



January 26, 2021

Mayor John Tory  
Chair, Executive Committee

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of the Executive Committee

**Re: EX20.7 - Advancing the Community Benefits Framework**

This is a submission on behalf of United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) in support of advancing the Community Benefits Framework that was adopted by Toronto City Council in 2019. We would like to thank the staff at Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDF) for the detailed assessment they have provided in the Report for Action, highlighting key challenges and opportunities in implementing Community Benefits principles and agreements on infrastructure projects.

Now more than ever, Toronto and the region needs leadership on bold ideas and a new way of doing business to help ensure COVID-19 does not become a poverty pandemic. Long before the current pandemic, United Way raised the flag and called for action on a growing list of *unignorable* trends in the City of Toronto. Our series of research on growing income inequality in the GTA tells us that an increasing number of people are being left behind:

- The average income for young adults in Toronto in 2015 was lower than it was in 1980.
- An immigrant in the GTA today makes a similar – or lower – income than a Canadian-born person was in 1980.
- For every dollar a white person in Toronto earns, a racialized person in Toronto earns 52.1 cents.
- Precarious or insecure employment has become imprinted on our labour market, with almost 40% of working-age adults in the GTHA working in some degree of precarious employment.
- Across the GTA, middle-income neighbourhoods are vanishing, more neighbourhoods are low-income, and high-income neighbourhoods are getting richer.

While we are still coming to grips with the impact COVID-19 will have on our communities, Toronto Public Health data and real-time information from our agency partners indicates that the gaps are deepening, and the stakes are higher. A robust Community Benefits Framework is one important lever that the City has at its disposal to help ensure the dollars it allocates to infrastructure projects and procurement are maximizing the return on investment: helping modernize our city for the people who live and work here, while reducing poverty and income inequality by creating career

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opportunities and economic growth for places and people hardest hit by historical discrimination and the pandemic. The urgency is especially true for women and those who identify as racialized and low-income.

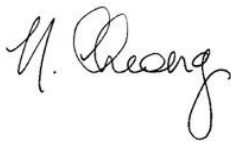
Therefore, engagement with these and other residents of Toronto will be key as the rebuild picks up steam and more projects get shovel ready. Several UWGT supported networks are already on the ground, in neighbourhoods across the city, convening and connecting residents, labour and employers, such as Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN), Scarborough Civic Action Network (SCAN) and the Jane/Finch Centre. These are just some of the essential community assets available to the City in advancing Community Benefits.

As the report mentions, several Community Benefits Frameworks are underway on projects in Toronto, across Ontario and North America that offer us a unique opportunity to learn from, build upon and gain momentum for interdependent social and economic solutions. The challenges that have surfaced in those projects, and identified by staff in the Report for Action, are real. What will be needed most is a firm commitment and *intentional* adaptation of recommendations and targets by all partners. This requires a dedicated and adequately resourced secretariat that can mobilize policy solutions, convene and connect all relevant stakeholders and track and evaluate progress.

UWGT stands ready to work with City staff, labour unions, resident groups, community agencies and the private sector to make Toronto's Community Benefits Framework a success.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any further questions.

Sincerely



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