Understanding the Intersections of Violence, Poverty, and Women's Well-Being

A Literature Review

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February 2026

Huronia Transition Homes
... working to end all violence against all women

thrive
a project of Huronia Transition Homes

Huronia Transition Homes (HTH) is a charitable organization that has operated across Simcoe County since 1984. We believe that all violence against all women and children must end. We are community members who are committed to education, advocacy, harm reduction, and poverty reduction as a means to end violence. Huronia Transition Homes is also committed to providing shelter and support to abused women and their children and to providing counselling to women survivors of sexual assault and socioeconomic opportunities through social enterprise.

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Executive Summary

Though poverty and gender-based violence are pervasive issues across Canada (Canadian Poverty Institute [CPI], 2021; Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, 2024; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2024), the degree to which proposed solutions meaningfully engage with the intersection of these issues has varied considerably (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; Fotheringham et al., 2014; Groening et al., 2019; Mosher et al., 2004; Mosher, 2008). Scholars have documented that current intervention efforts for each crisis are primarily characterized by public services and social assistance programming – systems that are influenced by rigid guidelines, bureaucratic processes and barriers, and that can, in some cases, worsen existing harms (Adams et al., 2008; Bingham et al., 2019; Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Collins et al., 2018; Dubeau, 2020; Grey, 2019; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Jones & Teixeira, 2015; Koshan et al., 2021; Maki, 2017; Mosher, 2008; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Pei, 2020; Tedds, 2017; Tedds et al., 2020; Women's Shelter's Canada, 2015). Further, these interventions ineffectively account for the unique challenges and barriers that exist in cases where poverty and gender-based violence overlap (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; Crenshaw, 1991; Fotheringham et al., 2014; Groening et al., 2019; Mosher et al., 2004; Mosher, 2008).

Given this context, there has been a renewed focus on exploring a basic income guarantee (BIG) as a potential solution to ending both gender-based violence and poverty, or at least alleviating their impact on individuals and communities (Basic Income Canada Network, 2024; Ontario Basic Income Network, n.d.; Pasma & Regehr, 2019). A BIG is characterized as a regular cash transfer made to people, usually from the government (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b), that will ensure they are able to meet their basic needs, participate in society, and live with dignity (Basic Income Canada Network, 2024). Furthermore, a BIG is predictable (Forget, 2018), indexed to the cost of living, and granted to people regardless of employment status (SCPRTG, n.d.; Withorn, 1993), ability to work, or social status (Cameron & Tedds, 2021). This literature review explores the research that has been conducted on BIG through both experimental design and theoretical research, particularly wherein studies have contextualized the intersecting relationship between poverty and gender-based violence.

Efforts made towards realizing a BIG in the Canadian context have largely been shaped by government-led reform in poverty alleviation and social provision (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b). Additionally, various BIG pilots, cash-transfer studies, and experimental simulation models have been explored across Canada, some of which remain in effect today (Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2022; Dwyer et al., 2023; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Forget, 2018; Gouvernement du Québec, 2025; Green et al., 2020b; Lanark Basic Income Network, 2025; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; PEI Basic Income Report, 2023). However, Cameron and Tedds (2021) argue that BIG proposals have largely overlooked the compounding impacts of systemic discrimination and gender-based violence on poverty.

A growing body of research has emerged to address this gap, including studies that have explored the potential advantages or disadvantages that a BIG may present in situations where these crises intersect. Some research has highlighted BIG's potential to improve women's access to and control over financial and economic resources, especially when distributed as an individual benefit (Cantillon & McLean, 2016). Other studies have cited BIG's ability to enhance labour market participation (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Zelleke, 2011), improve individual and community health and wellbeing (Dubeau, 2020; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Forget, 2018; Grey, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020), and reduce the impacts of structural inequalities (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Hunnicut, 2009; McLean, 2016).

Alternatively, the literature also highlights reservations in regard to withdrawal patterns from the labour market (TEDx Talks, 2014), the impact of BIG on existing public programs (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Grey, 2019), the costs of implementation (Pate, n.d.; Tedds & Crisan, 2021), the risk of further entrenching inequalities (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Gheaus, 2008; McLean, 2016; Robeyns, 2001; Uhde, 2018; Vollenweider, 2013), and that a BIG would not affectively address the diverse needs of marginalized populations (Cameron & Tedds, 2021).

Amid these contrasting findings, Tedds et al. (2020) emphasize that a BIG should not be understood as a single, uniform policy, but rather as a collection of policies grounded in core BIG principles. These principles include adequacy, autonomy, dignity, equality of opportunity, non-conditionality, universality, simplicity, and transparency (Smith-Carrier & Halpenny; Tedds et al., 2020). BIG policies can be further developed and assessed against thirteen key design elements, which concern the objective, sufficiency, exclusivity, universality, beneficiary unit, equivalence scale, uniformity, duration, frequency, conditionality, form, administrative structure, and financing of the program (Tedds et al., 2020).

Designing and implementing a BIG ultimately requires critical evidence-based discourse to ensure that a successful program is developed (Green et al., 2020b). This includes considerations on how to frame and analyze a BIG within societal structures, its correlation with basic services, and efforts to center an intersectional analysis. A full exploration of these and other recommendations made by the literature for program design, as well as for overarching societal transformation (Dale et al., 2021a; Dwyer et al., 2023; Mosher, 2008; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019; Withorn, 1993) was beyond the scope of this literature review. However, the existing literature on BIG, poverty, and gender-based violence, including studies that examine the intersections among all three, underscores that a BIG has significant potential to not only mitigate the harms caused by structural inequalities (Grey, 2019; Zelleke, 2008), but to support progress towards a more equitable, just society which is informed by intersectionality, and respects the existing diaspora of lived experiences (Green et al., 2021).

Foreword

This project began with a focused question: what role might a Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) play in reducing poverty and gender-based violence? Through our research centering women's lived experiences, our understanding deepened. Women did not describe poverty and violence as solvable through income alone. Instead, they revealed a broader architecture of harm rooted in coercive control, institutional surveillance, colonial continuities, gendered disability misrecognition, housing precarity, and fragmented services. Income insecurity was central, but it operated within interlocking systems that shape women's safety, dignity, and economic security over time.

As women shared their experiences, it became clear that while a BIG could be transformative, it alone would be insufficient within systems that stigmatize, disbelieve, and control. Financial stability cannot produce autonomy where housing is inaccessible, benefit structures enforce dependency, trauma is treated as non-compliance, or colonial laws continue to structure inequity. Women's accounts underscored that material stability must be paired with structural change in how institutions understand violence, poverty, and disability.

This recognition shifted our approach. What began as an exploration of BIG evolved into a broader examination of the conditions required for women to thrive. Women described thriving not as individual achievement but as access to safety, dignity, belonging, and stable resources. Adequate housing, food, transportation, culturally grounded support, and trauma-informed care emerged as foundational for participation, healing, and leadership.

The project therefore moved from asking whether income can reduce harm to asking what systems must look like to enable flourishing. Women's narratives showed that safety, dignity, and economic security are inseparable; income supports must be predictable, housing safe and affordable, services respectful and low-barrier, and Indigenous women must have access to culturally grounded, self-determined supports. Without these conditions, women remain in survival mode, unable to plan, recover, or build futures.

Our thematic analysis, *Safety, Dignity, and Economic Security: Creating conditions for women to thrive* reflects this expanded understanding. BIG remains a critical mechanism for interrupting poverty and economic dependency, but income reform must be embedded in wider systems change. Replacing punitive and surveillance-based approaches with trauma-informed, rights-based, autonomy-promoting systems is essential to disrupting cycles of violence and precarity.

Ultimately, this research affirms that a BIG is not an endpoint but a foundation, one rooted in a larger ecosystem of change. When income security is paired with respectful institutions, culturally grounded programming, coordinated services, and feminist trauma-informed practice, the conditions for flourishing become possible. Meeting basic needs through predictable income strengthens safety and well-being, but realizing women's autonomy requires systems built on dignity rather than surveillance, and support rather than conditionality. In this way, the economic floor created by BIG becomes the basis for broader reforms that allow women not only to survive but to thrive.

Thrive Project: Literature Review

Despite historic and ongoing intervention efforts to support victims of either crisis, poverty and gender-based violence remain pervasive issues across Canada (Canadian Poverty Institute [CPI], 2021; Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, 2024; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2024), and the degree to which proposed solutions meaningfully engage with the intersection of these issues has varied considerably (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; Fotheringham et al., 2014; Groening et al., 2019; Mosher et al., 2004; Mosher, 2008). Given this context, there has been a renewed focus on exploring a basic income guarantee (BIG) as a potential solution to ending both gender-based violence and poverty, or at least alleviating their impact on individuals and communities (Basic Income Canada Network, 2024; Ontario Basic Income Network, n.d.; Pasma & Regehr, 2019).

A BIG is not a new proposal, but one that has been revisited across the political spectrum (Grey, 2019), and whose features are already evident within some existing Canadian policies (Ontario Basic Income Network, n.d.; Pasma & Regehr, 2019). The foundational premise of a BIG is that it is a regular cash transfer made to people, usually from the government (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b), that will ensure they are able to meet their basic needs, participate in society, and live with dignity (Basic Income Canada Network, 2024). Furthermore, a BIG is predictable (Forget, 2018), indexed to the cost of living, and granted to people regardless of employment status (Simcoe County Poverty Reduction Task Group, n.d.; Withorn, 1993), ability to work, or social status (Cameron & Tedds, 2021).

This literature review explores the research that has been conducted on BIG through both experimental design and theoretical research, particularly wherein studies have contextualized the intersecting relationship between poverty and gender-based violence.

1. Poverty and Gender-Based Violence: Exploring the Intersections

Canada's official definition of poverty is "the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic level of living standards and to facilitate integration and participation in society" (CPI, 2021). It also suggests that poverty includes material, social, and spiritual factors. In addition, poverty is elsewhere conceptualized as being enabled and shaped by global hegemonic structures, such as racism, sexism, classism, patriarchy, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and other systemic harms which overlap and exacerbate vulnerability to poverty among groups who experience these systems of discrimination (Alkire, 2007; Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Goodman et al., 2009; Mosher, 2008; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Petit & Tedds, 2020).

Gender-based violence, used interchangeably with violence against women in this review, is a social and structural issue (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Goldblatt et al., 2019), and is defined as violence that is committed against someone based on their gender-identity, gender expression, or perceived gender (Cotter & Savage, 2019). It can include any form of violence, whether physical, economic, sexual, emotional/psychological, or otherwise; can include threats of violence, coercion and manipulation, and is rooted in gender norms and unequal power dynamics. Gender-based violence disproportionately impacts women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people and communities, and has diverse outcomes across the different dimensions of their lives. Gender-based violence is multi-causal, and can be located within intimate relationships, at work,

in community, during conflict, and within and because of existing institutions and systems, including those intended to offer support[1].

Frameworks and methodologies rooted in intersectionality, which was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), have sought to address the myriad experiences stemming from such intersecting forms of structural violence. Crenshaw sought to address how Black women experience both sexism and racism, and therefore experience a unique intersection of oppression that must be addressed by interventions which fundamentally understand how these systems of oppression overlap. Research, including that of Crenshaw (1991) has built on the framework of intersectionality to conceptualize how intergroup and intragroup differences related to gender, race, sexuality, and various other social paradigms, must be central to understanding how systems of oppression operate within society (Bingham et al., 2019; Block et al., 2019; Brascoupé & Mulholland, 2019; Broaddus, 2020; Canadian Women's Foundation & Hill, 2021; Groening et al., 2019; Hahmann et al., 2019; Martin & Walia, 2019; Mosher, 2008; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019; Snyder et al., 2015; Wright, 2020).

Through applying an intersectional lens to analysis, various studies have illuminated the complex and interconnected ways in which poverty and gender-based violence manifest. For instance, research has examined hegemonic frameworks that portray the victimization of certain groups of women as inevitable, the enduring legacies of colonization and racism, and the persistence of a sex-segregated labour market in which women—particularly racialized women and recent immigrants—are disproportionately represented in low-wage, precarious employment (Bingham et al., 2019; Block et al., 2019; Brascoupé & Mulholland, 2019; Broaddus, 2020; Canadian Women's Foundation & Hill, 2021; Grand'Maison & Lafuente, 2022; Groening et al., 2019; Hahmann et al., 2019; Martin & Walia, 2019; Mosher, 2008; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019; Razack, 2016; Snyder et al., 2015; Wright, 2020). Additionally, Terry (2005) and Goldblatt et al. (2019) utilize intersectional analysis to demonstrate that poverty and violence against women are mutually reinforcing structural issues that both enable and strengthen each other, and therefore require interconnected solutions (Goldblatt et al., 2019).

1.1. Current Interventions for Poverty and Gender-Based Violence

Historic and continued societal responses to poverty have been rooted in a system that relies on public services such as food banks and shelters, and variations of income assistance programming (Pasma & Regehr, 2019). While these programs have addressed some of the burden of poverty, they remain largely ineffective in ending the crisis, and simultaneously perpetuate new, or worsen existing harms, particularly in situations where poverty and violence against women intersect (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Findlay et al., 2023; Grey, 2019; Mosher 2008).

While support services such as shelters and food banks are vital resources, they serve the purpose of providing temporary, rather than permanent solutions (Dubeau, 2020). These supports are not designed to alleviate the structural inequalities that perpetuate poverty, such as the lack of critical infrastructure (e.g. housing, water treatments, energy grids) reported in Indigenous communities across Canada (Pate, n.d.). Further concerns are raised about the accessibility of these services, which may include long waitlists (Mosher, 2008), eligibility issues (Jeffrey & Barata,

[1] This definition of gender-based violence was conceptualized through the work of Huronia Transition Homes, in the organization's work to end all violence against all women. The definition was shaped through conversations with community members, Board members, and various stakeholders supporting the organization's efforts.

2017), lack of cultural understanding (Bingham et al., 2019), lack of availability (Collins et al., 2018; Little, 2015; Maki, 2017) and the impact of funding cuts, which exacerbate challenges for at-risk populations (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Jones & Teixeira, 2015; Koshan et al., 2021; Women's Shelters Canada, 2015). Women who attempt to escape poverty and/or violence also face significant levels of discrimination and stigma within systems of intervention and in wider communities (Collins et al., 2018; Goodman et al., 2009; Grey, 2019; Groening et al., 2019; Jategaonkar & Ponic, 2011; Jones & Teixeira, 2015; Maki, 2017; Mosher, 2008). Simultaneously, the current nature of support interventions creates distinct challenges both for service providers, and for women attempting to access support (Echenberg & Munn-Rivard, 2020; Fotheringham et al., 2014).

Fotheringham et al. (2014) highlight that homelessness has been viewed as a predominantly male problem, effectively leaving women out of societal discourse, public policy, and research agendas, which in turn influence funding priorities and the development of service delivery models. For example, as violence against women shelters are not typically integrated into the general homelessness sector, service users in these two groups are counted separately (Groening et al., 2019) and therefore funded separately. Dale et al. (2021b) illustrate the impact of this separation, citing that while 13% of homeless shelter beds are dedicated to women in Canada, over 68% are co-ed or dedicated to men. However, in order to be effective locations of support for victims of gender-based violence, shelters cannot only address the violence that women survived, but must confront the various barriers that women face which hinder their ability to create alternatives to the cycle of violence and poverty (Crenshaw, 1991; Fotheringham, 2014). Critically, the resources that can support this, such as counselling, safety planning, support groups (Little, 2015), childcare, and education, are seldom available in homeless shelters (Little, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2019), and are further limited by geographic location (Groening et al., 2019).

The lack of integration between gender-based violence and poverty interventions has led to an over-representation of women within the "hidden homeless" (Dale et al., 2021b, p. 127) or "episodically homeless" populations (Groening et al., 2019, p. 7). These populations may be found within transitional housing, women's shelters, shelters for immigrants or refugees, or halfway houses (Groening et al., 2019), all of which are often operating at or over capacity, if they are available in a community at all (Dale et al., 2021b). The hidden homeless population also includes women who are staying with friends or family (Groening et al., 2019), and in situations where women continue to live in an abusive home (Daoud et al., 2016; Groening et al., 2019).

Critically, access to housing remains one of the leading barriers for women escaping violence (Dale et al., 2021b; Fotheringham et al., 2014; Koshan et al., 2021; Maki, 2017; Mosher, 2008; Reid et al., 2021; Sullivan et al., 2019; Tutty et al., 2013; Witzman, 2010), while simultaneously, gender-based violence is one of the leading causes of women's homelessness and poor living conditions (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Clough et al., 2014; Fotheringham et al., 2014; Goodman et al., 2009; Groening et al., 2019; Koshan et al., 2021; Little, 2015; Maki, 2017; Mosher, et al., 2004; Sullivan et al., 2019). Ultimately, the frequent conceptualization of homelessness through mainstream perspectives directly impacts how homelessness statistics are counted, whose experiences of homelessness count (Fotheringham et al., 2014), and how interventions cause harm to vulnerable populations through their inability to provide effective support (Collins et al., 2018).

In addition to support service interventions, Ontario offers various social assistance programs aimed at providing income support to individuals who meet specific eligibility criteria. One of the primary programs is Ontario Works (OW), as outlined in the Ontario Works Act (SO 1997,

c 25). OW provides employment assistance to facilitate recipients to become/remain employed, and income assistance for basic needs. Eligibility requirements include being at least sixteen years of age, being a resident of Ontario, having assets no greater than the limits set, being in financial need, and participation in employment activities. Notably, the maximum level of financial assets permitted under the act is in accordance with a recipient who has a spouse, and more than one dependent, with a limit set at $15,500 and an additional $500 for each dependent after the first. If a recipient fails to meet eligibility requirements, the administrator can refuse assistance, declare the individual ineligible for a specified period, reduce assistance, or suspend it entirely.

Another social assistance program active within Ontario is the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) (Ontario Disability Support Program Act, S.O. 1997, c 25), which is intended to provide income support to people with a disability[2], and to a person of a prescribed[3] class. Eligibility requirements include that the recipient is at least eighteen years of age, is a resident of Ontario, has no assets greater than the limits set, is in financial need, and meets the definition of a person with a disability. The asset ceilings for recipients of ODSP are outlined at $40,000 for a single person, $50,000 for a couple, and an additional $500 for each dependent other than a spouse. If a recipient or a dependent fail to comply with or meet the eligibility criteria, the Director can refuse income support, declare ineligibility for a prescribed period, reduce or cancel income support, or otherwise suspend it.

A third option in Ontario is applying for Emergency Assistance, which provides financial assistance if someone lives in Ontario, is in a crisis or emergency (e.g. is being evicted, is in or is leaving an abusive relationship), and does not have enough money to cover their basic needs (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2022). Individuals who receive OW or ODSP are not eligible to apply, and recipients may receive support for up to six months.

Despite the existence of these programs, those who are meant to benefit from them rarely do, as a result of complex and bureaucratic processes, the fact that benefit amounts are too low to cover basic needs, and that processes are punitive, stigmatizing, and humiliating (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Grey, 2019; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pei, 2020; Tedds, 2017; Tedds et al., 2020). Forget (2018) highlights that individuals receiving social assistance must provide extensive documentation, which they may not have access to, meet with a caseworker every three months, participate in job-search activities, and obtain consent from their caseworker before enrolling in educational programs. They are also required to report any income received, produce receipts and related documentation for their expenses, and secure any additional income they are entitled to, such as child support payments. In cases of gender-based violence, this forces women to face their abuser unnecessarily and may further deplete their financial reserves due to court imposition processes (Grey, 2019; Mosher et al., 2004).

While social assistance programs may provide avenues for women to report violence to avoid such measures, studies have found that when women do provide this disclosure, they are required to provide very detailed information on the abuse that they had been subjected to (Adams

[2] The Ontario Disability Support Program Act (S.O. 1997, c. 25) defines a person with a disability as (a) the person has a substantial physical or mental impairment that is continuous or recurrent and expected to last one year or more; (b) the direct and cumulative effect of the impairment on the person's ability to attend their personal care, function in the community/workplace, results in a substantial restriction of one or more of these activities, and (c) the impairment and its likely duration and the restriction in the person's activities have been verified by a person with prescribed qualifications.

[3] "Prescribed" is defined in the Act (S.O., 1997, c 25) as prescribed by the regulations made under the Act.

et al., 2008; Groening et al., 2019; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Klein & Pulkingham, 2008; Koshan et al., 2020; Šimonović, 2019), they are treated with suspicion, and they are further responsible for learning about the intricacies of the system itself (Mosher et al., 2004). Other cited barriers that women face include discrimination from workers, language barriers, racism, stereotypes, stigma, and having to navigate their abuser manipulating the system to perpetuate further violence (Crenshaw, 1991; Goodman et al., 2009; Mosher et al., 2004; Mosher, 2008; Pate, n.d.; Peroni, 2016; Petit & Tedds, 2020; Shenker-Osorio, 2019).

Experiences of discrimination, stereotypes, and stigma are a particular point of concern outlined in the literature. People living in poverty and people receiving income assistance are confronted with assumptions that they are "lazy" (Petit & Tedds, 2020, p. 27), avoid work, are promiscuous (Mosher, 2008), and are less competent overall (Pate, n.d.). Sex workers are forced to navigate beliefs that sex work is not real work, mothers are seen as "[un]fit" mothers (Petit & Tedds, 2020, p. 45), and racialized women face stereotyping and stigma that are rooted in systemic racism. This racialized stereotyping perpetuates an underlying narrative of deserving and undeserving victims (Crenshaw, 1991; Shenker-Osorio, 2019), misrepresents and disrespects cultures (Peroni, 2016), and ultimately perpetuates violence. This compounding stigma within and surrounding social assistance is felt so deeply by recipients, or potential recipients, that some will avoid using social assistance programs altogether (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Moffitt, 1983).

Social assistance programs have also been found to keep people trapped within a paradox, in that social assistance does not provide enough of a benefit to cover basic needs, but recipients are penalized for earning additional income or holding onto financial assets (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Forget, 2018; Goldblatt et al., 2019; Groening et al., 2019; Klein & Pulkingham, 2008; Mosher et al., 2004; Mosher, 2008; Tedds, 2017). For example, recipients may be required to sell their vehicle, which could be their sole source of transportation, and such an expectation places women and children escaping violence at particular risk (Forget, 2018; Mosher et al., 2004). This systemic enabling of scarcity has resulted in recipients having to resort to dangerous, perhaps illegal methods of income generation, and heightens the risk of food insecurity, unsafe living conditions, and poor health conditions, among others (Klein & Pulkingham, 2008; Mosher et al., 2004).

The focus on enabling recipients to enter into or maintain employment also ignores a variety of factors surrounding the realities of violence against women and poverty. This includes the fact that in addition to seeking out relationships with financially vulnerable individuals, abusive men will actively limit their partner's ability to access economic resources (Adams et al., 2008; Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Goldblatt et al., 2019). They may do this through controlling access to bank accounts, or escalating violence when their partner tries to, or gains employment (Adams et al., 2008; Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Goodman et al., 2009; Reid et al., 2021; Samuels-Dennis et al., 2011).

The societal lack of recognition for the unpaid care labour done within a home, which is disproportionately shouldered by women, has also directly contributed to women's strained relationship with the labour market (Findlay et al., 2023; Grey, 2019; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Swift & Power, 2021), and compounds with other vulnerabilities resulting from structural hegemonies that leave women vulnerable to poverty and violence (Baker, 2009; Canadian Women's Foundation & Hill, 2021; Ljubičić & Ignjatović, 2024; Mckay & Vanevery, 2000; Mosher, 2008; Zanbak et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2012). For example, lack of affordable childcare, pay inequities, and exploitative workplaces or employers may all contribute to women concluding that their best option is in fact to return to an abusive relationship, rather than risk such aggregated scarcity (Canadian

Women's Foundation & Hill, 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Fahmy et al., 2016; Goodman et al., 2009; Grey, 2019; Mckay & Vanevery, 2000; Mosher, 2008; Zanbak et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2012).

The themes that emerge across the literature highlight that violence operates as a mechanism to compound pre-existing inequalities to generate, deepen, and sustain poverty (Goldblatt et al., 2019; Zanbak et al., 2023). Due to the bureaucracies and structural biases of the social assistance system, studies have found that women remain trapped within abusive relationships, or are otherwise subjected to further violence, whether by the abuser, or as a result of discrimination and stereotyping (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Crenshaw, 1991; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Koshan et al., 2021; Mosher et al., 2004; Peroni, 2016; Petit & Tedds, 2020; Šimonović, 2019; Shenker-Osorio, 2019; Women's Shelters Canada, 2015). Studies highlight that social assistance supports are designed to provide no assurance of a safe, continuous, and permanent income (Cameron & Tedds, 2021) because they are constructed to facilitate participation in the labour market, rather than to facilitate supporting those in need (Grey, 2019; Mckay & Vanevery, 2000). The resulting impact then, is that in an effort to reduce dependency on social assistance, these structures effectively increase dependencies on abusers (Fahmy et al., 2016).

2. The Case for a Basic Income Guarantee

Both theoretical research and experimental pilot programs have sought to explore BIG's potential not only to alleviate the persistence and depth of poverty, but to raise the standard of living overall (Ferdosi et al., 2020; Green et al., 2020b; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), as well as to explore BIG's potential to end violence against women and bolster women's autonomy (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Grey, 2019; Groening et al., 2019; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020).

The Simcoe County Poverty Reduction Task Group (SCPRTG) (nd) outline two models commonly referenced in the literature: a universal basic income (UBI) model, and a guaranteed basic income model. In the UBI model, every individual receives the same amount of financial support, regardless of their income level. For those who are not in financial need, the benefit is taxed back. In the guaranteed basic income model, other sources of income are considered, and people are provided with additional financial grants as needed, which are gradually reduced as income grows. However, there are differences in how a BIG could be defined, designed, and supported (McKay & Vanevery, 2000; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; SCPRTG, n.d.; Senator Kim Pate, n.d.), demonstrating that a basic income "is not a single, uniform policy, but rather a range of policy proposals that share certain principles" (Tedds et al., 2020, p. 3).

2.1. History of BIG

Conceptions of a basic income have been explored for centuries (Grey, 2019; McKay & Vanevery, 2000), with recurring themes in proposals focusing on concerns about individual freedom and the inadequacies of the traditional labor market in ensuring income security (McKay & Vanevery, 2000). The ideal of a BIG has historically held appeal across the political spectrum as well (Grey, 2019; McKay & Vanevery, 2000). Grey (2019) outlines that conservative ideology has framed BIG as an opportunity to reduce the role of government in people's lives by reducing the need for a welfare state. Alternatively, liberal or progressive views identify BIG's potential to support people in meeting their basic needs, and providing a strong socio-economic foundation that can protect people from precarities within capitalist systems and the labour market (see also Mckay & Vanevery, 2000).

Contemporary conceptions of a BIG were explored in greater depth in the twentieth century (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b). Martin Luther King Jr., the Black Panther Party, and activist James Boggs all advocated for a basic income in the United States, while the British Women's Liberation Movement passed a vote for a resolution for a UBI within the United Kingdom. While these origins of BIG reflect grassroots activism that steadily grew, the movement advocating for a basic income in Canada has largely been shaped by efforts focused on government-led reform in poverty alleviation and social provision. These efforts are outlined in greater detail in Table 1.

Table 1

Chronological Overview of BIG in Canada, Exclusive of Pilot Projects, 1970-2024

Year	Leading Body	Recommendation/Policy Details	Citations
1970	The Royal Commission on the Status of Women	Recommendation that a guaranteed income is provided to all single parent families.	(Cameron & Tedds, 2020b)
1971	The Report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty	Proposal for a universal income floor to be facilitated through an income-tested model or Negative Income Tax.	(Cameron & Tedds, 2020b) (Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
1985	The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada	Recommendation for the creation of a Universal Income Security Program (UISP).	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
1986	Statistics Canada	Proposal for an option to implement the UISP to be better integrated within the tax system.	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
1994	The Social Security Review	Additional explorations of two options for a guaranteed income in Canada.	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
1999	Basic income advocates	Development of a potential model for a basic income.	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
2011	Green Party of Saskatchewan	Outline of a commitment to a guaranteed livable income to eliminate poverty.	(Tedds & Crisan, 2021)
2013	Green Parties of Nova Scotia and British Columbia	The Parties commit to unifying all social assistance programs into one comprehensive structure.	(Tedds & Crisan, 2021)
2014	Green, Liberal, and NDP Parties of Ontario	The Parties begin advocating for a provincial BIG pilot.	(Ferdosi et al., 2020) (Tedds & Crisan, 2021)

2015	Green Party and NDP of Prince Edward Island	The Green Party plans to review research conducted on BIG, which is later supported by the NDP.	(Tedds & Crisan, 2021)
2016	Québéc Provincial Government	Québéc makes a comparable commitment to that of PEI.	(Tedds & Crisan, 2021)
	Green Party of Manitoba Green Party and NDP of Yukon Economists Robin Boadway, Katherine Cuff, and Kourtney Koebel	Manitoba renews its interest in enabling a provincial-level BIG, with the Green Party providing a detailed description and costing of a BIG within its election platform. The Yukon NDP election platform commits to developing a BIG pilot project aimed at reducing poverty, which mirrored the territory's Green Party's efforts. Economists propose a joint federal - provincial income-tested BIG for all adults, structured to replace various tax credits.	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
2017	Basic income advocates	Harvey Stevens and Wayne Simpson of the University of Manitoba propose replacing some of the most regressive federal tax credits with an income-tested basic income for all adults.	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
2018	British Columbia Provincial Government	The provincial government appoints an expert panel to study basic income in British Columbia.	(Government of British Columbia, 2022) (Tedds & Crisan, 2021)
2019	Federal Parliamentary Budget Officer	The Parliamentary Budget Officer models the parameters of the Ontario pilot project for the whole country.	(Tedds & Crisan, 2021)
	Provincial Parties of Alberta	Alberta's provincial parties commit to enabling a BIG through various means.	(Pasma & Regehr, 2019).
	National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	*Reclaiming Power and Place* calls on governments to establish a guaranteed annual livable income for all Canadians to meet their basic needs.	(National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019)
2021	Senator Kim Pate Senator Leah Gazan	Senator Kim Pate proposes a Bill for a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income based on consultations with Indigenous communities.	(Pate, n.d.) (Bill not passed into law: Bill S-233)

		Senator Leah Gazan proposes a Bill for a guaranteed livable basic income to provide all people over the age of 17 in Canada with a basic income.	(Bill not passed into law: Bill C-223)
2024	House of Commons	Bill C-223, sponsored by Senator Gazan, is defeated at the second reading in the House of Commons.	(Bill not passed into law: Bill C-223)
		Bill S-233, sponsored by Senator Pate, is at consideration at the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.	(Bill not passed into law: Bill S-233)
	Government of Canada	The Old Age Security (OAS) pension is an income-tested benefit with similar attributes to BIG.	(Government of Canada, 2025a) (Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
	Government of Canada	The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) is an income-tested benefit with similar attributes to BIG.	(Government of Canada, 2025b) (Pasma & Regehr, 2019)
	Government of Canada	The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is an income-tested benefit with similar attributes to BIG.	(Government of Canada, 2022) (Pasma & Regehr, 2019)

Despite various efforts across Canadian provinces, territories, and the federal government, Tedds and Crisan (2021) illustrate that policy commitments fall critically short when evaluated against the thirteen design elements of a BIG. Specifically, they lack reference to BIG's core principles, how the design elements address those principles, and how they respond to historical shortcomings. These gaps mirror findings that intersectional issues, such as gender equality, legacies of colonization, and Reconciliation processes, have been missing from these historic BIG proposals (Brascoupé & Mulholland, 2019; Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Mckay & Vanevery, 2000; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Some scholars may suggest that such processes illustrate how marginalized groups are merely added to poverty reduction agendas as subjects, without adjusting the tools of analysis (McKay & Vanevery, 2000); a reason identified by Crenshaw (1989; 1991) that demonstrates why intersectionality is critical for analysis and development efforts.

Evidentially, there is space and interest across Canada to explore the development of a BIG, and a recently renewed interest in doing so has been driven by concerns surrounding persistent poverty, bureaucratic complexity, public health, ecological justice, automation, precarious work, civic ties, and the inadequacy of social assistance supports (Mckay & Vanevery, 2000; Pasma & Regehr, 2019). The following sub-section of this review will explore previous BIG pilots and experiments held within Canada, and if and how they addressed these concerns.

2.2. BIG Studies and Pilots

Mincome

One of the most frequently cited studies of a BIG pilot program within Canada is the experiment known as Mincome, which ran from 1975 – 1978; a time during which BIG was being explored as a pillar of a just society, alongside medical care (Forget, 2018). The pilot took place in three sites within Manitoba (Winnipeg, Dauphin, and a set of smaller, rural communities). Dauphin was designated as a "saturation site" (p. 36), as every family in the town — rather than a select few—was invited to participate; however, they were only eligible for cash payments if their income fell below a certain threshold.

The monthly payments (Simpson, 2020) were determined based on family size, with a family of four receiving a culmination of $3800 if they had no other income revenue (Forget, 2018). As income from other sources increased, the value of the BIG payment declined by fifty cents for every dollar earned. Notably, participants in the experiment who had been on other forms of social assistance received slightly more generous payments, and all recipients retained full control over how their benefits were spent. Further, because families were not subjected to ill treatment from case workers, they did not perceive their BIG income as social assistance and reported feeling no associated stigma.

Although the BIG Mincome payments were distributed as planned, political and economic upheaval led to a stagnation in project analysis. The provincial NDP was replaced by the Conservative Party, which was uninterested in continuing the project. On the federal level, the Liberal Party, operating under a minority government, focused on survival rather than policy initiatives. Since Mincome had been a cost-shared project, with the federal government covering 75% of the costs and the provincial government covering 25%, the political turbulence caused the project's data to be shelved.

Despite the project's abrupt end, key insights suggest that if a BIG is calculated based on total family income, the lower-earning spouse may be the one to receive the benefit, which could lead to a reduction in intrahousehold inequality. Calnitsky and Gonalons-Pons (2021) also note that during the Mincome experiment, women were able to separate from their partner and begin collecting payments on an individual basis, illustrating how this design choice may support gender equity efforts. Critically, Simpson (2020) notes that despite recorded positive outcomes, Mincome payments were not sufficient to cover basic needs, and were further inhibited in that the scope of the project prevented a long-term or permanent benefit provision.

Southern Ontario's Basic Income Experience

In 2017, the Ontario provincial government selected Hamilton, Brantford, and Brant County in Southern Ontario as a location to take part in a three-year BIG pilot project (Ferdosi et al., 2020). Eligible recipients of the Ontario BIG pilot included those who had lived in the region for the previous twelve months and were living on an income of $34,000 or less for a single person, or $48,000 or less for a couple (Pasma & Regehr, 2019). The maximum benefit level was set at 75% of the Low-Income Measure (LIM) ($16,989 for a single person, $24,027 for a couple), though people with a disability were provided with an additional $500 each month. The reduction rate for the pilot was set at 50 cents for each dollar earned of additional income, except in the case of Employment Insurance or the Canadian Pension Plan, where the benefit was reduced dollar for dollar.

The pilot ended prematurely after the Conservative Party took office the following year, cancelling both payments to recipients and evaluation activities within a few months (Ferdosi et al., 2020). To supplement the data, Ferdosi and colleagues conducted online surveys and semi-structured qualitative interviews with pilot participants. Their findings revealed overarching positive impacts for individual recipients of the BIG payments and their wider communities, along with insights into research design choices.

The study reports that the pilot had targeted low-income households, with participants being between the ages of 18-64, and that just over half of respondents were female, while just under half were male. The demographics of the respondents closely reflected the composition of the pilot area, with 10% identifying as racialized, 5% as Indigenous, and all participants being Canadian citizens, with 10% having immigrated to Canada. Although the exact method for calculating monthly payments remains unclear, the distribution of payments varied among participants. The majority (87.44%) received between $700 and $1,999 per month, while 7.44% received less than $700, and 5.12% received $2,000 or more.

In addition, 40% of the respondents were accessing either OW or ODSP before the pilot, and the report reflected the differences among participants' access to basic needs under BIG compared to social assistance. For instance, most former OW/ODSP recipients decreased their use of food banks and payday loans, and participants reported an increased ability to properly care for themselves under BIG, compared to their ability to do so under social assistance.

Despite the limited data that the study had to rely on, and the inability of the study to fill the pervasive research gap of the pilot, Ferdosi et al. (2020) nonetheless concluded that recipients of the BIG pilot in Southern Ontario benefited in myriad ways. The majority of recipients who were surveyed were able to pay off their debts, move to a better paying job, used payday loans less, and were better equipped to deal with emergency expenses. The study also found that respondents were able to improve their financial security to such a degree, they experienced improved credit scores, and higher credit limits.

BC Cash Transfer Study

Though not an explicit BIG pilot itself, Dwyer et al. (2023) demonstrate the viability of utilizing a cash transfer program to reduce homelessness and hasten housing stability alongside social supports. The study provided a one-time cash transfer of $7500 to fifty individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, British Columbia. This amount was comparable to the annual income assistance in the province in 2016 and represented 59.6% of the average annual income of the study participants. The researchers screened participants for the eligibility criteria of being 19-65 years old, without stable housing for less than two years, holding Canadian citizenship or permanent residency, and having levels of substance use, alcohol use, and mental health symptoms that were not considered severe. Participants were provided with various combinations of a cash transfer, workshop, coaching, or none of the above, in the case of the control group. However, all participants were provided with honoraria, a free chequing account, replacement ID services, a resource booklet for local supports, and a used smart phone.

When participants received the cash transfer, they were granted full control over the allocation of the funds, and were invited to participate in assessment surveys every three months to measure housing stability, employment, education, income, spending, executive function, fluid intelligence, subjective well-being, food security, substance use severity, and social service use. The study found that recipients of the cash transfer were able to move into stable housing more

quickly, spent less money on temptation goods, and achieved food security earlier than the control group (Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability, n.d.). Recipients were also able to retain over $1000 in savings individually, and a total societal savings of $8,172 per person, per year, was achieved due to a reduced reliance on social support services, such as the shelter system. Dwyer et al. (2023) did find that the transfer had low impact on cognitive function and subjective wellbeing, but attribute this to the fact that $7500 is still a relatively small amount of money in Vancouver, representing just 12% of the average annual personal income.

Dwyer and colleagues outline that while additional cash transfer studies should be conducted, the research demonstrates the potential for such a mechanism to be a cost-effective, efficient means of providing intervention during economic insecurity. Critically, the study also identified that the best way to achieve public support for such a mechanism or policy is to demonstrate counter-stereotypical and utilitarian benefits of cash transfer models.

Additional Provincial Examples

There have been additional examples of variances in BIG programming across Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, a BIG program is in place for youth aged 16-21 who are transitioning out of care and residential services (Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2022; Lanark Basic Income Network [LBIN], 2025). Under this program, eligible youth receive $600/month, in addition to pre-existing financial services, as well as access to enhanced wrap-around supports inclusive of financial and employment counselling, mental health care, tutoring, education assistance, and life skills development programming (Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2022).

The province has also implemented a BIG pilot program for adults aged 60-64 who receive income assistance, but who are not yet eligible for OAS support (Children, Seniors and Social Development, 2022; LBIN, 2025). Under this pilot, eligible adults can receive additional finances that will increase their monthly incomes to the level that they would receive under OAS (The Canadian Press, 2025). However, less than one-third of eligible adults have enrolled in the program, and professionals have identified that this may be due to the complicated nature of the pre-existing social assistance system. This slow uptake in the pilot has highlighted the need for strong social safety nets to remain in place alongside BIG programs, which would include supports such as deeply affordable housing.

In Québec, a BIG program was implemented in 2023 to support individuals with a limited capacity for employment (Gouvernement du Québec, 2025; LBIN, 2025). Eligible participants include those who are already receiving social assistance, and who have had a severely limited capacity for employment for at least 66 out of 72 months, before enrolment (Gouvernement du Québec, 2025). The BIG includes a basic benefit, which is indexed each year, and to which adjustments can be made. In 2025, the benefit amount was calculated to be $1309/month, or $15,708/year.

While various assets could influence the benefit amount received, recipients are able to work and own property without their benefit amount being severely impacted (Gouvernement du Québec, 2025). Recipients can earn up to $15,708/year without seeing a decrease in their benefit. If and when income does exceed the annual exclusion rate, recipients will see a reduction rate of 55 cents for every dollar earned, applied to their benefit in the following year. Additionally, recipients are also able to hold $20,000 in cash resources without a reduction in their benefits, and in the case that they have more than the determined amount, the monthly benefit will be reduced at a dollar-for-dollar reduction rate. Participants can also hold property valued at up to $500,000

without seeing a reduction in their benefit, and in the case that property value exceeds this amount, the monthly benefit allotment will be decreased by 15 cents for every dollar above $500,000.

Prince Edward Island has also seen a push for a BIG pilot to be initiated, in which adults aged 18-64 would be eligible, and could receive a maximum benefit of 85% of the poverty line, which was estimated to be about $19,252 for a single adult in 2022 (LBIN, 2025; PEI Basic Income Report, 2023). The existing proposal also maintains a reduction rate of 50 cents for every dollar increase in a family's net income, wherein the census family is utilized to administer the benefit (PEI Basic Income Report, 2023). This proposal, which LBIN (2025) identifies as having the support of all provincial political parties, cites that the BIG would reduce the poverty rate from 10% to nearly 2%, and ensure that no Islander lives in deep poverty (PEI Basic Income Report, 2023).

Supplemental Models

A report for the Basic Income Canada Network (Pasma & Regehr, 2019) explores three different models that each demonstrate how it is possible for Canada to implement a basic income that is progressively structured and funded. Each of the options focuses on using the tax/transfer system as the administrative structure. This approach allows the researchers to use Statistics Canada's Social Policy Simulation Database and Model (SPSD/M)—a tool that, as Green et al., (2020b) explain, can represent individuals and families through information related to demographics, income, transfers received, taxes paid, and poverty levels—enabling users to accurately assess the implications of various policy measures.

All three of the models outlined in Pasma and Regehr's (2019) study are for adults, and are fully funded from similar sources, including non-refundable tax credits, half of social assistance administrative funds, and programs that provide direct income support, such as the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax. Additionally, each model is based on a benefit of $22,000 per year for an individual, which is close to the LIM for an individual in 2017. The models were also based on family composition, with the nuclear family serving as the standard structure. This was defined as an adult (or adults) living with any number of children under the age of 18 in the household.

The first model allocates benefits to individuals aged 18-64 based on family income. In this model, a single person receives $22,000, while a couple is allotted $31,113, to be divided between the individuals. The benefit amounts are calculated using the square root equivalence model, which adjusts the benefit according to family composition by taking the square root of the family size. Benefits are gradually reduced as other income increases, with a reduction rate of 40%. Additionally, the model accounts for tax changes that would impact low-income single seniors, adding an extra amount to their benefits. However, it would also maintain existing programs, such as the CCB for children under 18, and the OAS and GIS for seniors. Option 1 was found to have the lowest cost, at $134 billion.

The second model provides a benefit for adults 18-years-old and over, based on family income. This model was structured very similarly to the first model, but replaces the OAS and GIS benefits for seniors. The cost of this model was comparable to Option 1, sitting at $187 billion. In contrast, the third model, with an upfront cost of $637 billion, provides an individual universal benefit for all adults over the age of 18, delivered as a demo grant, where each adult receives the same benefit regardless of income. In this model, the CCB remains in place, and no reduction rate is applied. The study also identifies that the system for taxing income would need to be adjusted, as

everyone would receive $22,000 of non-taxable income, and therefore, all recipients would pay higher taxes on the first dollar of other income.

The results of Pasma and Regehr's (2019) model analysis reveal that in all three options, the population within the lower half of the overall income distribution sees an increase in disposable income, and inequality is greatly reduced. The authors note that poverty is almost eliminated, and for the small population that continues to live under the poverty line, the gap is smaller. The study also notes various issues that require further consideration, including the integration of seniors' programs, particularly within Option 2. Within Option 3, couples tended to benefit more than singles or single parents, underscoring the necessity of understanding the real costs and benefits of the options.

In a separate study, Green and colleagues (2020b) use Statistics Canada's SPSD/M tool to run 16,000 simulation experiments that explore the various possible ways in which a BIG program could operate in British Columbia. The simulations were assessed against implications related to cost, number of recipients, rates and depth of poverty, distributional affects, and inequality impacts. The study also demonstrated how a BIG would be constructed against the thirteen fundamental design elements, outlined by Tedds et al. (2020) (see Section 3.2.), with the two main objectives of the BIG simulations being to reduce both the rates and depth of poverty in BC.

Green and colleagues (2020b) also explore two different forms of a BIG, one as a UBI, where recipients would receive a cheque with a specified amount, and another form which was contingent on income, and modelled as a refundable tax credit. The benefit's sufficiency level ranged from $1,000 to $20,000 annually, with $20,000 set as the maximum because it represents the poverty line for a single individual in the province. The study identifies the beneficiary unit to be the individual or a family unit, and considers an equivalence scale using a per capita scale[4] and square root scale[5]. The universality and exclusivity design elements were defined against findings that children and the elderly were already receiving robust support, which would remain in place. Therefore, the BIG would be delivered to adults aged 18-64 years old, a population that was found to have higher poverty rates. There were no conditionality elements considered within the simulations, and the models were understood to be permanent benefits. The elements that were not considered within the simulations, but which are identified as needing consideration in BIG design nonetheless include exclusivity, frequency, funding, administration, defining a benefit reduction rate, and clarifying definitions of income (Green et al., 2020b; Tedds et al., 2020).

2.3. Advantages of a BIG

The literature acknowledges that a BIG will not solve every social harm, particularly on its own, but a BIG does have the potential to operate as an inclusive, cost-effective mechanism in efforts to reduce structural inequalities and oppressions (Findlay et al., 2023; Grey, 2019; Zelleke, 2008). Research suggests that cost-savings would be seen in reduced expenditures surrounding administration, healthcare, and related societal costs of poverty (Ferdosi et al., 2020; Findlay et al., 2023; Grey, 2019; Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability, n.d.; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.). For instance, Findlay and colleagues (2023) outline that after the one-time implementation costs, the annual operating costs of a BIG would be lower than the annual

[4] In a per capita scale, a two-adult family would receive twice the benefit of a single individual (Green et al., 2020b)

[5] In a square root scale, a two-adult family would be paid the square root of twice the benefit amount of a single individual (Green et al., 2020b)

operation costs of social assistance, while Grey (2019) states that estimates for healthcare savings in Canada range as high as $80 billion if a BIG were introduced in the country.

Beyond the financial savings implications, evidence from around the world cites that recipients of a BIG eat better, have increased access to education, and have more time and money to devote to care work within and outside of the home (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.). Local economies—particularly small businesses—tend to improve, and individuals report an increased sense of hope for a better future (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Pate, n.d.). A crucial finding has also been that communities benefit from decreased violence, improved social relationships, and increased empowerment of women and other disadvantaged groups (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Pate, n.d.). Further, research has identified the potential of a BIG framework to be combined with wrap-around supports to foster economic security for women, and work to end cycles of poverty and violence (Grey, 2019; Petit & Tedds, 2020; Robeyns, 2001) through various means, outlined herein.

Financial and Economic Resources

In the presence of economic insecurity and the absence of guaranteed assistance, individuals tend to prioritize immediate needs, using available resources quickly before income is no longer accessible (Forget, 2018; Grey, 2019; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020). Smith-Carrier & Halpenny (2020) argues that the permanent nature of a BIG allows people, especially women, to be better equipped to make important decisions that have long-term, positive impacts for themselves and their families. Forget (2018) also suggests that BIG provides recipients with increased financial resilience, which gives people the ability to have control over their finances. Therefore, people are not only able to pay for their daily expenses or immediate needs but save for the unexpected.

Notably, a basic income has been identified as having the potential to provide economic security for women, particularly those facing multiple intersecting forms of marginalization, who experience some of the highest poverty rates in Canada (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Mosher, 2008; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020), often as a result of gender-based violence, and other structural forms of oppression (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020). For instance, Cameron and Tedds (2020b) found that a BIG would offset some of the detrimental economic impacts of such systems of harm, including empowering women to have economic independence, rather than dependence that is borne out of unequal power relations. They also outline that a BIG would fill gaps evident in social assistance programs, so that recipients are able to effectively build an economic foundation for themselves through having adequate finances, and control over their resources.

Cantillon and McLean (2016) affirm that while a BIG would contribute to building economic independence for women, this would only be made possible through designing a BIG as an individual benefit, rather than as a benefit linked to a unit. Providing an individual allotment would recognize women as independent citizens, rather than as household dependents—a status often imposed when social assistance is reduced for women in partnered relationships, irrespective of whether they receive support from their partner. By fostering women's economic empowerment, they will have greater control in options for housing, childcare, and in the decision to leave an abusive relationship, as their options and choices will not be constrained by the barriers erected through economic insecurity (Dale et al., 2021b; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020).

Labour Market Participation

One of the most centrally noted benefits of a BIG is how it improves labour market participation, and relationships with the labour market overall, since BIG allows recipients to work without losing BIG income immediately (Zelleke, 2008). Ferdosi et al. (2020) report that this was evidenced in recipients of BIG in southern Ontario's pilot, as they were able to move from low paying, "dead-end" (p. 4) jobs, to jobs that provided higher income, better working conditions, and increased opportunities for advancement. This upward mobility in the labour market was made possible through recipients' increased access to it, as BIG enabled them to acquire resources such as work-appropriate clothing, reliable transportation, or even the ability to remain in locations where they could find employment that aligned with their skillset, rather than having to relocate to access support resources.

The ability to engage with paid employment while receiving BIG income reflects its principles of universality and unconditionality (see Section 3.1), and how BIG can effectively reduce and prevent poverty through avoiding the unemployment traps of social assistance (McLean, 2016). This would be of particular benefit to single and lower-income women, who are more likely to be recipients of social assistance, and thus more likely to be susceptible to the discretion and control that social assistance workers have over their benefit allotments (Forget, 2018; McLean, 2016). Smith-Carrier and Halpenny (2020) further argue that a BIG effectively bolsters women's economic empowerment within existing structures by not only increasing their bargaining power in the workplace, but also enabling them to pursue personal advancement through education, training, entrepreneurship, or other strategies that capitalize on the expanded opportunities and choices BIG facilitates.

The literature also identifies that a basic income could address the construct of separating the public from the private life by recasting care work, reproductive labour, and additional forms of societal participation as valuable in their own right (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Zelleke, 2011). Some feminist discourse has highlighted that the relegation of domestic responsibilities to private life has effectively devalued it in comparison to paid employment, and has contributed to fostering injustice within the home by way of an inequitable distribution of power, labour, and income (Zelleke, 2011). This disproportionately impacts women, who shoulder the majority of care and reproductive labour, regardless of employment status (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; 2020b; Canadian Women's Foundation & Hill, 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Findlay et al., 2023; Khosla, 2021; Mosher, 2008; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Zelleke, 2008; 2011). This inequality transgresses into the public sphere, resulting in women's prescribed responsibilities preventing them from competing fairly with men for jobs, income, and political power (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; McLean, 2016; Zanbak et al., 2023; Zelleke, 2011).

Zelleke (2008) highlights that since a BIG would equate care labour with work, it would not reinforce existing gendered distributions of labour, or the power of the public sphere. Smith-Carrier and Halpenny (2020) emphasize that a BIG would not be provided "as a payment for care work, but as a universal support for care work, providing everyone with a more effective opportunity to engage with it" (p. 5). This illustrates Cameron and Tedds' (2020b) position that a basic income, when truly rooted in meaningful inclusion and societal participation, could effectively create an expanded view of societal contribution that extends beyond paid work.

This is possible, in part, due to BIG being granted regardless of employment status, thereby creating an option for people to not be employed, and allowing individuals to engage in care labour without suffering a financial penalty (Smith-Carrier, 2020). Additionally, BIG would allow people to undertake alternative activities that contribute to social and environmental resilience (Pateman,

2004; Stroeken, 2024; TED, 2017). For example, Zelleke (2008) illustrates that a BIG would allow low-wage jobs, part-time work, and volunteer work to become more feasible, particularly because BIG is not meant to be a substitute for earned income, but a compliment to it. Furthermore, Pateman (2004) argues that by reassessing what labour is valued within society, a BIG could also support the re-configuring of interconnected institutions such as marriage and citizenship into more democratic forms.

It is worth noting that the evidence provided by basic income experiments suggests that a BIG has a neutral or positive effect on the labour market overall (Pate, n.d.; Stroeken, 2024). Pate (n.d.) cites that globally, the percentage of people who have exited the workforce upon receiving BIG is statistically insignificant, but is nonetheless a population composed of children, the elderly, those who are sick, those with disabilities, women with young children, and young people who shift their focus to education. Furthermore, research suggests that those who continue to remain unemployed, or otherwise leave employment upon receiving a BIG may use BIG to allow themselves to focus on other areas of their life that require attention, such as their health (Ferdosi et al., 2020).

Health and Wellbeing

Health is impacted by social status, education, the social and physical conditions in which people work and live, coping skills, and early childhood experiences (Forget, 2018), but income has been cited as the single most important determinant of health (Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020), and BIG has been identified as an income intervention that can support improved health outcomes for recipients and communities at large (Dubeau, 2020; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Forget, 2018; Grey, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020).

Ferdosi et al. (2020) cite that improvements in health systems were reflected in the basic income pilot in southern Ontario. In addition to finding an overall reduced reliance on health services (e.g. emergency rooms), the study found that the majority of participants reported having higher food security, capacity to afford drug and dental care, and the ability to engage in regular physical activity, all of which contributed to improvements in mental and physical health. Participants further expressed experiencing reduced anxiety and depression, an improved outlook on life and self-worth, improved relationships, and spending more quality time with themselves and others. Half of the respondents were able to afford counselling services, others reported a reduction in alcohol and tobacco consumption, and those who had a pre-existing health-condition or disability noted an increase in their general health and wellbeing.

Critically, a BIG allowed for participants to prioritize their health in decision making processes and resource allocation, which was identified as being central to a 34-year-old woman's ability to enter the workforce for the first time. The woman identified that she had been unable to work due to an abundance of health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, stemming from "pretty severe abuse" (p. 29), but receiving a BIG allowed her to look after herself, rather than remaining stressed about not having enough money. These findings reflect Smith-Carrier and Halpenny's (2020) research that expresses how a BIG could improve women's mental and physical health, as well as the health of their children, by virtue of its assurance of income stability.

On a larger scale, the literature also cites that a BIG could improve community wellbeing overall. The Mincome BIG pilot reported that community wellbeing improved through a reduction in property and violent crime, which researchers suggest may be predominantly reflected in a reduction of intimate partner violence, though the scope of the study could not confirm (Calnitsky

& Gonalons-Pons, 2021). Ferdosi et al.'s (2020) study also found increased rates in volunteerism, participation in extracurricular activities, increased socialization, and increased sense of dignity among communities receiving BIG, which mirrors research that suggests BIG would allow for a reprioritization of activities that are not solely tied to income generation (Pateman, 2004; Stroeken, 2024; Zelleke, 2008).

Another benefit that supported the wellbeing of participants was a reduction in having to navigate stigma associated with receiving a benefit and living in poverty. Cameron and Tedds (2021) outline that when there is a higher level of stigma attached to a program, there is a lower uptake, thereby making the program less effective. This was illustrated in the southern Ontario BIG pilot, where participants reported that the stigma surrounding their precarity had become internalized, and it impacted their mental health so severely, it deepened the harm of their poverty (Ferdosi et al., 2020). However, the BIG benefit, devoid of stigma, allowed them to position resources where they needed, and improve their living situation. A BIG therefore enables participants to receive support without the burden of stigma, effectively enhancing self-determination, and the right to healthy conditions (Forget, 2018; Grey, 2019).

Structural Benefits

Various benefits of a BIG program relate to its potential to specifically reduce structural inequalities, such as through addressing the multidimensional nature of poverty (Findlay et al., 2023). For instance, a BIG would ensure economic security and protection for women, particularly for women who are more vulnerable to poverty and violence than others (McLean, 2016), and who face systemic barriers to support interventions (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Hunnicut, 2009). While BIG alone cannot end systemic oppressions, such as the over-representation of mothers, racialized women, and recent immigrants in low-wage, temporary work, it will provide a mechanism to offset some of the economic consequences that surround these realities (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Grey, 2019; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020).

This is paralleled where BIG has been identified as a subject within processes related to Truth and Reconciliation (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Given that Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women, are among the populations at greatest risk of living in poverty and violence (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2020; Findlay et al., 2023; Koshan et al., 2021; Mosher at al., 2004; Mosher, 2008; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020), a BIG has been referenced as a point of investment to address the historic and ongoing systemic inequalities that colonialism perpetuates on Indigenous communities, and as a means to honour Treaty obligations (Dale et al., 2021b; Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020). Once again, a BIG must operate in tandem with additional measures that aim to reduce these interconnected structural inequalities in order to be truly effective (Brascoupé & Mulholland, 2019; Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Grey, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020).

Zelleke (2008) concurs that BIG could serve as a vessel to enable other institutional and policy changes to foster substantial progress in reducing systemic harms. Such changes may include wider availability and affordability of childcare services, greater availability of part-time work for women and men, and the correction of paid-work bias evident in current social assistance programs (McLean, 2016). Grey (2019) also highlights the necessity of a BIG program operating in tandem with corresponding inequality-reduction efforts, such as rent control, decent health benefits (e.g. dental and prescription coverage), and support for caregiving. Critically, if such

additional measures are not taken, and a program is ill-conceived, a BIG could effectively sustain, or even worsen the systemic costs of extreme inequality.

2.4. Concerns About BIG

While numerous potential benefits of a BIG have fostered support for its implementation, research has also highlighted recurring concerns and criticisms associated with BIG proposals and studies. In some cases, these concerns are cited as justification for opposing BIG as a policy intervention. In others, they are acknowledged as important considerations to be addressed in future research and program design—particularly in contexts where BIG is explored as a mechanism for addressing poverty and reducing violence against women.

Withdrawal From the Labour Market

The literature that outlines concerns with a basic income suggests that BIG only emerges as a policy option when the economy is struggling, and populations are grappling with high levels of unemployment or underemployment (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2016). As such, one of the most common concerns with the implementation of a BIG is that by providing people with an unconditional income that is not tied to employment status, people will leave the labour market altogether, in favour of remaining at home.

The concerns around a shift in the labour market are multifaceted. It is a mainstream belief that if people are not obligated to work to provide for themselves, then they will simply not work at all (TEDx Talks, 2014). Gourevitch (2016) also suggests that people gain value from work that goes beyond paid wages and benefits, including social standing, ties to community, and the value of workplace relationships. These factors subsequently create not just an economic dependency on employment, but a social and psychological dependency. Therefore, through BIG incentivizing people to leave the labour market, they would suffer a loss of the varied benefits that they would otherwise receive from employment (see also Gheaus, 2008). Gourevitch (2016) further outlines that the sense of being dominated and exploited is a shared class position among workers, so workers are best situated to pursue their interests as a collective, rather than as individuals, which BIG would facilitate. This suggests that a BIG, by encouraging people not to work, would further entrench class inequalities.

The Solution to Poverty Is Not BIG, but Public Programs

A persistent concern surrounding BIG is whether it can effectively alleviate poverty, given that targeted services aiming to address broader problems or needs, such as housing, medical care, counselling, child care, digital access, public transportation, pharmacare, and legal services are, and would remain essential (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Green et al., 2023). Studies suggest that implementing a BIG without complementary investments in public services would reveal its limitations in alleviating poverty, particularly when market mechanisms fail to ensure access to essential needs once they become unaffordable or inaccessible (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Grey, 2019).

Critically, a BIG does not itself dismantle barriers to social inclusion or create spaces for the development of strong communities (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Green et al., 2023; Grey, 2019), which these services work to form, at least in part. There are therefore concerns that if a BIG were to be implemented, these programs would suffer funding cuts, which will cause deep harm among vulnerable populations, including women fleeing violence, and especially those facing intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression (Dale et al., 2021b).

The Costs of BIG

Central concerns regarding the implementation of a BIG related to costs include that it would be too expensive, cause inflation, and be an added burden for taxpayers. Although it has been suggested that BIG is unlikely to cause inflation given its focus on redistribution (Pate, n.d.), some project designs may indeed create such impacts (Green et al., 2023; Mckay & Vanevery, 2000). For example, the Basic Income Canada Network has documented various financing options, which include financing through higher taxes and eliminating tax cuts that benefit the middle class, as well as cutbacks from provincial income assistance programs (Pate, n.d.). Each of these options would carry different financial implications, which some suggest have not been adequately addressed in efforts to design and implement a BIG program (Tedds & Crisan, 2021).

Critics also caution that when people receive BIG, the additional money could be absorbed through rent increases, ultimately leaving recipients no better off (Pate, n.d.). Grey (2019) concedes that a BIG must operate in tandem with interventions aimed at reducing such inequalities, or else risk further entrenching them. Additional research also suggests that rather than having to ensure that such interventions coincide with a BIG, it may be preferential to instead focus efforts on the reformation of existing programs (Green et al., 2023).

Entrenching Inequality

While the literature outlines BIG's potential to work towards equality through equitable design and implementation, it also outlines concerns about BIG's potential to further entrench inequalities within society. Cameron and Tedds (2020b) outline that a basic income could indeed disrupt systemic pathologies, but it could also merely offset the barriers they maintain or even obstruct other changes that would be necessary to ensure equality and inclusion are established.

In the case of BIG's potential to address gender inequalities, discourse among the literature is considerably polarized (Vollenweider, 2013). While supporters of a basic income, as explained, appeal to BIG's potential to allocate value on reproductive labour, and provide women with choice in entering or exiting the labour market (Cameron & Tedds, 2021), critics suggest that a BIG will further entrench gendered divisions of labour as the expectation of women to shoulder care labour carries forward, and women leave the workforce to appeal to this norm (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Gheaus, 2008; McLean, 2016; Robeyns, 2001; Uhde, 2018; Vollenweider, 2013). The history of women's weaker relationship to the paid labour market has also resulted in inequities in relation to benefit schemes, which are predominantly tied to paid contributions during employment (Mckay & Vanevery, 2000). Therefore, critics suggest that if women do use the income from BIG to exit employment, this inequality in resource distribution will widen, and women will be further recognized as dependents by way of having to utilize a partner's benefits for access to various resources.

While some legislation has emerged to address this disparity by removing discriminatory policies to enhance women's rights to benefit schemes, various social patterns such as the increase in single-parent households (most being female-headed), women's longer life expectancy, and women's disproportionate shouldering of unpaid care labour, all contribute to gender bias within social security programs (Mckay & Vanevery, 2000). This again points to the inadequacy of BIG to be an isolated means of intervention to reduce gender inequalities, particularly if an intersectional lens is not applied to its development, as is utilized in select research conducted on BIG's potential as a system of response (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; 2021; Crenshaw, 1989; Dale et al., 2021b; Findlay et al., 2023; Khosla, 2021; Mosher, 2008; Women's Shelters Canada, 2015).

Some feminists also remain skeptical that efforts to obtain structural equality will reduce women's vulnerability to violence (Hunnicutt, 2009), since violence against women exists not only within structural systems, but within ideological frameworks that would persist regardless of these efforts towards gender equity. As an example, BIG will not, on its own, challenge labour and property law, as well as the matrix of discrimination which embeds inequality within labour and property rights (Gourevitch, 2016). Since a BIG is proposed to be of an amount that not only allows people to get by, but to save money that they may perhaps use to buy property or gain better employment, vulnerable populations will inevitably continue to confront these systems of oppression (Brascoupé & Mulholland, 2019; Gourevitch, 2016). Furthermore, increasing women's economic power does not make them immune to violence (Hunnicutt, 2009), and in fact, Ericsson (2019) argues that increasing women's potential earnings triggers a male backlash response, demonstrated in increased patterns of abuse.

Cameron and Tedds (2020b) highlight that BIG pilot programs have also failed to accurately reflect intersections of identity and systemic factors, and the pathologies of power that directly contribute to financial insecurity and poverty. For instance, Broad and Nadjiwon-Smith (2017) raised concerns about implementing a BIG for First Nations groups in Ontario, highlighting that Indigenous communities experience poverty within the context of a colonial history, and as such, have diverging needs from mainstream understandings of the issue (as cited in Cameron & Tedds, 2020b). Furthermore, if a BIG is implemented as a colonial, paternalistic tool, it has the potential to cause further damage to Indigenous communities (see also Pasma & Regehr, 2019). Additionally, people with disabilities have expressed apprehension to a BIG, and if it will effectively consider the diverse needs of people with disabilities in its design. Researchers have also found that newcomers highlight that a BIG would neither improve access to resources, nor address the systemic racism that continues to cause them harm. These examples illustrate critics' concerns that a BIG does not itself dismantle many of the barriers to social inclusion, improve access to resources, or work to create enhanced opportunities, voice, and respect of rights (Cameron & Tedds, 2021).

Furthermore, a true basic income reflects an ideal of neutrality in its distribution, and critics argue that by fostering neutrality within the policy, these varied needs and lives of potential recipients are not effectively considered (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b). While a basic income model that is closely linked to a rich system of basic services shows promise (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021), in order to facilitate the necessary benefits and supports, detailed knowledge of a given jurisdiction is required, which includes understanding the diverse needs of populations, and how support interventions interact with them and each other (Cameron & Tedds, 2021). Achieving such an analysis is incredibly complex, and requires a thorough administrative apparatus, which undermines the principle of simplicity evident in BIG proposals and subsequently creates avenues for stigma to fester.

3. Designing a BIG

While the general goal of BIG proposals and pilots is to enable financial security, Cameron and Tedds (2020b) note that the existing literature varies in its explanations of to what extent a basic income accomplishes this, and also reduces other socioeconomic barriers. In some studies, a basic income is meant to replace existing social and/or economic support programs (McKay & Vanevery, 2000; Pasma & Regehr, 2019), while others propose that a BIG would work alongside them (Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Senator Kim Pate, n.d.), arguing that income alone cannot and will not solve systemic inequalities (SCPRTG, n.d.).

It is therefore evident that a BIG cannot be designed as one policy proposal but must be designed as a collection of policy proposals that share principles and objectives (Tedds et al., 2020). These core principles of BIG (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Forget, 2018; McKay & Vanevery, 2000; SCPRTG, n.d.; Tedds et al., 2020; Withorn, 1993) all highlight the need to enable economic security so people can meet their basic needs, and be able to participate in and be included within society (Alternatives North for the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2023; Basic Income Canada Network, 2024; Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Forget, 2018; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; SCPRTG, n.d.; Senator Kim Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Tedds et al., 2020).

This section of the literature review will explore these principles, the corresponding design elements, and recommendations made within the literature for enhancing BIG research and design along intersectional lines.

3.1. Core Principles of BIG

Several common principles of a BIG program are reflected both in its design structure and in the desired outcomes (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.). One of these principles is that the income benefit is *adequate* (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Green et al., 2021; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019; Senator Kim Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Tedds et al., 2020) to enable economic security. Rejda (2012) defines economic security as being comprised of financial adequacy (the ability to secure a basic quality of life and access basic needs), financial stability (the ability to survive unexpected financial fluctuations), and financial continuity (the expectation that a base level of income will remain continuous) (as cited in Tedds et al., 2020). A BIG is therefore diametrically opposed to the paradox of income generation seen in social assistance, as it ensures a steady stream of income without requiring recipients to deplete their financial reserves before accessing it.

As people gain economic security, they also gain *autonomy* of their own lives (Tedds et al., 2020), which is identified as another guiding principle of BIG in the literature (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.; Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Cantillon & McLean, 2016; Green et al., 2021; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Tedds et al., 2020; Withorn, 1993). Forget (2018) suggests the fostering of individual autonomy is evidenced in that recipients are never obligated to spend their funds in a pre-determined way, thereby giving them full control over their financial resources. This aligns with the ideal that autonomy, by allowing individuals to choose how to allocate their resources and efforts, enables them to achieve their unique goals (Cantillon & McLean, 2016).

This growth in autonomy then bolsters the principle of *dignity*, and supports the removal of stigma from the process of accessing a basic income (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.; Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Findlay et al., 2023; Forget, 2018; Green et al., 2020a; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Pei, 2020; SCPRTG, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020). The assurance of adequacy, autonomy, and dignity subsequently underscores a shift from seeing vulnerable persons as those merely in need of help, to respecting them as equal participants in society at large (Green et al., 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). Tedds et al. (2020) highlight that people who receive social assistance experience a high degree of stigma, but by ensuring that dignity and respect remain central to BIG, this stigma is reduced, if not eliminated entirely. This also illustrates *equality of opportunity*, which Smith-Carrier and Halpenny (2020) identify as another principle of BIG.

The principle of *non-conditionality* (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.; Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Coote et al., 2019; Findlay et al., 2023; Green et al., 2020a; Grey, 2019; Mckay & Vanevery,

2000; McLean, 2016; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.; SCPRTG, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Stroeken, 2024; Uhde, 2018; Zelleke, 2008) is evident in that a BIG requires no means testing, requirement to work or seek employment, and all existing income of recipients is treated the same (Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Stroeken, 2024). This also ensures that the BIG principle of *universality* (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Findlay et al., 2023; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Stroeken, 2024) is maintained. Pasma and Regehr (2019) identify that a BIG would be universally available to all citizens, permanent residents, and protected persons, regardless of employment status, family makeup, ability to work, and wealth or savings. Therefore, universal availability does not mean that every person receives a benefit, but rather that every person is eligible. Forget (2018) strikes a parallel in the concept of universality in BIG to universal health care in Canada, as it remains one of the most popular programs in the country "not because we all make equal use out of it, but because we can all imagine circumstances in which we might need help" (p. 28).

Finally, *simplicity* is also identified as a guiding principle of BIG, which is in part aided by the principle of *transparency* (Basic Income Canada Network, n.d.; Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Green et al., 2020a; 2023; Mckay & Vanevery, 2000; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Tedds et al., 2020). This stands in stark contrast to the complexities of current social assistance systems. These systems require recipients to navigate multiple programs, understand how to access them, meet eligibility criteria, and comply with monitoring mechanisms, all while contending with various factors that may affect their ability to do so (Tedds et al., 2020). However, Cameron and Tedds (2021) caution that simplicity may ignore heterogeneity, or the diverse levels and forms of barriers that populations experience. In contrast, Green and colleagues (2020a) highlight that while simplicity may be essential in accessing a BIG, the principle should not be translated as necessary to design methodologies, as the design and implementation of a BIG is not a simple process, but one that requires careful consideration throughout.

3.2. Design Elements of a BIG

In a paper commissioned by the Expert Panel on Basic Income in British Columbia, Tedds et al. (2020) outline thirteen design elements of a BIG (objective, sufficiency, exclusivity, universality, beneficiary unit, equivalence scale, uniformity, duration, frequency, conditionality, form, administrative structure, and financing) and provide corresponding design choices for its implementation. These elements interact with the constructed BIG program and other related systems, collectively determining the extent to which the program aligns—or does not align—with the core BIG principles (Cameron & Tedds, 2021). Cameron and Tedds further emphasize that designing a BIG will require critical trade-offs among these principles and design elements.

The research identifies that a BIG program must first define its primary *objective*, which may be addressing poverty and related inequalities, compensation for unpaid work, providing a social dividend for resource extraction, or as a solution to labour market transformation (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). The objective may then inform the *sufficiency* of the payments, or to what degree BIG will address living costs; whether it be at a minimum, partial, or fully sufficient level. Several mechanisms can be used to determine the sufficiency level, such as by comparison with the Market Basket Measure Poverty Thresholds (Cameron & Tedds, 2021), Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), or Low-Income Measure (Pasma & Regehr, 2019). Alternatively, the benefit could be set in comparison to programs such as social assistance, OAS, GIS, or the CCB.

The third design element is the *exclusivity* of the program, wherein it is determined to what extent a BIG would replace or complement existing social assistance programs (Cameron & Tedds,

2021; Pate, n.d.; Tedds et al., 2020). Pasma and Regehr (2019) outline that the income supports of social assistance, the Canada Workers Benefit, OAS, GIS, and tax expenditures are all potential candidates to be absorbed into a BIG infrastructure. However, other programs, such as Employment Insurance, maintain additional benefits beyond income assistance which cannot be replaced by a BIG (Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.). Additionally, Pate (n.d.) outlines that coupling income assistance with support services could produce harm for recipients, as is evidenced within current support mechanisms. For example, people receiving disability support are eligible for various health services, and therefore, people with disabilities who are able to work may be discouraged to do so, for fear of losing access to health supports that they may need in the future. The exclusivity of a BIG therefore requires ample consideration.

Tedds et al. (2020) highlight that a BIG may be *universally* available to various groups, including tax filers, specific populations, or else be truly universal, provided to individuals based on citizenship or residency. However, the *beneficiary unit* may be identified as the individual, household (i.e. blood, marriage, common law relationships) or common residence (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). While each of these options are possible, some studies highlight that enabling an individual benefit will foster a reduction in income gender inequality and inequality within households and relationships through fostering greater economic empowerment (Cantillon & McLean, 2016; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Stroeken, 2024). However, Pasma and Regehr (2019) illustrate that an individual's situation varies based on their family size. For example, the expenses of a couple are not necessarily twice that of a single individual, and therefore, providing a couple with twice the benefit of a single person privileges people in relationships over people who are single. It has also been suggested that the argument for an individual beneficiary unit being necessary to advance gender equity is weakened since a woman is entitled to a full benefit if she leaves her partner.

The *equivalence scale* element, being the mechanism used to scale the transfer to household size, may be per capita (all beneficiaries receive the same amount), square root scale (per capita benefit is multiplied by the number of beneficiaries in a household), or another option (e.g. OECD-modified, National Research Council) (Tedds et al., 2020). If a BIG is scaled to be proportional to household needs, a common approach is to use a square root equivalence scale (Cameron & Tedds, 2021). The literature does not expand on the benefits or drawbacks of each option, and Tedds and Crisan (2021) also identify a gap in federal conceptualizations of the equivalence scale for a BIG program.

The *uniformity* element, or the degree to which beneficiary units receive similar benefit levels, may vary at the individual level, group level (e.g. people with disabilities), or there may be a uniform benefit (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). Cameron and Tedds (2021) caution against a uniform benefit, given the heterogenous needs among individuals and groups, and the possibility that a uniform benefit would allow for some groups to meet their basic needs, while others continue to struggle. Pasma and Regehr (2019) outline that although a universal dividend option would operate in such a way that everyone would receive the same benefit amount, those who are higher income earners would pay the benefit back through higher tax rates.

Alternatively, in the income-tested model, only individuals with an income below a certain level would receive the benefit. This model maintains a reduction rate, where the benefit is reduced at a certain rate for every dollar earned in additional income, thereby setting the income threshold. However, Cameron and Tedds (2021) suggest that a benefit reduction rate undermines the principle

of social inclusion within a BIG through naturally penalizing the generation of additional income (see also Green et al., 2021; 2023).

Another element of design, the *conditionality* of the program, requires consideration on if reception of the benefit is based on behavioral, technical, or unconditional parameters (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). For example, Cameron and Tedds (2021) illustrate that the design of a BIG could require the receipt of the benefit to be based on income, assets, employability, or behaviors such as looking for work, engaging in caregiving, or filing taxes. It is also critical to consider the *duration* element, referring to the length of time beneficiaries would receive a BIG. This duration may be capped at a certain number of weeks or years, be based on a lifetime maximum amount, or it could prescribe a permanent benefit (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020).

While duration reflects the longevity timeline of a BIG, the *frequency* element relates to the benefit payment schedule, which may be a one-time payment, an annual benefit, or a regularly paid benefit. Cameron and Tedds (2021) outline that it is also possible to curate a combination of schedules, such as through initiating a lump sum payment, and maintaining an additional regular stream of benefit allotments. It is also critical to consider the *form* of the payments, which may be a cash transfer, refundable tax credit, or in-kind benefits (see also Tedds et al., 2020). Stoeken (2024) also suggests utilizing a negative income tax, stating that BIG and income tax are naturally linked, given that when people generate a higher income, the BIG benefit would gradually decrease.

Another critical element to consider in designing a BIG is the *administrative structure* of the program, which would determine how a BIG would be delivered and processed (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). Several suggestions have been made, including the use of the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA), governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the tax system as possible options (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Tedds et al., 2020). Pate (n.d.) argues that leveraging the tax system could enhance social inclusion by facilitating access to additional tax benefits (see also Bajwa, 2015), as well as services such as free ID replacement, no-cost chequing accounts, and mobile phones, which are benefits observed in other cash-transfer initiatives. Tedds and Crisan (2020) further outline that using the tax system offers an incremental implementation approach, leverages an existing administrative body (the CRA) and application system, can be at least partially or fully self-funded depending on program design, and ensures that benefits primarily accrue to those at the lowest levels of income distribution.

However, several studies caution against relying on the tax system as an administrative body. Bajwa (2015) highlights that the tax system itself is a complicated, overwhelming entity for low-income groups in particular. Low-income individuals can face several barriers when navigating the tax system, including the system's complexity, a low awareness of tax benefit schemes, a lack of mailed tax reforms, low computer literacy/access rates, low literacy rates, lack of access to support, newcomer status, low self-confidence and trust, and difficulty in assembling required documents. Stapleton (2018) also highlights that people with low-income may already resist filing their taxes due to the fully automated system, or because of a belief that social assistance programs will reduce benefits after a recipient receives an income tax return.

Utilizing the tax system to administer benefits could also present a problem in relation to the timing of benefits, given that taxes are filed once a year (Simpson & Stevens, 2019). Those who currently benefit from non-refundable tax credits could be made worse off under a negative income tax system, and those who do not file their taxes would get no benefit (Tedds & Crisan, 2020). Furthermore, while the primary objective of the CRA is revenue gathering, the objective of a basic

income is counter to this, which would require the CRA to move to a more service-style model of functioning (Tedds, 2017). This could create a cascade of other concerns, such as administrative accessibility and responsiveness to changing need, and it would be necessary to consider how exactly the tax system would treat the basic income payments themselves (Green et al., 2020a).

The final element in designing a BIG concerns the program's *financing* (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020), which some scholars suggest can be approached incrementally, allowing the final BIG amount to be determined over time (Stroeken, 2024). Proposed funding mechanisms include generating incremental tax revenues, reallocating funds through the reduction or elimination of existing government programs, and adopting self-financing models such as resource royalties, carbon taxes, or rent taxes (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Tedds et al., 2020). Pate (n.d.) further proposes that provincial governments could contribute to the financing, while additional revenue could be sourced through progressive tax measures targeting high-income earners. In addition, Pasma and Regehr (2019) identify potential funding sources such as income tax reforms, the elimination of tax loopholes, and the use of resource royalties to establish a sovereign wealth fund.

3.3. Considerations for Future Design

Designing and implementing a BIG requires a critical, evidence-based discourse to ensure that a successful program is developed (Green et al., 2020a). This includes considerations on how to frame and analyze a BIG within societal structures, its correlation with basic services, and efforts to institutionalize an intersectional analysis. These themes will be explored further in this section of the review.

Framing and Analyzing a BIG

The ability of a BIG to effectively enshrine economic security within society has been shown to be largely dependent on factors such as political climate, which can change the support BIG programs receive (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Ferdosi et al., 2020). Grey (2019) suggests that a BIG program can be developed through the lens of international human rights and responsibilities already ratified through the Canadian government. By actively working within such a framework (International Justice Resource Centre, n.d.), a BIG program could also be structured to support other needs such as affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, elder care, and employment standards (Grey, 2019). Strategies to achieve this could include engaging communities and organizations in participatory research, fostering collaboration around development indicators, increasing the participation of vulnerable populations, involving communities and governments in education initiatives, and developing mechanisms for holding governments and institutions accountable to their efforts.

While grounding a BIG program in a human rights framework can be appealing, Dale (2018) cautions against the uncritical application of human rights ideologies in local contexts. Relying on universal standards rooted in legal rationality can limit the adaptability of BIG to specific local realities. At the same time, productions that aim to reflect local experiences must use local imagery; however, to access funding, they are often required to align with transnational human rights principles. Although human rights frameworks tend to gain broader acceptance when applied in familiar cultural contexts, they are most transformative when used to challenge dominant power structures. This reflects the paradox of human rights: they can serve to challenge state power while simultaneously reinforcing it. This tension presents a unique challenge when framing BIG within a human rights discourse, as it must balance universality with local epistemologies and realities.

Correlation with Public Services

A significant body of literature examines the interaction between a BIG with social and community services, extending beyond the design element of exclusivity (Tedds et al., 2020). Basic services – provisions publicly funded to ensure availability based on need rather than the ability to afford them – are of great importance (Coote, 2019). Examples of such services include healthcare, education, housing, food, transportation, legal services, childcare, and adult social care, among others (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Coote, 2019). Some studies suggest that the most effective way to alleviate poverty is by focusing investments on enhancing both the capacity and accessibility of these services for all individuals through the development of a Universal Basic Services (UBS) model. Certain UBS models also explore potential interaction with universal basic infrastructure, which involves expanding investments in both hard infrastructure (e.g., rail, energy, water) and soft infrastructure (e.g., education, health, and care supports) (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b).

The UBS model is characterized by a high-quality, universal, and public model of care in which all families are guaranteed affordability, and providers are well compensated. Proponents of this model argue that it would be more efficient than BIG, as it would extend greater access to basic needs per dollar and be more effective because of targeted interventions. A basic services model would also adapt to the increasing cost of basic needs in the market and would subsequently call the commodification of basic needs into question, which is not something BIG is capable of on its own.

The variances of basic service models, when analysed through intersectional mechanisms, do indicate that basic services can better address root causes of poverty for marginalized groups, given that service provision is rooted in understanding that lack of access is a result of structural inequalities which extend beyond a lack of income. Furthermore, investment in basic services could reduce gendered barriers, and encourage sustained recovery for marginalized women after existing abusive relationships through providing supports and promoting inclusion beyond income supplementation (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Dale et al., 2021b). While the options of interaction within the literature vary, it is noted that the most realistic proposals of a BIG include some measure of income assistance operating in tandem with additional services and supports, and therefore, design proposals should maintain this consideration (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Uhde, 2018).

Critically, Pasma and Regehr (2019) suggest that neither public programs, nor income security eliminate the need for the other. While there are services, such as health care, which are best situated to be delivered under public provision, there are others, such as food security, that are perhaps better addressed by income support. The study highlights that it would be unlikely for a public food program to effectively address individual health, cultural, and religious dietary requirements, whereas a basic income would provide individuals with the resources to make their own dietary choices. Moving towards a model which maintains both a basic income and universal basic services is ideal, as public programs ensure that the level of income needed for someone to achieve security is lower, and income security ensures that public programs are available at a lower cost.

4. Conclusions

The existing literature on BIG has demonstrated its potential to alleviate, if not eliminate poverty and its corresponding impacts through effective program design, implementation, and evaluation. For example, in addition to enhancing financial security (Ferdosi et al., 2020), BIG pilot and cash-transfer programs in Canada have shown that BIG can reduce experiences of stigma (Forget, 2018), improve health outcomes, and increase access to housing for recipients (Institute

for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability, n.d.). However, despite these documented advantages, Cameron and Tedds (2021) argue that BIG proposals have largely overlooked the compounding impacts of systemic discrimination and gender-based violence on poverty. As a result, such proposals fail to account for the complexity of the diverse needs of women with lived experience of violence and poverty.

A growing body of research has emerged to address this gap, including studies that explore the intertwined relationship between poverty and violence against women, and others that investigate how a BIG may facilitate progress towards ending these mutually reinforcing crises (Cameron & Tedds, 2020a; 2020b; 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Goldblatt, 2019; Goldblatt et al., 2019; Goodman et al., 2009; Grey, 2019; Ljubičić & Ignjatović, 2024; Mosher et al., 2004; Mosher, 2008; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Terry, 2005; Zanbak et al., 2023). Scholars have documented that current intervention and alleviation efforts are primarily characterized by public services and social assistance programming – systems that are influenced by rigid guidelines, bureaucratic processes and barriers, and that can, in some cases, worsen existing harms (Adams et al., 2008; Bingham et al., 2019; Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Collins et al., 2018; Dubeau, 2020; Grey, 2019; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Jones & Teixeira, 2015; Koshan et al., 2021; Maki, 2017; Mosher, 2008; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Pei, 2020; Tedds, 2017; Tedds et al., 2020; Women's Shelter's Canada, 2015).

Given this context, and the unique challenges that women face both within and in leaving an abusive relationship (Groening et al., 2019), the integration of social and economic rights within responses to violence against women have been found to be essential (Goldblatt et al., 2019). However, the ability of a BIG program to meaningfully address these realities—and the diverse needs of marginalized populations, particularly within a colonial and capitalist context—depends on thoughtful design (McKay & Vanevery, 2000; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; SCPRTG, n.d.; Senator Kim Pate, n.d., Tedds et al., 2020). Some research has highlighted BIG's potential to improve women's access to and control over financial and economic resources, especially when distributed as an individual benefit (Cantillon & McLean, 2016). Other studies have cited BIG's ability to enhance labour market participation (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020; Zelleke, 2011), improve individual and community health and wellbeing (Dubeau, 2020; Ferdosi et al., 2020; Forget, 2018; Grey, 2019; Pate, n.d.; Smith-Carrier & Halpenny, 2020), and reduce the impacts of structural inequalities (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Hunnicut, 2009; McLean, 2016).

Alternatively, there remain critical concerns surrounding BIG's capacity to be an effective mechanism of intervention in cases of poverty and violence. The literature highlights reservations in regard to withdrawal patterns from the labour market (TEDx Talks, 2014), the impact of BIG on existing public programs (Cameron & Tedds, 2020b; 2021; Grey, 2019), the costs of implementation (Pate, n.d.; Tedds & Crisan, 2021), the risk of further entrenching inequalities (Cameron & Tedds, 2021; Dale et al., 2021b; Gheaus, 2008; McLean, 2016; Robeyns, 2001; Uhde, 2018; Vollenweider, 2013), and that it would not affectively address the diverse needs of marginalized populations (Cameron & Tedds, 2021). Amid these contrasting findings, Tedds et al. (2020) emphasize that a BIG should not be understood as a single, uniform policy, but rather as a collection of policies grounded in core BIG principles. These policies can be developed and assessed against thirteen key design elements, reinforcing the importance of thoughtful and context-sensitive design (see also McKay & Vanevery, 2000; Pasma & Regehr, 2019; SCPRTG, n.d.; Senator Kim Pate, n.d., Tedds et al., 2020).

This literature review aimed to examine the intersection between gender-based violence and poverty and to contextualize both historical and contemporary efforts toward implementing a

BIG, particularly through frameworks informed by this relationship. However, it did not comprehensively address the full range of recommendations proposed in the literature regarding the future development of BIG programs or interventions targeting poverty and gender-based violence (e.g., Dale et al., 2021a; Green et al., 2021; Mosher, 2008). Additionally, while Table 1 provides a chronological overview of BIG-related initiatives in Canada, there remains a notable gap in documented efforts between 1999 and 2011. Although the scope of this review did not allow for an in-depth exploration of this gap, further investigation may be warranted—particularly to assess potential factors of influence, such as political instability, which has previously played a role in the premature termination of certain BIG pilot projects (Ferdosi et al., 2020; Forget, 2018). Furthermore, several studies have highlighted the importance of public education and harm prevention strategies as mechanisms not only to support the construction and realization of a BIG (Dale et al., 2021a; Dwyer et al., 2023; Mosher, 2008; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), but to also facilitate transformation of existing social support programs (Withorn, 1993). These elements warrant further exploration in subsequent reviews of the current research landscape.

Ultimately, the existing literature on BIG, poverty, and violence against women—including studies that examine the intersections among all three—underscores BIG's significant potential to mitigate the harms caused by structural inequities (Grey, 2019; Zelleke, 2008). At the same time, it offers a conceptual framework that may help redefine the direction of society—a future that Green and colleagues (2021) describe as:

> a…place of mutual concern and mutual respect, where each person is supported to make the fullest contribution they can. Where no one is left behind. It is a place where government policy supports a strong sense of mutual concern, striving to use the full set of tools at its disposal to balance the desire for individual autonomy and the need for community. And it is a place where reciprocity needed to build and maintain public trust is at the core of public discourse. Where everyone, from those whose contributions bring them the largest incomes to the most vulnerable, is treated as an equal whose opinions are listened to with respect. (p. 6)

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Acknowledgements

The Thrive project at Huronia Transition Homes is grounded in collaboration and a deep commitment to centering the voices, knowledge, and lived expertise of women who have experienced both poverty and violence. We extend our profound gratitude to the women who generously shared their time, insight, and trust throughout this study. Their contributions are not only foundational to this work, but also essential to shaping more just, responsive, and humane policy and practice.

Strategic guidance for the Thrive project is provided through a multi-sector Stewardship Council that integrates academic, Indigenous, public health, and anti-violence perspectives, strengthening both community accountability and policy relevance. The Stewardship Council includes:

- Janet Mosher, York University
- Lauren Foote, Chigamik Community Health Centre
- Lisa Moreau, Georgian Bay Native Women's Association
- Christine Bushey, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
- Meaghan Chambers, Elizabeth Fry Society

We also gratefully acknowledge Amanda Wagner, who served as the Project Coordinator during the project's first year. Amanda's leadership, care, and dedication were instrumental in building relationships, stewarding the project's early development, and ensuring that women's voices remained central at every stage of this work.

This project was made possible through funding provided by:

Women and Gender Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

Understanding the Intersections of Violence, Poverty, and Women's Well-Being

Literature Review

Report prepared by Amanda Wagner and Desiree Salis for Huronia Transition Homes through The Thrive Project

Published: February 2026

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This project was made possible through funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada, the BIG Stewardship Advisory Council, and the women with lived experience who generously shared their knowledge and time.