



THE HILL TIMES

Thursday, June 18, 2026


Canada's Politics and Government News Source Since 1989

[Latest Paper](#)

TRENDING: Surveillance pricing | Climate body | Taxpayer ombud | Poilievre | Hill Climbers | NSICOP review | Tory AI video | Putin diminished | Editorial

Former MPs pitch P.E.I.-federal project tackling basic income

We do not have enough empirical information to determine the best way to deal with economic uncertainty and poverty. But we do know governments aren't achieving the poverty reduction goals they have set for themselves.

 Listen · 04:52 [About audio](#)



The federal and P.E.I. governments should co-operate on a five- to seven-year demonstration project of a basic income model, write former MPs Jean Crowder, left, Bruce Stanton, centre, and Wayne Easter. *Handout photographs, The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

OPINION | BY JEAN CROWDER, WAYNE EASTER, BRUCE STANTON

| June 17, 2026





For the past five years we have been involved with the [P.E.I. project](#), made up of a group of former and current politicians, public servants, advocates, and economists who have come together to see if we could define the goals and process of a federal/provincial basic income demonstration project on Prince Edward Island. The purpose of the project is to explore an economically and administratively feasible way of alleviating poverty and finding ways to help navigate economic disruptions.

There are currently many suggestions for how to do this, but we would like to name three:

1. [Create a full-employment economy](#);
2. Create an income targeted [basic income](#) floor; and
3. [Continue to focus on program-focussed support](#): welfare, food insecurity, housing, pharmacare, dental care, disability, youth, and more.

Each of these has its supporters and detractors. The problem is not our inability to agree on the best method, but our inability to find a process by which we can come to an agreement on the best method. We lose sight of the big picture because we focus on our version of how to achieve this. The goal—poverty alleviation—recedes into the background.

The P.E.I. project team has created an iterative process whereby political, social, and policy considerations are informed by economic theory, modelling, and costing. The result is the suggestion that the federal and P.E.I. governments co-operate on a five- to seven-year demonstration project of a basic-income model.

The idea behind this project is that we do not have enough empirical data to determine what is the best way to deal with economic uncertainty and poverty. What we do know is that governments are not achieving the [poverty reduction goals they have set for themselves](#).

Get Environment Newsletter

From climate change to natural resources dive into environmental legislation, policy and advocacy. Monday Afternoon

Please enter your email

SIGN UP

By entering your email address you consent to receive email from The Hill Times containing news, analysis, updates and offers. You may unsubscribe at any time. See our [privacy policy](#).

Is basic income a better way forward? Maybe. Could this project lead to finding an even better way to alleviate poverty? Maybe.

But ‘maybe’ isn’t good enough for some. The possibility that we may, through research, find a way to alleviate poverty and deal with economic uncertainty is not enough to move some people away from their commitment to a particular perspective, or even to accept that basic income is an option. For some who

SPONSORED



Canada
ambition
building
chain

As Ottawa redevelops
programs, 60-year-old
offers lessons w

Building Canada
Sovereignty



are committed to basic income, the possibility that a better way could be found makes them uncomfortable.



Do we want to find a feasible way to address economic uncertainty and poverty, or do we lose sight of this goal by arguing about the details of how to achieve it without having sufficient information to address our concerns. That is a question for our politicians, write former MPs Jean Crowder, Wayne Easter, and Bruce Stanton. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Even though most research begins with the concept of ‘maybe,’ what continues to be presented about basic income are concerns that it’s [too expensive](#), it will [deter people from working](#), it will undermine [necessary supports](#), and that it is [too complex](#). Okay. Let’s study it and see if any of the above are valid. But this suggestion is met with claims that it would be a waste of time and money, and focus should be on their solution—even though no empirical evidence exists to support these claims—or, even more worrisome: silence. What are the barriers that prevent us from engaging with—or even seeking—evidence?

READ MORE ON THIS ISSUE:

- **P.E.I. basic income project a federal partnership worth supporting**
- **What about Canada’s commitment to poverty reduction? MPs left us on read**
- **To stabilize Canada’s economy, start with a guaranteed liveable income**

To be fair, moving towards this project is politically complex, so we have proposed three steps:

1. Understand that the goal is for a five- to seven-years, full province, basic income demonstration project, with the control group being in another province.
2. Support the Federal/Provincial Working Group to study the report, and bring the data up to date. Understand the net and gross costs—[important and frequently misunderstood numbers](#). This working group was



established shortly after the report came out. We understand that it met once, in June 2024, and has not met since.

3. If the results of the working group confirm not only the report's modelled outcomes, but also results in a better understanding of the potential impacts a basic income could have on lives and on our economy, then the goal would be for the federal and provincial governments to define the goals and process of a demonstration project in P.E.I., and come to a cost-sharing understanding.

Do we want to find a feasible way to address economic uncertainty and poverty, or do we lose sight of this goal by arguing about the details of how to achieve it without having sufficient information to address our concerns? That is a question for our politicians. Support for the working group of the P.E.I. project would indicate they are willing to find a solution.

Jean Crowder served as the NDP MP for Nanaimo—Cowichan, B.C., from 2004 to 2015. Former Liberal MP Wayne Easter held the riding of Malpeque, P.E.I. from 1993 to 2021, and is the province's former solicitor general. Bruce Stanton served as Conservative MP for Simcoe North, Ont., from 2006 to 2021.

The Hill Times

See all stories BY [JEAN CROWDER](#), [WAYNE EASTER](#), [BRUCE STANTON](#)



FOLLOW THE HILL TIMES:



Want to make sure your whole office has the full *Hill Times* experience?

We have team plans available for companies, organizations, classes, Parliament Hill offices and more. [Fill out this form and find out if your team is eligible for a discount.](#)

MOST POPULAR

- 1** Four more former Conservative MPs want to separate from Canada and one wants to explore future with the United States: 'it comes down to what's the most advantageous tax situation' 
- 2** Lockheed Martin makes no promises on extras for F-35 deal, despite feds' push for 'more' economic benefits 
- 3** This is not a pissing-match PM 
- 4** Carney demands much more from his MPs, but also shares more of his insights, strategy, tactics at weekly caucus meetings, say Liberal MPs 
- 5** Technical recession label like 'crying wolf,' but Canada's economy going through 'pretty sluggish growth,' say economists 