

Draft resolution of the Town of Smiths Falls in support of a Basic Income Guarantee for working-age adults

WHEREAS, per Statistics Canada data, in 2020 the median after-tax household income in Smiths Falls was \$56,400, the lowest of any lower- or single-tier municipality in Lanark County (Beckwith the highest, at \$107,000), and compared to \$77,000 for Lanark County as a whole;

WHEREAS, per the 2021 Census of Canada 1490 out of 9085 residents of Smiths Falls (16.4% of the total) lived in low income, based on the Low Income After Tax (LIM-AT) measure;

WHEREAS, of the 1490 Smiths Falls citizens living in low income in 2021, 120 of them were children five years old or younger, 215 of them were children between the ages of six and 17, and 365 of them were seniors aged 65 or over;

WHEREAS, the level of income is one of the most important social determinants of health, and relates to many other determinants including education and literacy, healthy behaviours, one's social environment, and employment and work conditions;

WHEREAS, low income is strongly correlated with a wide range of negative health outcomes, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and poor mental health, and with shorter life expectancies compared to higher income persons;

WHEREAS, the minimum wage in Ontario and the maximum amounts of financial support available through Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) are deeply insufficient to meet the basic needs of full-time minimum wage workers, or of individuals or families drawing OW or ODSP support;

WHEREAS, ongoing, widespread, and rapid changes in labour markets, including due to outsourcing, artificial intelligence, automation, and advance of the "gig" economy, are causing more and more people to be exposed to labour changes beyond their control, adding to their vulnerability to low income;

WHEREAS, basic income is a means by which individuals, families, and whole communities can be less vulnerable to negative changes in health, relationship or family status, and labour markets, and better able to navigate transitions and challenging circumstances;

WHEREAS, basic Income is money distributed to eligible people, regularly, reliably, and without work requirement, and which, absent other income, should meet basic human needs;

WHEREAS, basic income exists in Canada in the form of longstanding programs like the Canada Child Benefit and the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors, programs with demonstrated positive impacts on basic income recipients, economies, and our greater society;

WHEREAS, there is need to establish basic income security for working-age adults in Canada who, at present and in general, lack sufficient social protection against low income;

WHEREAS, there is a growing body of evidence that basic income is not a disincentive on the pursuit or retention of employment and that, further, basic income is more likely to support such pursuit or retention given its stabilizing effect in the lives of people;

WHEREAS, the gross cost of a basic income program is reduced to a net cost once various funding options are exercised and the fiscal benefits of basic income are realized (e.g., basic income as a local economic stimulus);

WHEREAS, Canada, one of the wealthiest nations in the world, has the fiscal capacity to support a basic income guarantee for working-age adults;

WHEREAS, the call for basic income in Canada has been and is being made by public health authorities, including the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit per its November 2023 report on food insecurity within the health region;

WHEREAS, the call for basic income in Canada has been and is being made by many other interests, including a growing number of municipalities in Ontario and beyond, and by a range of provincial and federal parliamentarians;

WHEREAS, a 2022 national public opinion poll suggests that six in 10 adults in Canada support the concept of basic income;

AND WHEREAS, the Town of Smiths Falls wishes to add its municipal voice to the call for a basic income guarantee for working-age adults in Canada.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Town of Smiths Falls supports the concept of a basic income guarantee for working-age adults to help combat low income and economic vulnerability within our community;
- 2) That the Town of Smiths Falls calls upon the federal and the provincial and territorial governments to collaborate on the design, introduction, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of a national basic income guarantee program for working-age adults;
- 3) That the Council of the Town of Smiths Falls directs the Office of the Mayor to write (a) a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, copy to relevant federal ministers and to Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston MP Scott Reid; and (b) a letter to Ontario Premier Doug Ford; copy to relevant provincial ministers and to Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston MPP John Jordan, calling on these orders of government to collaborate on the design, introduction, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of a national basic income guarantee program for working-age adults;
- 4) That the Council of the Town of Smiths Falls directs the Office of the Mayor to write a letter to each of the Mayor's counterparts in the lower-tier municipalities in Lanark County, encouraging each municipality to also pass a resolution similar to that adopted by the Town of Smiths Falls;
- 5) That a copy of this resolution be shared with all other municipalities in Ontario, and with the presidents of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.