

- 1) Basic Income & Welfare Reform**
- 2) Youth Engagement & Storytelling**

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# Basic Income & Welfare Reform

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# HOW CAN WE ENACT A BASIC INCOME?

1) We can pass legislation at federal, provincial/state, and/or municipal levels that creates new basic income programs

&

2) We can also reform existing welfare policies to make a “**constructive basic income**”

# WHAT IS A CONSTRUCTIVE BASIC INCOME?

*“...basic income, as an objective, asks the right questions and could help inform public policy on everything from the inadequacy of social assistance to the inadequacy of the minimum wage.”* - Trish Hennessy & Alex Himelfarb, “Basic Income: Rethinking Social Policy”. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2016.

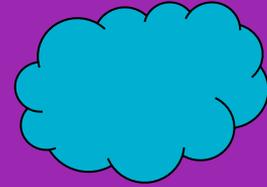
For the purposes of this presentation:

a “**constructive basic income**” refers to welfare policy after it has been reformed to be *effectually similar* to the basic income model.

# WHY A CONSTRUCTIVE BASIC INCOME?

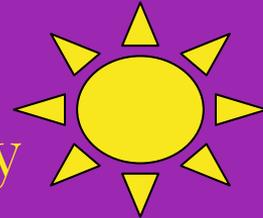
## CON

- Less perfect than starting from scratch



## PRO

- Easier politically and economically



# HOW DOES ONE CREATE A CONSTRUCTIVE BASIC INCOME?

Make welfare **easier to access** and **harder to deny** by **cutting red tape** (aka repeal and amend existing problematic statutes, regulations, and policies)

*“The welfare state has created an environment in which the individual loses his [or her] self-respect and becomes prey to agonizing frustration...The system has become an instrument of paternalism whereby recipients have been compelled to do what others thought was good for them, and to conform to middle-class norms that the poor themselves often have neither comprehended nor appreciated.”* –

Senator David Croll, “The Croll Report”, 1971

# WHAT RED TAPE SHOULD BE CUT?

Unreasonably high medical eligibility standards for disability programs

Ex. in Alberta, the *Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act* requires an applicant have “an impairment of mental or physical functioning or both that, in a director’s opinion after considering any relevant medical or psychological reports, causes substantial limitation in the person’s ability to earn a livelihood and is likely to continue to affect that person permanently because no remedial therapy is available that would materially improve the person’s ability to earn a livelihood.”

-*Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act*, SA 2006, c A-45.1, s 1(i)

# MORE RED TAPE

## Assets Tests

Ex. An Alberta Works recipient is allowed to save up the equivalent of one or two months of benefits depending on which program they are under. - *Income Support, Training and Health Benefits Regulation*, Alta Reg 122/2011, s 21

Ex 2. Under CalWORKS In California, a household (regardless of how many people in it) can have no more than \$2,000 in liquid assets. Exception: if there is a family member over 60 years of age the limit increases to \$3,000.

# MORE RED TAPE (& PATERNALISM)

- In Alberta, your AISH benefits can be discontinued if you turn down a job that AISH thinks you should have accepted (Alta Reg 91/2007, s 5)
- In Ontario, Ontario Works can show up to visit a benefits recipient's home without notice. If the benefits recipient refuses without reason, or if the benefits recipient has refused before, then their benefits can be cancelled. (O Reg 134/98, ss 5, 12)
- In the US, the primary purposes of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program include reducing “the dependency of needy parents by promoting...marriage” and encouraging “the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.”  
-<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf/about>

# INCREASING BENEFITS AMOUNTS

- Currently, in Alberta a single adult on Alberta Works's - Expected to Work program makes \$627 per month unless they're eligible for supplementary benefits. An average bachelor suite in Edmonton cost \$852/month in 2015
- Under Emploi-Quebec's Social Assistance Program, if a single adult is deemed to have temporary limited capacity for employment they receive \$767 monthly. If they don't qualify for temporary limited capacity they receive \$633.
- Under BC Works's disability assistance benefits, a single adult can receive up to \$1133.42/month

# INCREASING EARNINGS EXEMPTIONS

- Quebec's Emploi-Quebec Social Assistance and Social Solidarity programs have a \$200 monthly earning exemption limit and a 0% earning exemption rate after that
- BCWorks's Disability Assistance program has a \$12,000 annual earning exemption for a single adult household and a 0% exemption rate after that
- Alberta Works has a \$230 monthly earning exemption limit and a 25% exemption rate after that
- Ontario Works has a \$200 monthly earning exemption limit and a 50% exemption rate after that

READ MORE IN MY BLOG: [welfare-stories.blogspot.ca](http://welfare-stories.blogspot.ca)

- Problematic policies
- Opportunity to take action
- Most importantly, **stories** based loosely on the tragic experiences of real Albertan welfare recipients

# **Youth Engagement & Storytelling**

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# STORIES HAVE MADE BASIC INCOME POPULAR

- In Canada, the story of MINCOME
- In the US, Basic Income is always contextualized within the political narrative running from Thomas Paine to MLK. Or from Richard Nixon to Michael Tubbs and Andrew Yang
- Internationally, stories of empowerment from basic income pilots implemented by governments and NGOs have increased engagement in basic income policy
- Prescient narratives about automation and precarious employment have given basic income policy a sense of **urgency** and **necessity**

# WELFARE STORIES: [welfare-stories.blogspot.ca](http://welfare-stories.blogspot.ca)

- The tragic stories of Alberta Works and AISH recipients are too often invisible and inaudible
- This leads to a serious gap in public engagement in welfare reform related issues
- Welfare Stories shares stories based loosely on the tragic stories of real Albertan welfare recipients as a means to fill that gap, and start public conversation about welfare reform

## NEXT UP...

- Naymah and Roxy of the Conscious Minds Co-operative will engage you in a group exercise to envision a future where basic income is a reality
- I encourage you to continue to engage yourselves and folks in your spheres of influence through narrative. Whether it's difficult stories like those of welfare recipients today, or hopeful ones like those you're about to imagine with Roxy and Naymah, remember to tell stories as you try to persuade and to inspire

**THANKS FOR LISTENING!**

[welfare-stories.blogspot.ca](http://welfare-stories.blogspot.ca)