



September 18, 2015

To: Economic Development Committee

From: The Toronto Community Benefits Network

Re: Item ED6.4 – TO Prosperity: The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Toronto Community Benefits Network strongly endorses the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy recommendations for Good Jobs and affordable income, and supports in principle the range of measures identified for stable housing, affordable transportation, nutritious food, and supportive services.

The TCBN was started in 2014 and has built a strong community-labour partnership with a support base of workforce development agencies, learning institutions, and funders. Collectively we are creating a positive impact on how development works in the city, starting with Toronto's Light Rail Transit Projects.

*COMMUNITY BENEFITS* are the provision of tangible social and economic opportunities and outcomes for historically disadvantaged communities and equity-seeking groups as part of contract obligations in a development project. Jobs, training, procurement from local businesses and/or social enterprise, or other improvements determined in consultation with communities are included.

Getting recognized as a major stakeholder in the planning and approval stages; negotiating to ensure that a major development project produce specific benefits; ensuring that clear commitments are made and an accountability process is in place; taking responsibility for organizing the community's efforts and working together with the project sponsors to see the project completed-- each are key roles for the community in delivering meaningful change through a CBA.

To date the TCBN has developed a Community Benefits Framework with Metrolinx that covers the contracting for construction and maintenance of Toronto LRT lines. TCBN is hard at work aligning the workforce development system with historically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and equity seeking groups in preparation for the start-up of the contract for Crosstown Completion.

The Community Benefits model is an approach to breaking through barriers to opportunity, barriers that keep people in poverty which have built up through business-as-usual approach of the development industry in relation to large scale public and private projects. The approach has worked elsewhere – across the US, in the UK, in the Vancouver Olympics and in First Nations Impact Agreements. It has been and is being successfully demonstrated here—1652 Keele, Regent Park Revitalization, and with Metrolinx. We ask for your committee to take action to ensure City departments and agencies are mandated and properly resourced to carry out planning and implementation of community benefits in their delivery of capital investments and procurement.

We also bring the perspectives of a cross-section of our member groups.



# Toronto Community Benefits Network

[www.communitybenefits.ca](http://www.communitybenefits.ca)

*The Scarborough Civic Action Network (SCAN) is a network of community groups, agencies and residents working to improve the quality of life of Scarborough's diverse and growing population. SCAN has supported community involvement in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and we strongly endorse it. We ask that each Committee of City Council ensure the recommended measures for building strong and healthy communities are incorporated into the mandates and resources of the departments and agencies under their area of responsibility. Economic Development Committee has the opportunity to drive systems change through implementing Community Benefits and Social Procurement. Through building in expectations at the point of tendering for capital investments and purchasing, the City can steer the economics of each project to make each part of Toronto a more inclusive and equitable place to live.*

***Effie Vlachoyannacos, Scarborough Civic Action Network***

*Women for Change is a non-profit community based organization. We are committed to assisting immigrant women in breaking down barriers to integration, acquainting them with the tools to tap into the resources they need, and be a positive force for themselves, their families and the overall wellbeing of the Somali Community in Toronto's west end. Our members are experiencing high unemployment, struggling to find work and many family members returning home in Toronto after being laid off from the downturn in the Alberta oil industry. We need the City to take action on how it can use its capital investment and social procurement programs to provide opportunities for people like us who want to contribute to making Toronto a great city. Community Benefits Agreements offer us hope that we can be included in opportunities for jobs and training, and we are involved in turning the promise of Metrolinx Community Benefits Framework into reality building the Crosstown LRT. The City should and can do more to make opportunities available through Community benefits and social procurement.*

***Nasteeha Dirie, Women for Change***

*For Toronto to truly prosper, newcomer communities must be supported in getting access for becoming members in the workforce. Members of my community face many structural barriers to entry jobs and to getting the training we might need to be enabled to succeed. Even getting related work experience and international training recognized as an asset for employers is a huge challenge. **The Philippine Advancement Through Arts and Culture (PATAC)** considers that new infrastructure investment is a great opportunity to make changes to the 'business as usual' approach of big development projects that tends to reinforce the barriers to employment faced by members of newcomer communities like ours. We have worked with others through the Toronto Community Benefits Network to pilot a resident engagement process we believe will help open doors on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction project. This approach should be used wherever the City makes capital investments. We ask that you support ways like this to ensure good jobs for all.*

***Paulina Corpuz, Philippine Advancement Through Arts and Culture (PATAC)***



*Mount Dennis is in the second poorest riding in Ontario. This area lost close to 3000 jobs when Kodak Canada closed, and more with other nearby closures of manufacturing operations. In response, MDCA has been working with others to develop a community benefits framework with Metrolinx that ensures local residents get access to opportunities on the Eglinton Crosstown project, especially in the construction of the Mount Dennis station and Maintenance and Storage Facility on the former Kodak lands. Locals who are living through the upheaval of having two major transit schemes built through their area should benefit economically from this so that residents can live and work in the area and help improve our local economy. More needs to be done to ensure people in all communities have the chance to share in Toronto's prosperity. It is imperative that a mechanism for community benefits agreements be included in the City's capital investment and social procurement programs in order to bring job opportunities and apprenticeship training for at-risk youth and other employment disadvantaged groups in neighbourhoods like ours.*

**Judith Hayes, Mount Dennis Community Association**

*For a community like Jane Finch, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy is seen as a true leap forward. We are supportive of the overall response, because there is a great need to ensure Toronto bridges the poverty gap and builds an inclusive prosperity. The action recommendation concerning Community Benefits is in particular something to put your efforts behind. Together with the TCBN and Metrolinx, the Community Action Planning Group is working towards a community benefits plan for the Finch West Maintenance and Storage Facility site in the Jane Finch area. Our aspirations for this large infrastructure project include jobs, training, and business development, as well as shrinking the footprint of the MSF to permit Finch frontage development of a community hub for arts, culture and economic innovation. We look to the City to be partners in achieving community benefits in areas like in Jane Finch, and to include community benefits agreements in Toronto's capital investment and social procurement programs.*

**Rev. Robert McElhinney (ret.) Community Action Planning Group- North West Toronto**

*Dixon Hall has a long history of working on the complexities of poverty as one of Toronto's longstanding multi-service community agencies. Recently, in the revitalization of Regent Park, we have been actively involved in developing community benefits with Toronto Employment and Social Services, Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the private sector developer, The Daniels Group. As a result of these engagements, people who would otherwise have challenges with accessing the labour market have received employment and training opportunities. A further innovation has been to include groups such as the Dixon Hall Mill Centre, a social enterprise that works with people facing employment barriers in production of cabinetry and wood products, in the procurement process used by Daniels for this project. Dixon Hall/Dixon Hall Mill Centre, together with the TCBN Social Enterprise Workgroup, highly recommends the City of Toronto include community benefits agreements in your capital investment and social procurement programs.*

**Haris Blentic, MBA Director, Dixon Hall Employment Services**