

Ontario Basic Income Pilot Participant Quotes

““It’s a great thing. It helps you feel like an *actual citizen*. There is more dignity attach to it than with (receiving) social assistance.” [Alana Baltzer, 28 years old] ... Baltzer, who is 28 and has mental health and arthritis challenges, said she is using her improved financial resources to *eat healthier* and lose weight, and to *finance an education* at Mohawk in social service work to start a career and get off social assistance entirely. “*I don’t want to spend the rest of my life on social assistance. This is an opportunity to get out of poverty. I’m determined to not let it go to waste.*””

<https://www.thespec.com/news-story/8317857-spotlight-shines-on-basic-income-poverty-pilot-project-in-hamilton/>

“Mahood [53 years old] fell into deep poverty after a work-related back injury and the death of her husband two years ago. ... “I figured I had a year and a half left before I would lose my apartment and have to rent a room. It was pretty frightening,” she said. But with \$1,200 in basic income every month on top of her disability benefits, Mahood has money for *rent and healthy food* – and has begun making regular payments to clear her *credit card debt*. “If I am careful, I should be debt-free when the program ends in three years,” ... “I feel *healthier* and I am not stressed all the time about money.””

“This has already been a huge life-change for me,” she [Alana Baltzer, 28 years old] said. “I have a *full fridge*. I am eating more *healthy food*.” And she says she can finally afford a mouth guard to help correct chronic teeth problems cause by years of poor eating. She has opened a tax-free *savings account*”

““My biggest focus is getting my *own place* and giving poor John his apartment back,” says Hamilton resident Wendy Moore [60 years old], who has been sleeping on her friend’s living room sofa for about a year. It is giving me back my *independence*,” she said. “I don’t feel so backed into a corner. If I want to eat, I can *afford to buy* something instead of going to a food bank or a soup kitchen.”

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/02/24/from-barely-surviving-to-thriving-ontario-basic-income-recipients-report-less-stress-better-health.html>

“Former security guard Tim Button ... says he has been unable to work because of a fall from a roof ... Ontario’s new “basic income” program has enabled him to ... *eat healthier*, schedule a long-postponed trip to the *dentist* and mull taking a *course* to help him get back to work.”

“Dave Cherkewski [46 years old] ..., says the extra \$750 a month he is receiving has *eased the stress* of daily life and mental illness that has kept him out of work since 2002. ... Cherkewski dreams of returning to *work* in a role where he can help people with mental health challenges. “With basic income I will be able to clarify my dream and actually make it a reality, because I can *focus all my effort* on that and not worry about, ‘Well, I need to pay my 520-dollar rent, ... I need to eat and do other things.’”

<https://www.cbc.com/2017/11/30/canada-tests-basic-income-effect-on-poverty-amid-lost-jobs.html>

“Before it was a constant battle of what do I pay first and what do I let go. Sometimes I didn’t have enough food, so I’ve had to use the food bank quite often,” she [Barb Munro] says ... “I’m now able to *pay my rent and bills in full*, and on time.” ... “And when I shop for groceries, now I can buy *fresh produce* for the first time. I’m still cheap when I shop, but it’s nice to have a few more options,” she says. ... “I’m very careful with the money now,” she adds, and puts any *additional funds in the bank*. ... Just recently she decided to get curtains for her windows – just two \$10 panels, but that was an extra luxury

she wouldn't dare have chosen before getting basic income." ... She *works part-time* at a local grocery store about 15 hours a week. She did that while she was on ODSP, too. "I prefer to work."

<http://lindsayadvocate.ca/lindsay-woman-finds-mental-health-improving-basic-income/>

"Dana Bowman, 56, expresses gratitude for *fresh produce* at least 10 times in the hour and a half we're having coffee ... She feels *happier and healthier* – and, she says, so do many other people in her subsidized apartment building and around town. "I'm seeing people smiling and seeing people friendlier, saying hi more," she says. ... In 2015, two years before the basic-income trial, Bowman asked a case worker if she could get help paying for transportation to a Fleming campus that offers classes in social work. The official said that would lead to cuts in other benefits Bowman relied on. The message Bowman says she got was: "You're unemployable. You're not worth investing in.""

https://www.technologyreview.com/s/611418/basic-income-could-work-if-you-do-it-canada-style/?utm_source=ISAC+Media+%26+Policy+News&utm_campaign=eaf8956727-Media+and+Policy+News+emails&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_342c280cba-eaf8956727-81405749

"Do people even realize just how much people who are on ODSP go without? ... have you ever had to plan out how many meals you could afford to eat that week? ... Have you ever had to cancel a doctor's appointment because you don't have the money to take your family on the bus?"

"At perhaps the most desperate time in my life the Basic Income Pilot not only saved me, it also improved my life. The legally blind are prone to social isolation and reduced community involvement. While on the program I have been able to find some *seasonal work* – and I've begun *volunteering* in social services and the arts, to acquire new skills and experience, without worrying about food, clothing, and shelter. The Provincial Government has announced that the Basic Income Pilot is being cancelled because it is a disincentive to work. I am not lazy, I am not entitled, I am just disabled."

"The Ontario Basic Income Program gave me back my *Dignity*. I felt that my community was showing me, I was a valued member. By putting money where its mouth is, and equally important, where my mouth is. ... Once I became paraplegic I was poor, full stop."

"When we were lucky enough to be accepted to the Basic Income Pilot our lives changed. We were able to start *eating healthier* which resulted in both of us *losing about forty pounds each*. We had gained that weight over years of having to eat carb heavy food because it is cheaper and it was all we could afford. My wife and I were able to start putting money into an *RRSP/Mutual Fund* to save for our retirement which is impossible on ODSP. ... One of the biggest changes that Basic Income allowed was that I was starting to look for work. The problem I had doing this on disability was that my back most days is a 6 or 7 on the pain scale ... I don't know, however when I am going to wake up and that pain increases to a 10 which happens periodically. ... The last time this happened to me it lasted a year and a half and I had to use a cane to walk and could barely move. *Basic Income was going to allow me to test the waters and see if I could work ... On disability I was terrified that if I did get a job and I was okay for a year, lets say, and I was removed from ODSP what would happen if after I was removed my pain increased and was unable to continue to work. The process of getting Disability is not easy and my wife does not make enough to support two adults while I go through this process.*"

<http://bivoices.hamiltonpoverty.ca/>