Briglio works as a policy analyst for the province. She is keenly interested in low income issues and those most at-risk in our community. Through volunteer she hopes to continue to grow professionally as a researcher, policy analyst, and facilitator.

The City of Edmonton, in collaboration with Homeward Trust, requested OrgCode Consulting, Inc. to conduct an inquiry. The inquiry included: 1) an overview of the capacity and utilization of all currently existing emergency shelter services, 2) a study into why homeless individuals opt in for encampment instead of emergency shelter options, 3) strategies to reduce the volume of homeless encampments in public, 4) engagement of the provincial government and service providers in Edmonton as key stakeholders, and 5) recommended next steps. OrgCode conducted the study between January 14 and February 15, 2019 — this included two site visits to Edmonton and involved both primary and secondary research.

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database, managed by Homeward Trust, revealed that among the 1,923 homeless individuals on the list, 486 (25%) unique individuals lived outdoors as of January 2019. This showed an increase from 2016, when the count was 388 unique individuals. A deeper look into the data revealed that almost 30% of the encamped individuals reported conditions of physical health, mental health, and substance abuse, and only 5% revealed no serious health conditions. Despite Edmonton's effort in prioritizing permanent supportive housing for tri-morbid individuals, the demand for housing persists.

Interviews with homeless individuals conducted by OrgCode revealed that they felt unsafe in the shelters. Additionally, the shelters were overcrowded, limited people's independence, and posed systematic issues. Another survey undertaken by Homeward Trust complemented these findings, as it revealed violence, theft, mental health conditions, and substance use as the most common reasons people tended to avoid overnight stays. Other factors included line-ups, noise, and unavoidable proximity to others. This showed that availability of shelter spaces did not necessarily mean they were preferred or easily accessible by homeless individuals.

Recommendations have been made to extend shelter admissions to 24/7, in addition to reducing the stress of daily shelter search by increasing stays that involve continuous-stay enrollments. This will require initial planning and resources, so that accommodations can be evenly balanced across all shelters when spaces get full. More sophisticated accommodations could be introduced by the use of mattresses and bunks, by lifting barring/banning policies, and by developing capacity for personal belongings that would ensure longer term secure storage and reduce risk of theft. Further collaboration with crime prevention and police services would also help to address such issues and ensure that guests feel a sense of security and peace in the shelter environment.

Outreach teams, such as those from Boyle Street Community Services and Bissell Centre, are essential in connecting homeless individuals to appropriate shelter facilities across Edmonton, in conjunction with City staff. It is often challenging to maintain a steady balance between protecting homeless people and protecting the public land, as encampment clean-up process can lead to re-encampment in new, surrounding public areas. This imbalance can be addressed by formalizing the Encampment Resolution Team, which will involve making closure decisions based on factors of urgency rather than repeatedly chasing single campers from site to site, or reacting to 311 hits. This will ensure that both individual client status and public safety concerns are met through client risk and site risk measures of prioritization, respectively. After identification of an

encampment, a more comprehensive decision-making operation can be established through timely assessment of site risk and client risk, team meetings, and priority schedules.

Alternative living spaces for homeless individuals who do not opt in for emergency shelter have been discussed through four case studies. It has been strongly recommended to not sanction tent-based encampment areas, as this is likely to make homelessness more severe. In fact, a bridge housing program model has been suggested that will support the individual with a temporary safe place and create faster access to housing, while they are trying to secure permanent housing. Examples of bridge housing include master leasing of apartments, or some/all spaces within a rooming house. OrgCode has further suggested that investigation be done into emergency shelter models, such as the navigation center approach, in order to assess the feasibility of shelter de-centralization. Recommendations have been made for leadership improvement, enhancing system-wide communication among agencies, establishing emergency shelter standards, and promoting data sharing for effective decision making. Lastly, OrgCode endorses implementation of the Edmonton Affordable Housing Strategy and supporting the plan to end and prevent homelessness in the city.

Publication Source:

OrgCode Consulting (2019) - Report on Homeless Encampments on Public Land. Retrieved from City Council Community and Public Services Committee May 6, 2019 Meeting Agenda Item 6.2:

<http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=2279&doctype=AGENDA>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Debyani Sarker is a law student and research assistant at the University of Alberta. She has extensive experience as a statistical research assistant analyzing health administration data. When free, Debyani enjoys biking and reading twentieth century fiction.

REVIEWED BY JENNA HORNING

Loneliness is a common human feeling, whether we are alone or are merely unsatisfied with our relationships. However, due to a variety of factors, there are groups of people who are much more susceptible to what is known as social isolation: “a situation in which someone has infrequent and/or poor-quality contact with other people” (pg. 3). Employment and Social Development (ESD) Canada has developed a series of documents to highlight this issue among Indigenous seniors within Canada. This supplemental guide, *Social Isolation of Seniors: A Focus on Indigenous Seniors in Canada*, aims to “help organizations and service providers adopt approaches to help Indigenous seniors strengthen human connections” (pg. 2). Illustrated by factors including diversity, as well as language and culture, the text acts as a straightforward, yet specific, explanation as to how Indigenous seniors are affected by social isolation.

One of the first aspects considered within the report is the idea of diversity. According to ESD, there are more than 630 First Nation communities in Canada and while many share common experiences, they do not necessarily have much in common culturally (pg. 6). Indigenous people also experience a high degree of geographic diversity, making it difficult to travel to a gathering place or have reliable transportation. Another issue is “a lack of supportive Indigenous organizations” (pg. 6). When individuals live in rural areas or small towns, it can be difficult to find services that specifically cater to their cultural beliefs and values. Due to the fact that Indigenous communities are very diverse both in culture and geography, it can be much more difficult to develop and maintain relationships, leading to a greater sense of isolation.

Another element of concern for Indigenous seniors is language and culture. Pointed out within the text is the idea that “language and culture have been noted as protective factors against health crises and social isolation in Indigenous communities” (pg. 7), and seniors specifically “play important roles in protecting and passing on their cultural identities and languages to their families and communities” (pg. 7). Being able to speak one’s language is not only important for feeling connected but is also considered a cultural responsibility within the Indigenous community. Unfortunately, due to assimilation during the Pre-Confederation period, language also serves as a reminder of suppression. As a result, “most Indigenous languages are now considered at risk” (pg. 7). Ultimately, a lack of interplay between language and culture can contribute to social isolation.

After addressing these characteristics and a few more, including health and demographics, the text provides an overarching strategy already rooted within the Indigenous culture: protecting vulnerable communities through “traditional medicine, spirituality, traditional foods, traditional activities and language” (pg. 12). In essence, these “provide insight into the values of Indigenous seniors” (pg. 12), and the key to finding protective factors against social isolation: “activities and programs that provide practical social support” (pg. 12). As examples of this strategy, the document lists a series of community-level success stories, such as shared caregiving in Mitho-Pimachesowin in Saskatchewan and the Aboriginal Seniors Centre in Edmonton. As successful, ongoing initiatives they “provide important principles and ideas that can contribute to preventing and addressing the social isolation of Indigenous seniors” (pg. 19).

In order to adapt these ideas, facilitators must find ways to learn about and engage with Indigenous communities. As a resource guide, the document provides tools and examples of ideas exchange events for Indigenous seniors. The purpose of these events is to “build awareness, share information, build partnerships,

and create opportunities to work together” (pg. 26). Suggestions include having seniors lead conversations and strategies, and getting facilitators who are Indigenous (pg. 26). Specific tools within this section include an event planning checklist, sample invitation, presentation slides, case studies, handouts, and protocols for Elders.

Using a variety of excellent examples, the text showcases how certain factors can lead to social isolation for Indigenous seniors. Addressing social isolation can be a challenge but the first step is understanding the factors that lead to it. Specifically affecting Indigenous seniors are qualities of diversity, and the effect of language on culture. Using successful community initiatives and idea exchange events as resources, groups can begin to address problems and prevent them from happening in the future. Overall, this supplemental guide is an excellent resource for those trying to better understand not only Indigenous cultures but also how specific factors can lead to social isolation.

Publication Source:

Employment and Social Development Canada (2019). Social Isolation of Seniors: A Focus on Indigenous Seniors in Canada: Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/social-isolation-indigenous.html>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Jenna Horning works for an association representing Alberta water and wastewater operators. She is an active volunteer for several Edmonton festivals. She loves research and writing and is using these skills to learn more about social policy issues.

REVIEWED BY NATTY KLIMO

Upstream recently released *Towards Justice: Tackling Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada (2019)*, the third report in a series of reports that track and measure poverty rates among Indigenous children, and how they compare to non-Indigenous children in Canada. This report uses data from the 2006 Census, 2016 Census, and the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), as well as the Low-income measure after-tax (LIM-AT). It is important to note that poverty rates are not applied to those living on reserve and in the territories. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, custom data was requested from Statistics Canada to apply the LIM-AT to individuals living on reserve and territories. Additionally, Canada has designated the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as its official poverty line, but neither First Nations reserves nor territories have costed-out MBM baskets.

This study found that between 2006 and 2016, child poverty rates remained unchanged, with First Nations children being the most economically disadvantaged. Poverty rates did not significantly improve for Inuit and non-status First Nations children either. At a national level, one in five (17.6%) children lives in poverty, but poverty is experienced differently by different groups. This report distinguishes between three tiers of poverty. The first tier is the highest and consists of 47% of status First Nations children (53% live on reserve and 41% live off reserve). The second tier consists of 25% Inuit children, 22% Métis children, 32% of non-status First Nations children, as well as racialized (22%) and recent immigrant (35%) children. The third tier of poverty is the lowest and consists of non-racialized, non-recent immigrant, non-Indigenous children with a poverty rate of 12%. When examining the three tiers of poverty, it is evident that the poverty rate among status First Nations children is 3.8 times greater than for non-Indigenous children, and despite having the highest rate of poverty, none of these children are reported as living below the poverty line because poverty rates are not applied on reserve.

Child poverty rates for status First Nations children improved over the ten years, but at a very slow rate, decreasing from 52% in 2006 to 47% in 2016, due mostly to more children living off reserve. At a provincial level, status First Nations children living on reserve in Quebec have the lowest poverty rate at 29%, while status First Nations children living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba have the highest poverty rate at 65%.

Poverty rates for status First Nations children living off reserve have improved in Western Canada, especially in Saskatchewan, where the poverty rate decreased from 61% in 2006 to 50% in 2016. However, Alberta has seen the least improvement in reducing the child poverty rate.

Improvements in the poverty rate of Inuit children have been mixed and have changed very little since 2006, declining from 27% in 2006 to 25% in 2016. The child poverty rate for Métis children declined from 27% in 2006 to 22% in 2016, however, this may be due to an increase in Métis self-identification (30%) that occurred between 2006 and 2016.

Quebec has had success in reducing child poverty rates due to resource-revenue sharing between the province and First Nations governments. Hydroelectric projects have assisted with countering chronic federal underfunding. For example, the First Nations child poverty rate on the reserves of the James Bay Cree decreased from 19% in 2006 to 15% in 2016, which is lower than the national child poverty rate (17%). The same is also observed in the Nunavik region where the Inuit child poverty rate decreased to 16%. These results demonstrate how additional resources for Indigenous governments can have a significant impact on child poverty rates.

The federal government has expressed its commitment to reducing poverty through its first federal poverty reduction strategy targeting reduction of poverty by 50% by 2030. Upstream recommends that the strategy should consider how poverty is experienced by Indigenous peoples, and makes four recommendations for the national poverty reduction strategy: the MBM and the LIM-AT should be applied on reserves and in the territories; reserves should be included in annual income surveys; a commitment to reduce MBM poverty in reserves, which is in line with national goals; and support for self-determination with an emphasis on revenue sharing.

Publication Source:

Upstream (2019). Tackling Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada. Retrieved from:

https://www.thinkupstream.net/first_nations_child_poverty_rates

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Natty Klimo works as a program consultant for the province. She is bilingual (English and Spanish) and enjoys Spanish language literature, films and history. She likes to be involved in helping educate others about important social issues.

REVIEWED BY SHAWNA LADOUCEUR

This analysis of on-reserve housing needs and conditions is published by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). It is based on 2016 census reports and encompasses the 97,500 Aboriginal households living on-reserve in Canada. This on-reserve number represents 12.6% of all Aboriginal households and 0.7% of all households in Canada. Of these Aboriginal households, the census indicates one third live in adequacy and suitability-based (ASB) housing need. This is significant in comparison to 7% of Aboriginal households off-reserve and 4% of all households in Canada.

ASB housing need is the term used when a dwelling does not meet one or both of *adequacy* and/or *suitability* requirements, and where the household would have to spend 30% or more of before-tax income to pay the shelter costs of alternative acceptable local housing. Here, *adequacy* is measured in terms of condition, i.e. requiring any major repairs, and *suitability* is measured in terms of the size or number of bedrooms commensurate to the makeup of the household, and in accordance to the National Occupancy Standards. Challenges in meeting housing needs on-reserve include lack of both market-based housing and access to private financing, as well as limited access to housing materials.

CMHC uses the word Aboriginal rather than Indigenous because that was the term used in the 2016 census reports. For on-reserve households, CMHC uses the ASB housing need indicator instead of the core housing need (CHN) indicator because housing costs for most on-reserve households are paid through band housing arrangements.

Those living on-reserve in the Prairie provinces, in rural (vs urban) areas, in band housing, having government transfer payments as the major source of income, and for which the major household maintainer was aged 15-29, were most likely to be in ASB housing need. Figures contained within the article detail these statistics, comparing Aboriginal housing on-reserve to off-reserve, and to all households across Canada.

From among these otherwise dismal numbers, it is noted on-reserve households in ASB housing need did fall slightly from 2011-2016. Still, *adequacy* remained a major issue. Almost half of all on-reserve housing was built between 1996-2016 compared to about one quarter of all housing nationally. Furthermore, 28% of those built on-reserve during that period were in need of major repairs, compared to only 2% in all of Canada.

Annual government spending of \$319 million for on-reserve housing supports the construction of 1,000 new homes, renovation of 350 existing homes, and subsidization of 25,600 households. In further partnership with CMHC, new funding of \$554.3 million, spread across the 2016 through 2018 fiscal years, seeks to further reduce ASB housing need.

The above funding is earmarked to address urgent housing need, provide skills and training development, help renovate or retrofit homes, as well as emergency repairs, home adaptations, major repairs and additions, and supply shelters for survivors of family violence. Programs include insured loans, direct lending and First Nations proposal development. However, as previously indicated, one third of the 97,500 Aboriginal households on-reserve are already in ASB housing need. Given the enormity of this ASB housing deficit, it remains to be seen whether this will be enough to continue the arrest of suitability need or even begin to make a dent in the tremendous problem of adequacy.

Publication Source:

Brahim Lgui (2019). *Housing Conditions of On-Reserve Aboriginal Households*. Retrieved from: <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/cmhc/pubsandreports/socio-economic-analysis/2019/socio-economic-housing-conditions-on-reserve-aboriginal-households-69579-en.pdf?rev=3540c421-7206-4ea2-a117-6f4cdd0aafe1>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Shawna Ladouceur is a Registered Nurse who sees the impacts of the social determinants of health in ways that demand action. She has extensive experience working directly with vulnerable populations in the inner city. Her personal interests include skiing, hiking, biking, running, reading, and travelling.

REVIEWED BY ZAHRO HASSAN

This briefing report by the Conference Board of Canada looks at strengthening Canada's labour force. Canada is struggling with an aging population and low fertility rates. By 2030 almost all baby boomers, estimated to be around 9.2 million workers, will have retired. Unless they can be replaced, it will result in economic disruption leading to lower tax revenues, which are needed to maintain Canada's high living standards. This report looks at various solutions to strengthen Canada's labour force. It compares four scenarios to evaluate Canada's labour force and the impact on economic growth between 2018 and 2040.

The first scenario is to have no immigrants, which is unlikely since Canada has never had zero immigration intake. This scenario would lead to immediate labour force shrinkage by 0.1 percent annually starting in 2018. It would also result in the labour force standing at 18 million people in 2040 compared with 19.8 million in 2018.

The second scenario is to have no immigration, but to increase the participation rate of three minority groups: women, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. This scenario would lead to labour force growth of 2.2 million workers, with women accounting for the majority of the growth at 1.6 million.

The third scenario is to gradually increase immigration levels to 1% annually. This would add 5.3 million workers to Canada's labour force between 2018 and 2040 and by 2040, Canada's labour force size would be nearly 23.3 million people.

The final scenario is to increase immigration levels to 1% annually and increase participation rates of the three under-represented groups (combining scenarios 2 and 3). This scenario would add 25.5 million workers to the labour force by 2040 – compared with 23.3 million under scenario three, 20.2 million under scenario two, and 18 million under scenario one.

This report recommends scenario four as the best pathway to increase Canada's labour force and economic growth. This scenario would also “promote inclusive economic growth, alleviate poverty, and strengthen social inclusion and cohesion” (p.5).

Publication Source:

Conference Board of Canada (2019). *Can't Go it Alone: Immigration is Key to Canada's Growth Strategy*. Retrieved from: https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/8b04d73a-93c3-4c27-b8d4-5790504fea27/10150_Can'tGoltAlone_BR.pdf

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Zahro Hassan is a PhD student in educational policy at the University of Alberta, with a research focus on educational barriers faced by immigrant youth and how these barriers can be removed. Zahro's hobbies include reading, travelling, playing old school video games, and volunteering with causes she is passionate about.

“Through our research, analysis, and engagement, we hope to create a community in which all people are full and valued participants.”

—The Edmonton Social Planning Council

ABOUT ESPC

The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

OUR STAFF:

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THE RESEARCH UPDATE:

The Edmonton Social Planning Council, in collaboration with our volunteers, strive to provide stakeholders and community members with up-to-date reviews on recently published social research reports.

Interested in volunteering? Email johnk@edmontonsocialplanning.ca