

TM1.2 Update on Metrolinx's Ontario Line Construction within the Toronto and East York District

March 22, 2023

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) is a 120-member coalition of organizations and groups from community, labour and social enterprise working collaboratively to address the challenges of access to good jobs, local economic development and neighbourhood revitalization.

Since 2015, the TCBN has worked closely with our network members in neighbourhoods across the City of Toronto to lead community benefits education, community engagement, coalition building, negotiations and implementation of Community Benefits Agreements on five major infrastructure projects including Eglinton Crosstown LRT, Finch West LRT, West Park Healthcare Centre and the Casino Woodbine Expansion project.

Through these various community benefits projects, the TCBN network has supported hundreds of people from underrepresented groups into well paying careers - this includes both skilled trades and professional, administrative, technical and operational positions.

Construction of the Southern Civil Stations and Tunnels and Rolling Stock, Systems, Operations, and Maintenance components of the Ontario Line is set to begin later this year and TCBN is concerned with the absence of robust and prescriptive Community Benefits Agreements in the contracts. While the Ontario Line is expected to lead to thousands of jobs and career opportunities, the local communities most impacted by the construction of the project must not be left out.

In May 2022, after significant [community pushback](#) on the lack of a CBA and minimum equity hiring thresholds on Toronto's four new transit projects, Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster and the Ministry of Transportation committed to partnering with the Ministry of Labour "to facilitate a pathway for local residents and youth to find employment on the four major transit projects". In addition, the federal government has identified a Community Benefits Agreement as a [condition to funding](#) for the four new transit projects including the Ontario Line.

Locally, the City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework highlights the need for formalized and enforceable agreements, recognizing the role that community benefits play to secure local benefits for new infrastructure projects, the potential to support the City's recovery efforts from Covid-19 which have had a disproportionate impact on women, Black, Indigenous and racialized communities, and the need for an equitable workforce development in the face of looming labour shortages in the building trades.

While all the relevant stakeholders seem to have reached a consensus that community benefits are needed, the lack of any formal agreement is puzzling. The City of Toronto's research speaks to the tremendous work it takes to successfully implement a CBA, and that the potential impact of a CBA can be severely limited when it is left to the last minute.

The TCBN is seeking the assistance of the Ontario Line Subcommittee and the City of Toronto in securing a CBA for the Ontario Line project, and commitments to direct city resources towards working with Metrolinx to support the implementation of these agreements to maximize their potential.

Through our work in securing and implementing CBAs in Toronto including the Eglinton Crosstown LRT and Finch West LRT with Metrolinx, we have identified key elements of successful CBAs that must be included as part of this project:

- Agreements must include the minimum requirement for 10 percent of all trade or craft working hours to be performed by apprentices or journey persons who identify as Black, Indigenous and/or people of colour and 10 percent of all trade or craft working hours to be performed by apprentices or journey persons who identify as women;
- Professional, administrative and technical (PAT) opportunities for persons who identify as women, Black, Indigenous and/or people of colour
- Establish a project level Community Benefits Working Group that meets quarterly and includes the project contractor, Metrolinx, Infrastructure Ontario, Provincial ministries, labour and community representatives including Toronto Community Benefits Network to monitor and oversee the implementation and public reporting of outcomes;
- Creation and public reporting of an Apprenticeship & Workforce Development plan, Community Benefits Liaison Plan and a tracking/monitoring/evaluation framework;
- A dedicated community benefits liaison staff or team to support local community engagement, outreach and to support CBA implementation
- Requirements for contractors to develop, implement and report on an anti-racism strategy that includes training for all workers; and
- Social procurement opportunities, ensuring project companies prioritize procurement of goods and/or services from local businesses, social enterprises and diverse owned businesses.

This project will have a significant impact on local communities, but the nature of the impact will be dependent on the existence of robust CBA to ensure that local residents from equity seeking groups are able to share in the wealth created by the project.

We recognize the City of Toronto's continued efforts to ensure a CBA is included on the Ontario Line project (April 2022 [motion](#)) and we look forward to the support of this committee, City Council and staff in securing a Community Benefits Agreement for the Ontario Line project.

Kind regards,



Rosemarie Powell
Executive Director
Toronto Community Benefits Network