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To: [Executive Committee](#)
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Subject: EX33.1 Metrolinx + Fair Wage Policy
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City of Toronto, Executive Committee

June 8, 2022, EX33.1 Metrolinx Transit Expansion Projects – Second Quarter 2022

To members of the Executive Committee,

The issue of transit expansion is of vital interest to the people of Toronto. As the role of Metrolinx continues to evolve in building subway and light rail infrastructure, it is important to ensure that issues related to the construction and operation of our transit are fully understood by all decision-makers.

The Staff Report seeks “City Council authority to exempt Metrolinx from the City's Fair Wage Policy requirements for the following three transit projects: the Subways Program, the Light Rail Transit Program, and the GO Expansion Program”. The report suggests a rationale for some ancillary project work that the City could utilize Metrolinx to undertake, but there is no stated scope or limit to this work.

The Fair Wage policy is an essential tool to ensure fairness to workers, and has proved effective in curbing abuse and exploitation. The Toronto & York Region Labour Council does not support this recommendation, or any other proposal that would weaken the Fair Wage Policy. The key stakeholders including construction unions need to be fully consulted before any policy change takes place.

The City of Toronto’s Fair Wage Policy was established in 1893 and continues to exist today in order to “prohibit the City from doing business with contractors and suppliers who discriminate against their workers.” Numerous intentions are outlined, ranging from producing stable labour relations with minimal disruptions to protecting the public and guarding workers from exploitation. These are all excellent reasons for maintaining the Policy in its fullness.

We were greatly disappointed to see Metrolinx, an agency of the Provincial Government, requesting an exemption from the Fair Wage Policy, and equally disappointed to see that the recommendation to the Executive Committee is to accede to Metrolinx’s request.

In addition to the reasons for which the Fair Wage Policy exists, there is an additional benefit to having a strong unionized construction sector in our City: unions help to recruit a more equitable and diverse workforce, representative of our region, and to train apprentices to ensure the availability of skilled workers into the future.

Finally, an exemption would be inappropriate at any time, but in today’s circumstances – when construction workers continued to work as essential workers throughout COVID and where the cost of housing and other living expenses has soared – it seems particularly ill-thought-out to give serious consideration to such a step. It must be considered a cost of doing business to employ skilled workers at a wage that allows them to afford to live here, not just work here.

We call on the Executive Committee to make the choice to protect the City and its workers.

The Toronto & York Region Labour Council represents more than 220,000 working people from unions across all sectors of the economy.

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