

**To:** Metrolinx Board of Directors  
**From:** Laura Cooke  
Chief Communications Officer  
**Date:** November 22, 2019  
**Re:** **Communications Quarterly Report**  
**September 13, 2019 to November 22, 2019**

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### **Recommendation**

That this report be received for information.

### **Recent Highlights**

- The Indigenous Relations unit led Metrolinx's activities to recognize Orange Shirt Day on September 30. Orange Shirt Day started in Canada in 2013 and seeks to acknowledge the lasting trauma to Indigenous communities whose children were sent away to residential schools. Metrolinx volunteers handed out brochures to customers at Union Station, and attended an information session led by Kelly Brownbill, a traditional knowledge keeper who shared the history of residential schools in Canada and the present-day impact on Indigenous communities and families.
- The *Metrolinx News* site broke another record in the month of September with 82,555 views -- more than the entire year of 2018.
- Engagement on the Hurontario LRT project continued with stakeholders and elected officials following the announcement that Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx reached financial close and officially awarded the Hurontario LRT project to the preferred proponent, Mobilinx, on October 21. We shared this milestone with the community through corridor committee meetings and public open houses.
- The Hamilton LRT Team continues to work with the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and Downtown and International Village BIAs to help prepare businesses for major LRT construction through the "LRT Ready" series. On September 25, local business owners and community members travelled on a GO bus with Metrolinx and city staff to Waterloo, to check out the new ION LRT, ride the vehicles and hear from local businesses about their experiences throughout the life of the project.



Employees taking part in the Orange Shirt Day presentation.

- The media relations team partnered with GO Operations for an emergency simulation exercise on November 2 and 3. We used the opportunity to test Metrolinx's crisis communications plan. We achieved nine positive media stories mostly generated from a Metrolinx News story we published prior to the exercise. A total of 18 media outlets participated, and we had more than 50 media calls and 14 interviews. The exercise generated more than 15 positive or neutral media stories and an astounding two million media impressions (more than all of our news generally receives in a month).

Here are our engagement numbers since September:

- 25 public meetings with attendance by more than 1,605 people
- 256 stakeholder briefings with approximately 8,970 attendees
- 1,358 interactions related to GO Expansion & Rapid Transit projects (including emails, phone calls and walk-ins)
- 6,051 e-blasts
- 395,079 direct-to-home communications
- 40 blog posts resulting in 14,377 total views for the period

## Community Relations

Our teams engaged communities through a number of initiatives during the quarter.

- The Toronto West community relations team, together with Finch West LRT project constructor Mosaic Transit Group, attended a Back to School Block Party hosted



Toronto West Back to School activities.



Students at Forest Avenue Public School in Mississauga drawing their impressions during a Transit in Your Community presentation.

by Finch West Mall, and another similar initiative at the Rexdale Community Hub Centre. As part of the community benefits program, the teams provided school supplies to children in these communities. The team also hosted a Business Expo, attended by approximately 60 local business owners who heard updates on the Finch West LRT project and explored opportunities in the construction industry. From September 24 to 26, the Alstom Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) mock-up was on display at Humber College, giving students, faculty members and staff the chance to explore the future of transit in the community and ask questions about the project. Many also expressed their appreciation that there will be a station near the college!

- In Peel Region, the community relations team joined Transit Safety, Customer Care, Emergency Medical

Services and Peel Police Services for an activation to recognize Rail Safety Week (September 23-27) at Streetsville GO Station. The team engaged with more than 600 people, distributing information pamphlets on rail safety, magnets, paper buses and bookmarks. A similar event was held in conjunction with CN and VIA Rail at a Guelph Junction Railway Operation Lifesaver event.

- The Hamilton community relations team debuted a LEGO display of the Hamilton LRT corridor at the annual Supercrawl arts festival. Creative visual aids such as these not only draw attention but are also useful in helping residents visualize what their community will look like once a project is finished.



Residents of Hamilton enjoy the Hamilton LRT LEGO display.

- The Toronto East/Durham team provided construction updates about the Union Station Rail Corridor East to the Corktown Resident and Business Association. The team also convened a public meeting to discuss the Steeles Avenue East Grade Separation, attended by more than 150 people.

- On September 28, the Eglinton Crosstown team hosted an appreciation event for communities impacted by construction at three different locations along the Eglinton Avenue East corridor.

## Communications Planning

- For this quarter, communications planning support was provided for the November service changes announcement, PRESTO minimum load reduction, as well as the PRESTO 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities. The team executed communications plans and coordinated joint events with MTO in support of the November 4 announcement to build subways, and a photo-op featuring a visit from Associate Minister Kinga Surma and some local councillors to the new textile recycle collection point at Markham GO station on November 1.

## Stakeholder Relations

- On October 2, the team facilitated a Toronto Caucus MPP roundtable briefing, providing updates on Toronto-based Metrolinx projects.
- With support from Stakeholder Relations, on November 8 President & CEO Phil Verster presented on Metrolinx's strategy on Transit Oriented Development at the Ryerson City Building Institute. More than 150 developers and industry experts participated.

## Media Relations and Newsroom

- For the quarter, we responded to 508 media calls. Major areas of interest were September GO train increases, UP Express and its growth capacity, the Ontario Line Initial Business Case, the announcement of Free Wi-Fi on GO vehicles, and the lowering of the minimum load on PRESTO cards.
- There is considerable media interest and positive coverage related to stories published first on Metrolinx News.
- We have been publishing more stories and this has been giving our Metrolinx News site better search engine influence on Google. We surpassed 40,000 followers in September, including more than 9,000 followers added so far this year. Google continues to be our top referrer, directing readers to our Twitter account and Metrolinx.com homepage where we have been featuring our top news items. LinkedIn is now also among the top referrers to Metrolinx News.
  - Among the most popular news features were updates to our GO Transit ridership map, changes to PRESTO (a reduction of the minimum load required on a card) and continued progress updates on the Crosstown LRT project.



## Internal Communications

The internal communications team worked to build employees' awareness and engagement on several corporate activities and management decisions this quarter, including:

- Organizational changes to support the Toronto subway program
- Orange Shirt Day
- Employee Engagement Pulse Check survey
- PRESTO 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Cybersecurity awareness
- Introduction of a new unconscious bias training session
- Learning@work professional skills development series
- Metrolinx's United Way fundraising campaign kick-off
- 2020 Metrolinx Engagement and Inclusion Calendar

Respectfully submitted,

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