

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments: Feminists' Complex Responses to Guaranteed Annual Income and Basic Income

Margaret Hillyard Little

Professor, Gender Studies and Political Studies Departments, Queen's University

Lynne Marks

Professor, Department of History, University of Victoria

Abstract

The Canadian feminist movement has been weak in its current support of the Basic Income campaign. In order to understand why the feminist movement has been reluctant to embrace the current campaign for Basic Income as a fundamental policy to improve women's lives, this paper addresses three important moments when an earlier version of Basic Income was part of the national conversation. In particular, this paper will address: The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), 1967-1970; the Purge of Wages for Housework in the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) in 1979; and the NAC rejection of Mothers are Women's demand of government support for stay-at-home moms, 1987. Each of these historic moments included a conversation about the Canadian state providing payments for the unpaid caring work that women did. Through archival research and oral history interviews we illustrate that during these moments prominent feminists and their organizations were reluctant or opposed to supporting government payments for this unpaid caring work. These three important historic moments help explain why current feminists are reluctant to fully embrace the national campaign for Basic Income today.

Keywords: poverty, anti-poverty, Basic Income, feminist movement, Royal Commission on the Status of Women, National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Wages for Housework

Résumé

Le mouvement féministe canadien a démontré un faible soutien actuel de la campagne pour le revenu de base. Afin de comprendre les raisons de ces réticences quant à la campagne actuelle comme une politique fondamentale visant à améliorer la vie des femmes, cet article examine trois moments clés où une version antérieure du revenu de base a fait l'objet de débats nationaux. Notamment, il aborde : la Commission royale d'enquête sur la situation de la femme au Canada (RCSW en anglais) de 1967 à 1970, le mouvement féministe Wages for Housework (rémunération du travail ménager) au sein du Comité canadien d'action sur le statut de la femme (CCA) en 1979, et le rejet par la CCA de la demande de l'organisme Mothers are Women visant à obtenir un support gouvernemental pour les mères au foyer, en 1987. Chacun de ces moments historiques a donné lieu à des discussions autour du devoir de l'État canadien de rémunérer les tâches domestiques non rémunérées qu'exécutent les femmes. À travers des recherches d'archives et des témoignages d'histoire orale, nous démontrons que durant ces périodes, des féministes influentes et leurs organisations étaient réticentes, voire opposées, à l'idée d'une rémunération publique pour ces tâches non rémunérées. Ces trois moments clés historiques permettent de comprendre l'hésitation des féministes actuelles à adhérer pleinement à la campagne nationale pour le revenu de base aujourd'hui.

Mots clés : pauvreté, lutte contre la pauvreté, revenu de base, mouvement féministe, Commission royale d'enquête sur la situation de la femme au Canada, Comité canadien d'action sur le statut de la femme, Wages for Housework

Introduction

Many prominent Canadian feminist organizations have been ambivalent about Basic Income as a policy to improve women's lives. Some have rejected the policy option, seeing it as a regressive move pushing women back into the home. Others have signed petitions in support of Basic Income (BI) but have not integrated this policy option into their ongoing platforms. Few have embraced the Basic Income Movement and its goal to significantly reduce poverty in this country. Most are not centrally involved in the current BI movement advocating for a guaranteed livable annual income. How are we to understand this reluctance, especially when low-income women's groups such as Low Income Families Together (LIFT) are strong advocates for Basic Income, arguing that it would help to recognize and make visible the many aspects of unpaid and low-paid caring work predominantly done by women in our society (Grey, 2019, pp. 1-4)? LIFT, Elaine Power, Valerie Tarasuk and other feminist anti-poverty and food insecurity activist scholars argue a Basic Income would help alleviate poverty for women who do unpaid caring work for their children, the elderly and their communities. They also argue that Basic Income would help bolster the incomes of women who do low-paid caring jobs that are often part-time with minimum or low wages and little to no benefits or possibilities of job advancement. A Basic Income would help give Canadian women more choices about how to best balance their paid and unpaid work. A Basic Income would allow women to leave abusive relationships without facing utter destitution (Lowitt et. al., 2024; Swift and Power, 2021; Tarasuk, 2017). For all these reasons, the Basic Income movement has been very clear that Basic Income is a feminist issue. And yet, many feminist leaders, both those of liberal and socialist ideologies, have not embraced the Basic Income campaign. Through archival research and oral history interviews we examine the last 60 years of Canadian feminist politics to explore past moments where feminists have been reluctant to whole-heartedly support or have actively opposed various iterations of Basic Income policies.

There are many iterations of Basic Income which adds to the confusion in policy discussions. The Basic Income policy and its precursor Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI), which we are exploring here, are characterized by what Margot Young and James Mulvale call a "Strong Basic Income":

- a universal cash payment to all adults
- no restrictions on how the payment is spent
- unconditional meaning there is no means test or work requirement
- "the level of income guaranteed is formulated to lift each individual recipient's income above the poverty line" (Young and Mulvale, 2009)

There are three significant moments in recent Canadian feminist political history when feminist leaders at the national level showed reluctance to fully explore women's poverty and endorse a Strong Basic Income as a key policy option:

- i) the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), 1967-1970

- ii) the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)'s rejection of the Wages for Housework organization and all its allies from membership in NAC, 1979
- iii) the NAC rejection of Mothers are Women's demand for government support for stay-at-home moms, 1987

All three of these historic moments included a conversation about the Canadian state providing payments for the unpaid caring work that women did. And in all three moments prominent liberal and socialist feminists and their organizations were reluctant to support or virulently opposed universal government payments for this unpaid caring work. Each of these feminist moments will be examined to better understand why so many current-day feminists continue to show weak support for, and even opposition to, the Basic Income policy.

Full disclosure: We come to this research as activist scholars who have struggled in our own way with these issues. Both Little and Marks are socialist feminists, with strong union ties which made them initially wary that Basic Income could drive women further away from the labour market and increase their economic dependency upon male partners. Initially Marks came to support the Basic Income option as she did community work with women in shelters and once a mother herself, became increasingly critical of certain feminist perspectives on stay-at-home motherhood and their implications for low income mothers (Marks, 2004). Little was reticent to endorse BI, influenced by her involvement with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. OCAP organizer, John Clarke, argued that BI is a neoliberal austerity policy that will reduce wages and state supports for low-income Canadians (Clarke, 2020, 2021). But the more Little conducted interviews with low-income *women* activists, and deeply listened to their views, she realized they generally disagreed with OCAP and she became an ally in their cause for Basic Income. Her position has been further solidified as she co-authors a book honouring long-time anti-poverty activist Josephine Grey, co-founder of LIFT (Little et. al, forthcoming). She has been a long time supporter of OCAP, LIFT and local anti-poverty groups and is now a member of the Kingston Basic Income Campaign.

Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), 1967-1970

The first moment in recent Canadian political history when poverty became a national issue and Basic Income was discussed as a policy option was in the 1960s. In April 1967, Prime Minister Lester Pearson declared “war on poverty.” He promised \$25 million a year to needy mothers and their children through the introduction of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). The CAP heralded a new era in federal-provincial welfare state expansion. It guaranteed unlimited cost-shared funding for provincial and municipal welfare programs, and it signalled a new level of federal responsibility for the nation's poor. Yet despite this war on poverty, most provinces did not increase their welfare rates, with rates remaining well below subsistence. And although the provinces increased the types of low-income single mothers who were eligible for social assistance, they did not lessen their moral surveillance (Little, 1998, pp. 115-138).

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

Social policy expert Wendy McKeen views the late 1960s/early 1970s as a pivotal moment when the struggle over the interpretation of the needs of poor mothers was addressed by experts and on-the-ground activists (McKeen, 2012). By the mid 1960s, poverty had gained public attention as a result of a number of widely publicized reports. In 1964, the Ontario Federation of Labour declared that more than 1 million Ontarians were living in poverty. In 1965, a Canadian Welfare Council study on rural poverty found the “extent staggering.” And another report the same year concluded that more than 1 million Canadians were illiterate and about 4 million (one in five Canadians) were living below the minimum poverty line. These shocking reports on poverty were headline stories in prominent daily newspapers.

On February 16, 1967, following these well-publicized poverty reports, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) announced it would solicit the views of women by encouraging women’s organizations and individual women to write letters and/or present briefs to the Commission on issues related to the status of women. Just ten months after this announcement, on October 6, 1968, the federal government established the Special Senate Committee on Poverty (Croll Committee) with a \$1 million budget to inquire into the causes of poverty and make recommendations for its elimination. The Croll Committee provided money to help the poor organize, present before the committee, and protest outside the committee hearings, thus receiving media attention.

From April 1969 to November 1970, the Special Senate Committee on Poverty held hearings across Canada. The national and local media covered the Croll Committee members as they travelled and heard briefs. The committee members were criticized for holding their hearings in hotel ballrooms, so they began taking tours of the “slums” of Canada’s cities with the media in tow. This was front-page news day after day. And the committee hearings provided a national forum for low-income voices. This was the first time federal funding was available to poor and low-income groups, which in turn used this strategically to form, organize, protest, and attract media attention. This sparked hundreds of anti-poverty groups to organize and raise their voices (Little, 1998, pp. 148-149).

In December 1970, just seven months after the Croll Committee hearings ended, the RCSW report was released. And yet, despite all this public attention to poverty, the RCSW’s report states, “The specific situation of women in poverty was an *unexpectedly significant finding* [emphasis added] in our investigation” (RCSW Report 1970, p. 331). Unexpectedly? This phrase in the RCSW report was written four and a half years after Prime Minister Pearson declared war on poverty, after low-income groups had begun to organize in almost every city, and after poverty had become a front-page news story with the Croll Committee members touring the country.

How could the RCSW be surprised by the breadth and depth of poverty that women experienced? To understand this more fully, we examined all of the groups that submitted to the RCSW that called for a Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI), the precursor to Basic Income, that advocated a regular cash transfer from government intended to guarantee low-income citizens

more economic security.¹ While the commissioners of the RCSW were not necessarily feminists, the organizations that presented briefs to the Commission generally had some attachment to feminist ideals, for the most part liberal or socialist/Marxist in nature. So the RCSW hearings and report created a platform for women, predominantly feminists, to publicize their demands to the state. We found that only *nine* of 246 groups who submitted briefs to the RCSW advocated for GAI. There were only *three* explicitly low-income women's groups who submitted briefs to the RCSW and all three advocated strongly for a GAI. These groups were the Minus Ones, Winnipeg; Parents Without Partners, Ottawa; and Single Parents Associated, a subgroup of the Social Action Committee, Toronto (RCSW Index Finding Aid, pp. 33-87). Each of these low-income women's groups defined itself as a single-mom group. The details of each brief by these single-mom groups will be outlined below.

While most members of the Minus Ones described themselves as deserted, separated, divorced, or widowed mothers, this group also included "other concerned citizens": lawyers, ministers, and social workers. The group met weekly at the local YWCA in Winnipeg. Their first recommendation to the RCSW was GAI for all sole-support mothers. They were particularly concerned about deserted mothers in cases where the fathers did not pay support and the court awards were unenforceable. As the Minus Ones' brief states, "The mothers live in constant fear that the payment will be late or will not be made at all." The group was also concerned that welfare rates not only were too low but were reduced if the single mother had paid work. They argued that:

There should be an overt recognition that mothers with families are contributing members of society and are not dependents as such. They are responsible adults making an economic and social contribution to this country and are an economic asset to this country as their children will be in the future. As a consequence of that economic contributions [*sic*], as a right they should receive an adequate economic return which ... should be an assured guaranteed income. (Minus Ones Brief 146 to RCSW)

Thus, they saw a GAI as a way for the state to financially compensate these single mothers for the hard, caring work they were doing. The brief explains, "This would bring the work performed by the woman in the home into the credit side of our economic ledger and we would be forced to admit their economic contribution to society. It would be proof positive that married women are not dependents but are productive members of society and performing essential services" (Minus Ones Brief, p. 18). The Minus Ones organized, politicized, and presented briefs demanding GAI for single mothers before various levels of government.

¹ As stated above a GAI gives a cash transfer from government intended to ensure a minimum level of income for everyone. While there are many versions of Basic Income for the most part advocates call for a Universal Basic Income that gives everyone a flat cash transfer, regardless of their level of income that will be taxed back for those with higher incomes. The alternative is an income-tested Basic Income that provides a government cash transfer for those below a certain minimum income that is taxed back as their income increases. For more details see: <https://basicincomecanada.org> and <https://www.ubiworks.ca/ubi-vs-gmi>

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

Parents Without Partners (PWP) was an Ottawa-based group that was part of an international organization of single parents. Its submission included a detailed brief plus statistical tables and five individual letters written by single mothers. PWP stated that one in 15 Canadian families was headed by a single mother. The group made four demands to the RCSW:

1. more public housing;
2. “Supplementary allowances for those whose income is below a decent standard, to provide a Guaranteed Annual Income,” (Parents Without Partners, Brief 319, p. 2);
3. more educational opportunities for girls and women; and
4. more mental health counselling.

The five personal letters from single mothers that accompanied the brief explained in poignant detail the poverty and distress the writers experienced. Four of the five mothers had fallen into poverty because of their family circumstances. In sum, this brief from PWP had a powerful impact with its detailed statistics and clear demands, and its poignant letters from single moms.

The third low-income group that submitted a brief to the RCSW was Single Parents Associated, under the umbrella of the Social Action Committee in Toronto. Like the Minus Ones, Single Parents Associated was a politically organized group that had advocated at various levels of government. They had presented a petition to the Attorney General of Ontario. To develop their RCSW brief, the organization held a public meeting in Toronto where they devised a questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire demonstrate a very strong demand for GAI (Single Parents Associated, Brief 455).

In summary, all three single moms’ groups that submitted briefs to the RCSW advocated clearly and articulately for GAI. This is distinct from the Indigenous, ethnic, and immigrant women’s groups that submitted briefs. Given that race, colonialism, and immigration status can deeply affect poverty, we also examined briefs written by racialized, immigrant and ethnic (nine), and Indigenous (two) women’s groups. There were no briefs by organizations representing Black or racialized women. Vijay Agnew, Joanne St. Lewis and Toni Williams have previously addressed the racial blinders of the RCSW (Agnew, 2007; St. Lewis, 1997; Williams, 1990).

The immigrant and ethnic women’s groups that submitted briefs represented what we would now consider white ethnic women, and the majority were second- or third-generation Canadians. About half of the immigrant and ethnic women’s groups spoke about poverty and the other half did not. The immigrant and ethnic women’s groups who mentioned poverty in their briefs were: the Groupe de Femmes Francophones de la Région de Moncton, New Brunswick; the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada in Willowdale, Ontario; and the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Hebrew Association and Neighbourhood House Services in Montréal, Québec. The Women’s Federation of Allied Jewish Community Services in Montréal mentioned poverty only to say that youth need exposure to those “near or at the poverty level” to develop empathy. The immigrant and ethnic women’s groups who did not mention poverty in their briefs

were: the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians Women's Committee; the Canadian Polish Women's Federation in Toronto; and the B'nai Brith Women District 22 in Toronto. (Briefs to RCSW 404, 366, 314, 194, 229, 312, 107). Although the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians Women's Committee spoke about the exploitation of immigrant women in the workforce, none of these immigrant and ethnic women's groups explicitly advocated for GAI.

The two Indigenous women's groups that submitted briefs to the RCSW were distinct from the immigrant and ethnic women's groups in that they wrote at length and in detail about poverty and spoke both as low-income Indigenous women and as representatives of other low-income Indigenous women. They explicitly connected colonialism and poverty in all aspects of Indigenous women's lives. They tied Indigenous women's poverty to Indigenous women's loss of rights and status. While the briefs from these two Indigenous women's groups address the issues of poverty deeply they do not explicitly advocate for GAI (Nickel 2022, pp. 1-15; Mary Two-Axe Earley, Brief 245; Alberta Native Women's Conference, Brief 310).

There are only six other women's groups that wrote briefs for the RCSW that directly advocate for GAI. They are diverse in their political ideologies: A Group of Women; the Federation des Services Sociaux; the Manitoba Volunteer Committee on the Status of Women; the Voice of Women (VOW) in Edmonton; the NDP Provincial Women's Committee in Saskatchewan; and the League for Socialist Action in Toronto. Each of these GAI advocates took one of three distinctive positions. One argument for GAI relied on strong maternalist rhetoric, as seen in the brief by A Group of Women from Ste. Thérèse, Québec. They wrote in French but the brief was translated into English. "We recognize the role of the mother in the home as a specialized career ... In return for services rendered, society must remunerate those who serve it; therefore mothers should be paid" (RCSW Brief 124). Another type of argument for GAI used a group's expertise as social service providers. This was seen in the briefs by the Federation des Services Sociaux and the Manitoba Volunteer Committee on the Status of Women (RCSW Briefs 256, 318). The latter was particularly impressive, as it represented 41 organizations in Manitoba including one group of low-income single moms, the Minus Ones, which also presented its own brief (discussed above). The third GAI argument was presented by three other groups, which situated their expertise within a left-wing political economy analysis. The VOW from Edmonton advocated for GAI on the grounds of both economic equality for women and survival of the species: "We feel that if the human race is to survive in this nuclear age, ... women must participate fully in the political, professional and industrial life of Canada." (RCSW Brief 159, pp. 1-2). To achieve women's full participation in society would, the group stated, require daycare, the end of the dismissal of married women from paid work, and a GAI (RCSW Brief 159, p. 4). The other VOW groups that submitted briefs to the RCSW did not mention GAI, but the Halifax group was one of the few to name race, gender, and poverty together in its brief (RCSW Brief 429). The NDP Provincial Women's Committee, Saskatchewan, which represented 40 local NDP women's chapters in the province, advocated for GAI within a comprehensive platform to increase welfare-state provisions (i.e., increased welfare rates, family allowances rates, pay equity, childcare, and flexible working periods for young moms) (RCSW Brief 133).

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

And the League for Socialist Action, Toronto, wrote about the oppressive nature of the family, pointing out that women are “tied by a thousand threads to the maintenance of the home ... The family ... has taken on many of the forms of a prison.” (RCSW Brief 163, pp. 1-2). It advocated for real supports for working mothers (e.g., childcare, nursery schools) and GAI to give mothers the choice to stay home. “With the implementation of these propositions, the family could freely evolve into a harmonious relationship between human beings.” (RCSW Brief 163, p. 2); thus, the League for Socialist Action proposed a package of supports for mothers who did paid or unpaid work, of which GAI was part, but the group did so in a manner that asserted and critiqued the oppressive care work done in families. This position was distinct from those of the other GAI advocates in its devastating critique of the oppressive conditions of the family. It was also distinct from some other socialist/Marxist women’s groups that focused on achieving more freedom for women through paid work. To be clear, there were differences amongst socialist/Marxist women’s groups who presented briefs. But all of these groups agreed paid work would free women from their dependence on men and from oppressive familial relations. For instance, the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) was gravely concerned about women’s economic dependence on men. But, unlike the League for Socialist Action, the CPC did not mention GAI and saw solutions for women solely through better paid employment (RCSW Brief 126).

Armed with 468 briefs—six months of hearings in fourteen cities and one month after the Croll Senate Committee on Poverty had completed its seven months of public hearings—the RCSW released its report on December 7, 1970. One month after the RCSW report was released, following a groundswell of anti-poverty activism across the country, the first National Conference of Poor People’s Organizations met in Toronto. They called for a radical redistribution of profit and formed the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) which still exists today as Canada Without Poverty. And yet despite all of this anti-poverty organizing, despite blaring newspaper headlines about poverty and the Croll Committee hearings, the majority of the RCSW briefs and the commission’s subsequent report are shockingly muted on the subject of poverty.

In its list of 167 recommendations, it makes numerous demands for equal opportunity in employment and training, fairer tax law, the end to stereotyping and much more to improve women’s working conditions. Most of these recommendations would be of most benefit to white middle-class women. On the topic of poverty, the RCSW’s Report showed concern for aging women with inadequate pensions and impoverished single mothers. In sum, the report made four recommendations about poverty and one of them addressed Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI). Recommendation #135 states: “We recommend that a guaranteed annual income be paid by the federal government to the heads of all one-parent families with dependent children.” (RCSW Report, 414). Thus, the RCSW promotes a restricted version of GAI – targeted only to one-parent families with dependent children and no GAI for low-income couples or two-parent families. In this recommendation there is no attempt to address the unpaid and low-paid caring work that most women did, and that left large numbers, with and without partners, in poverty.

Although the RCSW advocated for a limited form of GAI, it was not deeply integrated into its analysis of women's everyday lives. If poverty was an *unexpectedly significant finding* in their report, and so few women's groups with lived experience of poverty submitted briefs to the RCSW, it is no surprise that the RCSW did not fully appreciate how GAI would significantly alleviate poverty for low-income Canadian women. Given the numerous studies of poverty, the Prime Minister's declared war on poverty, and the groundswell of anti-poverty groups emerging across the country, the RCSW missed an opportunity to reach out and deeply understand the lives of low-income women and appreciate GAI as a significant anti-poverty policy solution. And most of the women's groups who submitted briefs to the RCSW also missed an opportunity to advocate for a policy promoted by their low-income sisters.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women's rejection of Wages for Housework, 1979

The second recent historical moment when feminists were confronted with increased popularity of Guaranteed Annual Income among many women, was a heated debate within the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) in 1979. NAC's origins can be traced to a lobby group of 30 women's organizations called the Committee for Equality (CES) that, in 1966, called for a royal commission on women's issues. Following the RCSW Report, the coalition members met again, created the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, (NAC) and resolved to do everything possible to demand the government implement all of the recommendations of the RCSW (Anderson & Lambert, 2006). Although the RCSW Report weakly recommended GAI, the issue was not central to NAC's advocacy work in the 1970s and 1980s. By the early 1990s when racialized women became NAC leaders, there was more support for GAI but this was never central to their politics. As with the RCSW, they addressed women's poverty primarily in relation to older women who had been housewives and were left with dramatically inadequate pensions, and low-income single mothers. NAC had, at best, only limited support for GAI. NAC's primary solution to women's poverty was greater equality for women within the paid workforce, and policies such as universal childcare and equal pay that would make this possible.

Meanwhile the GAI policy option was actively promoted by an international movement with several Canadian chapters, called Wages for Housework (WFH). WFH emerged in Europe from Marxist feminist critiques of the failure of traditional Marxism to recognize the value of women's unpaid household labour. Canadians became exposed to WFH politics through a North American tour of WFH co-founders, Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, in 1972-73 and their WFH publications. A number of WFH groups emerged in Canada, including in Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal. WFH activists also travelled internationally to meet their WFH sister activists in the US, UK and Europe. WFH highlighted the oppression of women in the home and demanded wages for this unpaid caring work (James, 2012; Toupin, 2018).

Poverty was central to WFH theorizing and grassroots politics. Because of this focus on wages for housework, they appealed to many marginalized women who had few alternatives to

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

unpaid or low-paid caring work inside or outside the home. As a result, WFH often worked closely with low-income women, immigrant women, domestic workers, waitresses and sex workers. Because women did the majority of unpaid and low-paid caring work, WFH was able to create effective and unlikely alliances between “whores, wives and dykes” (Toupin, 2018, p. 212). As Ellen Woodsworth, a WFH member, explains,

Welfare women got it [the WFH agenda] and it was tremendously empowering and strengthening for them to have recognition that what they were doing is really very very valuable work as well as impoverishing work and bad for them and their families if they didn't get paid for it.... And immigrant women [got the WFH agenda because they] were coming from societies where women's work was more respected and there they had a place within their families in society that I don't think mothers in our society have. (Woodsworth, 2016)

And Sunday Harrison, another WFH member explained how mainstream feminists did not integrate poverty into their politics.

It was International Women's Day and they wanted to feature poverty but without really understanding what that meant... It wasn't integrated into their politics... But WFH had a class analysis... White mainstream feminism was all about getting a piece of the pie and we were more radical and knew that that was a really incomplete demand. (Harrison, 2022)

WFH ideology was distinctive from NAC politics, with its clear Marxist feminist critique of capitalism that included a race, gender and class analysis of unpaid housework. For example, WFH activists argued that capitalism benefited enormously from the unpaid work of women in the home and advocated that the state needed to recognize the value of this domestic work and pay for it. In their words,

We women are at the bottom because we labour without a wage, and that is both our fundamental powerlessness within the working class and the fundamental weakness of the entire working class vis a vis capital. The demand for a wage therefore, is our first fundamental level of power because it is our refusal to function for capital as unwaged reproducers of labour power, and it is the class demand because it puts an end to the division between the waged and unwaged. (Wages for Housework Group II Statement of Political Differences, WFH collection, Women's Movement Collection)

WFH argued that if the state paid for this caring domestic work, this would free women from dependence on men. There was a revolutionary tone to all WFH politics. If women had wages for housework they could refuse both exploitative paid work and unpaid care work. They perceived this recognition of unpaid caring work as far more liberating than taking an oppressive paid job. Paid employment was a double “slavery of being expected to carry the burden of two jobs, one inside and the other outside the homes....” (James, 1972). This message struck a chord with many of the single mothers and other low-income women whom WFH sought to organize.

As a letter from a housewife in Thunder Bay, Ontario, stated in a WFH newsletter, “Wages for Housework sounds like my kind of movement... All the ‘women’s liberation movement’ has done is add more exploitation onto women by telling them to join the labour force” (*WFH Campaign Bulletin* Vol. 1, No. 2, 1976). They also had a critical race politics as Canadian WFH groups aligned with racialized and immigrant women’s issues and were connected to the Black Women Wages for Housework groups in the U.S. (Little, Marks et. al., 2020).

As part of their politics WFH demanded that the Canadian state create or expand policies that recognized unpaid housework. For example, in 1977 they launched a successful campaign against the Liberal government’s initiative to freeze Family Allowances (which in inflationary times meant a real cut). The Family Allowance was a universal social program that was paid to all families with children regardless of their income, and was paid directly to the mother. It was an amount that never came close to fully covering the costs of unpaid caring work done in the home but it was a recognition of this work and was very popular amongst many low-income and/or stay-at-home mothers. WFH members created a national protest going door to door, to schools, to community groups and to politicians demanding that the Canadian state maintain Family Allowances.

WFH’s politics naturally aligned with a number of welfare rights mothers’ groups across Canada. In Winnipeg they fought against the Manitoba Government’s decision to deduct child tax credits from social assistance benefits, reducing money to low-income mothers and they won (*Harpies*, no. 1 v. 1 1979). Some WFH members in Toronto were involved in the Mother-Led Union (MLU), a group of low-income single mothers advocating for policies to improve their lives. The MLU, founded in 1974, was a strong advocate for GAI along with its demand for improved welfare rates and free daycare for working and stay-at-home mothers (Mother-Led Union pamphlet, c. 1975).

One major WFH campaign that deserves recognition is their attention to the exploitative working conditions of immigrant domestic workers. Many consider Judith Ramirez the leading WFH voice in Toronto in the 1970s. As she explained in her interviews with us, she took the WFH ideology into her work with marginalized women. She was an active ally with the Mother-Led Union. She helped form the Immigrant Women’s Health Centre and the Immigrant Women’s Employment Centre in Toronto. But she is best known for founding INTERCEDE, an organization that supported foreign domestic workers. (Ramirez, 2017)

Judith Ramirez recalls the tension with the feminist leaders over this activism with marginalized women:

Mainstream feminism had such a blind spot about the value of women’s work that was not in the paid workforce.... It was not only disagreement, it was virulent disagreement. And there seemed to be a very strong perception on the part of mainstream feminists that this was a real barrier to the liberation discourse. And all the emphasis was about women working outside the home. And anything about women in the home was almost by definition seen as retrograde. (Ramirez, 2017)

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

As WFH gained momentum in their political campaigns to support marginalized women and emphasized unpaid or low-paid caring work, this created tensions with the NAC. Most socialist and liberal feminists involved in NAC viewed the tactics of WFH as divisive and disruptive and had major disagreements with their theories and policy platforms (McKeen, 1994). In the spring of 1979, WFH organized a contingent of twenty-five women, representing ten political groups, including a number of low-income mothers' groups, to apply for NAC membership and to attend the NAC Annual General Meeting (AGM). The conference theme was "Economic Realities for Women." The NAC executive decided to deny membership to WFH members and supporters, thus denying them the right to attend the AGM. This was the first time NAC had ever rejected an application for membership (McKeen, 1994).

In justifying this decision, NAC President Kay Macpherson explained that while NAC and WFH agreed on short term goals such as childcare, job training, and improved services for women, the two organizations differed tremendously on long-term goals. Macpherson wrote:

What NAC is aiming for in the long run – equal opportunities, equal pay and end to sex role stereotyping, appears to be in contradiction to the basic goal of the WFH groups, since the aims of Wages for Housework – pay for housework, even the housework done in keeping oneself clean and fed... ultimately reinforces the stereotype of women in the home. (Wages for Housework membership application file; National Action Committee on the Status of Women funds, 1979)

NAC's refusal to permit WFH to attend the AGM sparked a major public conflict (Wages for Housework membership application file; National Action Committee on the Status of Women funds, 1979). Feminist lawyers, politicians, academics and artists from across Canada wrote letters to NAC defending WFH, noting the success of WFH groups in helping low-income, lesbian, immigrant and indigenous women to organize around issues of welfare rights and other concerns (Letter from Sheila Ross, Letter from Ellen Murray, Letter from Dorothy Thomas and others, March 1979; Wages for Housework membership application file; National Action Committee on the Status of Women funds, 1979). NAC received negative press both in Canada and internationally as 'elitist', 'well-off' women keeping out poor women (Wages for Housework membership application file, 1979).

A compromise was eventually reached and WFH members and allied groups were permitted to attend the keynote address but denied NAC membership. Judith Ramirez, who was part of the WFH delegation at NAC, recalls it very well. She says WFH delegation which attended NAC's AGM included low-income women (Ramirez, 2017). In her keynote speech Dorothy O'Connell, President of the Ottawa Tenants Council, was very critical of NAC. She accused NAC feminists of "downgrading women in the home." She concluded with a plea for women to lobby for more money for social services, including subsidized housing (NAC Recommendations March 23-25, 1979, Wages for Housework membership application file). NAC leaders responded by saying that they were very active in addressing the concerns of poor

and immigrant women but maintained that WFH were reinforcing women's oppressive role in the home.

The events at the 1979 AGM did not alter NAC's position. After the conference the new executive reaffirmed the earlier decision to deny NAC membership "to any group explicitly affiliated or identified with the Wages for Housework Campaign" (Letter from Lynn Macdonald to WFH, May 28, 1979, Wages for Housework membership application file). Feminist scholar Wendy McKeen has argued that NAC over time ultimately accepted much of the analysis of WFH, particularly the need to value the unpaid work that women did in the home (McKeen, 1994). NAC may have accepted this element of WFH analysis, as shown in NAC's 1990s campaign to have unpaid work acknowledged in the Canadian census, but during the 1980s NAC remained committed to challenging women's dependency, advocating their involvement in well-paid employment, with access to quality childcare.

From this 1979 NAC exclusion of WFH and their allies, we can see clearly the important division between mainstream feminists and marginalized women's politics. Low-income and immigrant women, along with WFH, supported policy options that highlighted and valued the unpaid caring work of women. While socialist feminist activist scholars have highlighted the laborious, unrecognized and undervalued nature of women's unpaid caring work, they generally advocated for policies to reduce or relieve women of this work, in the longer term through a more collective socialist society, where all women's work would be collectivized, and in the shorter term by having women enter the paid workforce, with good jobs and subsidized childcare (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978 and 2003; Benson, 1994, Luxton, 1980 and 2023; Molyneux, 1979; Seccombe, 1974).² In contrast, WFH and their welfare rights allies demanded a form of Basic Income (BI), paid directly to women, that would recognize and compensate women (as much as possible) for this unpaid caring work.³ During this era NAC was wary and concerned about promoting a policy direction that focused on state pay for women's work in the home, given their concerns that such demands would reinforce women's subordinate role in the home. While NAC supported increased welfare rates for single mothers, they focused more of their advocacy on encouraging women's involvement in the paid workforce. For liberal feminists this option was seen as leading to greater liberation and equality for women, while for socialist feminists it provided a route out of the individualized oppression of the private home and family.

NAC vs. Mothers are Women, 1987

² Some socialist feminists remain very committed to these collectivist solutions. A recent piece by Meg Luxton, (Luxton, 2023) for example, provides an excellent overview of socialist feminist proposals for addressing the oppression caused by women's responsibility for unpaid caring work. Basic Income is not included as an option.

³ WFH were very clear that Basic Income, or wages for housework, must be paid directly to women. They were opposed to guaranteed annual income proposals that were based on family income, and paid to the (usually male) head of the household ("In Defence of the Family Allowance", WFH to Marc Lalonde, n.d. 1978? Wages for Housework membership application file).

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

This attention to unpaid caring work, particularly motherhood, became a source of friction between NAC and another feminist group in 1987. Mothers Are Women was a group of middle class primarily white feminist women who were stay-at-home mothers. At the 1987 NAC Annual General Meeting, MAW brought a resolution advocating that parents should have the choice of staying home on a full or part-time basis to care for their children, and that therefore “NAC’s demands for government funding of daycare be extended to include equivalent financial support for parental daycare provided in the home” (Mothers Are Women AGM Resolution, March 10, 1987, NAC). While their resolution was broad, MAW’s primary goal was for stay-at-home mothers to have state wages. While MAW was a middle class group of women, their policy could also have benefitted low-income women who wanted a choice to stay home with their children rather than working at oppressive low-wage jobs. This MAW resolution caused considerable discussion among the NAC executive. NAC President Louise Dulude was worried that the resolution would dilute NAC’s support for daycare and create real divisions within the organization. At the same time, since R.E.A.L. Women (a right-wing Christian ‘family values’ organization) was becoming an increasingly visible force and attacking NAC for not supporting women in the home, Dulude also wanted to avoid any conflict that would appear as a “rejection of homemakers by NAC” (Memo from Louise Dulude to NAC table officers, April 16, 1987; Dubinsky, 1985). She suggested NAC invite MAW members to speak at a family policy workshop at the AGM to try and develop a compromise position. The President’s request was denied by the panel organizers, the socialist feminist Organized Working Women. As a result, the fault lines between feminists who advocated government support for stay-at-home mothers and those who opposed it were again exposed at a NAC AGM. MAW’s resolution created much dissension on the conference floor. Socialist feminists spoke against it, arguing that paid work was the only path towards greater equality for women. They were concerned that MAW’s proposal would encourage women to stay out of the workforce and be more dependent upon their spouses. MAW members strongly advocated for their platform, which would provide money and dignity to mothers staying home with their children. However, MAW’s motion was voted down, and instead a socialist feminist motion affirming the need for the development of an integrated Family Policy “based on the NAC principles of the equal responsibility of men and women for domestic labour and childraising and of the equal right of women and men to work outside the home” was passed. MAW members left the meeting in tears (witnessed by authors Little/Marks) (NAC Social Services Committee Family Policy Resolution #29, March 10, 1987).

Another feminist moment – Today with the Basic Income Movement

We have discussed three feminist moments, from the late 1960s to the late 1980s, where mainstream feminists could have chosen to stand with low-income, immigrant and racialized women who promoted a government policy that valued women’s unpaid or low-paid caring work. It wasn’t until the 1990s that NAC became more concerned about these issues. Sunera Thobani, the first woman of colour NAC President (1993-1996), spoke more explicitly about the unpaid and low-paid work that many racialized, immigrant and Indigenous women did. Joan Grant-Cummings, her successor, was the first Black woman to be NAC President (1996-1999)

and spoke in support of BI as a way to support racialized and low-income women doing unpaid and low-paid caring work (Mulvale, 2001, p. 103; Mulvale and Vanderborcht, 2012, p. 192; Mulvale, 2008, p. 18). But even when NAC and other feminist leaders acknowledged the benefits of BI to address this oppressive caring work, they did not make it central to their feminist campaigns.

Today is another moment where feminists can stand with marginalized women. Feminist activists and scholars have demonstrated that Basic Income is a feminist issue and how it will benefit low-income women. The Basic Income movement is gaining momentum right now. Senator Kim Pate introduced the Basic Income Bill C223 to Senate in October 2023. A parallel bill was introduced to the House of Commons by Leah Gazan, a Winnipeg MP, Indigenous activist and member of the Wood Mountain Lakota Nation. Senator Pate is a former President of the Elizabeth Fry Society, an organization that supports incarcerated women, many whom are low-income and/or Indigenous. Through her past advocacy work, she is keenly aware of how Basic Income will provide low-income women with better options for raising their children (Policy Options, March 2004). Pate argues that, through this bill, low-income women will be able to leave abusive relationships and raise their children on their own without state surveillance and punitive regulations. Food insecurity scholar Elaine Power and author Jamie Swift interviewed recipients of the Ontario Basic Income pilot programme and found them to have better mental and physical health, better nutrition, enriched education and training options and better job opportunities (Power and Swift, 2021). Similarly, university scholars Mohammad Ferdosi, Tom McDowell, Wayne Lewchuk and Stephanie Ross, also conducted interviews with pilot participants and found huge physical and mental health improvements. They concluded, “Everyone who received Basic Income reported benefitting in some way” (Ferdosi et. al. 2020, p. 4). Anti-poverty activists such as Josephine Grey, co-founder of Low Income Families Together, have explained how Basic Income will provide low-income women with the freedom to choose when and under what conditions they will do paid work. Basic Income will permit low-income women to reject exploitative minimum wage jobs that have negative impacts on their families. They will be able to choose to be full-time mothers if that is best for them and their children (Grey, 2021). Scholar activist Chloe Halpenny has demonstrated how Basic Income will provide better supports for disabled women as it did in the Ontario pilot program (Halpenny, 2022). And in 2020, over 3,600 organizations and individuals from across the country signed on to a national “Statement on Basic Income: A Case for Women.” These endorsers include professional women’s organizations such as the Canadian Women’s Foundation, the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), and Women’s College Hospital. But they also include low-income groups such as Alliance Against Poverty of Waterloo Region, Income Security Peterborough, the Elizabeth Fry Society, numerous shelters, and violence against women centres. The list also includes organizations representing racialized, immigrant, Indigenous and religious minority women including Asian Women for Equality, Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Global Afrikan Congress, Islamic Family and Social Services Association and Victoria Native Friendship Centre. LEAF has separately provided conditional

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

support for BI in its publications. And the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples National Action Plan called explicitly for a National Basic Income (MMIWG+ Plan, 28). Yet despite all this evidence and support from advocates for low-income, Indigenous, racialized, immigrant and religious minority women, and signatures by leading feminist groups, Sheila Regehr, Director of the Basic Income Canada Network, says most white privileged feminists have yet to put real political weight behind their signature of approval (Regehr, 2024). We hasten to add that feminists are not the only progressive Canadians who have been lukewarm in their support of BI. Both the New Democratic Party and the Canadian labour movement have both been reluctant to embrace BI and instead focus on policies to improve paid work (Mulvale & Finkel, 2016, p. 43; Mulvale, 2008; Mulvale & Vanderborgh, 2012).

Why is that? Let us look briefly at the current feminist arguments against Basic Income. According to the *Basic Income Studies* special issue on the Feminist Case for Basic Income, some feminist scholar activists believe Basic Income will move us further away from our goal of gender equality. The standard feminist argument against BI is that women will choose unpaid care work over their paid work options. Ingrid Robeyns argues that Basic Income “will do nothing to destabilize the *traditional* gender division of labour” (Robeyns, 2008). This feminist argument is particularly prevalent amongst union women and assumes that a paid job, any paid job, will be better than individualized caring work in the home in that it will challenge traditional gender roles, provide more economic independence for women, and bring them into the more collective space of the workforce. As activist publicist Richard Swift argues, the political Left is ironically left defending the very oppressive working conditions it critiques (Swift, 2017). Josephine Grey and many other low-income women advocates will quickly tell you that their precarious, part-time McJobs do not lead to a sense of solidarity or liberation (Grey, 2021). Another feminist argument is that we cannot have Basic Income *and* social services and so we will sacrifice our demand for an expanded welfare state if we support Basic Income. Canadian economist Armine Yalnizyan, a vocal critic of BI, makes this argument when she writes:

It takes more than just incomes to deal with the messy, unending process of seeking a more just society, where people see each other as equal, respected partners. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. We lose the village when the answer to every individual cry for help is “the cheque’s in the mail.” (Yalnizyan, 2021)

And yet all of the BI advocates in Canada are united in their vision of a robust welfare state that includes BI *as well as* enhancing many current social programs, including childcare, retraining and parental leave. A third argument that underlies some feminist opposition to BI is a distrust of low-income people. Feminist economist Barbara Bergmann argued about the dangers of giving cash to low-income women.

[Basic Income] gives cash, while a welfare state gives a significant proportion of benefits in the form of goods and services, or vouchers that can only be spent on these. This insures that public money goes to fill publicly agreed-upon needs and that taxpayers’ money is not spent

on things of lower public priority or that are wasteful, such as gambling or larger cars. (Bergmann, 2008, p. 4)

While this argument is at the more extreme end of feminist opposition to BI, it does reflect the Victorian moral judgement of at least some anti-BI scholars who have great faith in everyone else receiving cash benefits from the state but do not trust low-income citizens to make healthy decisions for themselves. It is important to note the double standard here where the state regularly provides tax incentives for capitalists to gamble in the stock market, and to start risky new business ventures. Similarly, few are concerned about the state giving cash benefits to injured and unemployed workers.

Conclusion

When we asked anti-poverty activist scholar Frances Fox Piven at an anti-poverty conference in Kingston why she supported Basic Income when it might be so miserly that it would not begin to fulfill the basic needs of low-income citizens she, who has pioneered the important work on social movement politics, said, “A social policy will only be as strong as the strength of the social movement behind it.” For Basic Income to not only be implemented in Canada but also to be a robust social program it needs to have a strong, diverse social movement behind it. Generally liberal and socialist feminists have not made poverty issues an integral part of their politics in the past. The vast majority of briefs to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women did not make poverty a central concern nor did they advocate for Guaranteed Annual Income, the precursor to Basic Income. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women strongly opposed the politics of Wages for Housework and their low-income allies when the latter promoted wages for housework. They rejected groups that wanted to honour women’s mothering roles by advocating for state support for mothering. It is time for feminists to prioritize issues of poverty, the importance of unpaid caring work, and the need for state support for that work. They need to listen to what low-income, Indigenous, racialized and immigrant women say about social policies that will improve their choices in life. They need to reflect upon their historic trajectory and consider being part of a large social movement calling for a robust Basic Income policy.

In recent years, former NAC president, Judy Rebick, has reflected on her role in the feminist rejection of housework issues:

Most feminists at the time [1970s] argued that our strategy should focus on equality in the paid workforce. Twenty-five years later that strategy has been successful, yet women are still doing the lion’s share of unpaid work in the home... I was among the feminists who supported the focus on paid work in early stages of second-wave feminism. I now believe that valuing unpaid work is the key to achieving equality for women and countering the savage, market-obsessed society we are becoming. (Rebick, 1999, as cited in Petrusek, 2023, p. 15)

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

Judith Ramirez, former leader of the Toronto WFH group, and founder of INTERCEDE, a group to advocate for foreign domestic workers, echoes Rebick's reflection.

We're still at a point in Canada where one of the latest studies on the wage gap shows that we've lost ground and I think that it's a very intractable issue, the undervaluing of women's work in the home, and outside the home when they're doing housework like activities. So it's still very much there and very serious, and we lived the legacy of not having properly framed what the struggle is. (Ramirez, 2017)

With the Basic Income movement feminists have the opportunity to reframe women's struggle. They have the opportunity to include unpaid and low-paid caring work in their analysis of women's oppression and in their visions for liberation. If they were robust in their support, Basic Income would allow women the freedom to decide when and under what conditions they would conduct paid and or unpaid work. It would centre low-income, Indigenous, racialized, and immigrant women's struggles first and foremost. For as Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, warns "... if any of us are left behind, we have failed" (Garza, 2020).

Acknowledgements

This article is a result of our SSHRC Insight research entitled, "Alternative Visions: Indigenous, Racialized, Immigrant and Low-Income Women's Activism in Canada, 1960s-1980s." We wish to deeply thank our many Research Assistants and our Project Managers (Carling Beninger, Andrea Eidinger, Mckelvey Kelly, Karissa Patton, and Krystl Raven who helped with this extensive oral history and archival project. We also thank Marten Becker for their detailed work with the references for this paper. We would also like to honour the many low-income women activists who have tried for many decades to put poverty issues on the bigger feminist agenda and to thank Basic Income advocates for their tireless work on promoting a public policy to recognize low-income peoples' daily struggles. In particular, we are deeply grateful for the editorial suggestions of Food Insecurity activist scholar, Elaine Power.

References

- Abner, E., Mossman M.J., & Pickett, E. (1990). No More Than Simple Justice: Assessing the Royal Commission Report on Women, Poverty and the Family. *Ottawa Law Review*, 22, 3, 575–605.
- Agnew, V. (1996). *Resisting Discrimination: Women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women's Movement in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.
- Agnew, V., (2007). "The Conundrum of Inclusion: Racialized Women in Public Policy Reports," in *Interrogating Race and Racism*, University of Toronto Press, 325-351.
- Anderson, D. and Lambert M.-E. (2006, February 7). National Action Committee on the Status of Women, in The Canadian Encyclopedia.
<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/national-action-committee-on-the-status-of-women>
- Arscott, J. (2010, June 2). "More Explosive Than Any Terrorist's Time Bomb: The RCSW, Then and Now" [paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association.
- Bergmann, B. (2008, December). "Basic Income Grants or the Welfare State: Which Better Promotes Gender Equality?" *Basic Income Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, p. 1-6.
- Bezanson, K. & Luxton, M. (2006). *Social reproduction: feminist political economy challenges neo-liberalism* (1st ed.). McGill-Queen's University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773576902>
- Capper, B. and Austin, A, (2018). 'Wages for Housework Means Wages Against Heterosexuality': On the Archives of Black Women for Wages for Housework and Wages Due Lesbians. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24.4, 445-456.
- Clarke, J. (2020, April 21). Basic reasons to oppose basic income. *The Canada Files*.
<https://www.thecanadafiles.com/articles/bi>
- Clarke, J. (2021, May 3). Defending the left case against basic income. *Canadian Dimension*.
- Coalition Canada Basic Income. (2020). "Statement on Basic Income: A Case for Women".
- Dalla Costa, M. (1972). "Women and the Subversion of Community", in M. Dalla Costa and S. James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Falling Wall Press, pp. 21-56.
- Dauda, Carol L. (2012, June 13-16). *National Battles and Global Dreams: R.E.A.L. Women and the Politics of Backlash*. [paper presentation]. Canadian Political Science Association annual meeting, Edmonton, Alberta.

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

- Ditchburn, J. & Pate, K. (2024, March 6). Basic Income and a Just Society: An Interview between Jennifer Ditchburn and Kim Pate. *Policy Options*.
<https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2024/interview-ditchburn-pate/>
- Dubinsky, K. (1985). “Lament for Patriarchy Lost? Anti-Feminism, Anti-Abortion and R.E.A.L. Women in Canada,” Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. *Feminist Perspectives*.
- Dulude, L. (1987, April 16). Memo from Louise Dulude to NAC table officers, NAC Collection, Women’s Movement Archives, Ottawa.
- Federosi, M. (McMaster University), McDowell, T. (Metropolitan Toronto University), Lewchuk, W. and Ross, S. (both McMaster). (2020, March). “Southern Ontario’s Basic Income Experience,” quote on p. 4; statistics on pp. 59-60.
- Garza, A. (2020). *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart, One World*: New York, Chapter 8: The Meaning of the Movement.
- Grey, J. (2019). “How a human rights basic income could support women’s climate resilience,” Director of Low Income Families Together and Oasis Food Hub Project.
- Halpenny, C. (2023). We need to take care of each other, and that’s what this program was helping to do’: Disabled women’s experiences of the Ontario Basic Income Project. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 12(3), pp. 27-58.
- James, S. (1972), *Women, Unions and Work or...What is not to be done and The Perspective of Winning*. AK Press.
- James, S. (2012). *Sex, Race and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952-2011*, PM Press.
- James, S. (2021), *Our Time is Now: Sex, Race, Class, and Caring for People and Planet*, PM Press.
- Little, M. H. (1998). *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997*. Oxford University Press.
- Little, M. H., Marks, L, Beck M., Paszat E., and Tom L. (2020). Family Matters: Immigrant Women’s Activism in Ontario and BC, 1960s-1980s (M. Dagenais and A. Ricci, Eds.) *Atlantis: Journal of Women’s Studies. Special Section: Transnational Feminism*, 41(1) pp. 105-123.
- Little, M. H., McRae, A., Jalal, H. (forthcoming). *Lifeboats for All: A Firebrand calls for a more just world*.
- Lowitt, K., Levkoe, C., Dale, B., Dring, C., Gbejewoh, O., Glaros, A., . . . Power, E. (2024). *Advancing basic income as a policy tool for food systems sustainability*. Agriculture and Human Values. doi.org/10.1007/s10460-024-10654-4.

- Luxton, M. (1980). *More than a labour of love: three generations of women's work in the home*. Women's Educational Press.
- Luxton, M. (2023). Never Done: The Challenge of Unpaid Work in the Home. *Feminism's Fight: Challenging Politics and Policies in Canada since 1970* (B. Cameron and M. Luxton, Eds.). UBC Press, 92-126.
- Marks, L. (Spring/Summer 2004). Feminism and Stay-at-Home-Motherhood: Some Critical Reflections and Implications for Mothers on Social Assistance. *Atlantis*, 73-83.
- Marks, L. and Eidinger, A. (2021, May 8). "Unmarked but not Necessarily Secular: Submissions from Ethnic and Religious Women's Voluntary Organizations to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women," [paper presentation]. *Between Postwar and Present Day: Canada 1970–2000*, University of Toronto.
- Marks, L., Little, M., Gaucher, M., and Noddings, T.R. (2016). 'A Job That Should be Respected': contested visions of motherhood and English Canada's second wave women's movements, 1970-1990. *Women's History Review*, Vol. 25, No. 5, 776-778.
- McKeen, W. (2012, Spring). Seen but Not Heard: The Construction of 'Welfare Mothers' in Canada's Late 1960s/Early 1970s 'War on Poverty.' *Canadian Woman Studies* 29, 107–123
- McKeen, W. (1994). "The Wages for Housework Campaign: Its Contribution to Feminist Politics in the Area of Social Welfare in Canada," *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, No 33, 21-43.
- Molyneux, M. (1979). Beyond the Domestic Labour Debate. *New Left Review*, 116, 3–27. <https://doi.org/10.64590/jvq>
- Mulvale, J. P. (2008, April). "Basic Income and the Canadian Welfare State: Exploring the Realms of Possibility," *Basic Income Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1.
- Mulvale, J. P. and Frankel, S. (2016, September). "Next Steps on the Road to Basic Income in Canada," *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 27-50.
- Mulvale, J. P. and Vanderborcht, Y. (2012). Canada: A Guaranteed Income Framework to Address Poverty and Inequality? (R. K. Caputo, Ed.). *Basic Income Guarantee and Politics: International Experiences and Perspectives on the Viability of Income Guarantee*, Chapter 11, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples National Action Plan, June 3, 2021. https://www.vpl.ca/sites/default/files/NAP_Report_EN.pdf
- Nakai, A. (2023). Materialism, autonomy, intersectionality: revisiting Virginia Woolf through the Wages for Housework perspective. *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 24 (4), 497-511.

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

- Nickel, S. (2022, Spring). ‘We Must Now Take Action’: Indigenous Women, Activism, and the Aftermath of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 89, pp. 1-15.
- Nickel, S. (2021, May 8). “‘We Must Make Our Children Proud’: Indigenous Women, Activism, and the Aftermath of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women” [paper presentation]. *Between Postwar and Present Day: Canada 1970–2000*, University of Toronto.
- Petrasek, S. (2023). The Toronto Wages for Housework Committee: a contribution to the critique of society and space. *Gender, Place & Culture*, pp. 1-21.
- Power, E. and Swift, J. (2021). *The case for basic income: freedom, security, justice*. *Between the Lines*.
- Rebick, J. (1999). “A Woman’s Work.” *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 237, cited in S. Petrasek, *The Toronto Wages for Housework Committee*, p. 15.
- Robeyns, I. (2008, December). Introduction: Revisiting the Feminism and Basic Income Debate. *Basic Income Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, p. 2.
- Rousseau, C. (2016). The Dividing Power of the Wage: Housework as Social Subversion. *Atlantis*, 37.2 (2), 238-252.
- Sangster, J. (2021). “Invoking Experience as Evidence”; Joan Sangster, *Demanding Equality: One Hundred Years of Canadian Feminism*. UBC Press, 249–254.
- Sangster, J. (2023). Waitresses in Action: Feminist Labour Protest in 1970s Ontario. *Labour/Le Travail* 92, 13-52.
- Secombe, W. (1974). The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism. *New Left Review*, 83, 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.64590/bdk>
- St. Lewis, J. (1997). “The Entire Woman: Immigration and Visible-Minority Women,” in Andrew and Rodgers (Eds.) *Women and the Canadian State*, 262-267.
- Swift, R. (2017, September 16). The dead end of wage labour. *Canadian Dimension*. <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-dead-end-of-wage-labour>
- Tarasuk, V. (2017, June). Implications of Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity. Northern Policy Institute, Research Paper No. 24.
- Toupin, L. (2018). *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-77*. UBC Press.
- Turpel-Lafond, M. E. (1997). “Patriarchy and Paternalism: The Legacy of the Canadian State for First Nations Women,” in Caroline Andrew & Sandra Rodgers (Eds.), *Women and the Canadian State*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 64–78.

- Williams, T. (1990). Re-forming 'Women's' Truth': A Critique of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. *Ottawa Law Review* 22, 3, 725-759.
- Yalnizyan, A. (2021, February 3). *It's time to bury the idea of a universal basic income*. Atkinson Foundation Newsletter. <https://atkinsonfoundation.ca/atkinson-fellows/posts/is-it-time-to-bury-the-idea-of-a-universal-basic-income/>
- Young, M. and Mulvale, J.P. (2009). *Possibilities and Prospects: The Debate Over a Guaranteed Income*. An Economic Security Project Report, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Zelleke, A. (2022). Wages for Housework: The Marxist-Feminist Case for Basic Income. *Política y Sociedad*, 59.2.

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

Archival Sources

Feminist Publications:

- *Kinesis* (April 1982), pp. 14-15; Mothers Take Action
- *Kinesis* (April 1982), pp. 12-14; Mothers Day in the Park
- *Kinesis* (June 1980), p. 3
- *Upstream* (May 1979), article by Kathleen Macleod Jamieson

Royal Commission on the Status of Women Briefs:

A Group of Women, Ste. Thérèse, QC, Brief 124 to the RCSW, 4 mars, 1968, n.p.

Alberta Native Women's Conference, Edmonton, Brief 310 to the RCSW, March 12-15, 1968.

Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, Women's Committee of the National Executive, Toronto, Brief 194 to the RCSW, March 1968

B'nai Brith Women District 22, Toronto, Brief 107 to the RCSW, April 12, 1968.

Canadian Polish Women's Federation, Toronto, Brief 229 to the RCSW, March 1968

Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, Brief 126 to the RCSW, March 14, 1968.

Federation des Services Seriaux à la Famille du Québec, St. Jean, Brief 256 to the RCSW

Groupe de Femmes Francophones de la Région de Moncton, New Brunswick, Brief 404 to the RCSW, 3 août, 1968.

League for Socialist Action, Toronto, Brief 163 to the RCSW, 6, March 21, 1968.

Manitoba Volunteer Committee on the Status of Women, Brief 318 to the RCSW, 21 mars, 1968.

National Council of Jewish Women, Montréal, Brief 366 to the RCSW, esp. 3-5.

NDP Provincial Women's Committee, Saskatchewan, Brief 133 to the RCSW, 15, March 19, 1968.

Two-Axe Earley, Mary, for a Group of Women, Brooklyn, NY, Brief 245 to the RCSW, March 20, 1968

Voice of Women, Edmonton, Brief 159 to the RCSW, n.d.

Voice of Women, Halifax, Brief 429 to the RCSW, n.d.

Women's Federation of Allied Jewish Community Services, Montréal, Brief 312 to the RCSW, April 12, 1968.

Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association and Neighbourhood House Services, Montréal, Brief 314 to RCSW, 1–15, esp. 7. April 11, 1968

Women's Movement Archives Collection, University of Ottawa Archives:

- “Women for Welfare Win Rights,” *Harpies* 1, no. 1 [Winnipeg Women's Building Newsletter] (July, 1979): 5.
- “What Does “A” Do? NAC's Dilemma” 1979, Wages for Housework membership application; National Action Committee on the Status of Women fonds, Canadian Women's Movement Archives Collection, 10-024-S7-F563.
- Wages for Housework, WFH Group II Statement of Political Differences; Wages for Housework material, Canadian Women's Movement Collection, University of Ottawa Archives.
- Memo from Louise Dulude to NAC table officers, Barbara Cameron, Judy Campbell and Marylou Murray, April 16, 1987, National Action Committee on the Status of Women fonds, Canadian Women's Movement Collection, U of Ottawa Archives.
- [Mothers Are Women AGM Resolution] 1987, AGM: Workshops file; National Action Committee on the Status of Women fonds, Canadian Women's Movement Collection, CA ON0034 10-024-S1-F319.
- [NAC Social Services Committee Family Policy Resolution #29], March 10, 1987, AGM: Resolution Originals file. National Action Committee on the Status of Women fonds, Canadian Women's Movement Collection, CA ON0034 10-024-S1-F313.

“The Family Allowance Protest Continues,” *Wages for Housework Campaign Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Fall 1976), Library and Archives Canada OCLC # 1080363767, Box H-110-2.

“The Mother-Led Union Demands for Women on Family Benefits,” *Mother-Led Union pamphlet* (c. 1975), Dorothy Kidd Personal Archives.

Three Important Canadian Feminist Moments

Interviews

Grey, Josephine, Co-founder of Low Income Families Together, July 21, 2021; December 1, 2024; January 9, 2025; July 30, 2025; September 17, 2025; September 18, 2025.

Harrison, Sunday, WFH member, February 5, 2022.

James, Selma, co-founder of Wages for Housework, March 2022.

Kidd, Dorothy, WFH and Wages Due Lesbians (WDL) member, May 2022; May 2024.

Miles, Angela, WFH member, October 27, 2016.

Ramirez, Judith, WFM member, Toronto, February 3, 2017.

Regehr, Sheila, Director of Basic Income Canada Network, June 25, 2024.

Woodsworth, Ellen, WFH and WDL member, Vancouver, 2016.