



Invitation to Attend the CSLS Seminar Series on Living Standards

Does Canada Need a Guaranteed Annual Income for its Citizens?

Peter Hicks

4:00-5:30 PM

Thursday, February 16, 2017

Laurier Room, Rideau Club

99 Bank Street, 15th floor

Ottawa, Ontario

To attend, please RSVP by February 14 to andrew.sharpe@csls.ca.

The idea of a guaranteed annual income (GAI) or basic income is currently being considered by a number of governments, both in Canada and abroad. Some see such a policy as the most effective way to reduce poverty. Others argue that rapid technological change is leading to massive unemployment and the distribution of income must consequently be decoupled from paid employment through a GAI. Still others feel that a minimum level of income should be unconditional and an entitlement or right of citizenship. And finally some argue that combining myriad income support programs into one program would result in administrative savings.

But is a one-size fits-all GAI the best way to meet societal objectives? In this presentation, Peter Hicks, the author of the recent C.D. Howe commentary “Toward a New Balance in Social Policy: The Future Role of Guaranteed Annual Income within the Safety Net”, will provide a review and assessment of GAI schemes. He will argue that the way ahead lies not in a big GAI. Rather the priority should be to improve existing social programs in three areas: better services such as skill-enhancement programs tailored to individual needs; more flexible access to income support during periods of low income over the life cycle; and extension of existing measures in support of children, seniors and the disabled.

Peter Hicks worked for many years as an Assistant Deputy Minister of policy in several federal government departments, mainly in the area of social and labour market policies. During the period 1995 to 2001, he worked for the OECD in Paris, coordinating their activities on the policy implications of aging societies. Since his return to Canada he has worked at Social Development Canada, HRSDC, the Policy Research Initiative, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, the Privy Council Office, and the Canada Public Service Agency.