



OSGOODE

OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL  
YORK UNIVERSITY

*Professor Estair Van Wagner*  
Tel (416) 736-5476  
email : [evanwagner@osgoode.yorku.ca](mailto:evanwagner@osgoode.yorku.ca)

OSGOODE HALL  
LAW SCHOOL

4700 Keele St.  
Toronto ON  
Canada M3J 1P3  
Tel 416 736 5030  
Fax 416 736 5736  
[www.osgoode.yorku.ca](http://www.osgoode.yorku.ca)

January 27, 2021

Re: Item EX20.7 Advancing the Community Benefits Framework

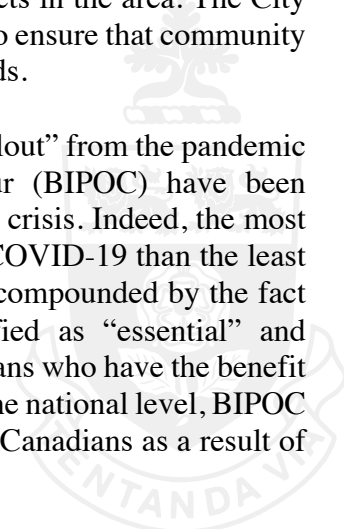
To: Mayor John Tory, Chair & Members of the Executive Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about this important item today. I am an Associate Professor at Osgoode Hall Law School and the co-Director of the Environmental Justice and Sustainability Clinic.

The City's Community Benefits Framework, and its recently released report on advancing this framework, set out important first steps for the City to take to ensure that future social and economic development opportunities are inclusive. One of these recommendations is to include minimum hard targets for community benefits initiatives, which are crucial to enforcing and ensuring the realization of these community benefits. Importantly, the report states that "setting hard targets should reflect the needs and aspirations of the local community." But in the midst of three intersecting crises—that is, the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, and anti-Black and Indigenous racism—the City must take increasingly bold and specific actions to ensure that the needs of equity-seeking groups are actually met.

As you may know, the Parkdale People's Economy developed a [Community Benefits Framework](#) in 2018 (before the City's own framework) to ensure that those who live in Parkdale, specifically those who have been historically marginalized, benefit from proposed development projects in the area. The City must follow the lead of the Parkdale People's Economy to ensure that community benefits are responsive to community articulated demands.

[Recent research from the Toronto Foundation](#) on the "fallout" from the pandemic shows that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) have been disproportionately impacted by the current public health crisis. Indeed, the most racialized parts of the City had 10 times more cases of COVID-19 than the least racialized parts of the city. These rates of infection are compounded by the fact that non-white workers are disproportionately classified as "essential" and therefore have to work in-person, unlike other Torontonians who have the benefit of being able to work from the safety of their homes. At the national level, BIPOC have unemployment rates almost twice as high as white Canadians as a result of the pandemic.



YORK  
  
UNIVERSITÉ  
UNIVERSITY

[Toronto Public Health and the Dalla Lana School of Public Health](#) have produced more evidence to show that the pandemic does not impact all Torontonians equally. Specifically, Toronto Public Health reports that COVID-19 test positive rates increase as household incomes decrease. Given that Toronto is also facing a housing affordability crisis, “[l]ow-income families and racialized families are more likely to live in over-crowded housing which decreases their ability to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19.”

The City of Toronto now has the opportunity to ensure that the recovery from COVID-19 is explicitly equity-focused. I fully support and call on the City of Toronto to implement the [Toronto Community Benefits Network’s \(TCBN\) recommendations](#) to strengthen the City’s Community Benefits Framework and ensure an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These recommendations include:

- Requiring signed Community Benefits Agreements for all large scale capital projects and ensuring equitable community engagement processes for each
- Setting a 10% minimum hard target for equity hiring on all large scale capital projects
- Collecting, tracking and reporting disaggregated data (gender, race, age and geography) of all employees on projects that apply under the Community Benefits Framework
- Designating the Toronto Community Benefits Network as a strategic City partner to support the negotiations, implementation, monitoring and evaluation functions of the City’s Community Benefits Framework, including but not limited to implementing targeted programs to engage and support women, youth, Black, Indigenous and racialized communities access to the jobs and opportunities created through community benefits

Along with the TCBN, and other constituents, I will be paying close attention to these proposed amendments at the City Council meeting in February. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Estair Van Wagner  
Associate Professor & co-Director, Environmental Justice and Sustainability  
Clinic