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October 6, 2025

Mr. John Elvidge, City Clerk
City Clerk's Office
100 Queen Street West
12th Floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mr. Elvidge,

Re: Harbord/Hoskin Reconstruction

Councillor Dianne Saxe has submitted an Administrative Inquiry to seek information on the Harbord Street & Hoskin Avenue Upgrades project. This letter, developed in collaboration with Engineering & Construction Services, responds to this request.

Introduction

Project Overview

The Harbord Street and Hoskin Avenue upgrades project includes watermain and sanitary sewer replacements, road resurfacing and safety improvements, including new or improved pedestrian crossings, concrete curbs to separate motor vehicle travel lanes from the existing painted bike lanes, and green infrastructure planters. The project was tendered in May 2024, awarded in July 2024, and construction began in September 2024. The project area spans approximately three kilometres, extending along Harbord Street and Hoskin Avenue from Queen's Park Crescent W. in the east to Ossington Avenue in the west (just over 2.5 km), as well as Huron Street from just south of Harbord Street, north to Bloor Street W. (just under .5 km).

Community Impact and Communication

Projects of this scale are inherently disruptive. Efforts are made during project design and delivery to minimize disruption and to communicate clearly so residents and businesses know what to expect, where and when. It is recognized, however, that aspects of this project, including communication, coordination of project phasing and site management, could have been stronger.

Past Design and Construction Practices

Past practices used when this project was designed, tendered and initiated aimed to complete the work as quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. This meant crews generally

moved along the full length of the project area from start to finish, installing watermains first, followed by water and sewer services (the smaller pipes that connect homes and businesses to the larger systems beneath the roadway), then returning later to grind pavement, complete concrete work, lay base asphalt, and finally, apply top asphalt. While efficient from a project-wide perspective, this method left each section of the project area under construction for an extended period.

Improving Future Project Delivery Through the ECCD Program

While this project was designed, tendered and launched before the City's Enhancing Capital Construction Delivery (ECCD) program was approved, it is worth noting that ECCD directly addresses many of the concerns and issues raised through this administrative inquiry. This response outlines how the ECCD program will specifically address those issues moving forward as the program is rolled out over the next two years.

The ECCD program, adopted by Council in April 2025, is designed to modernize how large infrastructure projects are delivered. It aims to strengthen contract structures, improve oversight, and enhance communication with residents and businesses, with the goal of creating more reliable construction experiences and minimizing overall impact. As ECCD is implemented over the next two years, it will continue to build on these lessons learned on the Harbord Street and Hoskin Avenue upgrades project to improve outcomes across future infrastructure projects.

Response

Q1: Why was the road reconstruction conducted so slowly, in fits and starts that prolonged disruption of the surrounding neighbourhood?

Project Schedule

The original schedule set an October 2025 completion target, and the project is largely on track to meet that deadline, except for the small section between Ossington Avenue and Grace Street, which as noted below, is expected to be complete by the end of November 2025.

Prolonged Disruption

For many residents and local businesses, the work may have felt like it was happening with periods of activity followed by pauses. In fact, the project was advancing according to the planned step-by-step sequencing. While crews were consistently active somewhere along the three-kilometre work zone, individual residents and businesses would not have seen work taking place on their block or in their immediate area at all times. Additionally, during the watermain commissioning process, when the new pipe is tested, flushed and chlorinated, visible work on site may appear limited. However, this phase involves critical behind-the-scenes activity, and construction cannot proceed until the watermain successfully passes all required testing.

As noted in the introduction, the work was carried out in stages, moving along the street based on the type of task. The sequence included:

- October 2024 – Winter 2025: Watermain and sewer installation work, including mandatory testing to ensure water safety, with temporary surface restoration for safety and traffic.
- Winter 2025: Connection to the distribution system and further water testing.
- Spring 2025: Property service connections and permanent surface restoration, including sidewalks, curbs, bike lanes and trench drains.
- Summer–fall 2025: Road milling, paving, pavement markings and landscaping.

This rolling approach reflected standard practices at the time of project design and tender. Communication about this rolling approach was provided in response to public inquiries, typically on a one-on-one basis through the project’s field ambassador, and starting in June 2025, in weekly project updates. However, communication could have been stronger in explaining where crews were working and where they were scheduled to be next. Under ECCD, future projects will be phased section by section, where appropriate and practical.

Coordinating Work in the Western Segment – Ossington to Grace

A small section at the west end of the project, between Ossington Avenue and Grace Street, covering about 550 metres and involving only the addition of concrete curbs to separate motor vehicle travel lanes from the existing painted bike lanes and road resurfacing (no watermain or sewer work), was delayed due to the need for capital coordination with other nearby projects on Crawford Street and Ossington Avenue that included underground water infrastructure. The timing of work in this area was coordinated to avoid overlapping work zones and to allow underground infrastructure to be completed before surface restoration and repaving began. Completion of this section is now expected by the end of November 2025. Only this section of the project is delayed; the rest remains on track to be completed in October as outlined in the original plan and construction notice.

Q2: What oversight measures were in place during the project to minimize disruption of the surrounding neighbourhood, and what needs to change to achieve steady progress and swift completion of road reconstruction in each area?

Oversight included two full-time inspectors assigned solely to this project. They monitored safety, cleanliness, and traffic control plans. A work zone coordinator also reviewed traffic management and coordinated with nearby projects.

Site inspectors regularly checked for cleanliness and safety, and the contractor responded to issues when they arose. However, debris and signage concerns persisted at times. All of these issues were documented in the contractor’s performance evaluation and discussed directly with the contractor on site to ensure accountability and improved performance.

Residents and businesses received notices before and during major disruptions, including pre-construction notices, construction updates, night work notices and water disruption notices. Starting in June 2025, weekly email updates and more frequent construction update notices were also provided.

As the ECCD program is implemented over the next two years, stronger oversight and accountability measures will be introduced through a phased approach, including:

- Faster decision-making in the field through enhanced contract management.
- Performance-based incentives and extended work hours to shorten timelines.
- Phased contracts requiring one section to be completed before moving on.
- A strengthened contractor code of conduct and performance evaluation system (which will also support enforcing site cleanliness and maintenance standards).

Some of these measures are already being piloted on major projects and have shown early success in accelerating delivery and reducing disruption.

Q3: What will be done to improve communication with surrounding communities and ensure that problems with such projects are promptly resolved?

Notification frequency from the start of this project met City standards and, as of June 2025, was increased to significantly exceed them. However, many residents and businesses still felt they were not adequately informed.

Over the next two years, as the ECCD program is implemented in phases, new tools to improve communication will be introduced, including:

- Increased oversight and support from city staff, including an Issues Management Coordinator, Capital Construction. This role will embed engagement staff more directly into project delivery teams to improve information sharing and responsiveness.
- Regular pop-up information sessions and e-newsletters.
- Enhanced project websites with up-to-date schedules.
- Improved on-site signage.

Conclusion and next steps

The disruption experienced by local businesses and residents during this project has highlighted areas where long-standing construction practices need to evolve. These lessons are informing the ECCD program, which is focused on strengthening accountability, improving oversight, and modernizing contract structures to reduce community impacts while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

ECCD is in its early development phase, with pilot initiatives already underway and additional measures to follow as the program team is fully established. Implementation will take place over a phased two-year period, subject to available budget. The objective is to deliver more reliable construction outcomes, restore neighbourhoods more quickly, and ensure systemic improvements in how capital projects are delivered.

Sincerely,



Will Johnston, P. Eng.
Deputy City Manager,
Infrastructure Services

cc:

Jennifer Graham Harkness, Chief Engineer and Executive Director, Engineering and Construction Services

Barbara Gray, General Manager, Transportation Services

Lou Di Gironimo, General Manager, Toronto Water

Geneviève Sharkey, Chief Procurement Officer