

RESEARCH UPDATE

May 2020

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Publisher:
Edmonton Social Planning Council
Suite 200, Bassani Building
10544-106 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 2X6

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This report is published by the
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AN ALBERTA GUARANTEED BASIC INCOME

REVIEWED BY KEVIN BEAUCHAMP

Wayne Simpson and Harvey Stevens examine the potential options for an Alberta Guaranteed Basic Income (AGBI). Simpson is a research fellow and economics professor at the University of Manitoba, and Stevens is a retired Government of Manitoba senior policy analyst. This paper was published through The University of Calgary's School of Public Policy.

Despite the economic booms Alberta has received, poverty persists in the province; an AGBI could help address this issue. Two arguments against implementing an AGBI relate to the financial costs and potential work disincentives. Simpson and Stevens propose an AGBI model that would improve the fairness of the tax system and not require significant funding, by making six currently non-refundable tax credits (NRTCs) refundable. The NRTCs proposed to be eliminated include the *Basic Personal Amount, Age 65 and over, Pension Income, Education, Tuition, and Student Loan Interest*, and would create an AGBI budget of \$5.36 billion.

The equation for determining the net benefit to the recipient is “Net Benefit = G – (Family Income x BRR),” where G = size of the guarantee and BRR = Benefit Reduction Rate. As BRR increases, the depth of the benefit increases but is targeted towards a smaller number of recipients. A BRR of 10% was chosen as it benefits a larger percentage of families, minimizes work disincentives, and reduces the poverty rate by 26.3%, and poverty depth by 25.3%. Annual guarantees of \$6,389 would be allocated for single-parent families, and \$9,305 for two-parent families. Additional “top-ups” for persons with disabilities and caregivers of disabled adults were also included. When accounting for labour supply costs, the AGBI would end up costing the provincial government \$154.3 million. Net benefits would be mostly distributed to individuals in the two lowest income deciles, while higher income deciles would receive a modest income reduction of approximately 2%. In general, single-parents and single persons benefit modestly at the expense of two-parent families.

Simpson and Stevens also outline a joint Federal/Alberta GBI option. This option would remove the same NRTCs as the AGBI, along with the federal GST credit. A federally funded national GBI, with one G and BRR set for the entire country, would be complemented by a provincial GBI with its own G and BRR values. Simpson and Stevens propose a federal BRR of 15% and an Alberta BRR of 10% that would create a budget of \$11.4 billion allocated for Albertans. The estimated net costs of the joint GBI would be \$801.2 million.

Federal collaboration would have a more significant impact, as federal tax credits are about 50% higher than provincial tax credits. Single-parent families would receive annual guarantees of \$13,674 while two-parent families would receive over \$19,000. Reductions in poverty rates (44%) and depth of poverty (54%) would be more pronounced, and the gains/losses for each income decile level would also be approximately doubled, compared to the AGBI option. The relative impacts based on family unit type would remain consistent with the AGBI option.

A limitation to the two models is that they had to resort to the traditional method of measuring poverty, using Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) which have been criticized as a poverty measure; Simpson and Stevens acknowledge that the Market Basket Measure (MBM) is currently Canada's official poverty measure. I also

noted a large discrepancy in both models regarding the percentage change of disposable incomes between elderly singles and elderly couples in the lowest income decile level, with elderly couples benefiting more. The differences between single-parent/two-parent families and non-elderly singles/non-elderly couples at the same income decile level are much more modest.

A potential flaw in these models is that disposable income losses aren't completely progressive along income decile levels. Higher income earners would lose a smaller percentage of disposable income compared to middle-income earners. In the joint Federal/Alberta model, the 4th and 5th income decile levels, on average, would lose more disposable income in pure terms compared to the income earners above them. Further income redistribution may be necessary to increase the equity of the GBI models for middle-income earners.

The models presented appropriately account for changes in the labour supply and tax revenue. However, if a GBI model is ever enacted, it would be worth considering the reduced costs (healthcare, social services, policing, etc.) that would likely result from a more equal society. However, these measures were beyond the scope of the research and would be very speculative at this juncture.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Simpson, W. & Stevens, H. (2019). *An Alberta Guaranteed Basic Income: Issues and Options*. University of Calgary. Retrieved from: <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/sppp/article/view/53021/51943>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Kevin Beauchamp spent the past year as a Human Geography student at the University of Alberta and will be entering a Master of Urban and Regional Planning program this fall. Kevin plans to explore topics such as affordable housing, social marginalization, and community development throughout his Masters studies.

EXAMINING CHILD CARE FEES ACROSS CANADA

REVIEWED BY AGATHA BRIGLIO

In 2019 a survey was sent to 37 cities, including representation, at minimum, of one city from each province and territory. The survey was part of the sixth annual Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' series that tracks and analyzes Canadian child care comparable fees paid to licensed child care providers across Canada. It examined child care fees across three groupings: infants, toddlers, and preschool children.

On average, infants include newborns to the age of two. In British Columbia, infant and toddlers are a combined category (zero – three years of age). The infant category is the smallest among the three groupings. Toddlers extend from the age of two to the age of three. The preschool-age category includes ages three to school entry and is the largest group.

Most centres in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland & Labrador, Iqaluit, and Yellowknife are not-for-profit licensees that follow provincial set-fee rates. A small number of for-profit centres exist, and charge at least 10% more for preschool space.

In Quebec, parents receive a rebate through a tax credit that can reimburse up to 90% of their child care fees (depending on their income).

In 2019, St. John's, Newfoundland, became a majority set-fee city. However, 39% of its licensed spaces are still at market rates, which are 10% - 40% higher than provincial set-fee rates.

Report findings: Infant care is most expensive in Toronto, with a monthly median cost of \$1,774. The lowest rates are in Quebec, where the monthly fee is set at \$170.

Toddler care ranked highest in Toronto at \$1,457. In Iqaluit, Nunavut, and Richmond, British Columbia, toddler care fees are more than \$1,200 a month. In Iqaluit, space for toddlers and preschool age children are at the same fee. Quebec cities ranked lowest at a set-fee of \$179 a month. Other rates, like Winnipeg at \$415, and Charlottetown at \$586, are located in set-fee provinces.

Impact of policy initiatives: In 2017, a three year federal/provincial/territorial agreement initiative was introduced as a way to reduce child care fees, specifically preschool-aged fees. It established an action plan based on five principals: accessibility, affordability, quality, inclusiveness, and flexibility. Alberta introduced a limited number of \$25/day fee spaces (roughly 7%) in Edmonton and Calgary. In British Columbia, a \$10/ day fee was introduced, roughly 5% of available spaces.

The survey results indicate public policy (such as province-wide fees), fee regulation, and public funding—not market demand—play a role in determining child care fees. In conclusion, child care fees are lowest when licensees receive public funding set out in public policy.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care Fees in Canada 2019*. Retrieved from: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2020/03/In%20progress_Child%20care%20fees%20in%20Canada%20in%202019_march12.pdf

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 work she hopes to continue to grow professionally as a researcher, policy analyst, and facilitator.

A BASIC INCOME FOR ALBERTA

REVIEWED BY SANDRA GOSLING

This is a summary and critical review of the Parkland Institute's report, *A Basic Income for Alberta*. Co-authors are Alison McIntosh, a research manager at Parkland Institute with experience on health and social policy issues, including basic income, and Rebecca Graff-McRae, a post-doctoral social science and humanities research fellow at the University of Alberta.

The Parkland Institute's report provides a summary and analysis of the complex sides of the basic income debate, and is an illustration of what a basic income policy could look like in the province of Alberta. Basic income can be defined as "an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement" (Van Parijs, 2004, as cited in McIntosh & Graff-McRae, 2019, p. 7). The report is laid out by first outlining the various definitions and conceptualizations of a basic income, then exploring the different policy schemes for implementing a basic income, deconstructing the political debate, and providing a critical analysis of how basic income could and could not work in Alberta.

What makes this report unique to other literature is that it goes beyond contextualizing the left and right political divisions of basic income to provide critical analysis of the changing complexities of poverty, the nature of work, and policy directions for social and economic institutions. It moves away from the attitude that basic income is a simple solution to complex social and economic issues.

It is made clear throughout the report that while basic income has distinct and measurable benefits for those who are disadvantaged, it does not address the structural causes of income insecurity. Additionally, the realities of Alberta's political sphere are included to reflect practical considerations for such a policy. The authors deconstruct the policy framework of basic income to demonstrate that it is only the first step to eliminate poverty and support those at risk. It is honest in its limitations, especially with consideration to the other causes of inequality such as gender, race, (dis)ability, geography, age, and citizenship status.

One limitation of the report is that it fails to consider the current administrative complexities of the welfare system and the future administrative complexities of implementing a basic income. While it recognizes that the current schemes of social and income assistance have not been sufficient for meeting at-risk individuals or household needs, it does not attempt to analyze why that is. Research outside of this report demonstrates that the current welfare system stigmatizes individuals, limits autonomy, and invades privacy; issues that a basic income would propose to eliminate (Pereira, 2014). A basic income—whether managed federally or provincially—would also require complex administrative coordination and consolidation of existing programs, which the authors of this report fail to address.

In summary, this is a comprehensive analysis of basic income that addresses the many benefits to individuals and households, as well as the many risks to policymakers and public services. It demonstrates that the future of basic income policy is largely dependent on future ideological shifts to re-conceptualize economic prosperity and the role of government and individuals before it could ever be implemented successfully.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

McIntosh & Graff-McRae. (2020). *A Basic Income for Alberta*. Parkland Institute. Retrieved from: <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/parklandinstitute/pages/1773/attachments/original/1579618093/basicincomeforalberta.pdf?1579618093>

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

Pereira, R. (2014). Economic security in the twenty-first century: How guaranteed annual income (GAI) confronts multiple imperatives. *Home Oeconomicus*, 31, 1, p. 159-179.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Sandra Gosling is a socio-economic researcher, with special knowledge and interest in evaluating the social and economic benefits and consequences of policy decisions related to a variety of issues including industrial development, poverty, human trafficking, child welfare, and Indigenous rights.

EARNINGS INEQUALITY AND THE GENDER PAY GAP IN CANADA

REVIEWED BY JENNA HORNING

Earnings inequality between men and women has been a long-held issue in society. While there are many social and cultural elements at work, *Earnings Inequality and the Gender Pay Gap in Canada: The Role of Women's Under-representation Among Top Earners* by Aneta Bonikowska, Marie Drolet, and Nicole M. Fortin, attempts to understand the gap strictly through economics and accounting exercises. Using the Longitudinal Work File, “a 10% random sample of Canadians who file a T1 tax return or receive a T4 Statement of Remuneration from an employer” (p. 1), the researchers analyze trends and explore “the role that gender differences in industry of employment play in the gender earnings gap” (p. 1).

Firstly, a discussion of trends in annual earnings and female shares by selected percentiles is presented. Annual earnings are grouped into four different categories, the “bottom 90%, next 9%, next 0.9% and top 0.1%” (p. 2), to understand how earnings have changed over time. The overall trend for each group is discussed but the one observation that stands out the most is that “earnings gains in Canada have been the largest among individuals at the top of the distribution” (p. 2). Corresponding numbers prove this to be true. From 1978-2015, “the next 0.9% average annual gains were twice that of the previous group—at 1.9%” (p. 3), while “the top 0.1% gains were larger still—at 4.2% per year” (p. 3). Ultimately, the researchers discover that the higher within the earnings group, the higher the income gains will be over time.

Secondly, what can be considered the most important aspect to this research study is how the trends in earnings gains impact the overall gender earnings gap. Two factors play a part: “the representation of women within each earnings group, and the earnings of women relative to those of men within each group” (p. 3). What the researchers find is that the “share of women in the top earnings groups increased” (p. 3) but women still “remained significantly under-represented in each group” (p. 3). The article then discusses the “annual earnings of women relative to those of men varied across the top earnings groups” (p. 3). Within two earnings groups, the next 9% and the next 0.9%, “the average annual earnings of women corresponded to more than 95% of the average earnings of men over most of the reference period” (p. 3). While the researchers do note that estimates for the 0.1% are “sensitive to the business cycle and are more unstable given the smaller underlying sample size” (p. 3), they do observe that women’s earnings relative to men’s were falling over time until the late 1990s when the trends appeared to reverse. The data shows that while the number of women within each earnings group is increasing, they are still under-represented.

Thirdly, an element that could provide further explanation towards the researchers’ findings would be an exploration of “occupations or educational attainment” (p. 7). The data sample used within the research, however, did not record this information, leading to a potential downfall. While not as specific, “information on the industry sector and . . . industry classification” (p. 7) could be considered, providing some insight into the differences between men and women among earnings groups, as large shares of men and women are employed within different sectors. For example, more men are employed in “mining, oil and gas, [and] utilities” (p. 7), while more women are employed in “educational services and health care” (p. 7). However,

within the next 0.9% and top 0.1%, “the top three industrial sectors . . . are the same for women and men” (p. 8). While looking at industry as opposed to occupation doesn’t provide as much detail, it does provide a general trend that could be used towards further discussion.

Overall, the research study provides a look at the differences in earnings between men and women among earnings groups, and then further through industrial distribution. Those present within the top earnings groups tend to earn more over time, more men are present within higher earnings groups than women, and within the top two earnings groups industrial sectors are the same for men and women. By strictly presenting the evidence through statistical and hypothetical exercises, the study fails to provide an explanation as to why these differences exist. For someone not familiar with these principles, elements of the discussion can also be difficult to understand. Ultimately, women have made gains to limit the gender earnings gap, but the gap still exists and the question of why is left unanswered. To benefit further sociological study surrounding the gender pay gap, the overall observed trends could be used. In the end, there is still work to be done to understand income inequality among men and women and thus, work to eliminate it.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Statistics Canada. (2019). *Earnings Inequality and the Gender Pay Gap in Canada: The Role of Women’s Underrepresentation Among Top Earners*. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2019002-eng.pdf?st=ijdgGYJi>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Jenna Horning holds a Bachelor of Communication Studies degree and currently works for an association representing Alberta’s 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.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION PRACTICES IN CANADA'S CHARITABLE SECTOR

REVIEWED BY SHAWNA LADOUCEUR

This article summarizes findings from a 2018 survey conducted by Imagine Canada. Imagine Canada is a national organization providing programs and resources to strengthen charities, promote corporate giving, and support the charitable sector through accreditation, corporate recognition, public policy advocacy, and research.

Organizational stakeholders, policymakers, the media, and individual Canadians want to see how the charities they support are affecting the populations they serve, as well as the impact on broader systems. But given the diverse range of potential approaches to measurement and evaluation, an even wider range of possible uses for the results produced, and the incredible diversity of stakeholders and audiences with whom to engage, charities seek a common understanding around norms and expectations. Imagine Canada works with charities to establish a cohesive narrative for this increasingly important conversation, and this survey laid groundwork for the development of this common understanding with an in-depth look at the current state of evaluation.

Seeking to benchmark current practices, categories for this survey included: aspects measured and evaluated; methods employed; how results were used; the role of funder relationships; enablers and barriers affecting evaluation capacity and ability to make use of findings; opinions about evaluation and measurement; the role of evaluation-related networks; the effect of dedicated evaluation staff; and the role and effect of employing external evaluators.

An overview of survey results indicated 96% of charities evaluate their work in some way. Method and resources employed can be affected by: the size of the organization—small (<\$150,000 annual revenue), medium (\$150,000 - \$5 million), or large (>\$5 million); charitable subsector (grant making, fundraising and voluntarism; arts, culture, & recreation; education; social service; and health); and region of Canada in which the charity operates. Aspects measured include: outputs, outcomes, quality, long-term/systemic impacts, return on investment, and other measures. A range of both quantitative (administrative data, statistical compilations, surveys, web statistics, and experimental studies) and qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, logic models / theories of change, and case studies) are employed, with measurement tools used seemingly correlated to aspects being measured.

Results from evaluation can be used in many different ways. For the purpose of this survey, these were subdivided into four major categories and eighteen distinct uses. Categories included: stakeholder reporting/communications; organization/program-planning and decision-making; learning; and organizational performance. The most common of the eighteen distinct uses were: reporting to the organization's board of directors, funders, or other supporters; evaluating achievement of objectives; learning from outcomes; revising existing programs; and supporting the development of new ones.

When examining evaluation capacity and ability to make use of findings, the survey exposed both enablers and barriers. Listed in order of influence, these included: support from organizational leadership; staff buy-in; staff

knowledge, skills, tools, etc.; stakeholder buy-in; funder support; external evaluators/ consultants; capacity of funded/ supported organizations; staff time; and financial resources. These factors function as barriers when absent, and enablers when present.

An examination of funder relationships found that 90% of charities surveyed received some form of external funding. Charities that received funding dedicated to evaluation tended to a more comprehensive review. Regular communication between funders and fundees appeared to be key to making best use of evaluation results, and served to promote a positive view of this relationship.

Key survey findings indicated that satisfaction with evaluation capacity and ability to make use of results were strongly correlated with enablers and barriers. Of note, opinions about evaluation did not seem to vary according to what charities evaluate, how they evaluate it, or how they use evaluation results. Involvement with evaluation networks increased overall satisfaction. Charities with dedicated evaluation staff were more likely to draw on a number of specific methods and resources, have significantly more positive opinions about evaluation, and to see potential enablers and barriers as enablers. While this survey found that charities working with external evaluators reported being less satisfied with evaluation capacity, they actually tended to demonstrate greater capacity, evaluating more involved aspects of their work and drawing on more sophisticated methods. Speculation as to this phenomenon is presented as multifactorial and seemingly complicated.

This survey provided a starting point on which to base a coordinated narrative for the conversation charities are having with Canadians. Such narrative will certainly serve to increase trust and confidence, strengthen charities, and promote giving in support of the charitable sector. Given the heavy statistical nature of this report, this review can only provide a broad overview of the large repository of valuable statistical information presented in this survey. Please see the full report for detailed analysis.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Lasby, David. (2019). *The State of Evaluation—Measurement and Evaluation Practices in Canada's Charitable Sector*. Imagine Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/research/state-of-evaluation>

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.

UNDERSTANDING SUPPORT BARRIERS FOR LGBTQ2 PEOPLE

REVIEWED BY HANNA NASH

In *Provider Perspectives: Understanding Support Barriers for LGBTQ2 People*, NorQuest College researchers Cindy Boucher and Kassi Boyd examine the difficulties and perspectives of front-line workers when providing services to Edmonton's homeless, or at-risk of homelessness, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2) community.

When exploring the specific obstacles affecting staff in relation to their work with homeless or at-risk members of the LGBTQ2 community, Boucher and Boyd discovered three central difficulties experienced by most organizations in Edmonton: a lack of resources for staff, limited contact with self-identified LGBTQ2 members, and continued fear from members of LGBTQ2 groups to identify themselves and their unique needs to organizations. The results of Boucher and Boyd's study is restricted to interviews held with 35 individual front-line service providers in Edmonton. Research from the organizations themselves was limited and difficult to procure.

Organizations offering help to these individuals facing homelessness often do not have relevant policies, procedures, or guidelines readily available for staff to reference. In addition, most staff reported that they did not feel that they were adequately educated in current LGBTQ2 culture and systemic barriers to fully understand how homelessness is influenced by gender identification and sexual orientation. Although most interviewees expressed an interest in receiving education on the LGBTQ2 community, most support staff indicated that they were unaware of ways to become more informed. This in turn creates a lack of consistent aid available for those who are vulnerable as they are subject to individual staff biases, and by the onus for staff to access external resources and knowledge.

Self-identification is not a requirement for clients who seek help. Not being aware of which clients are part of the LGBTQ2 community creates added challenges for support staff when helping individuals specific to this community. Many support staff could not indicate the number of LGBTQ2 clients they may have had, or in fact whether they had ever helped an LGBTQ2 client. This additional difficulty prevents front-line staff from understanding a client's specific needs and struggles. Furthermore, most organizations rely on a generalized client-focused approach, whereby staff assess each client and provide resources regardless of who they are. Although this blanket approach is done in the interest of aiding in a non-discriminatory fashion, it does not take into consideration the specific challenges the LGBTQ2 community faces, such as risks to physical or mental health.

This leads to the third most identified barrier. As many members in this community have experienced traumatic events related to their gender identification and sexual orientation, many choose not to self-identify. As a result, these LGBTQ2 members often do not feel safe in expressing their individual circumstances, and believe that they are risking their safety by exposing themselves to a front-line service worker. Front-line service staff identified this as a barrier to current and continued help for the community, suggesting that without increased self-identification, resources specific to their needs will likely not be made available to them or their community. Assets, particularly government funding, will likely only be made available with proof and

justification for a population. This study also demonstrated that although many front-line staff respect an LGBTQ2 individual's right to conceal their sexual orientation or preferred gender, staff were generally unable to give specific reasons or examples for why an individual would refrain from self-identifying.

Boucher and Boyd provide many insights into the difficulties front-line staff experience when trying to provide aid to homeless or at-risk LGBTQ2 people. Further research into specific populations within the community could provide governments and society with an enhanced understanding of the impediments faced by front-line service providers. For example, this study does not distinguish the unique concerns between age groups, gender, or health within this population.

Additionally, as this research was undertaken with the help of front-line staff who volunteered to speak to Boucher and Boyd, it presents a difficulty in truly understanding the position that organizations take when aiding members of the LGBTQ2 community. Boucher and Boyd do take into consideration that the people who volunteered to take part in their study are most likely open to supporting the LGBTQ2 community, and consequently, much of this research is based upon individual biases and interests rather than the outcomes of clearly identified and consistent policies of organizations providing aid.

Boucher and Boyd's research addresses the concerns that have been overlooked by society and the very organizations that exist to help those who are most vulnerable. If organizations were held accountable to implement specific policies and procedures, perhaps front-line service staff would be more effective in helping the LGBTQ2 community.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Boucher, C. & Boyd, K. (2018). *Provider Perspectives: understanding support barriers for LGBTQ2 people*. NorQuest College. Retrieved from: <http://homewardtrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Boucher-and-Boyd-2018.-Understanding-support-barriers-for-LGBTQ2-people.pdf>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Hanna Nash enjoys ballet performances and other live theatre, as well as outdoor sports and travelling to new countries. Hanna is interested in sharing information and knowledge to Edmonton's diverse communities.

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

ABOUT

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

Susan Morrissey, Executive Director

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RESEARCH UPDATE

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

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