



UNITE HERE Local 75 CLC-FTQ

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**Economic Development Committee
City of Toronto
c/o Dela Ting, Secretariat Contact
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2**

Monday, January 20, 2014

RE: Item ED 28.5 “Feasibility Considerations of Toronto Hosting the 2025 World Expo.”

Dear Councillor Thompson and members of the Economic Development Committee,

My name is Valrie Lue, and I am Vice-President of UNITE HERE Local 75, the union for hospitality workers in the GTA. We are hotel, restaurant, cafeteria, stadium and racetrack workers and we work in more than 50 locations across the city.

We are excited about the possibility of Toronto hosting the World Expo 2025. Clearly these kinds of city-wide events have a huge positive impact on our industry. Our members know that when people come to visit this city, they like what they see!

When city-wide conferences and events come to Toronto, our hotels and restaurants are busy, and our city gains valuable exposure to visitors. More “heads in beds” mean more hours, and this in turn means more money for our families and in our communities. The Expo is especially exciting for us because it’s not than just a weekend-long conference or two-week sports gathering, but a 180-day event. This sustained level of activity would have a transformative effect on our industry.

But it’s about more than Expo 2025. We’d like to see more work done on a long-term vision for the hospitality and tourism sector in our city. Every time we’re in contract negotiations, we hear from our hotel GMs across the bargaining table the hotel companies are desperate for more city-wide convention business. We applaud the efforts of Tourism Toronto on this front, but we think the City itself needs to do more.

For example, a city gripped by gridlock makes it difficult for visitors to get around. Improved public transit would not only help those who live and work in Toronto, but would also have a huge benefit for the tourism industry. We keep re-visiting the transit question over and over, but our lack of action is impacting Toronto’s tourism potential.

Also, we just saw the opening of the Ripley Aquarium of Canada, the first major tourist attraction to open in Toronto in more than two decades. What is the City doing to promote the development of other new attractions? What is the next big project on the horizon?

There are big conversations we need to have about the future of our city, with or without Expo 2025.

How do we move residents, workers, and visitors around the city in a way that is green and inclusive?

What is the city's long-term plan to develop and fund our infrastructure over the next 20 years?

How will we create more good, green jobs in Toronto?

How do we work to narrow the widening gap between the rich and poor?

How do we make sure that women, immigrants and people of colour aren't left behind?

As the city continues to grow, and especially as we develop Toronto's waterfront, how do we unlock economic potential in a way that is inclusive and sustainable?

I would like to thank City staff for their hard work on this file. There is a lot more we need to know as we move forward building our vision for Expo 2025. I urge the Economic Development Committee not to simply shelve this report. We need more work done, and more voices need to be included in this important conversation.

Sincerely,

Valrie Lue

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