

RE: EC17.2 A Partnered Approach to Inclusive Economic Development

November 26, 2024

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) is a community-labour network with a mandate to support Community Benefits Agreements that help to ensure local communities benefit from public infrastructure and development in Toronto through commitments to good jobs, local and equitable hiring, social procurement and neighbourhood and environmental improvements.

Since 2014, the TCBN has supported over 2,000 people from Toronto's Black, Indigenous and diverse communities into good jobs and opportunities as part of equitable hiring and local workforce development initiatives associated with CBAs and community benefits commitments. Such projects have also been able to redirect over \$100M in spending to local Black, Indigenous and diverse-owned businesses and social enterprises through social procurement.

The TCBN would like to thank the Chair Councillor Alejandra Bravo and members of the Economic and Community Development Committee and City staff for bringing forward the beginning steps towards the development of Toronto's first Inclusive Economic Development Framework (IEDF).

In March, the TCBN submitted a letter to the Economic and Community Development Committee raising concerns about the draft IEDF and staff report, urging the committee to include more input and feedback from community based-organizations and groups. We would like to thank Councillor Bravo for convening stakeholders in September of which included a diverse representation of stakeholders from community, labour, environment, private sector, foundations and anchor institutions. Some of the important revisions we see reflected in the today's report include:

- a. A revised definition and principles that is centred on social and economic rights
- b. The recognition that the City has levers and tools to support and advance inclusive economic development in Toronto
- c. A commitment to co-develop of actions and indicators through a Working Table and partnered approach

Today, the City is facing significant challenges including:

- 16.3% youth unemployment rate¹ (the highest since April 2014) and Black youth unemployment rate of 24.3% in Toronto²
- 21.7% poverty rate, the highest amongst all urban centres in Canada and surrounding regions in the GTHA³

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-youth-employment-unemployment-1.7217122>

² <https://lmic-cimt.ca/the-state-of-youth-employment-in-canada/>

³ <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/topics-start/poverty>



- Rising inequality, with the top 10% of Toronto tax-filers earn more than than \$106,700 per year while more than half of Toronto tax-filers earn below \$38,500⁴ per year, which is significantly below the \$45,600 considered a living wage.^{5 6}

In recent months, we have been working alongside community and labour partners including Social Planning Toronto, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council and the Toronto Environmental Alliance, amongst others, to identify gaps and recommendations for improvement. One of the areas of concern is the direct alignment with the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (APTE). We are concerned that this will end up as a parallel process APTE, rather than informing and shaping APTE actions. In addition, we support and would like to amplify the recommendations outlined in the Social Planning Toronto joint letter including the following:

- Request that City staff partner with the Working Table to integrate community, public and nonprofit ownership; the City's climate lens and circular economy principles; the care economy and gender equity; and worker rights in the gig economy, into the IED framework
- Build IED reporting directly into the annual reporting on the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (APTE). In addition, we request that staff report back within 6 months, indicating progress and how new APTE initiatives have incorporated the principles of the IED framework
- Include the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy in the list of relevant plans, strategies and programs that will apply the IED definition and principles
- Include Children's Services in the list of relevant divisions to be involved in the development of the framework, and consult with sectors, communities and experts that deliver or advocate for important social infrastructure in Toronto, such as child care, long term care, seniors services and home care, shelter services, community services and feminist organizations and experts on the care economy
- Consult with and engage vulnerable groups, including residents experiencing housing precarity, newcomers, and individuals living on low-incomes to inform and participate in the development of the IED framework, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation

We thank committee Chair Councillor Alejandra Bravo and staff for your continued engagement and commitment to co-development of the IEDF. We look forward to our continued participation and contributions in the development of the framework and monitoring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R Powell".

Rosemarie Powell
Executive Director
Toronto Community Benefits Network

⁴ <https://torontofoundation.ca/vital-signs-2024-income-and-wealth/>

⁵ <https://www.ontariolivingwage.ca/rates>

⁶ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110005501>