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From: Rick Ciccarelli [REDACTED]
Sent: September 8, 2022 1:15 AM
To: Chair of Metrolinx <Chair@metrolinx.com>; Caroline.Mulroney@pc.ola.org
Cc: michael.ford@pc.ola.org; Councillor Frances Nunziata <councillor_nunziata@toronto.ca>;
ahmed.hussen@parl.gc.ca; Mayor_Tory@toronto.ca; Kelly Hagan <Kelly.Hagan@metrolinx.com>;
Andrew Hope <Andrew.Hope@metrolinx.com>; derrick.toigo@toronto.ca
Subject: Mount Dennis Community Dispute with Metrolinx ECWE Transit Planning and Community Engagement

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Dear Chairman Wright and Minister Mulroney,

After receiving a copy of the attached 8 page letter signed by Phil Verster President and CEO Metrolinx, dated August 25th, 2022 and entitled "**An open letter to the residents and communities along the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension**", I have no option left but to request that Don Wright as Chair of Metrolinx Board of Directors together with Ontario Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney jointly review our community stakeholders substantive concerns with the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension. We now add to our community dispute with Metrolinx on the ECWE Mount Dennis-Scarlett Segment project plan, that your CEO is a source of ongoing misrepresentation of facts to your Board of governance, to its partner the City of Toronto, and to its oversight authority the Ministry of Transportation.

Rather than raise our multiple objections to the contents of this letter, I will cite 3 straightforward instances where Mr Verster is now publicly misleading and misrepresenting facts related to the ECWE Mount Dennis -Scarlett Segment.

First matter of concern:

Based on information prepared by the ECWE Project Team, Mr Verster refers to the route of the ECWE LRT primarily running along the "boulevard" of Eglinton west. Specifically, on page 5 paragraph 3 of his open letter, in a section uniquely entitled "**Protecting parks and strengthening tree cover and green space**", Mr Verster categorically states that in the interest of *protecting and preserving* Fergy Brown, Eglinton Flats and Pearen Park, Metrolinx is

"building the elevated guideway and elevated structure to straddle the boulevard as close as possible to Eglinton Avenue West and the existing Bridge".

This information has also been conveyed by ECWE to the City of Toronto Transit Expansion Office throughout the term of the project, assumedly in the interests of "coordinating". Toronto Transit Expansion Services Office has repeated this information from Metrolinx, now expressed in the CEO Open Letter, to the municipal level of decision makers in its quarterly progress updates, with a description of the ECWE route as being "on the boulevard, not through the park" defined in full Council review of the TTEO item report, as based upon the project information it received from Metrolinx. This occurred as recently as this past May and June when Toronto Council twice dealt with affirming their directive to the Executive Director of Toronto Transit Expansion Office to negotiate the engineering design being planned for across Eglinton Flats with Metrolinx and report back on procurement adjustments to the new the first meeting of Council following the 2022 municipal election.

In the Mount Dennis ecoNeighbourhood Initiative understanding , the route across Eglinton Flats does not run "on the boulevard" except for an unconfirmed section somewhere west of the planned Jane Station location. Instead, it runs directly through mature forest to the north side of Eglinton from the top of bank at Pearen Park, across Fery Brown Park east of Jane, across Emmet Park west of Jane before navigating southwards to reach the Eglinton West Boulevard. This routing requires clear-cutting of a substantial area of our neighbourhood's living city across two parks in Mount Dennis. The path of the elevated section will not permit future tree growth that could interfere with the electrical catenary or allow for debris fall onto the track bed, so any replanting within a 40 foot area beneath the tracks will not be a replacement of the existing mature forest, and the process will impact the existing wetlands in both Fery Brown and Emmet Parks. And if the ECWE plan is allowed to proceed as CEO Verster indicates, , it will inflict ecological damage that has not accurately been accounted for to the ultimate decision-makers, using corporate marketing of promises of future tree planning and community benefits to distract and buffer reality. This is to say nothing of the audacity of an intentional corporate greenwash campaign being used that justifies clearcutting in the interests of "Protecting Parks and Strengthening Tree Cover".

Second matter of concern:

Despite leading a Regional Transportation Agency that prides itself for its

awareness of matters of public safety ("Safety Never Stops"), Mr Verster generically indicates in the next paragraph on page 5 of his Open Letter that "Space within Pearen Park will be required for construction staging". The real world translation of this is that Metrolinx ECWE has decided in favour of locating the storage yard for heavy construction machines and major material storage in an actively used children's park. In my personal experience, many children find up-close heavy construction activity to be fascinating, and young people just love to explore-- whether its at toddler stage or teen age. Either during or after regular construction project work hours, there is real potential for this "space ...required for construction staging" location becoming an unauthorized "playground" for young people. The high risk of it becoming an "emergency medical services response needed immediately" location should be anticipated, but also could be prudently avoided by reconsidering the CEO endorsed decision to locate heavy construction equipment in a well used children's playground. Please check the cost of insurance rates should this part of the project proposal ever get to the stage where it goes out for financing.

Third matter of concern:

Mr Verster has indicated in glowing terms the lengths that the Metrolinx Eglinton West Crosstown Extension has gone to engage with local community members and support their involvement. Yet the local urban indigenous community has been working for many years along the west bank of the Humber River just south of the Eglinton Bridge, doing restorative work and renewing the land with traditional plantings of medicinal and sacred vegetation. Names of the workers are familiar to our community and had anyone from Metrolinx expressed interest in engaging with them, a referral would have quickly been given.

Yet in the length of time Metrolinx has engaged with Mount Dennis on transit planning, no one from Metrolinx, let alone from the EWCE team whose project route crosses the land which they actively steward, has ever reached out to learn about what they are doing, why they consider it significant to happen in that location, and to jointly consider how this work may be impacted or how to best support it through potentially offering some form of community benefits.

A notable example of EWCE non-engagement has occurred despite community efforts to make a connection happen while planning consultations were underway. In the fall of 2021 Mount Dennis Community Association invited the ECWE team to be part of its annual fall Humber Trail Walk so that it could

meet and exchange with the person coordinating indigenous forest gardening, But after being introduced and an initial joint talk to about 40 attendees, the ECWE team was determined to hold its own talk session separately and stay under the Eglinton bridge. More recently, MDeNI, when it negotiated its July 25th 2022 pre-Open House meeting with the ECWE team, made it a priority to again introduce Metrolinx to this coordinator, who is a key community connector and urban indigenous advisor to MDeNI. He was given time to convey his concerns about the complete lack of respect for the land that was being demonstrated by Metrolinx, about an apparent blind spot about indigenous heritage and culture, and the lack of understanding of the role of the land now known as Eglinton Flats. The response from Metrolinx was the familiar "We hear your concerns", and then the Metrolinx Subways Program sponsor for EWCE provided us with his "Metrolinx Knows Best" presentation and finished by saying we will be getting an open letter from the CEO confirming this after the Open House. Thirty days later, despite developing opportunities for discussions between MDeNI and Metrolinx senior management, the CEO letter is released like legal clockwork.

Summary

Mr Wright, please confirm at your Board meeting tomorrow morning that you and the Minister of Transportation will review these three concerns: the first about Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster conveying misinformation to your board and authorizing it be conveyed to the City of Toronto for its decision making; the second, that the CEO indicates and downplays the decision to use a site for construction that will place children and youth at safety risk; and finally that the CEO indicates extensive efforts have been made to engage community in planning consultations while Metrolinx ECWE visibly ignores meaningful engagement and dialogue with a well recognized and credentialled local urban indigenous facilitator.

We request that you jointly invite our representatives to meet with you together to discuss these matters at your earliest convenience, in the interest of seeking a collaborative way forward.

On behalf of the Mount Dennis ecoNeighbourhood Initiative Team,

Respectfully

Rick Ciccarelli

Lead Director (vol) MDeNI [REDACTED]

cc. York South Weston MPP Michael Ford; YSW City Councillor Frances Nunziata; YSW MP Ahmed Hussen; Mayor John Tory, Metrolinx Chief Capital Officer Andrew Hope; Metrolinx Sr VP Community Relations Toronto Projects Kelly Hagan; City of Toronto Transit Expansion Office Executive Director Derrick Toigo