



NIAGARA POVERTY REDUCTION NETWORK

July 6, 2020

To the members of Niagara Regional Council Public Health and Social Services Committee:

I am writing on behalf of our Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN), in support of the motion prepared by Councillor Laura Ip for the Public Health and Social Services Committee meeting of July 14, 2020. NPRN is a collective of over 30 agencies and individuals working to wipe out poverty in Niagara through education, collaboration, and advocacy to address poverty's root causes. We are proud to support the idea brought forward by Councillor Ip's motion: that the Region of Niagara ought to lend its moral authority to the growing movement for a basic income, as a key component of a system of programs and policies that effectively move people away from poverty (e.g. affordable childcare, housing, public transit, etc.).

NPRN has a long history supporting the implementation of a basic income model for Niagara and more broadly. Prior to the implementation of the Ontario Basic Income Pilot and beyond, NPRN engaged in advocacy work related to increasing awareness around a Basic Income Guarantee, media campaigns, and participated in the Basic Income Pilot project consultation process.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, NPRN has addressed the need to develop a moratorium on rent obligations for people living on a low income, and significant gaps in the rollout of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), especially pertaining to the inability of Niagara's growing communities of sex workers and undocumented migrant workers to apply for the Benefit.

These unresolved concerns relate directly to Councillor Ip's motion: If implemented, a basic income policy would provide meaningful financial support to the vulnerable tenants and workers whose interests have inspired the above appeals. As we know from the Basic Income Pilot experiment in Hamilton, basic income measures have a significant, positive impact on the health and overall dignity of recipients, especially when implemented alongside other programs and policies that create a stronger social safety net. This endorsement of Councillor Ip's motion is issued with that fact in mind.

Councillor Ip's motion proposes a letter from Chair Bradley to key members of our federal cabinet, on behalf of the Region of Niagara, endorsing the letter from Simcoe Muskoka in the name of income security. Persistent poverty and household food insecurity are cited in Councillor Ip's motion as additional core values motivating the proposed letter.

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The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network wholeheartedly supports Councillor Ip's motion and the values that inspire it. We must act in a collaborative way for the human rights of all people, independent of their class. The fact that people can only realize their human rights if they have the benefit of a certain amount of material prosperity gave rise to CERB. This same co-relation is recognized in your own, ongoing efforts as Regional Council to ensure that Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program are optimally implemented for Niagarans through the efforts of our hard-working municipal social service employees. Moreover, COVID-19 has inspired new awareness across Niagara of the need for basic income. Council endorsement of the Simcoe Muskoka initiative would thus be a wise continuation of the social justice momentum emergent in our region.

Thank you for considering this letter. If you have any concerns or questions related to its contents, or to the work of NPRN, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Sincerely,
Aidan Johnson

Niagara Poverty Reduction Network Chair

On behalf of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network