

To:

Metrolinx CEO, Phil Verster

Metrolinx Board Chair, Don Wright

**Concern with Implementation of Community Benefits on the Ontario Line**

June 23, 2024

We are writing to you to express concerns about the Ontario Line Industry Expo and the implementation of Community Benefits on the Ontario Line project.

In 2021 the Toronto Community Benefits Network, local residents, organizations, and service providers came together to form the Moss Park Coalition to advocate for a Community Benefits Agreement to be attached to the Ontario Line project. Much of this advocacy has been focused on opportunities for workforce development within the neighbourhoods that will be most impacted by Ontario Line construction, such as Moss Park.

The Coalition began meeting regularly with Metrolinx in March of 2023, first as a Community Liaison Committee, then shifting as the Construction Liaison Committee in fall of 2023. The Ontario Transit Group (OTG) began attending our meetings with Metrolinx after they were awarded the Southern Civil contract in spring of 2023. In these meetings both Metrolinx and OTG told the community that they understand the need for good jobs in Moss Park, the opportunities that this project can provide to meet those needs, and a commitment to organize a local job fair for the project that will help to ensure that Moss Park residents can access the economic opportunities that will come with this project.

We were reassured that a Moss Park job fair would happen after seeing the event Connect6 organized in Thorncliffe Park in January of 2024. They found accessible space directly within one of the communities most affected by Ontario Line construction, they brought in community organizations at an early stage of organizing the event to make sure that we had time to understand the event, and inform community members, Connect6 produced a list of jobs and employers that will be present at the event, and they invested significant time and energy into advertising and promoting it. By working together, we were able to have a successful event that saw many community members access the opportunities provided by the event.

The approach that OTG has taken for the Ontario Line Industry Expo failed to meet the expectations created by Connect6's approach and puts the opportunities offered at the Expo beyond the reach of many Moss Park residents. The Moss Park Community was not notified of the event until an email was sent out only 8 days before, and we have seen very little evidence of OTG and Metrolinx promoting the event other than the email and LinkedIn post. We did not know how many jobs will be offered, what type of jobs will be offered, or what employers will be attending. This creates many obstacles for community partners as we have little information to communicate and a tight deadline to organize efforts to connect community members to these resources. Instead of building off the success of Connect6's job fair, OTG is putting extra barriers between job seekers and opportunities for employment.

**Commented [1]:** How many emails were sent? If there was only one or two, I would put there here to quantify it.

This short timeframe also makes it very difficult for small businesses and social enterprises to attend the Expo to learn about procurement opportunities. There was no communication about what needs the project has or what type of opportunities may be available.

Moss Park residents have waited patiently for these opportunities to come to fruition as OTG has celebrated several significant milestones including:

- In January 2024, OTG celebrated one million hours worked on the project without any injuries;
- In spring of 2024, OTG began piling work at stations across their portion of the Ontario Line;
- In July 2024, Station excavation is planned to begin.

OTG has reported no progress to the community in working on key contractual obligations such as creating a publicly accessible dashboard to report on local hiring and procurement achievements and forming stakeholder working groups to oversee the implementation of Community Benefits. This lack of transparency surrounding the implementation of Community Benefits is not living up to community expectations and leaves them feeling sidelined by the project.

We know that this project can still produce the opportunities that so many Moss Park community members need, but there is a high-risk of them remaining inaccessible without better coordination with community partners. We have heard you constantly reiterate Metrolinx's 4 pillar approach to Community Benefits and your understanding of the importance of this program, we now need to see these promises being implemented.

We are urgently requesting a meeting to work out how OTG can fulfill its contractual obligations, related to transparency around local hiring and procurement and implementing stakeholder working groups that are long overdue, implementing Metrolinx's 4-pillar Community Benefits strategy, and creating accessible employment opportunities for local community members which are obligations related to the federal funding of the Ontario Line Project.

We are urgently asking the Metrolinx Board of Directors to provide us with answers to the following questions:

- How does Metrolinx plan to ensure that its Ontario Line contractors implement Pillar 1 of Metrolinx's 4 Pillar strategy?
- What steps will be taken to accelerate the implementation of Pillar 1 Benefits?
- How will Metrolinx begin to hold its contractors accountable to fulfill their contractual obligations around stakeholder working groups and the public reporting of progress related to targets for local employment and procurement?

We know that there is still enough work left on this project for Community Benefits to have a real impact for the Moss Park community, but we need to act immediately. We look forward to your timely response.

Regards,

David Anderson,  
Moss Park Coalition