

November 20, 2023

Dear Mayor Guthrie and City of Guelph Councillors,

I am writing to ask you to adopt the resolution put forward by Councillor Klassen calling on the federal and provincial governments to work to establish a program that ensures that every Canadian has a Guaranteed Livable Income. In pilot programs, recipients have been less likely to suffer from food insecurity, have improved living accommodations, cared for their children, paid down debt or got a better education. They were also able to improve their physical and mental health. A program such as this would not only alleviate the stress and suffering of the individuals receiving the money but would have a positive effect on society as a whole.

While the benefits to recipients are pretty obvious, the benefits to society may not be less obvious. For instance, the local economy benefits because the money given to recipients ends up in our community as groceries and other necessary goods are purchased and rent is paid. Municipal costs for social services such as welfare, health care and criminal justice are decreased. But perhaps best of all, we are assured that we are living in a community that really does value all of its members.

One of the main criticisms of Guaranteed Livable Income is that people receiving the money will not be motivated to work. However, reviews of basic income pilots in Canada indicate that few recipients drop out of the work force. Those that do, do so in order to look for better employment, start a business, or to engage in care work. This renewed sense of efficacy leads to improvement in physical and mental health as they are no longer dealing with the stress and hopelessness that comes from going without or further into debt because their income does not cover essential expenses. This is why organizations such as public health, the education system, mental health workers, social workers, physicians, food banks, and faith groups have endorsed a Guaranteed Livable Income.

Guelph is a lovely place to live, but it is marred by the number of unhoused people especially in the downtown and the parks. I believe that if we provide all people with a living income, they will be better able to afford a home and, even more importantly, they will have hope for a better future. A Guaranteed Living Income, by solving the underlying problem of poverty, will go a long way to solving the thorny problem of homelessness.

Please vote to adopt the Guaranteed Livable Income resolution as a first step to creating a society where all people are supported, respected and valued.

Sincerely,

Linda Beale