

Consultation Guide for the Basic Income Pilot project

A Message from the Ministers

We are thrilled for this opportunity to hear from people in Ontario about a Basic Income Pilot — an innovative way to help lift people out of poverty and deliver income support in a better way.

We're looking for creative solutions to help deliver services people need by making public programs simpler and more efficient, and support poverty reduction. We know it's time to do things differently.

Our Basic Income Pilot will test the view that a Basic Income could help deliver income supports efficiently, while improving health, employment, and housing outcomes for Ontarians.

The Hon. Hugh Segal recently provided the government with a Discussion Paper, *Finding a Better Way: A Basic Income Pilot for Ontario*. We thank Mr. Segal for his work, and his discussion paper will help guide these consultations, as well as the design of the Pilot.

We want to hear what you think about the concept of a Basic Income, and how it could work in our province. This Consultation Guide is designed to spark conversation, and help you offer an informed opinion on what the Basic Income Pilot Project should be.

What we learn from the Pilot will also help to inform future approaches to income security. We are always looking for creative, innovative, and evidence-based solutions, to help us do a better job in providing services to the people who need them. We remain committed to continuing our work toward real transformation of the income security system.

We look forward to receiving your input on this important project.

Chris Ballard

Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy
Minister of Housing

Dr. Helena Jaczek

Minister of Community and Social Services

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Consultation is the next step in creating a comprehensive pilot project to evaluate the impact of a Basic Income program. We want to hear your views on how to implement a Basic Income Pilot in Ontario.

This guide begins with some basic information about what Basic Income is, and how it can help people.

This guide then divides the consultation process into five separate categories. Each category looks at a specific aspect of the Pilot's design.

- Eligibility for the Pilot (who should participate?)
- Site Selection (where should the Pilot take place?)
- Benefit Design (what and how much should participants receive?)
- Evaluation Approach (how should we measure results?)
- Administration (how should the Pilot be managed?)

At the end of each category, there are questions to help us capture your feedback.

This guide also provides a summary of *Finding a Better Way: A Basic Income Pilot for Ontario*, the discussion paper written by the government's Special Advisor, Hon. Hugh Segal.

How you can get involved

Consultation to help design the Basic Income Pilot will run from November 2016 to January 2017. The feedback we receive will be used to finalize the Pilot design and help us plan how to get the project running. We will prepare a final report on what we have heard, and introduce a plan for the Pilot by April, 2017. You can provide your feedback in several ways:

- Attend a facilitated in-person discussion hosted by the Province
- Host your own discussion group using this guide and the Consultation Toolkit
- Submit your comments online via the Ontario.ca/open consultations portal
- Email your thoughts to: basicincome@ontario.ca

WHAT IS “BASIC INCOME”?

There is no single definition of Basic Income, but it is generally understood to be a payment to individuals and families to make sure that everyone benefits from a minimum level of income. Basic income can help:

- Lift more people out of poverty.
- Simplify the income security system.
- Improve people’s health, empower people to get jobs and help people afford housing.
- Give people more certainty and empower them to spend less time navigating a complex system, and more time actively participating in the economy.

Typically, a Basic Income cash transfer has “no strings attached”. Recipients are not required to work, look for work, or participate in education or training to receive the payment. There are three generally accepted models of Basic Income.

In a **Universal Basic Income** program, benefits are paid to everyone, regardless of income level. This model can be accompanied by a progressive income tax system, like Canada’s, which can “recover” the benefit from higher income households.

In an **Income Top-Up** program, income is topped-up with benefits to ensure a minimum income level. For each dollar of earned income, benefits are reduced as your income increases, dollar for dollar (100% tax back rate), until benefits are paid back in full.

In a **Negative Income Tax program**, benefits are provided to those whose income falls below a minimum income level. Under this system, people earning below a certain level receive financial support from the government, instead of paying taxes. Then, for each dollar of earned income, benefits are reduced by less than a dollar (less than 100% tax back rate), until benefits are paid back in full. The Basic Income Pilot could test one or multiple tax-back rates. A tax-back rate is the percentage that a benefit is reduced, as a recipient’s earned income increases.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION PAPER: CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Discussion Paper prepared by the Hon. Hugh Segal provides advice to the government about a potential model and outlines a number of key considerations for developing, implementing, and testing a Basic Income Pilot in Ontario.

Pilot Design and Selection Criteria

The Discussion Paper recommends that the Pilot test:

- A Basic Income as a negative income tax (NIT)
- A Basic Income that replaces Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and supplemented by earned income
- A Basic Income that is more generous than the income support provided through Ontario Works and ODSP
- A Basic Income for working age individuals 18 to 64 years of age
- Two benefit amounts, at 75% and 100% of the Low Income Measure (LIM) ¹
- Two different tax back rates to apply to earned income.
- Both a randomized controlled trial and saturation site studies (see below)

The Discussion Paper recommends focusing the Pilot on the effects that a Basic Income could have on poverty reduction, workforce participation, health and education outcomes, and service delivery.

¹ The LIM is a common income-based measure used to define poverty. The LIM is equal to half of median household income for the province and adjusted to household composition. Adjustment means that it reflects the fact that a household's needs increase as the number of household members increases.

The Discussion Paper recommends looking at the impact of a Basic Income on:

Individual behaviours and outcomes

using a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) in a major urban neighbourhood/community.

Community-level impacts

by investigating the changes on the population for a “saturation site” in northern Ontario, southern Ontario and a First Nations community, where everyone could get the Basic Income.

Outcomes and Measurement

The Discussion Paper recommends monitoring the effects of Basic Income on up to 10 specific areas, including health, employment, education, housing, and social services. It also recommends examining the impacts a Basic Income would have on current programs, for things like costs, benefits, administration, and delivery.

Recommendations about data and evaluation highlight the need to protect personal information, use existing government data, and ensure transparency.

Governance and Administration

The Discussion Paper notes that the Pilot could be managed by an arm’s-length consortium of not-for-profit research organizations. In this scenario, two groups would advise the government and oversee the Pilot: a Basic Income Pilot Advisory Council and a Research Operations Group. Staff could include a Project Leader to manage day-to-day operations, an Ethics Advisor to protect the privacy and integrity of participants, and a Financial Officer to ensure financial diligence.

Implementation of the Pilot

The Discussion Paper suggests considering three phases:

Phase I: Preparation, Organization and Preliminary Interviews

Phase II: Quantitative and Qualitative Surveys and Testing

Phase III: Comprehensive Analysis and Evaluation

WHAT IS A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL?

A Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) is considered the “gold standard” of experimental research design. Trial participants are randomly selected to receive a treatment or intervention, and observed changes of the treatment group are compared against a control group, participants who don’t get a treatment.

WHAT IS A SATURATION SITE STUDY?

A saturation site study is a research design in which all individuals living within a selected test community are eligible to receive the treatment or intervention. This type of study can capture changes at a community level.

THE CONSULTATION GUIDE

The Discussion Paper provides you with a framework to start your own conversation on how a Basic Income Pilot might work. In this section, we have divided the consultation process into five separate categories. Each category looks at a specific aspect of the Pilot's design. You can use this as a starting point for your discussions and recommendations.

At the end of each category, we have suggested questions to help you with the consultation process. We encourage you to develop your own questions as they arise from the discussion.

Section 1: Determine eligibility for the Pilot

Determining who is eligible to participate in the Basic Income Pilot is one of the first things the government must decide. For example, a broad-based Pilot design could look different compared to one focused on the under-unemployed or newcomers.

Broad eligibility criteria may lead to more general results – meaning the observed changes or outcomes in the Pilot are more likely to be repeated elsewhere in the province. Broad eligibility criteria may result in more people being included in the Pilot.

A Pilot for targeted groups of people may decrease costs. However, the evidence generated may not be as relevant to the broader population and may only be useful for addressing specific problems or issues.

The Discussion Paper recommends that eligibility to participate in the Basic Income Pilot would depend on:

1. **Age** - individuals aged 18 to 64 years
2. **Residency** - individuals who have been residents of the Pilot sites for at least one year.

Participation in the Pilot would be **voluntary and consent based**. No one would be forced to participate. For the RCT, Pilot participants could be selected randomly, using administrative lists of Social Insurance Numbers. Eligibility and selection to participate for the Pilot does not necessarily mean the individual would get a payment. An assessment would still be required to determine whether they qualify, based on their current income.

The Discussion Paper highlights some additional considerations for those without a fixed address, and advises including non-citizens.

Questions for Discussion

- 1.1 Are there specific groups of people or populations who should be targeted in the Pilot, such as the under-employed, social assistance recipients, or newcomers? Why?
- 1.2 What should the Pilot use to determine eligibility? Should eligibility be based on an individual's income, or should eligibility be determined by total family income? Why?

Section 2: Select the sites

A key part of the Pilot's design will be determining where in the province the Pilot will run. Where we decide to run the Pilot could determine what we are able to measure, and what we can get out of this test. Pending the final Pilot eligibility criteria, site selection will also be a key driver of Pilot costs.

The Discussion Paper highlights two different types of test sites that could be used for the Pilot: RCT studies and saturation site studies. Each type offers unique benefits to ensure that the Pilot outcomes can be thoroughly analyzed.

How RCT Pilot sites would work

In an RCT study, trial participants would be randomly selected to receive the Basic Income benefit. There would also be a control group that would not receive the benefit. The control group would be studied over time to help understand the impact that the Basic Income benefit has on other groups.

A single urban site as opposed to a province-wide trial, could offer significant advantages:

- The evaluation would be simpler – a province-wide RCT would introduce too many other factors that may influence participants
- Concentrating activities within a single geographic area of the province would help control costs

The Discussion Paper suggests three key considerations when considering a RCT test site:

It should accurately represent Ontario's population:

An RCT study should ensure a realistic representation of the Ontario population, including members of Indigenous communities, racialized communities, immigrants, social assistance recipients, and low-income workers. This would ensure that results from a Basic Income could be replicated in other areas of Ontario. Targeted Pilot eligibility criteria may impact to what degree we can generalize that the Pilot findings will also be true in other parts of the province.

It should comprise a dynamic labour market:

The site should not have large, stabilizing employers, such as large government offices. This will limit the number of buffer effects which could make some communities less responsive to changes in the economic cycle. These communities can be “protected”, potentially producing skewed employment outcomes.

It should have strong support from local, community, and municipal leadership, and delivery partners.

How Saturation Sites would work

In a saturation site study, all eligible individuals living within a selected test community would be able to receive the Basic Income benefit. In contrast to the RCT, this can capture changes in a community as well as individual behaviour, since a higher concentration of people are getting the intervention and interacting with each other.

Ideally, the saturation sites would be:

- Geographically contained
- Reasonably isolated from other communities.

This would help limit external effects when measuring the community level impact of the Basic Income Pilot.

The Discussion Paper proposes implementing three saturation sites, in three different areas of the province. The areas proposed are:

One saturation site in southern Ontario:

This site would be representative of the population in southern Ontario. There would be no institutional stabilizer (a large employer, such as government) protecting its labour market from movements in the economic cycle.

One saturation site in northern Ontario:

This site would be as representative as possible of the communities in northern Ontario, according to the criteria above. In this scenario, the Pilot could consider sites with labour forces that have stronger ties to the fluctuations of commodities-based industries, such as mining, forestry, etc.

One saturation site in an Indigenous community:

The Pilot could consider offering an opportunity to develop a Basic Income Pilot adapted to the realities of Indigenous communities. This would be done in a culturally appropriate manner, to acknowledge the unique circumstances of First Nations peoples.

In these saturation test sites, all individuals who meet the established age and residency requirements would be eligible to receive the Basic Income benefit.

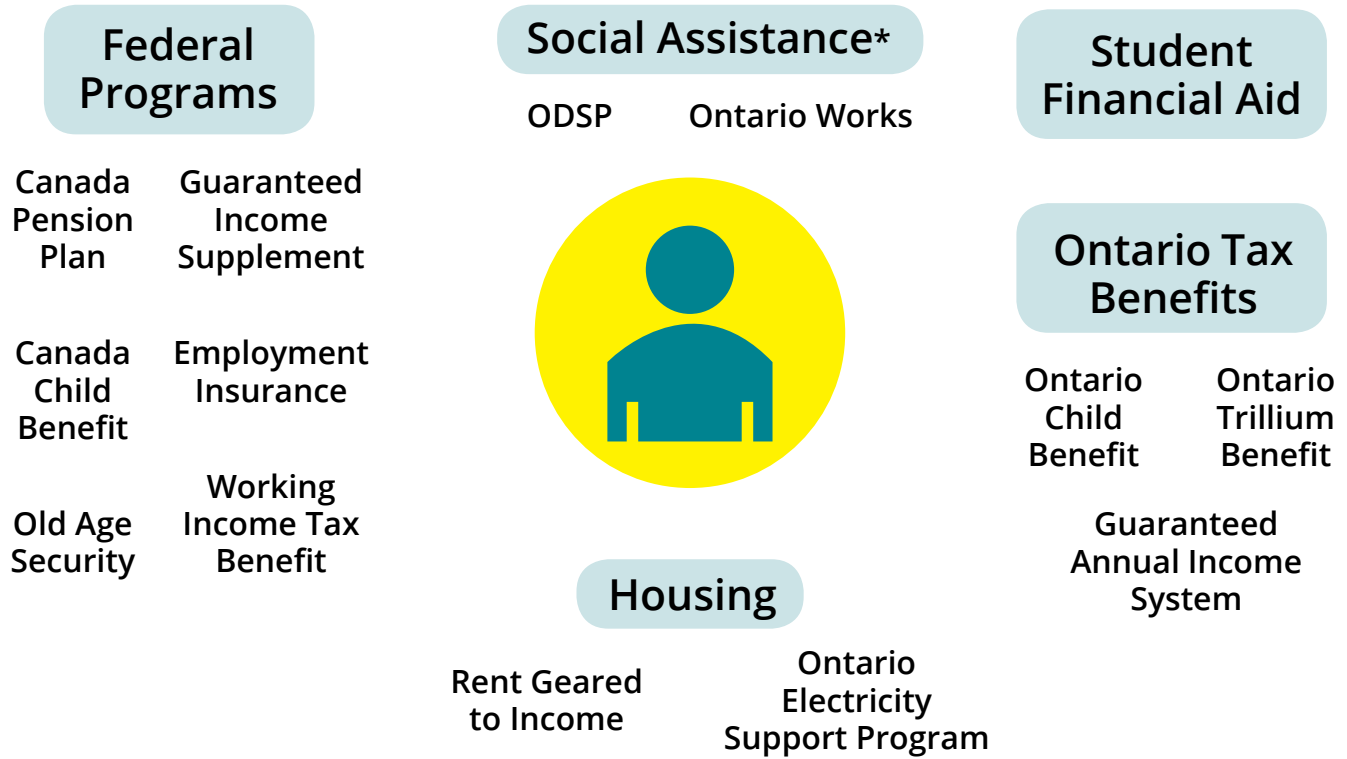
Questions for Discussion

- 2.1** What are the most important things to think of when selecting a Pilot location? Why?
- 2.2** How do you think Pilot sites should be selected?
- 2.3** Do you think it's important to have saturation and RCT site? Why?
- 2.4** Should the government consider phases for sites e.g. starting with RCT and doing saturation sites later?

Section 3: Design the benefits

Determining the Basic Income benefit amount will require very careful consideration. The goal is to set a fair and affordable benefit amount that has a meaningful impact on people living in poverty.

There are many income support programs in Ontario delivered by the different levels of government.



Folding these other benefits, such as the Ontario Child Benefit and federal income support benefits into the Pilot may increase the complexity of the administration and evaluation of the Pilot. The same is true of in-kind benefits and services, such as subsidized housing and employment training assistance.

In all of the Pilot tests, the Discussion Paper recommends linking the Basic Income benefit amount to a percentage of the Low Income Measure (LIM), a common indicator used to define poverty. The LIM is

* Social assistance includes other supports such as special diet allowance, supplementary health coverage, employment related benefits and more

equal to half of median household income for the province, and adjusted for household composition. Pilot participants with a disability (and their caregivers) could receive the Basic Income and an additional \$500 per month. This could be adjusted based on re-assessments of the costs of living with a disability.

The discussion paper lays out a variety of considerations.

Benefits in Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Test Groups

Based on the proposed RCT design, the Discussion Paper proposes the following benefit and tax back test groups:

Group 1: Control Group would not receive a Basic Income, but they would continue to receive existing income and supports under Ontario Works and ODSP. This group would experience no change in terms of income support and other benefits, but their outcomes and behaviour would be monitored by the research team.

Group 2: Would be guaranteed an income, corresponding to **75% of the LIM**, and adjusted to the composition of the household. This group would see their earned workplace income taxed at a **lower tax back rate**.

Group 3: Would be guaranteed an income, corresponding to **75% of the LIM**, and adjusted to the composition of the household. In this group, additional earned income would be subject to a **higher tax back rate**.

Group 4: Would be guaranteed an income corresponding to **100% of the LIM**, adjusted to the composition of the household. In this group, additional earned income would be subject to a **higher tax back rate**, the same as Group 3.

Benefits in Saturation Sites

In a saturation site, all individuals eligible to participate would receive the same benefit amount and tax back rate. As recommended in the Discussion Paper, the benefit level would be 75 per cent of the Low Income Measure (LIM), with ODSP recipients/caregivers receiving an additional amount of at least \$500 per month. In this group, additional earned income would be subject to an **established tax back rate**.

Maintaining Supplemental Benefits

The Discussion Paper recommends that the Pilot test the replacement of the existing Ontario Works and ODSP income supports with a Basic Income.

Current recipients of Ontario Works and ODSP receive supplemental benefits such as prescription drug coverage, dental care, assistive devices, vision care, special purpose allowances for things special diets, etc. The Discussion Paper proposes that participants in the Pilot who were previously on Ontario Works and ODSP would continue to receive supplemental benefits, and maintain their eligibility for subsidized housing.

Comparing Basic Income benefits to existing programs

The table below provides an illustrative comparison between the maximum annual Basic Income at 75% LIM, adjusted for household size, as recommended in the Discussion Paper with existing rates under Ontario Works.

Comparison of Basic Income model (at 75% LIM) and Ontario Works		
Household size	Annual Basic Income Benefit Amount (at 75% LIM, 2016e)	Annual Ontario Works Basic Needs + Max Shelter
Single adult	\$16,989	\$8,472
Single with one child	\$24,027	\$11,592
Single with two children	\$29,427	\$12,228
Couple	\$24,027	\$13,140
Couple with one child	\$29,427	\$13,776
Couple with two children	\$33,979	\$14,460

Source: LIM 2016 estimate - StatsCan, CANSIM 206-0091, adjusted based on inflation at 2%; social assistance rates as of November 1, 2016

The following table below provides an illustrative comparison between the maximum annual Basic Income at 75% LIM, adjusted for household size with an additional \$500 per month for adults with disabilities, as recommended in the Discussion Paper with existing rates under ODSP.

Comparison of Basic Income model (at 75% LIM) and ODSP		
Household size	Annual Basic Income Benefit Amount (at 75% LIM, 2016e) + \$500/month*	Annual ODSP Basic Needs + Max Shelter
Single adult	\$22,989	\$13,536
Single with one child	\$30,027	\$18,540
Single with two children	\$35,427	\$19,296
Couple	\$30,027	\$20,256
Couple with one child	\$35,427	\$21,012
Couple with two children	\$39,979	\$21,852

* Basic Income benefit amount includes an additional \$500 per month for one adult with disability.

Source: LIM 2016 estimate - StatsCan, CANSIM 206-0091, adjusted based on inflation at 2%; social assistance rates as of November 1, 2016

Questions for discussion

- 3.1** Should the Basic Income amount be enough to significantly raise incomes and reduce poverty, or should it provide a base level of financial modest income floor to provide a certain level of stability? Should the benefit amount alone get people out of poverty or should it be a combination of benefits and earnings that accomplish this goal? Why?
- 3.2** Beyond money, what other services and supports (e.g. employment, mental health, housing, etc.) are needed to accompany the Basic Income? Which are most important?
- 3.3** What elements of Ontario Works and ODSP should Basic Income replace? What about other benefits outside of Ontario Works and ODSP, such as help with childcare, employment start-up benefits to help cover the costs of trade tools, uniforms, etc., or drug and dental benefits? Why or Why not?
- 3.4** What other factors should be considered when determining the Basic Income level. Why?

Section 4: Deliver the Basic Income Pilot project

How the Basic Income payment is delivered will depend on which model is chosen for the Pilot. A key administrative decision to be made is how responsive the program would be to changes in participants' circumstances. A more responsive system may better serve the participants, but it could be more complicated and costly to administer.

Ontario is committed to public reporting, transparency, and accountability in the administration of the Pilot.

Payments

The Discussion Paper notes that implementation of a Negative Income Tax (NIT) and delivering the payment through the tax system will require close collaboration with the federal government. Ontario would need to rely on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for this.

The Discussion Paper recommends that payments be issued monthly, and that participants be allowed to signal changes in their household composition (e.g. marriage, change in earned income/job status, birth of a child, etc.) throughout the year, so that their Basic Income can be adjusted.

The paper notes that participants could also receive their payments bi-weekly, as a way to mediate any financial planning challenges associated with living with a disability.

The Discussion Paper recommends developing specific strategies to engage with groups of people without bank accounts or a fixed address, or those who don't file income tax returns.

Questions for discussion

- 4.1** The Discussion Paper recommended a NIT model for the Basic Income. Do you agree with this recommendation? Why or why not? If not, what model would you prefer?
- 4.2** Should the Pilot consider delivering payments in an alternative method to the Canada Revenue Agency delivery system proposed in the Discussion Paper, if they are available?
- 4.3** How should the Basic Income respond to changes in income circumstances?

Section 5: Evaluate the Pilot's outcomes

Ontario wants to develop an effective evaluation approach for the Basic Income Pilot, to clearly define success and measure outcomes along the way. This means the questions we want answered in the Pilot must be connected to measurable outcomes. Monitoring outcomes will ensure that the results of a Basic Income Pilot will be of value to future public policy making.

The Pilot's outcomes must be linked to specific and measurable changes in behavioural responses, so that evaluators can determine the sample size(s) and timeframe required to determine the effects of the Basic Income.

Since data must be collected throughout the Pilot's evaluation, the collaboration and consent of participants in sharing their personal information is required. Participants will be well informed to provide consent, and their rights to confidentiality and privacy will be upheld.

Ontario has three main pieces of legislation protecting people's privacy:

- (i) The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)
- (ii) The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)
- (iii) The Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA).

The government is committed to ensuring that all private and personal information collected during the Pilot complies with the rules and regulations in these laws.

The Discussion Paper proposes measuring the following 10 outcome areas:

- health
- life choices
- education
- work behaviour
- community-level changes (e.g. crime rates, local labour market)
- administrative efficiency compared to social assistance
- food insecurity
- perception of citizenship and social inclusion
- housing stability and quality
- interactions between Basic Income and other benefits, such as Ontario Child Benefit.

Data and Evaluation

There are several methods for collecting data and information from participants:

- Administrative data (data about individuals that is collected by all three levels of government through benefit programs like Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP))
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Questionnaires
- Focus groups

The Discussion Paper recommends that participants provide consent for access to their de-identified personal records, such as tax information, employment history, and prescription drug usage, to the evaluators. To support the monitoring of long term outcomes, they would also consent to retroactive access to their individual records, for a minimum of two years preceding the Pilot and following the conclusion of the Pilot. To achieve maximum validity, interested participants will be asked to provide consent as a condition of participation in the Pilot.

Information Privacy, Confidentiality and Access

The Discussion Paper recommends that participant data would always be protected. However, aggregated data and evaluation results would be made public on an ongoing, transparent basis. Before collecting any data, the Discussion Paper recommends that permission and approvals from both federal and provincial privacy commissioners be obtained, and from any applicable research ethics review boards.

Open Access

The Discussion Paper recommends that data and evaluation results be made public on an ongoing, transparent basis. There would also be a formal process where independent researchers can apply to access the de-identified micro data generated by the Pilot. This will ensure that all of the main Pilot's findings can be replicated, and used to conduct new, complementary analysis.

Questions for discussion

5.1 The discussion paper recommends measuring ten outcome areas. Rank these outcome areas in order of importance:

- health
- life choices
- education
- work behaviour
- community-level changes (e.g. crime rates, local labour market)
- administrative efficiency compared to social assistance
- food insecurity
- perception of citizenship and social inclusion
- housing stability and quality
- interactions between Basic Income and other benefits, such as Ontario Child Benefit

List any other outcomes you think should be measured.

5.2 Do you think that data and evaluation results should be made public in an ongoing basis?

5.3 What changes in behavior would you expect to see with a Basic Income? What kind of results should we see from the Pilot to call it a success? Why?

5.4 What strategies can we use to encourage people to participate in the Pilot?

5.5 To measure outcomes, we would need people to share their personal information, including linking administrative data together. What concerns would you have about using this information to see how people use benefits and services differently after getting a Basic Income? How can we make you feel that your information is secure?

5.6 So that we can compare the outcomes of Basic Income to the status quo, we would need people to share their personal information, even if they didn't receive the Basic Income. Would you be comfortable with this so that we can understand these differences?

5.7 If you are a Pilot participant, should you receive results prior to any public report release?

Your input is most welcome and appreciated

Thank you for sharing your ideas and opinions on the design of the Basic Income Pilot.

We are always looking for creative, innovative and evidence-based solutions to help us do a better job in providing services to the people who need them.

We are committed to implementing a Basic Income Pilot, and your participation is a key part of that process.

For more information about the consultation process, please contact us by email at basicincome@ontario.ca.

GLOSSARY

Universal Basic income - Benefits are paid to everyone, regardless of income level.

Income Top Up - Benefits are paid as a top-up for earned income to ensure a minimum income level is met.

Negative Income Tax - Benefits are provided to those whose income falls below a minimum income level and are reduced as earned income increases at a set rate.

Control Group – In a Randomized Controlled Trial there is always a control group which does not receive the intervention. This group serves as the baseline for the study, and the other groups receiving intervention(s) are compared against this group

Treatment Group(s) – Randomized Controlled Trials can include multiple treatments groups receiving different interventions. This allows researchers to compare different interventions, for example different levels of Basic Income, and look at the outcomes those groups