



January 26, 2021

To: City of Toronto Executive Committee

Re: EX20.7 Advancing the Community Benefits Framework

I am writing to support the City of Toronto's efforts in advancing the Community Benefits Framework. This initiative is an important community building initiative and will help to solidify the community benefits movement in Toronto and contribute to job creation opportunities in the construction industry for equity seeking groups particularly as the City emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS) is a trusted leader in delivering non-partisan and impartial research to our industry and government partners. OCS is a joint labour-management organization working with all of the building trade unions and their contractor counterparts in Ontario's unionized industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) construction industry. Our mandate is to develop relationships, facilitate dialogue and provide value-added research to our stakeholders. Past research initiatives have focused on the underground economy in construction, fair wages, labour market analysis, demographics, community benefits and the role of the unionized sector in apprenticeship, journey person upgrade and safety training.

Many of the building trades unions are supporters of the City of Toronto's equity programs and would welcome the recommendations set forth in the staff report, *Advancing the Community Benefits Framework*. In particular, the recommendation for dedicated resources to provide leadership and develop back-end infrastructure to guide implementation of the Community Benefits Framework is critical for ensuring success. Continued relationship building between the City, unions and community partners will also help ensure the development of effective hiring pathways to connect job seekers with employers and unions.

Community Benefits Agreements can secure work, skills training and fair wages to qualified local residents and groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the skilled trades sector. Many of the goals of community benefit programs align with those of the unionized construction industry - providing safe, high quality careers.

The building trades unions have a well-developed system for hiring and training labour. Their ability to draw in skilled labour from regions and provinces where the pace of construction has slowed is a unique advantage in meeting demand for workers during peak construction periods. A bargaining relationship with the building trades unions is an 'insurance policy' against skills shortages and their damaging consequences.

Furthermore, the unionized sector is known for its commitment to training. It is well established that the building trades unions and their employers invest heavily in apprenticeship training, skills upgrading and health and safety training with annual contributions of \$40 million and over 95 training centres. Unionized employers support these investments because the training directly benefits the contractors in the form of higher productivity and fewer occurrences of work-related injuries. This advantage in productivity and safety supports the higher wages and better benefits that are earned by unionized workers.

Earlier this month, OCS and the Institute for Work and Health released a report documenting the Union Safety Effect. The report shows that unionized workers employed by building trades contractors have 25% lower lost-time allowed claim injuries with the WSIB (the unadjusted risk ratio is even higher at 31%). The full report can be found on our website at <https://iciconstruction.com/2021/01/11/unionsafetysafetyeffect2021/>.

Unions and their contractor partners have been collaborating for over 150 years and will continue to create innovative tools to facilitate labour-management relations and to develop best practices that boost productivity, safety and skills training. The OCS looks forward to working with the City of Toronto to realize enhanced community benefits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Robert Bronk', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Bronk
Chief Executive Officer