

## **TM2.1 - City of Toronto Recommendations for Metrolinx's Ontario Line Construction within the Toronto and East York District**

July 10, 2023

The Toronto Community Benefits Network is writing to express deep concerns related to the promised Community Benefits Agreement by the Federal government as part of the Ontario Line project. Nothing in the contracts signed between Metrolinx and Connect 6ix and Ontario Transit Group that is in line with the basic standards for CBAs that have been established over the past 10 years.

Since 2015, TCBN has worked with over 120 of our community, labour and social enterprise members to advocate and work with local communities to realize meaningful community benefits as part of major public infrastructure and urban development projects.

Through this approach, our network has supported over 2,000 individuals from historically disadvantaged communities and equity seeking groups into good jobs and careers in the construction industry. Local communities have also identified opportunities to secure additional benefits including local and social procurement opportunities and other neighbourhood and environmental improvements like the Jane-Finch land transfer for a future Community Hub and Centre for the Arts.

Such outcomes could only be achieved in collaboration with community, labour, Metrolinx, government and industry through the inclusion of transparent and accountable mechanisms such as: contractual obligations outlined in the TCBN-Metrolinx Community Benefits Framework, commitments and targets in project agreements, apprenticeship and community benefits liaison plans with the contractors and signed declarations that emphasize specific equity hiring targets for apprenticeships on each project.

### **Prioritizing Ontario Line Community Benefits Agreement**

While construction has already begun on the Ontario Line project, Metrolinx has still failed to demonstrate how they will satisfy Federal funding [requirements](#) to produce high-quality jobs and negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement for the project.

Such an agreement must be informed through meaningful engagement with impacted communities and guarantee the TCBN minimum standard that at least 10 percent of all trade or craft working hours be performed by apprentices or journeypersons who identify as Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and a 10 percent target for women.

Two weeks ago, TCBN hosted the Ontario Line Emergency Community Benefits Agreement Town Hall with over 150 people attending from impacted communities to hear directly from local elected representatives, the City of Toronto Community Benefits team and Metrolinx and to share comments and questions.

During the town Hall, some of the key themes that we heard was:

**Meaningful, inclusive community engagement and involvement** - Impacted communities are seeking a better approach to working with Metrolinx and the project co. in the planning, design, construction and long term to maximize local community benefits and mitigate the impacts of the project on local residents and businesses. Project specific community benefits working groups and construction liaison committees need to be convened as soon as possible.

**Implementation** - Although Metrolinx has a four pillar community benefits and supports program, specific details on how they and project co. intend to work with local communities to implement, monitor and oversee these goals has been very limited.

**Transparency and Accountability** - To date, transparency on community engagement and community benefits has been poor. After requesting and waiting for more information about community benefits details in contracts, this information was not provided until after the project agreement was made public.

The TCBN received a commitment from Metrolinx in May 2022 that community benefits requirements would be included as part of all new transit projects including the Ontario Line. Such commitments were not reflected in the two Ontario Line contracts awarded in November 2022. Community Benefits Agreements start with community and must be negotiated and implemented with communities.

As a community-labour coalition committed to economic and racial justice, we are deeply disappointed by Metrolinx's attempt to depart from best practices and standards that constitute a Community Benefits Agreement. There is still time to get the Ontario Line Community Benefits Agreement back on track, however time is critical with each day passing by.

We urge the City of Toronto to explore all options available to ensure that Metrolinx, provincial and federal governments deliver on the promise for a Community Benefits Agreements which follows the City's minimum standards for projects over \$50M and best practices that ensure accountable and transparent measures including targets for construction trade equity hiring, community oversight and public reporting.

Some important commitments that we are seeking from Metrolinx on include:

- Apprenticeship and Workforce Development plans informed through community and stakeholder engagement. Such plans must also be made publicly available prior to project start (similarly to the Eglinton Crosstown and Finch West LRT plans)
- In all Ontario Line project agreements, quantified minimum targets including 10% Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour; 10% Women in apprenticeships on a trade-by-trade basis and professional, administrative and technical opportunities on the project
- A community benefits declaration (similarly to the Eglinton and Finch West LRT) should be developed and signed between the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx, Project Co, City of Toronto and TCBN that codifies the targets in contractual commitments that are monitored and publicly reported
- A plan on how Project Co. intends on disseminating information on social procurement opportunities in the local community and its efforts to purchase from local businesses and social enterprises (similarly to Eglinton Crosstown LRT and Finch West LRT)
- Establish an Ontario Line working group that meets quarterly, at minimum, comprised of Metrolinx, TCBN, Preferred Proponent and other stakeholders to review and finalize Apprenticeship and Workforce Development Plans, and develop a tracking, monitoring, public reporting framework (similarly to Eglinton Crosstown LRT and Finch West LRT)
- Tracking, monitoring and reporting framework should be developed and reviewed as part of the project specific working group that meets quarterly (similarly to Eglinton Crosstown LRT and Finch West LRT)
- Tracking, monitoring and reporting framework should include disaggregated public reporting on apprenticeships and professional, administrative and technical opportunities outcomes (similarly to Eglinton Crosstown LRT and Finch West LRT)
- Ongoing meaningful community engagement in all project phases to maximize local community benefits and mitigate the impacts of the project on local residents and businesses
- Better support for businesses affected by construction, particularly in areas without BIAs, where Transit Expansion Construction Mitigation Grants are difficult to access

Regards,



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