



December 5, 2023

Dear Executive Committee:

My support for the Eglinton East Light Rail Transit project is very personal. I was a student at the University of Toronto Scarborough from 2003 to 2008. I remember the day when city councilor and TTC chair Adam Giambrone came to a meeting of the Scarborough Campus Students' Union. He was there to sell us on a really cool idea from Mayor David Miller: it was called Transit City.

At the time, I lived with my parents near the border of Markham and Scarborough. The 21 Brimley, 53 Steeles East, and the former Line 3 (Scarborough Rapid Transit, or SRT for short), were my regular transit routes. I thought Transit City was exactly what Toronto needed: light rail transit in the underserved areas of the city.

However, Mayors Rob Ford and John Tory, along with Premier Doug Ford, thought that “subways, subways, subways” were the best transit option for Scarborough. For the next 13 years, Scarborough transit planning became political football. Today, the Scarborough Subway is being built, but it's not enough. Earlier this year, the SRT was finally retired from service...after it derailed. It was a sad ending to the little rapid transit line that could, and the SRT deserved better.

What were the transit options when I was a student? Infrequent, packed buses and the SRT. What are the current transit options for Scarborough residents? More frequent but still packed buses. We need to advance the Eglinton East LRT for the future students of UTSC and Centennial College. We need to advance the Eglinton East LRT for all Scarborough residents, but especially those in Malvern, Highland Creek, West Hill, Guildwood, Woburn, Scarborough Village, and Eglinton East.

I'm going to change gears by telling you a love story. Thirteen years ago, I joined the fight for my city. I became a transit advocate, and then a housing rights advocate. I also became a paralegal, so you could say that I'm a professional advocate.



I love Toronto. We're one of the most vibrant and livable cities in the world. We have the best motto: "Diversity our strength". We are a great city because we are diverse. Because it doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, what language you speak, what you believe, or who you love...there will be a place for you here.

To all the naysayers who disrespect Toronto, I say this: you need us. Ontario needs Toronto. Canada needs Toronto. We are essential to the province, and we are essential to the country. We are the socioeconomic engine that keeps everything else running. And we deserve the ability to control our own destiny, without having to beg for money and attention from the provincial and federal governments. Toronto and the other cities across Canada are not creatures of their provinces, not anymore.

If I could ask one question to all of our elected representatives in Toronto, including our MPPs and MPs, it would be this: "Do you love this city?" If the answer is not an automatic, "Yes!", then I doubt your ability to represent us. There are so many uncertainties in life, but I am certain about one thing: you fight for those you love.

Yours in transit,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Helen Lee  
Executive Producer & Co-Host  
The Next Stop Podcast