

June 5, 2025

RE: TE23.29 - Ontario Line - Construction Update - Second Quarter 2025

Dear Members of the Toronto & East York Community Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) in response to the TEYCC Second Quarter Ontario Line Update. While we are excited with the potential of this project to provide both transformational transit infrastructure and Community Benefits to many neighbourhoods across the Ontario Line, we share deep concerns surrounding some items that have been highlighted in item's staff report.

A central theme to many of our concerns is that Metrolinx is drifting away from the best practices for community benefits, which have been informed through deep engagement with the TCBN community-labour coalition and industry stakeholders over the past decade. A crucial part of the success of past projects including the Eglinton LRT and Finch West LRT was the collaborative approach in co-development and delivery of the Community Benefits program.

Community benefits are not simply about hiring targets. It is about developing a program that is transparent and accountable to communities that are affected by a project which ensures clear local pathways to jobs and training opportunities for underrepresented groups in construction, procurement opportunities for local businesses, Black, Indigenous and diverse-owned businesses and social enterprises, and other benefits identified through meaningful community engagement. These processes are critical to ensuring the success of any community benefits program.

Community Benefits Reporting

While Metrolinx is reporting that they are surpassing their hiring targets across the transit program, we have yet to receive a report on community benefits outcomes from the Ontario Line project and how Metrolinx and its contractors are working within local communities to deliver Community Benefits.

A key component to the delivery of Community Benefits is ongoing community engagement and transparent reporting of community benefits outcomes. This needs to happen at quarterly intervals with information on community benefits outreach and disaggregated data on a project by project basis. Previous projects would provide this information on a quarterly basis to ensure that community benefits outcomes are reported with transparency and local communities affected by the project are informed on outcomes and results.

Community Benefits Working Group

Another best practice is the establishment of quarterly working groups so that community benefits plans are co-developed and implemented with key stakeholders including community, labour and local businesses. It is concerning that the Community Benefits Working Group outlined in the staff report only involves the City and Metrolinx and no representation from the TCBN. The Community Benefits Working group must include the TCBN, whose membership include the diverse groups and organizations that serve communities along the Ontario Line and who have played an integral role in shaping the Metrolinx community benefits program for over a decade now.

Stakeholders Working Group

The Stakeholder Working Group meetings are failing to maintain the schedule as described by the relevant Ontario Line Project Agreements. This Committee should play an important role in making sure that this project is delivering on jobs and opportunities to communities affected by the project.

It is essential that it meets quarterly and has the information that it needs to track progress and plan for future work and job opportunities. The Terms of Reference for this committee of circulated by Metrolinx in 2024 failed to meet the minimum requirements for this Committee as stated in the relevant project agreements in key areas such as; the frequency of meetings, the role of the Committee, and the responsibilities that Metrolinx and its Contractors have towards this Committee. This Committee should have a perspective that it is forward looking and helping to plan for upcoming work and opportunities, not just be relegated to receiving reports.

The TCBN wrote to Metrolinx in January 2025 with feedback on the draft Terms of Reference but have not heard back about any changes.

We look forward to continuing to work with the City, Metrolinx and its contractors, to ensure that this project delivers the highest standard of Community Benefits to the neighbourhoods that are being affected by the project, and we would like to thank the Toronto & East York Community Council for their continued support in these efforts.

Regards,



Rosemarie Powell
Executive Director
Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN)