

# Why a Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Matters to Municipalities

**Basic Income Guarantee (BIG): an idea whose time has come**

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Presented by:

**Yarmouth County Community Health Board**

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# 2025-2029 Western Zone Community Health Plan



Developed through Public Engagement & Data collection



4 Broad priorities as well as Commitments to Community



A BIG links to Access to Basic Needs (Food, Housing, Income security)



A BIG links to Mental Health

## Western Zone Community Health Plan 2025-2029

### Community Health Boards:

Lunenburg County, Queens, Clare, Digby and Area, Shelburne County, Yarmouth County, Annapolis, East Kings, Kings West



# A Basic Income Guarantee (BIG): A Promising Approach

A Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) is an **income-tested**, **targeted**, and **unconditional** cash transfer from government to individuals who need it most, that would enable everyone in Canada to meet their basic needs, participate in society, and live in dignity, regardless of work status.

## Some Guiding Principles for BIG:

- universally accessible
- unconditional, subject to income & residency requirements
- sufficient - a livable amount
- respectful of autonomy
- component of a social safety net

## What is poverty?

Poverty is a condition where individuals lack the resources, means, choices, and power to maintain a basic standard of living and participate fully in society.

***Poverty is a policy choice... and it's an expensive choice.***

# Poverty is connected to

## **food insecurity**

8.4% of Nova Scotians live with severe food insecurity, they cost our healthcare system 2x as much as food secure individuals

## **homelessness**

Provincial spending in response to homelessness increased by \$10.5M in the 2025-26 Budget, and healthcare costs are 6x higher for those experiencing homelessness

## **Health care costs**

Those experiencing poverty are more likely to visit the emergency department and more likely to use mental health services

# Current Targeted BIG Programs

Canada already has targeted programs:

- Canada Child Benefit for families
- OAS/GIS for low-income seniors
- Canada Workers Benefit
- Canada Disability Benefit



**Isn't it time for a BIG for all?**

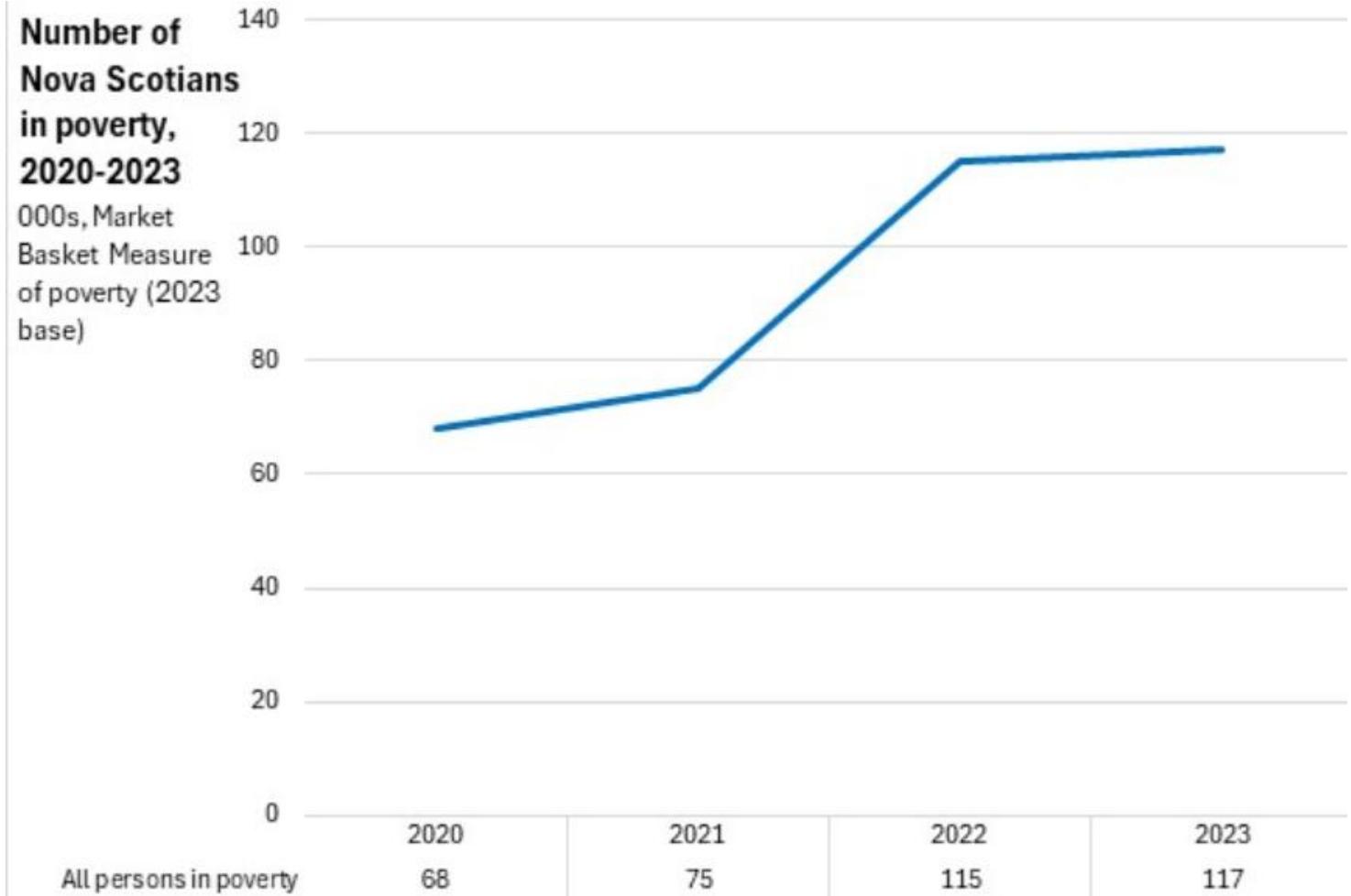
**Isn't it time that it's a livable amount?**

# Poverty rates have been climbing since 2020

**NS Poverty Rate is 11.5% (MBM 2023)**

**Provisional estimates for 2024 shows poverty at 12.8%**

**For comparison, Canada's Poverty rate is 10.9% (MBM 2023)**



Source: Canadian Income Survey 2023 (MBM)

# Yarmouth Child Poverty (Under age 18)

## Yarmouth County

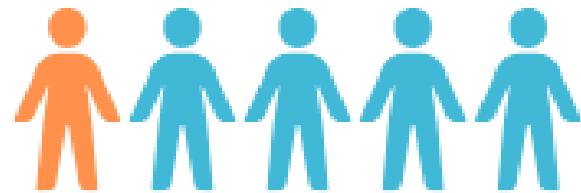
Child poverty rate	% change from 2021
28.0%	+15.2%



**1 in 5** children live in poverty  
in Yarmouth County

## Nova Scotia

Child poverty rate	% change from 2021
23.8%	+16%



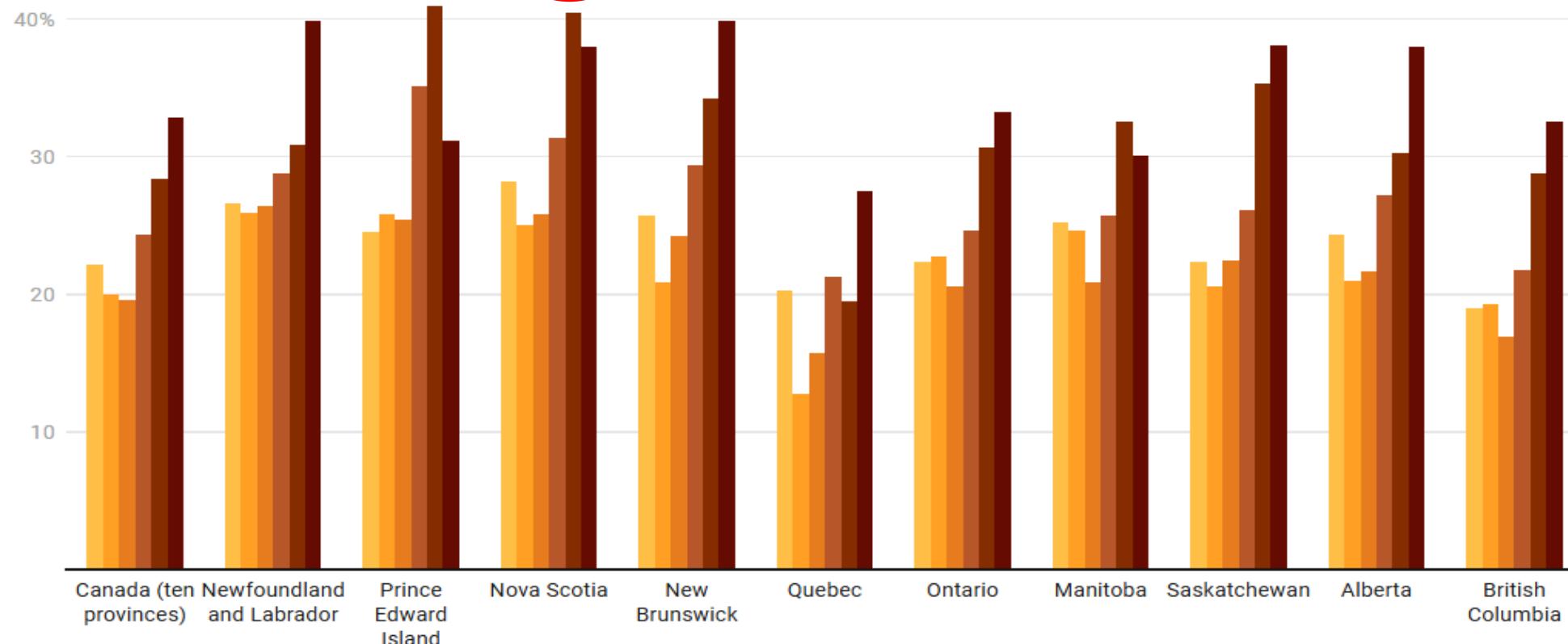
**1 in 5** children live in  
poverty in NS

## Percentage of children under 18 living in food-insecure households by province, 2019-2024

Hover for percentages

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024

38%



# Why Should Municipalities Care about BIG?

- **Poverty impacts our communities and the costs of poverty are downloaded onto municipalities.**
- **Municipalities represent an important voice in social policy discussions at all levels:** they are often on the front lines, working to ensure that residents and communities lead happy, healthy, sustainable, and productive lives.

# Why Should Municipalities Care About BIG?

## ***BIG recipients experience:***

- improved mental & physical health
- better access to medication, nutritious food & transportation
- decreased poverty rates
- reduced homelessness
- improved financial security

# Why Should Municipalities Care About BIG?

## ***BIG communities experience:***

- decreased strain on the health care system
- decreased crime = reduced pressure on the justice system
- increased high school completion & employment training
- increased local spending = builds the local economy
- increased entrepreneurship

# What's Happening Now?

- Senate Bill S-206: An Act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income (committee stage)
- Bill C-253 (House of Commons): An act to develop a national framework for a GBI
- Proposed PEI Demonstration Project and all-party committee
- NFLD also has all-party committee looking at BIG
- Nova Scotia Private Members Bill 41: The Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot Project Act

# The PEI Demonstration Project

The PEI demonstration project has proposed the following:

- Implemented through the tax system
- Replaces social assistance
- Other financial programs kept in place (Child Benefits, OAS/GIS, Disability benefits)

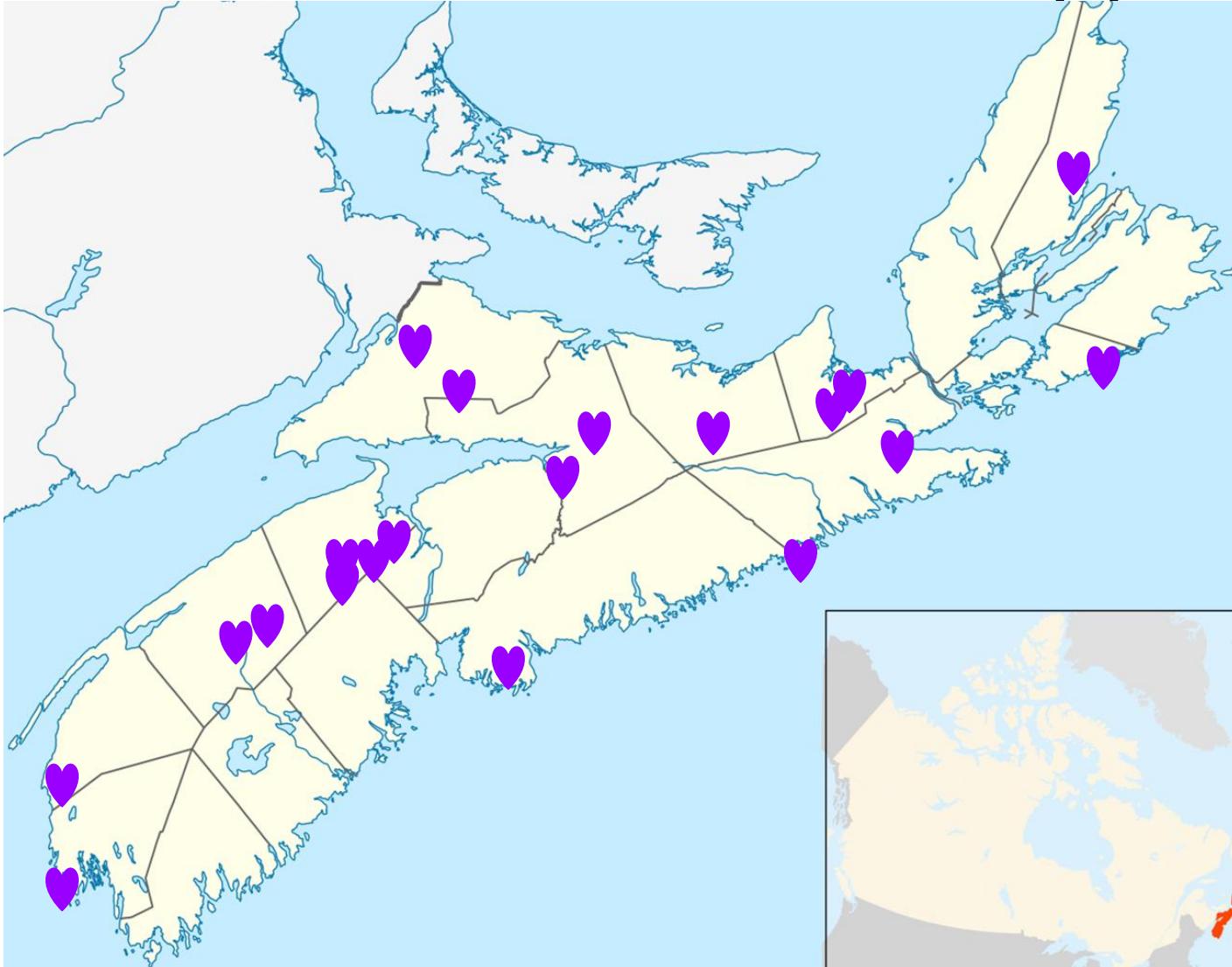
# Our Asks to Council

1. That Warden & Council write a letter to the Prime Minister Mark Carney, copy MP Chris d'Entremont, requesting they honour the FED-PROV BIG working group in PEI and begin talks to establish a similar working group with Nova Scotia.
2. That Warden & Council write a letter to the Premier Tim Houston, copy MLA Colton LeBlanc requesting that the province establish an all-party committee of the NS legislature to examine the implementation of a basic income guarantee program for Nova Scotia. (A Framework)

# Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities passed a motion  
*'That the Board of Directors, based on the recommendation from the Equity & Community Wellbeing Committee, request that an all-party committee of the provincial legislature study the feasibility of a basic income guarantee program and that this be communicated to the province. '*

# NS Municipalities that Have Passed Resolutions Supporting a BIG



As of November 2025, the Municipal Representatives of ***more than 80% the population of Nova Scotia*** support BIG

# Thank you! Questions?

**“The feds have the money, the province has the jurisdiction, and the city has the problems.”**

**The Honourable Mike Savage, ONS Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia**

# References

1. Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada (n.d.). [Consensus Statement](#)
2. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2021). [The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces](#)
3. Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (2025). [A Distributional Analysis of a National Guaranteed Basic Income - Update](#)
4. Richard et al. (2024). [Disparities in healthcare costs of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, Canada in the post COVID-19 pandemic era: a matched cohort study](#)
5. Men et al. (2020). [Association between household food insecurity and mortality in Canada: a population-based retrospective cohort study](#)
6. Coalition Canada Basic Income (2024). [Case for Basic Income for Criminal Justice](#)
7. [Corrections Key Indicators, 2023-24](#). NS Dept of Justice Policy & Information Branch