



Community Summary Report #31

Location: Prince Edward Island

Partner Name: PEI Working Group for Livable Income /
Cooper Institute

Livelihoods, Incomes and Community Resilience for a Net-Zero Canada
Community Conversation
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
Thursday, January 27th, 2022

Hosted by the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income and Cooper Institute

This report serves several purposes. As much as it is a record of proceedings, it is a recognition and appreciation of the contributions of 45 people took time out of what has been described as the “longest January in history” to join and participate with enthusiasm in yet another zoom meeting. Everyone was generous in their listening and thoughtful in their comments. As always, we are thankful for the ten people who, prior to the event, accepted to be leaders and reporters in the breakout rooms. The ideas that emerged from the discussions needed to be recorded and shared. There is material here that could be used as a starting point for future discussion and action planning. The report will also be shared with the Green Resilience Project team, who will draw on its contents as they compile the results of discussions that have taken place in 30 other communities, and endeavour to use the collective findings in advocacy for policy change.

We’ve divided the PEI report into four sections:

1. Introduction and Background
 2. Some Experiences of PEI Realities
 3. The Road Ahead
 4. Future Outlooks
- Appendix 1: Discussion Notes
Appendix 2: About the hosts

1. Setting the Stage: Introduction and Background

The Green Resilience Project provided a welcome opportunity for the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income and Cooper Institute to convene a timely and important community conversation, one aimed at better understanding how the uncertainties brought on by climate change, income insecurity, inequality and discrimination overlap in the lives of people residing in Prince Edward Island. This gathering was a chance to consider the strengths we can draw on, and the barriers we must overcome as we build resilient communities. Looking ahead, we discussed not just what we might do to develop that resilience, but how we must do it.

Julie Pellissier-Lush, Mi’kmaq poet and actor, storyteller and knowledge keeper welcomed everyone, in peace and friendship. The gathering of ~45 people took place (virtually) on the unceded territory of Mi’kma’ki. Julie shared one of her poems, “When Things Are Bad”, which she said was inspired by a teaching from an elder, and which she thought might be a useful tool for navigating such big issues as income security, the climate crisis and community resilience. For these times, and for this discussion, it could be helpful to allow

ourselves to step away when we feel overwhelmed, to take a breath, to release any negative energy and to come back re-energized, ready to bring good things to the conversation.

Michelle Jay, member of the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income (WGLI) provided some background and local context. Since 2013, WGLI has promoted Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) as the most effective way to eliminate poverty, and to ensure that everybody is provided with a truly livable income. That is, an income that goes beyond the bare necessities and supports people to, for example, participate in their community and take advantage of learning or training opportunities should they wish to do so. After organizing many community conversations over several years, the group developed a set of “BIG” principles based on what they heard from people. BIG must be, among other things: universal, unconditional; recognize peoples’ different needs; based on truly livable income; promote environmental health and sustainability; and it must be community-led.

Environmental intersectionality highlights how marginalized groups with different identities are affected in a wide variety of ways, stemming from the environmental injustices that they endure. It also considers how social injustice affects the natural environment. Michelle encouraged the group to think about questions related to income inequality, the climate crisis and community resilience within that context.

It's clear that we need all our voices at the table. We need to ask, how do anti-racism work and addressing the rights of Indigenous peoples connect with climate and income? We must look at our racist past, our colonial past and our colonial present, and strive to understand how these intersect, and how they make and keep people poor. We've seen most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic that in any crisis it's the most vulnerable, the poorest among us who are most affected. We may be in this together, but we are all in different boats with different resources at our disposal.

Janet Patterfung, manager of the Green Resilience Project then provided some information about the larger, national project. The project was developed as a platform for exploring the links between income security, climate change and community resilience. It is based on the understanding that income security is a necessary foundation for allowing individuals and communities to take part in the transition to a lower-carbon economy. Income shapes our ability to navigate crises, including the climate crisis.

The project is organizing a series of 30 community conversations based on questions such as: What will it take in our community to be resilient to the changes resulting from the climate crisis? How could things be different? What can we do? The discussions could be around big, blue-sky issues, or smaller, more specific actions or steps.

Once the conversations have all been held, the reports will be compiled, and ideas for next steps or actions will be developed and brought before policy/decision-makers.

2. Some Experiences of PEI Realities

While the effects of the climate emergency and the unequal distribution of wealth on individuals and communities are global in nature, they can play out in different ways, or take

different forms in different parts of the world, including in Prince Edward Island. In the PEI Green Resilience discussion, participants identified overarching issues and aspects of our lives that are affected by these converging crises and they described in clear terms how these are experienced by people and communities in this province.

Income inequality is not accidental, nor does it exist in a vacuum. As one participant pointed out, *“We talked a lot about income inequality, but I want to point out that inequity allows income inequality and allows this to be okay by dominant society. Even if we do have a universal basic income to help address income inequality, there are still so many intersectional inequalities that will take place and continue to be a burden. So, the challenge for us is to think beyond basic income. What other forces are at play? How do we address those forces? Because that’s really the root cause. Income inequality is the result of those forces.”*

The extent of poverty in Prince Edward Island is significant. The province typically has among the lowest wages in the country. It was noted that 40% of people living in the province would qualify for Basic Income. The effects of poverty are unequally distributed and amplified among certain groups including BIPOC community members, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and newcomers to Canada.

Participants in the PEI discussion spoke about the impacts of climate change on food security, community engagement, work and mobility, and how these were connected to income inequality.

Freedom: Privilege brings with it certain freedoms. People who are financially secure have more freedom to invest in programs and goods which help to reduce their carbon footprint. People with fewer resources, less income, are not as free to engage in activities or programs that mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. Government programs aimed at encouraging energy efficiency including home retrofitting, purchase of electric vehicles, solar panels, heat pumps and such are for the most part available only to a class of people who own property. People on low incomes who don’t own their home (30% of PEI residents) are largely left out. As one participant noted, *“carbon tax funds are spent on incentive programs which go to benefit people who could pay for them if they needed to or wanted to”*.

It was noted several times during our discussions that Prince Edward Island lacks an Island-wide public transit system. That means people living in rural areas in what is essentially a rural province are dependent on their own, or their neighbour’s personal vehicles to shop for groceries, go to medical appointments and participate in their communities. Transportation accounts for 44% of PEI’s greenhouse gas emissions, a number that could be lowered with an affordable, Island-wide public transit system. The absence of public transit disproportionately affects people who are not able to afford a car.

When people are struggling to meet their basic needs, they don’t usually have the time or energy - the freedom - to engage in campaigns or activities aimed at influencing public policy. This is something that can easily be taken for granted. Being part of a movement or campaign is empowering. The benefits, including increased feelings of hopefulness and feeling connected to others in a common cause, are not available to people who literally can’t afford to be involved.

A vulnerable workforce: Prince Edward Island's economy is highly dependent on three sectors, all of which are vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis, fishing, farming and tourism. The Gulf of St Lawrence, the health of which is essential to our fisheries, is warming at an alarming rate; extreme weather events can cause devastation of crops, erosion of soil and damage to water and aquatic life; variations in seasons due to climate change may affect farming, fishing and tourism.

Farm workers, fish processing workers and seasonal workers in the tourism industry are particularly vulnerable. The climate crisis adds to the precarious nature of their work, which is typically low-waged and seasonal. This is particularly true of migrant workers, whose presence in Canada is precarious at the best of times due to a federal program that virtually indentures workers to a single employer and makes it extremely difficult to become a permanent resident.

Food security: Approximately 14% of PEI's population, or almost 20,000 people experience food insecurity. We know that, in general, food insecurity rates are higher among certain demographics including BIPOC communities. According to various international bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, climate change is causing disruptions in the global food system, due to among other things, droughts and flooding. PEI, while being very much an agricultural province, exports much of what is produced here, and is highly dependent on food imports. It is not much of a stretch to suggest that shortages and increased prices of food are experienced more acutely by people who are surviving on low incomes.

3. The Road Ahead

The PEI Green Resilience Conversation places the future of community resilience within the context of the obstacles and strengths inherent in this community. These in turn are subjected to a "root-cause" analysis and then placed within the framework of the need for deep-rooted changes in focus and direction.

Obstacles in the PEI Community

Participants in the PEI conversation identified the pervasive power of the corporate sector which, for example, puts large-scale potato production, at the center of economic activity. The industrial corporate model of agriculture undermines the efforts of small farmers who aim for sustainability, and the protection of land and water. The corporations have inordinate political influence with their "access to government".

Progress is measured by corporate bottom-line economics, the current system which is designed to facilitate the further enrichment of the wealthy. Participants identified this system by name as "capitalism". It is recognized that adherence to this system leaves unquestioned and unmitigated innumerable inequities. These inequities are identified in the limited access which marginalized populations have to: affordable housing, food security, adequate healthcare-especially mental healthcare, affordable and appropriate transportation.

The economic system is geared to create poverty which ensures in poverty rates will remain high in Prince Edward Island.

It is clear that poverty is not evenly distributed. There is a rural-urban imbalance. Women experience poverty more acutely than men. People with disabilities are especially affected. The BIPOC community faces racism which permeates every aspect of life and adds to other vulnerabilities. The LGBTQ 2S+ community continues to be subject to discrimination.

In PEI, people may be very politically involved, but many feel they are distanced from actual political power. The electoral system, First Past the Post, is identified as an alienating factor.

Changes to the environmental, social, cultural political and economic systems require a lot of energy and attention, which is often in short supply.

Strengths of the PEI Community

Many of the strengths identified by the PEI conversation are related to geography, cultural assets and traditions. It is noted that as usual many of the strengths are accompanied by corresponding weaknesses

Prince Edward Island is a small jurisdiction having all the trappings of a full province with a population of a mere 160,000. The community is highly organized (though that level of organization and active engagement is out of range for the many people who are marginalized by race, income, gender preferences, abilities, gender, and age).

There is a high level of cooperation among organizations working on social justice issues. Many of these identify as: formal coalitions, networks, working groups, alliances and unions.

A number of groups are already involved collaboratively on concerns related to climate change and a multitude of environmental issues and others on advocacy related to basic income. There are many formal and informal networks some of them going back generations. Most people have wide circles of acquaintances, and many are in tight knit groupings either of traditional and/or of family relationships.

Perhaps surprisingly, participants identified the PEI Government as a possible asset. This is related to close personal connections possible in a small jurisdiction between the people and political leaders. It was noted that people feel that, knowing their politicians, they have access to political power. Also currently, with a third party as official opposition, and with the governing party giving importance to collaboration, it is possible to expect some progressive legislation.

The PEI conversation identified the strength of having three communities of Indigenous communities (two First Nations and the Native Council) with their unique knowledge of place. There is hope in the increasing influence of BIPOC USHR, which stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour United for Strength, Home, Relationship, a not-for-profit organization, providing support and advocacy to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) folks living on Prince Edward Island.

Improved welcoming of newcomers is recognized as an asset. The community is enriched and strengthened by new immigrants. The LGBTQ 2S+ voice is becoming louder and clearer and adding authenticity and strength to the community.

There are many hopeful signs that climate change is slowly making its way into the Island's consciousness and discourse. This growing awareness and healthy anxiety is due to many factors: the number of people who are witnessing the erosion of the Island; the weekly public demonstration of Fridays for the Future; the initiatives of the University of Prince Edward Island's climate research lab; the Government of PEI's incentives encouraging alternative energy sources and uses; the many non-governmental individuals and organizations identifying the climate change as an Emergency.

“PEI has an opportunity for producing more income security for communities across the Island. A fundamental path forward is economic decarbonization, reducing our carbon emissions by transitioning from carbon-based energy sources to non-carbon-based energy sources. PEI has great potential with wind energy. Expanding renewable energy sources has been a way other island communities have increased income security. The Faro islands were losing money to import carbon-based energy. They transitioned to renewable energy, this improved income security, as did an island in Denmark called Samsø.”

Similarly, there is a steady growth in awareness and engagement around basic income guarantee. Over the past ten years the community has taken the lead on identifying PEI as an ideal launching place for Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) for all of Canada. PEI politicians have had three unanimous votes in the Legislature to move this program forward with the Federal Government. A cross-Canada basic income advocacy coalition is championing PEI as a starting place for BIG.

Although the climate change movement and the basic income movement have each identified the connections between the two issues, the first deliberate community conversation on their convergence has been the Green Resilience Project.

4. Future Outlooks

Participants in PEI Green Resilience conversation appreciate being part of a national endeavour which works toward climate justice and income equity. The participants recognize that there is need to re-focus. The deliberation identified five themes for movement toward a resilient community: intersectionality; convergence; truth and reconciliation; decolonization; oppressive and invasive power of the capitalist system; collectivity/inclusion.

Intersectionality

As PEI residents consider improving community resilience, we are compelled to internalize and give expression to the interconnected nature of racism, ageism, ableism, economic disparity, gender discrimination, and extractive entitlement. All of these create and mutually support systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Convergence

As social movements in PEI continue forward with increased strength together, there is need for an alignment of common values and goals which tend towards inclusion. This is particularly true of the organizations advocating for: basic income, food security and affordable housing; racial equity rights; trade justice; migrant worker rights; ability rights; women's rights; gender diversity rights; and rights of the planet related to climate change; the protection of land and water; and democratic transformation.

Truth and Reconciliation

There is no resilient community, no serious climate change work, and no progress in distribution of wealth without a deep and active commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. This means acknowledging the truth of Canada's treacherous history with Indigenous peoples. It means being truthful about our current relationships (or lack thereof). It means making amends for the past and working towards new agreements, where possible. "Without acknowledging the process of reconciliation, and the discussion around land acknowledgement, it will be difficult to move on with climate justice. There is risk of tokenizing the relationship. (We) need to be cautious about that. What is the approach? What is the intended outcome? Is it allyship, partnership? There is need to incorporate people from all groups in the research, the training, understanding the settler colonial history (that) Canada is built upon, understanding why Canada is where it is with climate: it's not because of Indigenous people, it's because settlers destroy the environment."

De-colonization

The first shocking historical approach of the European powers and settlers in their colonizing campaigns was that they "discovered un-peopled lands", open for settler ownership and exploitation. They did not even see the Indigenous People who lived on those lands for centuries. Therefore, decolonization in relation to Indigenous People involves the ongoing recognition of who Indigenous Peoples are and re-establishing their right to be here.

"It's important that any/all advocacy work must center, support, and advance decolonization. Making any system more 'fair' while we continue to have an exploitative and extractive relationship with Indigenous Peoples and their land is wrong. It will also do nothing to address climate, environmental, and social crises."

Oppressive and invasive power of the capitalist system

One group in the PEI conversation identified the capitalist system itself as a colonizer of the majority of the population, with its exploitative and extractive relationships. This puts another meaning on the word "decolonize". The capitalist system includes and is built on many inter-related systems of oppression, especially affecting marginalized populations.

"So, all of these things need to be addressed together. We do need to discuss low carbon transition, but we need to go beyond just preserving current power structures. Financial incentivization tends to harm marginalized people and benefit the privileged. Government is

supporting community organizations, like anti-racism organizations, but I'm not sure they're involved in the decision-making process in terms of climate crisis work.”

Collectivity and Inclusion

Members of the conversation stressed the importance of moving toward community-based solutions, as opposed to individualistic approaches which is so foundational to capitalism. This is rampant today in the USA and in Canada. The public educational system gives precedence to individual development rather than a sense of collectivity. Young people who are engaged in social transformation are strong, and they do this in spite of the system.

Awareness at a young age is important. Children have the right to know about Indigenous people, about the land, sea, water, and air. These are essential for curriculum in the school.

The responsibility for building a resilient community and a just transition belongs to everybody. And the positive outcomes belong to everybody. The challenge to social change organizations: make room for everybody with a will to make progressive change.

Appendix 1: Discussion Notes

Group 1 - Question 1

How is the climate emergency and the unequal distribution of wealth affecting you, your family and your PEI Community as a whole and how are these effects unique to PEI?

- Income gives people freedom. When people have disposable income, they are better able to adjust to climate change. People with no disposable income are more likely to experience negative impacts.
- Climate change creates problems in the food system and affects food security by reducing the availability and increasing the costs of healthy food. People with less disposable income are more likely to be affected by food insecurity.
- PEI has among the lowest wages/incomes in the country and so we are more affected by the rising costs of food. This is made worse by a lack of affordable housing. Since COVID, the gap between the rich and poor on PEI has widened.
- Demographics of PEI: PEI being rural and having an aging population diminishes our ability to be resilient.
- Prince Edward Island is very much a rural community which makes transportation more critical, more difficult and more expensive. (Lack of public transport means reliance on personal vehicles, which contributes more to climate change, and is more expensive.)
- Agriculture is one of the main contributors to Prince Edward Island's economy. Farmers need to use equipment that is heavily reliant on fossil fuels, adding to the crisis, but also making them more vulnerable to rising costs.
- We are an island. Especially on Lennox Island, you can see the erosion on an annual basis -we are losing meters of land. The climate crisis (and related extreme weather events such as heavy rains) is causing erosion of land and loss of soil.
- We are a province dependant on several fisheries which are being affected by ocean warming and rising sea levels. (Gulf of St. Lawrence temperatures are rising at an alarming rate.)
- According to the [PEI Climate Change Risk Assessment](#) completed in 2021, climate change is causing shifting in seasons, which affects fishing and farming and tourism. As climate change affects our primary industries, we will see displacement and relocation of the people who rely on them for income. Those on lower incomes have fewer resources to adapt.
- Much of the reason that climate change is not currently high on the agenda for the average Islander is that in this COVID-19 crisis, many are feeling vulnerable and unsafe. Young families are struggling to get their basic needs met, working from home, on-line learning for children, experiencing stress because of regulations and restrictions in their jobs or even loss of jobs. The increased cost of food, housing and heating has affected many who were already having trouble in making ends meet.

Childcare takes much energy and is especially challenging as a single parent. As a result, people don't have time or energy to be involved in volunteer work, to lobby or protest for needed changes to legislation regarding climate change. They need to focus on meeting basic needs.

- There is a serious chance that PEI will be affected by drought since agricultural demands are greater and we have a limited supply of fresh water.
- There is also the high cost of renewable energy resources and inequity in being able to afford things like heat pumps, wind and solar energy, electric transportation (bikes/cars). Most rebates are only available to homeowners, and people who can afford to purchase and operate vehicles.

Question 2 – Group 2

How are the climate emergency and insufficient income connected to each other?

- People who lack income are more affected by the impacts of climate change. The impacts include less secure housing, and decreased access to water.
- Urban planning can make people living in poverty more vulnerable, for example when affordable housing is built in areas that are more vulnerable or precarious.
- Lack of public transit - if this were addressed could be a way for people (including those who can't afford a car) to be involved in mitigating climate change.
- In understanding the connections between the climate emergency and insufficient income, it is important to recognize and understand the demographics of who is experiencing poverty, and intersecting identities. And to understand that poverty is not accidental. **Income is not the only lens through which to understand peoples' abilities to mitigate effects of climate change.**
- Climate change destabilizes countries and contributes to increased conflict, in places like Syria and Darfur for example.
- Rural communities more exposed and less able to mitigate climate change due to less income and capital than larger urban areas. Just as a lot of policy initiatives are geared to people who have capital, this is also true at a community level. Rural or small communities have fewer resources, less ability to mitigate effects of climate change.
- People who work in resource-based economies/livelihoods such as fishing and farming are more vulnerable.
- Agriculture is a high-risk venture, made even riskier by climate change. This is a sector that could be helped by basic income.
- Rising costs of food due to climate change, contributes to food insecurity.
- Need for increased agriculture production but in a different, more sustainable way. Smaller scale agriculture could be one way of making it possible for people to engage in farming.

- COVID 19 has shown the vulnerability and precarious nature of our lives, like the climate emergency does and will.
- Policy changes by governments to mitigate climate change are focused on people or communities who have income and capital already. For example, heat pump program for homeowners who are low income. With the systems in place most people with the income eligible cannot afford to buy a home. Electric cars and incentives are geared at people with relative means and not accessible for those most vulnerable.
- Discussion around land use, the need for changes to land use and to support people to live more sustainably and small scale. The need for increased education around natural resources, land use, soil quality and restoration.
- Important to be mindful of local realities and different demographics.
- We need a vision that includes everyone at all stages of the process and that considers and addresses these complex issues.

Question 3 – Group 3

a) **What are some of the major strengths of the PEI community which help us to respond to the challenges of the climate emergency and the level of poverty that affects us all?**

- The new UPEI climate lab outside Morell, which trains researchers and reports on climate impacts.
- The number of students graduating from UPEI's Climate programs.
- Our island community – informal networks abound.
- In such a small place, people know one another, we have close connections with people in positions of influence, and easier access to governing bodies (politicians) - on a small island – motivated individuals can have an impact.
- There is strength in working together on these issues.
- Local tradition and family relationships – strong ties to previous generations.
- Green Party is currently in opposition – the government is willing to cooperate, creating possibilities for progressive legislation.
- Many organizations on the island are working together to save the environment
- Several Island groups are working on BIG, this is an important issue gaining traction.
- Indigenous communities with significant knowledge, who can guide actions associated with the climate crisis.
- Potential for a local and more sustainable food system.

- Welcoming newcomers and others to the Island and identifying intersectionality with regards to race, food security, equity, housing, environment and other barriers to participating in the community.

b) What are some obstacles which prevent the community from responding?

- Power of large potato processors (industrial agriculture) and their access to government that can undermine efforts of small farmers in the agricultural sector.
- Marginalized communities – there are a lot of incentives for things such as solar panels that are inaccessible to people affected by low income, food insecurity.
- Gaps in the mental health care system.
- Infrastructure is lacking to support those who are marginalized.
- Inequities within healthcare, income systems, food systems, housing.
- Housing that may be inaccessible or inappropriate.
- Racism: those in positions of privilege and others not realizing racism is happening, even though we are a small island and there's not much space between us, communities aren't always connecting with one another.
- Significant poverty: 40% of people in the province would qualify for Basic Income; unequal distribution of/amplification of the effects of poverty among BIPOC community members, people with disabilities, LGBTQ community, newcomers.
- Poverty is linked to racism
- Not seeing environment crisis as an intersectional issue is a barrier.
- Political system as a barrier going forward to create sustainable change – First-Past-the-Post versus Proportional Representation. How to make sustainable change with governments changing every 4 years? How much say does the public actually have?
- PEI does not have a large tax base and a lot of things take money to move forward.
- Education and advocacy aimed at the public and at politicians requires significant investment of time and money.
- As we become interconnected through this climate crisis – unpaid labour is required to continue moving forward; BIG could be a solution.
- Lack of a real wealth tax; current system is designed to facilitate further enrichment of the wealthy.

Question 4 – Group 4

a) **What are some actions we are taking in PEI to build up the community's ability to respond to the combined challenges of the climate emergency and lack of livable income of a high percentage of the Island population?**

- Free heat pumps for people on low income. But they are for homeowners only.
- There are some programs to upgrade insulation and increase energy efficiency, but they are relevant only to people who own their home.
- Some faith groups and other groups are working to better understand and address the disconnect between the climate emergency and individuals affected by low income
- Rural public transit is slowly improving. There are new options.

b) **What are some other actions that we can take in PEI?**

- We need to address the lack of affordable rental housing.
- Public transit for all. It needs to be subsidized by the government.
- More active transportation lanes for cyclists.
- More community gardens to grow food, as food prices are rising.
- Make it a basic human right to an affordable, safe, environmentally friendly home.
- A plan for emergencies, like power outages, so that we all care for each other.
- Minimal standards for rental properties – including standards for energy efficiency Building codes to ensure everyone can deal with hotter summers and colder winters.
- Redefine affordable housing to address those who earn way less than the average income.
- Keep water a public trust, available and free for all.
- Free water treatment systems for anyone dealing with contaminated water.
- Internet connectivity for all, to make it possible for anyone to join a zoom call like this one without needing to drive or get a ride.
- Allow people with excess solar electricity to donate it to others who are on low incomes.

Question 4 – Group 5

a) **What are some actions we are taking in PEI to build up the community's ability to respond to the combined challenges of the climate emergency and lack of livable income of a high percentage of the Island population?**

- Fridays for Futures
- PEI Working Group for a Livable Income campaign for Basic income Guarantee.

- Transitioning to wind power on the Island.
- Purchase of electric buses for public and school transportation.
- Young people are among the leadership on joining these issues on many fronts.

b) What are some other actions that we can take in PEI?

- On a more general scale, discussion needs to be framed within the intersectionality of a variety of systems of oppression
 - Racial inequality
 - Gender inequality
 - Income inequality
 - Social inequality
 - Environmental injustice
- Underlying these systems is the economic system itself, capitalism and its objective – the maximization of profits.
- Solutions must move towards community-based instead of being individually based.
- Solutions need to be local in action and global in action and awareness.
- Solutions must be particularly sensitive to those who are struggling the most, historically and in the present moment - sensitive to Indigenous/racial injustice which is a result of colonization.
- Environmental injustice can be undone in part through listening first to groups and peoples on the edge or periphery of power.
- It's important to note the resilience of groups in our society who are the most vulnerable; the most resilient are often those who struggle the most, we can learn from their wisdom.
- There needs to be holistic approach, through a lens of intersectionality.
- Solutions must move towards redistribution of wealth through taxation for example.
- We must listen and follow the lead of Indigenous peoples, BIPOC leadership.
- Governments can prioritize a need and act quickly, as revealed by CERB and other benefits during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

General Discussion (including comments written in “chat”):

- We talked a lot about income inequality, but I want to point out that inequity allows income inequality, that allows this to be okay by dominant society. Even if we do have a universal basic income to help address the income inequality part, there are still so many intersectional inequalities that will take place that will continue to be a burden. So, the challenge for us is to think beyond basic income. What other forces are at play? And then, how do we address those forces? Because that’s really the root cause and income inequality happens to be the result of those forces.
- Migrant workers are used and abused in this country. It’s the most abusive, racist policy that we’ve had in a long time. We should be making every effort to ensure migrant workers become permanent residents and are given rights equal to everyone else. This is connected to the climate crisis because we are going to have millions more migrants, and we need to welcome them as people who will make PEI their home.
- My mind goes to changing the curriculum in our education system, the future is in our children. If it becomes their normal, and they have responsible discussion, we will see a positive demographic switch, we have to work with the education system to get that change.
- We teach children to be individual and learn on their own, but in community we need to learn to work together, how do we teach them that?
- With climate change, we’re leading away from helping others, who can’t afford to live on their own properties, as climate brings colder winters, we’re increasing the gap between homelessness and being able to live outside, people can’t live, need to discuss this.
- While we did mention learning from Indigenous people, I want to acknowledge the importance of reconciliation work and climate justice. Without acknowledging the process of reconciliation, and the discussion around land acknowledgement, it will be difficult to move on with climate justice. There is risk of tokenizing the relationship. We need to be cautious about that. What is the approach, what is the intended outcome? Allyship, partnership? Incorporate people from all groups in the research, the training, understanding the settler colonial history Canada is built upon, understanding why Canada is where it is with climate, it’s not because of Indigenous people, it’s because settlers destroyed it. Collaboration can look different in different communities in Canada.
- To echo what was just said, it's important that any/all advocacy work must center, support, and advance decolonization. Making capitalism, our society, or any system more "fair" while we continue to have an exploitative and extractive relationship with Indigenous Peoples and their land is wrong. It will also do nothing to address climate, environmental, and social crises.
- Property, in the context of income and wealth inequality: we need to remember that inequality has to do with those who have everything as much as it has to do with those who have little. Our system is designed to facilitate the enrichment of the wealthy. There is a class of people who are profiting, this same class is responsible for the lion’s share of

GHG emissions that are causing the climate emergency. We're limited in our ability in PEI to rectify this - it's important to work at every level - municipal, provincial, federal, international - to create a better world for all (except perhaps a few billionaires)!

- It is incredibly important to move toward community-based solutions, as opposed to individual action which is so foundational to capitalism. The groups to lead us in that would be First Nations of the Island, and truth and reconciliation, the history of colonization needs to be undone, awareness needs to be brought at a young age in education system, of First Nations, land, sea, water, and air, this is essential for curriculum in school.
- If you want to know what government priorities are, follow the money. Comments made this year and last in pre-budget consultations and in the climate change review risk assessment process are strikingly similar. Half of the Carbon Tax funds are spent on incentive programs which go to benefit people who could pay for them if they needed to or wanted to. If you want change, if you want what we've spoken about tonight, resiliency for the population, you have to fight the Irvings for the money. There is a budget process coming up, and the more the Minister hears about the issues we're talking about tonight, the more likelihood this will be heard. Public money should be put toward mitigating the risks of climate change that we've hit on tonight. There's no substitute for getting to the decision makers.
- PEI has an opportunity for producing more income security for communities across the Island. One aspect of climate change is carbon emissions, and a fundamental path forward is economic decarbonization, reducing our carbon emissions by transitioning from carbon-based energy sources to non-carbon-based energy sources. PEI has great potential with wind energy. Expanding renewable energy sources has been a way other island communities have increased income security. The Faro islands were losing money to import carbon-based energy. They transitioned to renewable energy, this improved income security, same thing in an island in Denmark called Samsø. As we move forward with decarbonization, transitioning to renewable energy could increase income security for Islanders.
- The capitalist system includes systems of oppression. So, all these things need to be addressed together. We do need to discuss low carbon transition, but we need to go beyond just preserving current power structures. Financial incentivization tends to harm marginalized people and benefit the privileged. Government is supporting community organizations, like anti-racism organizations, but I'm not sure they're involved in the decision-making process in terms of climate crisis work.
- We need to continue conversations like this with representation from across the Island. Housing crisis solutions need to ensure that we're focusing on decolonization and anti-capitalism, need to move away from individual and to the collective. Youth are doing a good job of getting involved. The more we learn from diverse individuals, the more we educate youth on importance of collective. We can't just focus on PEI but should be advocating on a global level. Canadian companies are pillaging resources elsewhere in the

world, it's all connected. Just a guaranteed basic income, which is obviously really helpful, doesn't solve everything in an already broken system.

- We are the microcosm of the macrocosm, what happens here will have impact on the globe, all manner of change that COVID has shone a light on, is possible, for us to lead, the future is bright, there are so many people expanding the use of our brains, it can all happen here as we work together.

Appendix 2: About Cooper Institute and the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

The PEI Working Group for a Livable Income (WGLI) is a non-governmental network of community-based organizations and individual members. Since its formation in 2003, WGLI has understood the importance of addressing the root causes of poverty in Prince Edward Island, and has advocated for policies, programs and services that support a livable income for every person who resides in the province.

WGLI's definition of livable income is:

An income that provides enough to pay rent or mortgage and monthly utility bills, to buy nutritious food and medicine, to use transportation, to continue learning or training, to access childcare or eldercare, to participate in the community, and to cover emergencies. A livable income supports people to live in good health and in dignity.

The working group makes a priority of learning from community; over the past twenty years, members have organized (and continue to organize) many community engagement activities and public presentations on topics related to livable income. The group has consistently communicated with policy makers at all levels of government and has maintained a constant media presence.

In 2013, the Working Group decided to embark on a campaign to promote Basic Income Guarantee. *C-BIG PEI: Campaign for a Basic Income Guarantee* is a member of the *Basic Income Canada Network (BICN)* and *Coalition Canada basic income - revenu de base*.

WGLI continues to urge the community and governments to support and develop strong poverty reduction strategies to shore up current income sources. We advocate for policies and programs which including: livable wages, a fair EI system, adequate social assistance payments, pensions, and increases in disability supports and Old Age Security, affordable housing, food security, access to dental and mental health care and to prescription drugs.

Current active member groups include Cooper Institute, ResourceAbility, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, PEI People First, Women's Network PEI and United Way PEI, and recent members have included labour organizations such as CUPE PEI, women's and francophone organizations such as Actions Femmes, arts and culture groups such as Culture PEI, faith-based outreach groups such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Holy Redeemer Parish, and groups with associated interests such as the PEI Association of Social Workers, Habitat for Humanity PEI, and others. Because it truly is a working group and no one leaves a meeting without a task, many groups and individuals have contributed to the work over the years.

Cooper Institute

Cooper Institute was established in 1984 in Prince Edward Island. We are a collective, a registered charity, with between 2 and 5 staff people at any given time. We most often work in partnership with other grassroots organizations that are organized for positive and progressive social, economic, political, and cultural change.

As a collective, all members of Cooper Institute have input into policies, procedures, programs, and projects. Our work is carried out by staff and volunteer members of the collective.

Some of our Objectives:

- To collaborate with other groups on issues related to social and economic justice and protection of Prince Edward Island lands and water;
- To engage and amplify the voices of members of Prince Edward Island communities;
- To provide the environment for making links of understanding and cooperation among groups on PEI which are working toward the same goals;
- To continue to learn, and to facilitate the exchange of information within our networks, coalitions, and alliances.

We understand that the strong voice of the community is a most essential and necessary aspect of social change. Our work supports the empowerment of groups, individuals, and communities. We use a community development model based on the assumption that those who experience a given situation are the experts. Our role is to bring out from the participants their experience of their reality; to facilitate the analysis through which participants recognize the fundamental causes of their group's situation, as well as the strengths and resources available to the group; and identify concrete and viable actions that would change the situation.

Cooper Institute is a founding member of the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income. In fact, WGLI grew out of a 2002 Cooper Institute project aimed at engaging community around the issue of minimum wage. We are also members of Islanders for Proportional Representation, the Coalitions for the Protection of PEI Lands and Water and Trade Justice PEI, Save our Seas and Shores PEI, the PEI Coalition for Supported Decision-Making and many other networks and coalitions.

In 2021-22 we are engaged in specific projects and programs related to: Migrant Workers' Rights, Affordable Housing and Tenant Organizing, Livable Income with a focus on Basic Income Guarantee, Electoral Reform, Land and Water Protection.

For more information:

<https://www.cooperinstitute.ca/>