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Re: Formation of a Sub-Committee to Deal with Impacts along the Ontario Line

Members of Toronto East York Community Council:

We understand that there will be a motion in front of Toronto East York Community Council at the February 23, 2023 meeting to create a sub-committee to deal with the issues for various communities along the Ontario Line. We are writing in favour of the creation of this committee and hope that with its creation we may be able to work together with Metrolinx to resolve the many issues that have emerged along the route.

ACO Toronto is particularly concerned with the unresolved impacts on cultural and environmental heritage. We include quoted sections from a letter sent to Metrolinx nearly a year ago via their consultation process. At the time we requested a forum to address our issues. To our knowledge there have been no changes to the project in response, and the battle to protect Osgoode Halls Cultural Heritage Landscape has moved into the courts.

ACOToronto is the local branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, founded in Toronto in 1933 by Professor Eric Arthur and Anthony Adamson. Through a network of 17 branches across Ontario we educate and advocate for the conservation and re-use of structures, districts and landscapes of architectural, historic and cultural significance to inspire and benefit Ontarians.

“Let us first say that we recognize the need for this transportation infrastructure, which will serve important communities such as Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park who have struggled with bus service for generations, as well as new areas of high population concentration at Liberty Village.

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the impact of the selected Ontario Line Project on an extensive number of heritage sites along the length of the route, particularly along Queen Street, one of the City’s most vibrant streets, important for the cultural life of the citizens as well as visitors. The project makes its way through a concentration of Toronto’s most significant heritage properties and heritage conservation districts, almost as if the route was chosen to inflict maximum damage.

Our ability to understand the full impact of the project is hampered by the separation of the description of it between transit planning by Metrolinx and development planning along the line by Infrastructure Ontario.

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The Ontario Line will have irrevocable impacts on Toronto’s most significant heritage sites, including Fort York, Queen Street, East and West, Osgoode Hall, and the First Parliament Site. “Direct impacts are also anticipated for five Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs): King-Spadina HCD, Queen Street West HCD, Riverdale HCD, St. Lawrence Neighbourhood HCD, and Garden District HCD.

The report describes impacts related to the demolitions required for stations, excavation and construction staging, and future vibration during train operation. Will Metrolinx be undertaking condition surveys of all the relatively fragile heritage properties along the line as a baseline before construction begins so that it will be possible to identify damage caused by construction or operation activities and provide adequate compensation to property owners? We are also concerned that the stated objective to have development along the line repay the costs of the Ontario Line, as well as policies inviting high density projects within 800m of stations will result in little more than token elements of Toronto’s most significant heritage resources surviving to tie the city to its past.

We are particularly concerned with the impact of construction of the station entrance at the lawn of Osgoode Hall, requiring removal and reconstruction of the historic fence and the removal of trees from the west lawn to create a construction staging area. The intrusion into this historic cultural heritage landscape is egregious and absolutely unacceptable.”

In conclusion, community efforts to achieve better outcomes have fallen on deaf ears at Metrolinx. We hope that the creation of a City Committee will provide a channel through Council to achieve better communication within the communities along the line and with Metrolinx. The issues require better design, which is more likely to be achieved through collaboration than through confrontation.

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Nasmith, Past-President ACOToronto
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