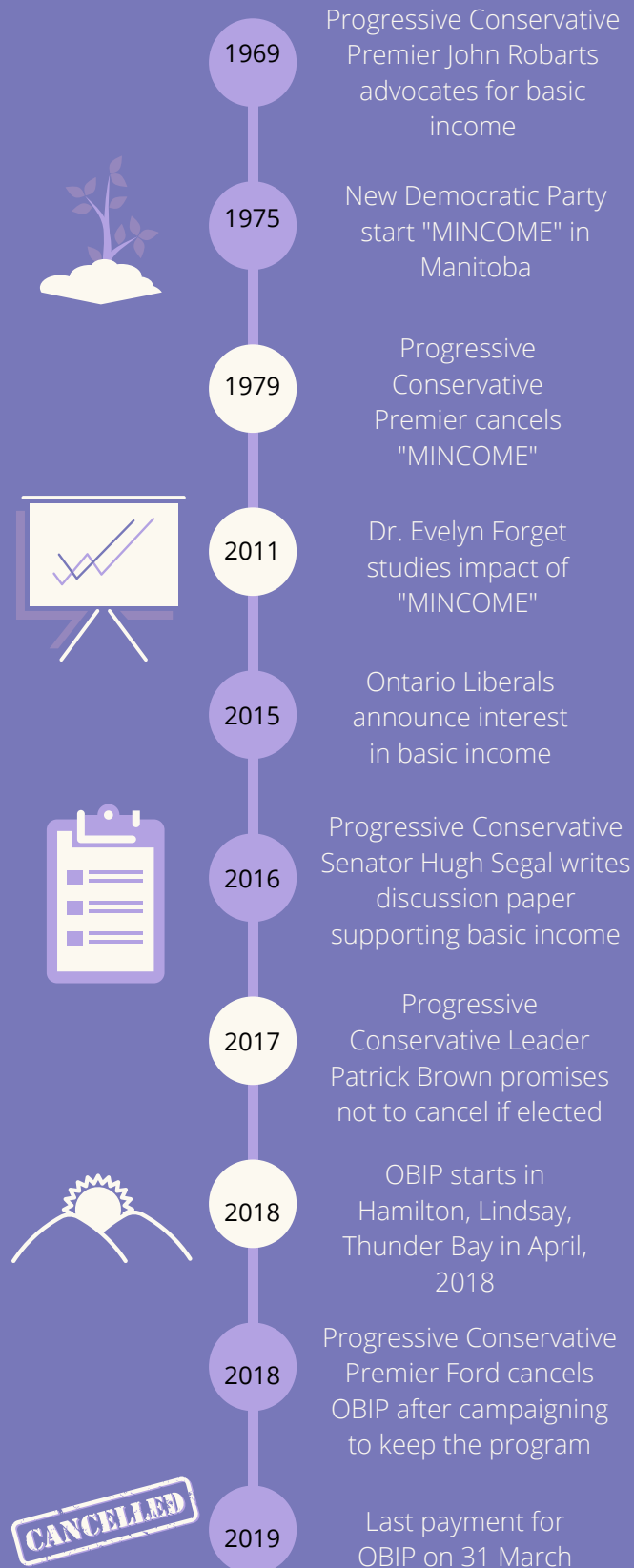


# EXPERIENCES WITH THE ONTARIO BASIC INCOME PILOT IN THUNDER BAY

## Timeline of Basic Income in Canada



## What Was the Ontario Basic Income Pilot?

- A program providing a minimum income for eligible Ontarians
- Individuals were issued **\$16,989** per year
- Couples were issued **\$24,027** per year
- Recipients with disabilities were eligible for an extra **\$6000** per year
- The main sites for this program were Hamilton, Lindsay and Thunder Bay
- The program was intended to run from 2018-2021
- The program was cancelled prematurely in 2018 with the last payment made in March, 2019



## What This Research Was About

- This research was focused only on recipients of the OBIP living in Thunder Bay
- **We wanted to know:**
  - How people experienced the Ontario Basic Income Pilot
  - How people experienced the cancellation
- We **interviewed 20 recipients** to answer these questions
- We also **interviewed 13 "key informants"**, people who knew about the impact of the OBIP and its cancellation but were not recipients
- Interviews took place **between November 2019 and March 2020**
- The research was conducted by Dr. R. Gokani and Janice Thibault from Lakehead University's School of Social Work



# WHAT PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE ONTARIO BASIC INCOME PILOT?

## Recipients Could Afford Healthier and Sufficient Food

"I like to eat healthfully and sometimes, well fruits and vegetables and that type of food is very expensive. So I didn't [when on ODSP]. When I was on the Ontario basic income, I didn't have to worry about that."



"I would have no breakfast before basic income. I just couldn't afford breakfast."

## Recipients Felt Better Mentally and Physically

"[Basic income] helps you snap out of your depression. It's just kind of like I was able to I don't know, just have more time to deal with my mental health in general you know?"



"The stress and anxiety went away, actually, which was important to me because you could get up in the morning saying, yes, this cheque coming at the end of the month for my rent...[basic income gave] peace of mind."

## Recipients Planned to Improve Education and Employment



"Like I wanted to start a business once I graduated and I would have the money to pay for dues...[in addition] if I was on a basic income...I could use the money from basic income for the start up fees"

"And basic income was like, this is what your life could look like with a bit more and got me thinking like, how can I continue getting this a little bit more after basic income? Which is why I kind of started working towards my high school because it got me thinking."



## Recipients Had More Money For Basic Needs

"It was just nice not to stress about buying the simplest things. And not having to worry about paying my bills. Like I had an appliance break down and I was able to get a loan. And I was able to start paying that off...and knowing that if I was given a prescription for something, I didn't have to worry if I could afford it because I could."

"My disposable income was basically disposed of [before basic income]"



## Recipients Felt Humanized

"It made me feel like a person, like I don't have to scrape by and it made me feel like I was on the same level as regular people."



"It gave us dignity. Dignity means to me that when you go out in the world, you're not frowned upon by society. You can walk with your head up a little higher because you feel like you belong somewhere and that you're okay and you're with your disabilities. You're gonna get looked after."

## Recipients Were Able To Participate In The Community

"If you wanted to go to a movie you could go to a movie, or if you want to participate in anything that costs any money, you could do it...You know, so think it was just so nice to be able to whatever it was, go out for lunch or take my grandchildren to McDonald's or go to Homesense and buy something frivolous."

"Well, I certainly think it works because, you know, it would be because it allows people to become more and more able to participate in society because they have the income."



[illegible][illegible]

**\*THE ABOVE ARE GENERAL TERMS RECIPIENTS USED TO DESCRIBE THEIR DISABILITIES AND HEALTH CONDITIONS**

# OTHER THINGS RECIPIENTS TOLD US

## Recipients Discussed Income Inequality and Class Consciousness

"[Doug Ford's] rich so he doesn't understand [rich people] don't understand what it's like to stand in line at a food bank. To depend on others for charity...[the cancellation] pissed us off. And you can't really blame us because it's like, you know, some rich guy comes along and says, oh, no, you don't get that."



"Please, can't we just try to find a way to survive? We want to get along. We want to be able to eat. We want to be able to pay our bills. And we want to be able to enjoy life a little bit. Just a little bit. Not asking for a lot. I mean, I want to just get along and survive. But when you're always broke, when you're always scratching, then you're always thinking, how come them how come not me."

## Most Recipients Expressed Some Difficulty with Getting or Keeping Work

"I have Crohn's disease and osteoarthritis and probably a few other things at this point that nobody's really discussed, but it's made working full time impossible."

"When the basic income pilot came along, it was like hope, you know, it's like winning a lottery per say. I was struggling. I had lost my job because of my mental health."



"I believe that we are not born into this world to do nothing but suffer and that we should have a generosity of spirit toward our fellow human beings and want the best for them. And if I have a steak and I'm I've worked for it, I'm not going to say to you, if you don't have a job, you know, too bad, you know"

"I think any time that you get off the bottom rung of the mess, like in the hierarchy of needs Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Life is always better. You don't want a civilization on the bottom rung. There is no community activity. There's no community involvement."

"I think that the doors that open when folks actually have some income security would actually result in a better overall economy for everyone, because, you know, it does provide access to education, access to better housing, better opportunities to be able to have your basic needs met."

