

CASE STUDY | BUILDING THE BASIC INCOME NOW ATLANTIC CANADA MOVEMENT

WRITTEN BY THE TAMARACK INSTITUTE

A REGIONAL MOVEMENT WITH NATIONAL IMPACT

There is strong support for Basic Income in Atlantic Canada, and it continues to grow. Today, nearly half of Atlantic Canada's population – an estimated 1,151,704 people – live in a municipality that has passed a resolution in support of Basic Income. This momentum is not accidental – it is an achievement that has been driven by a powerful regional movement that has united a diverse network of advocates for Basic Income across Atlantic Canada.

This regional movement has influenced policymakers and positioned the region as a national leader, among others, in advancing Basic Income. This case study explores how advocates across Atlantic Canada came together to build a regional voice for Basic Income which has successfully amplified their impact both locally and collectively. Uniting under the banner of Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada, this diverse network of partners across the Atlantic region has made significant strides in advancing Basic Income. Specifically, their efforts have:

• Strengthened Municipal and Community Advocacy for Basic Income

- They've supported municipalities across Atlantic Canada to pass resolutions in support of Basic Income – 5 in New Brunswick (32.53% of the province's population), 2 in Newfoundland & Labrador (22%), 16 in Nova Scotia (74%), and 5 in Prince Edward Island (45%).
- They created practical <u>toolkits</u> to equip advocates to effectively engage their communities and municipalities to advance Basic Income.



 They've hosted opportunities for skills-building and peer learning through the network that have helped fuel and sustain momentum for the movement, including: two regional summits, bi-monthly network calls, and regional conferences on BI.

Unified and Amplified the Movement for Basic Income Across Atlantic Canada

- They developed a <u>Consensus Statement</u> outlining the Basic Income model that they are advocating for, uniting 484 individuals and 70 organizations behind a shared goal and approach.
- They hosted a <u>Basic Income Summit</u> that provided a space for elected officials across parties to connect on Basic Income, sparking federal-level discussions among MPs.

Helped Advance the National Movement for Basic Income

- Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada's work has been recognized by the Senate's Standing Committee on National Finance as a model for effective Basic Income advocacy.
- Canada's Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) <u>updated its Analysis of a</u>
 <u>National Guaranteed Basic Income</u> (GBI) based on Prince Edward Island's
 GBI Report, which Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada continues to support and advocate for.
- Participating communities have strengthened their own local credibility by joining Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada.



FROM LOCAL EFFORTS TO A REGIONAL MOVEMENT

Across Atlantic Canada, there were many local collaboratives working to end poverty who were recognizing Basic Income as an inroad to helping people out of poverty. However, too often these locally focused Basic Income efforts were operating independently of one another.

At the same time, Atlantic Canada members of Tamarack's Communities Ending Poverty network had long expressed a strong desire to do more together, but they struggled to find a unifying effort around which they could focus their capacity-building and advocacy. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the rollout of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) provided a tangible demonstration of how direct income supports could function, which rallied Basic Income advocates and created an ideal moment to advance Basic Income with renewed momentum.

The Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty, particularly a group of social justice-driven Nova Scotian advocates from the Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish, Coady Institute, and the Antigonish Women's Resource Committee, helped drive momentum to link the disconnected local Basic Income efforts unfolding across Atlantic Canada into a collective movement for Basic Income across the region. Inspired by the work of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (who had worked with Tamarack to share evidence around the effectiveness of Basic Income that they had learned as an Ontario Basic Income Pilot site), the Antigonish Coalition to end Povertya recognized Basic Income as an effective approach to income security that aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal commitment that "no one will be left behind," and saw Basic Income as a holistic and flexible policy solution with the potential to address flawed policies that too often exacerbate poverty.

To begin putting their ideas into action, the Sisters of St. Martha proposed an initial strategy that anti-poverty advocates from across Atlantic Canada could work on together: hosting elected officials from across the region to share, in one unified voice, their support of Basic Income.



This strategy evolved into the short-term goal of bringing together the region's elected officials to foster camaraderie and host dialogues around Basic Income through a summit. Elected officials who attended the summit shared that they had never collaborated across provincial jurisdictions before with other elected official advocates. This was an important early step in strengthening the movement's influence.

At the same time, Tamarack worked with its Communities Ending Poverty members in Atlantic Canada to convene advocates who were already championing Basic Income locally across the region and provided structural support to help Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada's core planning group identify collective goals and actions to advance a regional approach to the implementation of Basic Income. One of the group's priorities was to learn from the experience and wisdom of Basic Income pilots across other parts of Canada, drawing on learnings to guide and strengthen their work in the Atlantic region. Tamarack's partnership, initially requested by the Sisters of St Martha, was foundational for the development of Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada.

Not only has Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada helped advocates across Atlantic Canada amplify local calls to advance Basic Income, but it has transformed separate efforts into an influential regional movement with shared goals, strategic coordination and growing influence. By uniting isolated local Basic Income efforts into a coordinated regional network, Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada multiplied its influence, helping to secure municipal resolutions representing 48% of the population.

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: COLLABORATION & STRATEGY

Five key ingredients helped Tamarack, the Sisters of St. Martha, and Basic Income advocates from across Atlantic Canada build a regional movement for Basic Income. Strong partnerships laid the foundation, leveraging Tamarack's role as a national convenor. Coming together to advance shared goals while amplifying local efforts helped strengthen the movement. Key influencers helped expand and inform impact. Tools and resources helped build capacity.



And critically, advocates were able to coordinate their efforts to rally around political opportunities like all-party support for Basic Income in Prince Edward Island. The five key ingredients for building a regional movement are:

Backbone Support & Shared Motivation

- Tamarack, as a recognized and trusted convenor, and the Sisters of St. Martha, as grassroots champions, collaborated to establish the necessary infrastructure to co-create a regional Basic Income strategy.
- Tamarack's Communities Ending Poverty Network rallied members from across the region who were already advocating for Basic Income as a tool to help end poverty, to collaborate in solidarity.
- The core planning group's affirmation of different provincial and communityspecific strategies to advance Basic Income supported members to feel confident in their local work, and that confidence helped drive momentum within the region.

Unity, Not Uniformity

- Each province shaped its own approach to advancing Basic Income while being informed by, and sharing a commitment to strengthening regional efforts.
- Local actions that reflected different provincial and community-specific realities were amplified while alignment on regional shared goals was maintained.
- Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada's planning group identified provincial and community-specific policy opportunities that they could influence as a regional block.

Connecting the Right People in the Right Places

Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada built a diverse network of people, from a
variety of sectors, including engaged influencers with strong local networks:
municipal leaders, public health officials, faith groups, business leaders,
advocates - and intentionally connected their regional effort to national - and
intentionally connected their regional effort to national networks for Basic
Income like the Basic Income Canada Network.



- They connected and aligned influential communities across the region that were already working to advance Basic Income.
- The planning group learned from people who had already been prioritizing Basic Income either locally, regionally, or nationally.

Making Advocacy Clear and Easy

- The core planning group created Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada's Consensus Statement as a rallying point and an easy way for people to demonstrate their support for implementing Basic Income across the region.
- They also engaged members of the broader network to develop toolkits to make it easier for communities to advocate for Basic Income clearly and consistently.

Seizing the Political Moment

- Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada engaged federal MPs by hosting a regional Basic Income Summit.
- They continue to leverage PEI's success in getting unanimous support from the provincial government of PEI to implement Basic Income, to build momentum across the region.

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Through sharing [across the Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada network], we deepened our understanding of Basic Income and how to advocate for it, especially the jurisdictional work that needs to be done between the provinces and the federal government. We had access to a wider variety of effective and strategic advocacy activities. For us in Nova Scotia, being part of this group helped us to be more active at the municipal and local levels.

- The Sisters of St. Martha



LESSONS IN MOVEMENT-BUILDING & COLLECTIVE IMPACT

To create meaningful change, communities must sometimes lead the way rather than waiting for provincial or federal governments to act. While systemic barriers exist, when communities work together and align their efforts, they are often more successful at influencing higher levels of government. Together, they can help shape public policy by nurturing constructive relationships with government and then mobilizing their collective networks to create a groundswell of support for the policy changes they are trying to advance. Collective Impact – a proven framework for multisector collaboration to advance high-impact systems change – offers a useful approach for tackling complex challenges like poverty by supporting local efforts to align towards shared goals.

Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada's approach encompasses several of the conditions and preconditions of the Collective Impact framework. Specifically, a core group of **influential champions** who were already working collaboratively across sectors to address poverty in their local communities came together to develop a regional **common agenda** of shared goals and actions to advance Basic Income. They leveraged the **urgency for change** sparked by the rollout of CERB, and the growing desire across Atlantic Canada Communities Ending Poverty members to work together, by focusing on Basic Income as a viable and urgent pathway to addressing poverty.

Tamarack provided needed **backbone support** as Basic Income Now Atlantic Canada was forming, by connecting and coordinating local advocates across Atlantic Canada to leverage their influence to advance a regional movement for Basic Income.

With **adequate resources** for collaboration in place, Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada relied on **continuous communication** between the core planning group as well as with the larger network of members. They also identified opportunities to align local efforts to be mutually reinforcing, such as coordinated public engagement and advocacy to amplify the movement's impact across the region.



Though Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada members worked to engage different levels of government as part of their shared goals, they leveraged their collective strength and local networks to build quantifiable and unignorable support for Basic Income regionally. The success of their work to support 48% of Atlantic Canada's population to be represented under municipal resolutions in support of Basic Income proves that when communities come together, they can create the momentum needed to push for policy change.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR MOVEMENT-BUILDING

- 1. What are we hearing from people with lived and living experience about the issues we're trying to address?
- 2. Who are the champions across our communities who are already advocating for the changes we're seeking to make?
- 3. Where is there political will across our collective networks?
- 4. What lever points exist across different levels of government that we can impact with a collective voice?

THE ROAD AHEAD: WHAT'S NEXT FOR BASIC INCOME IN ATLANTIC CANADA?

The core planning group of Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada continues to meet monthly to refine their common agenda and to create opportunities for shared learning and capacity-building with the larger network. Over the next few months, their focus will be on:

 Supporting Prince Edward Island's Basic Income Demonstration Project, outlined in the proposal, "Proposing a Guaranteed Basic Income for PEL." The Federal/Provincial Working Group for a PEI GBI was created to study the data and administrative structure of a 5-7 year GBI demonstration project for PEI and how it could be moved forward. This project is about more than just PEI



but is intended to serve as a federal-provincial model that would demonstrate a process and inspire the formation of basic income programs in other jurisdictions (provincial, territorial or Indigenous nations).

- Using their collective voice to continue advocating for Basic Income with elected officials, calling on MLAs and MPs from all parties to prioritize a Guaranteed Basic Income in their party platforms.
- Continuing to advocate for Basic Income as a poverty elimination strategy
 vital to future-proofing Atlantic Canada. Basic Income is an effective policy
 lever for achieving income security and addressing poverty, but it also
 supports many other efforts to "leave no one behind," like improving
 access to food and housing, advancing gender and racial equity, and
 responding to the impacts of climate change.
- Strengthening national collaboration and alignment. Basic Income NOW
 Atlantic Canada has joined 26 organizations across the country in
 endorsing a new joint statement responding to the 2025 Federal Budget:
 <u>Canada's Most Important Capital Is Human To Build Canada Strong,</u>
 <u>Guarantee a Basic Income</u>. This collective statement highlights a Basic
 Income Guarantee as the vital missing piece needed to ensure that no one
 in Canada is left behind.

RELATED TOOLS & RESOURCES

- Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada Consensus Statement
- The <u>Atlantic Provinces Municipal Toolkit</u> and <u>checklist</u> which be used to work with municipalities to pass resolutions supporting basic income.
- <u>List of municipalities across Canada that have passed resolutions supporting Basic Income</u>.
- The <u>Movie Screening and Discussion Toolkit</u> can help local organizations or coalitions to organize gatherings to learn more about basic income and its impacts.
- Sign up for Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada's mailing list.
- Read <u>Collective Impact 3.0</u> by Liz Weaver and Mark Cabaj.