

Community Benefits as a Strategy for Economic Inclusion in
Ontario: The Eglinton Crosstown LRT Story (so far)

Introduction

In 2012, a diverse group of actors came together to pursue community benefits through the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction

- The immediate goal was to leverage this \$5.3 billion infrastructure investment to create economic opportunities for residents from historically disadvantaged groups.
- The longer term goal was to contribute to a broader conversation about ensuring the benefits of economic development are shared more equitably.
- Individuals and organizations from community and labour with support from philanthropy came together to articulate a shared vision for community benefits and mobilized to make this vision a reality.
- This case study outlines the story of this mobilization, including key milestones, successes and dilemmas, and identifies insights and lessons learned from the perspective of the key players.

Story overview

This deck tells the story of a journey that is unfolding in four interrelated streams

1. Building commitment to a shared vision

The story begins with a diverse group of actors committed to '*lives being materially changed through community benefits*'. An early milestone is the creation of the Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN), which brings together community and labour groups. TCBN's *Foundation Document* reflects a commitment to shared values that was fostered through extensive community organizing.

2. Developing shared goals and strategy

Grounded in a commitment to shared values, TCBN and other partners work together to develop a negotiating agenda underpinned by a disciplined mobilizing strategy. The *Community Benefits Framework*, signed by the TCBN and Metrolinx, is a signal of the provincial agency's commitment to community benefits and is celebrated as an early win.

3. Determining an approach for implementation

Building on momentum from early wins, TCBN and other partners expand their focus to determine how a community benefits agreement would work in practice – e.g. how to connect residents to construction-related jobs, enable social enterprises, and secure broader neighbourhood benefits. Investments from labour, philanthropy, and a provincial *Labour Market Partnership* support resident engagement, needs analysis, and program design activities. The passing of the provincial *Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act* signals the need to consider implementation on a bigger scale. The local and provincial government and philanthropy come together to fund a *construction workforce pathway* as a cornerstone of the implementation plan.


4. Focusing on outcomes and continued engagement

Clearly defining what success looks like and determining whether and how to set a target is an early and ongoing challenge. The signing of *Community Benefits Declaration* and the development of the Community Benefits and Apprenticeship Plans are major milestones. Determining how the Declaration can be enforced and how broader outcomes should be monitored and evaluated remain ongoing priorities.




Our process

- This story was developed through a series of interviews and workshops with key players in the community benefits story in spring 2017
- Blueprint conducted interviews with 17 representatives from community groups, labour unions, government and philanthropic organizations involved in pursuing community benefits related to the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction
- We also held two workshops with these representatives to obtain feedback on our findings and to collectively identify key insights and takeaways
- This story was commissioned by the Atkinson Foundation to support strengthening community benefits policy and practice in Ontario
- The story tracks efforts leading up to the signing of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT Declaration in December 2016.



The story: Key events, success factors, & dilemmas



1. Building commitment to a shared vision

The story begins with a diverse set of actors and organizations interested in economic inclusion coming together to explore the potential of community benefits

Labour

Union leaders recognize community benefits as an opportunity to build on their work for increased diversity and inclusion in the trades, and connect with community to begin building a broad support base for community benefits.

Community

Activists with a history of organizing for equitable economic opportunities related to development connect with labour and focus on the opportunities provided by transit construction.

City of Toronto

Building on prior experience linking community benefits to city-building projects (e.g. Regent Park, Waterfront Renewal), city staff share expertise and guidance.

Foundations and other funders

Leaders begin to recognize the alignment of community benefits with their strategic priorities, and invest financial and other forms of capital in the emerging coalition.

Metrolinx

Metrolinx staff members increase their focus on community engagement, and implement a local hiring program for the Georgetown South project.

1. Building commitment to a shared vision

Success factors	Dilemmas
<p>Strong coalition of labour and community actors work together to build a common vision for the potential of community benefits</p> <p>Upfront investment in articulating shared values, building trust and fostering relationships helps ensure the coalition is prepared to set priorities and make difficult decisions</p> <p>Commitment to ‘learning together’ amongst TCBN members and other coalition partners ensures sharing of information, development of a knowledge base, and ongoing capacity building</p> <p>Early and ongoing support from Labour Council provides resources and a platform for movement-building</p>	<p>Clarifying roles and responsibilities for individuals and the organizations they represent, including their role in decision-making around strategy, advocacy, and implementation planning</p> <p>Developing shared priorities and goals of community benefits given wide scope of potential areas of focus, including social enterprise, social procurement, and apprentice jobs</p> <p>Navigating differences in orientations to the political process across sectors, organizations and individuals</p>

Milestone: TCBN Foundation Document

The TCBN Foundation Document outlines a shared vision, commitment and objectives for the TCBN. The document was drafted during a two-day community benefits workshop in 2013 that included knowledge transfer from other jurisdictions.

How partners became involved

Community

Community activists, organizations and resident groups in the GTA organize for equitable economic opportunities related to redevelopment (e.g. Regent Park, Woodbine Live). Activists begin to engage additional individuals and community groups to mobilize for community benefits opportunities connected to transit development.

Community-labour partnerships

Community and labour organizations partner on initiatives related to economic inclusion, such as the Good Jobs for All movement.

Labour unions

Construction unions have a long-standing focus on equity and diversity in the trades, starting with efforts to increase the representation of women and expanding to Indigenous Canadians, newcomers, racialized individuals, disadvantaged youth and priority neighbourhoods. Labour Council begins to engage with community and government to explore opportunities for diverse hiring on transit projects.

City of Toronto

The city government begins to focus on opportunities for linking city-building and workforce development. The City works with Toronto Community Housing to develop a local hiring plan for Regent Park, and building on experience with this and other projects, shares expertise and guidance in early conversations about linking transit investment with workforce development.

Metrolinx

Recognizing alignment with their emphasis on community engagement and being a good neighbour, Metrolinx welcomes conversation with coalition representatives. Senior leaders within Metrolinx signal early support for linking community benefits to upcoming transit projects.

Philanthropic organizations

Metcalf, Atkinson, Maytree and United Way Toronto and York Region recognize the alignment between the vision of community benefits and their missions and strategic priorities, including poverty reduction, promoting decent work and building community power to drive more equitable economic development. Leaders within these organizations see the potential of community benefits to achieve these goals in practice while also driving policy level innovation in workforce development and infrastructure investment. These organizations invest in and provide strategic advice to the emerging community benefits movement.

2. Developing shared goals and strategy

Advancing community benefits requires the coalition to build consensus on a negotiating agenda and mobilizing strategy

- Early communication between the emerging community benefits coalition and Metrolinx highlights the opportunity for diverse hiring related to transit development.
- Laying the groundwork by incorporating lessons learned from other jurisdictions and developing the TCBN foundation document establishes shared goals and principles.
- Successful negotiation between TCBN and Metrolinx to develop the Metrolinx Community Benefits Framework provides a strong basis for working towards project-specific goals.
- Presenting a united front through presentation to final bidders on the Eglinton LRT construction contract enables the community to voice their own vision, ensures bidders see that community benefits is a priority, and demonstrates the strength and credibility of the coalition.
- Negotiating team is established with representatives from community, labour and philanthropic organizations to negotiate with Metrolinx and Crosslinx Transit Solutions (CTS) on community benefits goals related to apprenticeship hiring, professional, administrative and technical (PAT) jobs, social enterprise, and compliance and monitoring of targets.

2. Developing shared goals and strategy

Success factors	Dilemmas
<p>Commitment to solidarity underpinned by a disciplined mobilizing strategy helps ensure the coalition is able to navigate challenging terrain</p> <p>Credibility and influence of the negotiating team is enhanced through involvement and commitment of philanthropic organizations</p> <p>Political assets and influence of the coalition are essential to strategically advance the community benefits conversation</p> <p>Internal champions provide support for diverse hiring and keep community benefits on the government agenda</p> <p>Policy dialogue spearheaded by Atkinson engages stakeholders in a broader conversation about the potential of Community Benefits to foster more equitable economic development across Ontario</p>	<p>Establishing a negotiating position is challenging given the ‘newness’ of community benefits and uncertainty around what is possible in Ontario context. Other challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Different perspectives on priorities and goals among coalition partners▪ Difficulties in developing an Ontario-specific evidence base and justification for targets▪ Legal and process constraints to establishing an enforceable target <p>Determining a negotiating strategy given differences in organizational interests, cultures, constraints, and orientations to political process (e.g. community mobilization and empowerment versus direct political influence)</p>

Milestone: Metrolinx Community Benefits Framework

The Community Benefits Framework was negotiated by TCBN and Metrolinx and signed by leaders of both organizations in April 2014. It signals Metrolinx’s commitment to community benefits for upcoming transit projects in Toronto, and outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities for community benefits programs.

3. Determining an approach for implementation

Delivering requires a strategy for implementation involving key partners

- Labour Market Partnership funding from Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development provides support for the initial planning around connecting disadvantaged jobseekers to construction jobs, and demonstrates the Ministry's institutional support to a dedicated construction pathway.
- Metrolinx commissions research on good practices related to community benefits monitoring and compliance to increase understanding of how to implement community benefits.
- Resident engagement sessions organized by TCBN reach out to historically disadvantaged communities to share information about the construction industry and hiring processes.
- Additional research commissioned by the Atkinson Foundation in collaboration with Mowat Centre and Graser and Associates builds the Ontario evidence base, enhances the credibility of community benefits, and helps coalition partners identify and articulate best practices.
- Multiple working groups are established by TCBN to plan for the implementation of community benefits goals related to apprenticeship jobs, PAT jobs, and social enterprise.
- Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act is passed including a principle supporting community benefits, signaling a broader need for a dedicated pathway to connect disadvantaged jobseekers to construction jobs.
- Collaboration between city and province to design and implement the construction pathway broadens the scope of what is achievable through the pathway, and helps build the credibility of community benefits.

3. Determining an approach for implementation

Success factors	Dilemmas
<p>Connection to provincial policy is underscored with the passing the of the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act</p> <p>Connections to broader priorities of organizations involved is firmly established, such as linking city-building with workforce development (TESS), sector-focused employment and training (MAESD), and youth success (UWTYR)</p> <p>Commitment of senior staff from partner organizations provides leadership to innovate a new model for linking residents to construction jobs</p>	<p>Establishing the right governance structures for the Construction Pathway and for the monitoring and evaluation of community benefits that institutionalize new ways of working together and address organizational constraints</p> <p>Managing expectations about what community benefits can feasibly deliver for local residents and when, given local industry context, construction timelines and other constraints</p>

Milestone: Labour Market Partnership

In 2014, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (formerly Training, Colleges and Universities) entered into an Ontario Labour Market Partnership with the United Way Toronto & York Region to design a model for a workforce development pathway to connect residents to construction jobs.

Milestone: Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act

In 2015, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act is passed including a principle supporting community benefits. Atkinson leads a collective effort to press for community benefits to connect the work to a broader provincial policy framework.

Milestone: Funding of Construction Pathway

In 2016, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Toronto Employment and Social Services, and United Way Toronto & York Region agree to fund the Construction Pathway, an integrated service delivery site to connect disadvantaged residents to construction-related jobs.

4. Focusing on outcomes and continued engagement

Ongoing engagement, mobilization and monitoring are crucial for the success of community benefits

- Community Benefits Declaration outlines goal for employing historically disadvantaged residents for trade or craft working hours included in the declaration.
- Apprenticeship and Community Benefits Plans outline Crosslinx Transit Solution's objectives and approach to implementing community benefits.
- Continued engagement to oversee and monitor outcomes will be an ongoing part of this story.

4. Focusing on outcomes and continued engagement

Success factors and dilemmas

Success factors	Dilemmas
Shared commitment of all project partners to reaching the goals and objectives outlined in the Community Benefits Declaration, Apprenticeship Plan and Community Benefits Plan	Ensuring success given that the declaration is not legally enforceable Need for cooperation from other players in the system (e.g. labour unions and workforce development agencies) to make the goal a reality Defining metrics and targets to measure progress towards the goal Clarifying roles and accountability for monitoring and reporting on progress Establishing processes and technical infrastructure for collecting accurate, timely information on metrics

Milestone: Community Benefits Declaration and Plans

The Community Benefits Declaration, signed in 2016, outlines a clear goal for apprenticeship hiring, stating that all partners “*aspire to achieving a goal of employing apprentices or journeypersons from historically disadvantaged communities and equity seeking groups to perform 10% of all trade or craft working hours, on a trade by trade basis, required to construct the Project.*” Crosslinx Transit Solutions (CTS), the consortia building the LRT also developed an Apprenticeship Plan and Community Benefits & Liaison Plan outlining their approach for achieving broader community benefits goals.

What was achieved?

Equitable economic opportunities through apprenticeships

CTS and partners have publicly committed to having historically disadvantaged residents perform 10% of all trade or craft working hours required to construct the Project. The Construction Pathway will begin serving potential apprentices in summer 2017.

Integration of skilled newcomers in PAT jobs

CTS worked with service delivery agencies to establish a framework for hiring skilled newcomers through PAT jobs. The original target of hiring 50 skilled newcomers into PAT jobs for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT line has already been exceeded.

Social enterprises and social procurement

To date, \$55,000 of has already been dedicated to social enterprises affiliated with the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction. CTS has established a process to facilitate additional spending on social enterprises.

Neighbourhood and environment improvements

Community groups also advocated for the preservation of the Kodak building as a historical site. The building will be incorporated into the design of the Mount Dennis LRT station, with part of the building earmarked for community use. The community also successfully organized against the construction of a gas power plant at the Mount Dennis station, which will be replaced by a battery system.

Key moments of cooperation, turning points and highlights

Coalition actors identified several highlights of the community benefits story:

- Developing the TCBN foundation document – Brings together a wide range of partners around a shared vision and establishes the strength of community and labour cooperation
- Community Benefits Framework – Ensures that community benefits will be embedded in future transit infrastructure investments in Toronto
- Labour Market Partnership – Represents a “vote of confidence” from the province and advances implementation planning conversations
- Premier speaks about community benefits at Good Jobs Summit – Raises the political profile of community benefits
- Presentation to final bidders on the Eglinton LRT – A key moment of successful cooperation that highlights the collective power of the community benefits coalition
- Establishing construction sector pathway – City of Toronto and provincial government commit to a ground-breaking partnership for integrated service delivery
- Community Benefits Declaration – Landmark declaration between signatories that includes a measurable goal for employment of historically disadvantaged groups



Key insights

Key insights

Individuals involved identified several themes important to the success of community benefits:

1. Commitment to shared values

4. Mobilizing strategy

2. Community-labour coalition

5. Internal champions

3. Learning while doing

6. Focus on achieving targets

Commitment to shared values

- Building an effective community benefits coalition requires a *commitment to shared values* among all partners
- Early in the process, coalition partners worked hard to foster commitment to shared values of economic and racial equity and to educate one another on these issues
- Because some coalition partners had worked together previously in other contexts, the trust-building process was accelerated

Why is a commitment to shared values important?

Establishing a foundation of shared values:

- Helps activists, organizations and sectors put aside individual interests and commit to achieving goals together
- Helps partners navigate tension between broader goals of community benefits, and specific project asks that could be achieved in the short term
- Ensures that shifting roles and uncertainty about outcomes do not derail the movement

Community-labour coalition

- One of the most important success factors was strong representation from both community and labour
- Labour Council played an important role as an early convenor of community and labour groups and provided resources and support to the coalition
- Champions within individual construction unions worked to build support for community benefits and ensure it could become a reality
- Community and labour groups had partnered together previously to work towards shared equity goals, and utilized these relationships and experience to build commitment
- Key individuals with ties to both sectors worked to build strong relationships and a shared vision between groups

Why is a community-labour coalition important?

- Presenting a united front of community and labour groups is important for identifying community needs, establishing an authentic voice for the coalition, and articulating a credible vision with community asks at the centre
- Role of labour is particularly important for ensuring that negotiating platforms and implementation planning are informed by the evolving construction industry context and hiring processes



Learning while doing

- Learning and capacity-building were crucial given the novelty of community benefits in the Ontario context
- Coalition partners focused on learning about community benefits together as the movement progressed and sharing insights with each other along the way
- Philanthropic organizations and other partners (University of Toronto, United Steelworkers) supported early research on community benefits in other jurisdictions to identify key insights and lessons learned
- Mentoring and knowledge-sharing within and among organizations helped to develop an informal community of practice that is ongoing

Why is learning while doing important?

- Establishes a shared knowledge base and common starting point about effective strategies and approaches
- Helps ensure the sustainability of community benefits through a sustained focus on knowledge transfer
- Commitment to ‘everyone learning together’ helps reinforce relationships, foster trust, and maintain momentum of the movement, which is particularly critical in an emergent process where roles were fluid and driven in part based on which partners had the capacity to deliver what was needed at a given time



Mobilizing strategy

- The community benefits coalition worked together to develop a mobilizing strategy that focused on achieving and celebrating wins
- Coalition partners focused on understanding opportunities, analyzing decision-makers and their motivations, and engaging those decision-makers in intentional and strategic ways
- Priority was placed on presenting a united front and ensuring solidarity and discipline among diverse coalition members to work towards shared wins

Why is developing a mobilizing strategy important?

- Ensures that ‘dilemmas are not deadly’ and helps to balance the tension between what can realistically be achieved now, and broader goals that the movement is working towards in the future



Internal champions

- Key individuals at Metrolinx and both levels of government helped to keep community benefits on the agenda and advance movement goals
- Champions in the political sphere worked to build the legitimacy of community benefits, while champions in the bureaucracy supported implementation planning and execution
- In addition, the novelty of community benefits mean that internal champions within community, labour and philanthropic organizations were also crucial for maintaining support and advancing the agenda of community benefits

Why are internal champions important?

- Internal champions can communicate with other coalition partners about what can reasonably be achieved to shape demands and strategies
- Having individuals who are focused on community benefits and making it a priority helps build its credibility and ensure support from senior leadership
- Internal political support helps advance community benefits from ad hoc projects to formal policy

Focus on achieving targets

- Coalition partners highlighted the importance of focusing on targets to ensure that community benefits goals were met
- Partners identified a number of key dilemmas that needed to be resolved related to targets including:
 - What *types* of targets to push for (e.g. number of employment opportunities, number of trade and craft hours, social enterprise spending)
 - What the appropriate “numbers” are for targets (e.g. 10% versus 20% of trade and craft hours)
 - The process and political constraints to setting targets and ensuring that targets are enforceable (e.g. determining whether language around targets could be inserted into the project RFP, and whether targets could be included in the project agreement)
 - The importance of linking targets to an effective monitoring and compliance framework, determining how to measure outcomes related to the targets, and establishing roles and responsibilities for this process

Why is a focus on targets important?

- Building community power to ask for a target and make that target a reality, regardless of how “much” the target is, is crucial for setting a floor and establishing a shared vision for what a win is
- Focusing on targets establishes the right processes and new ways of working together that make additional benefits possible in the future



Summary and conclusions



Key takeaways

No universal “template” for community benefits, but several key ingredients:

- A coalition with strong representation from both community and labour is the foundation for the success of community benefits
- Ensuring that the coalition can achieve its goals requires significant upfront work to build shared values, ensuring that all partners have a stake in realizing positive outcomes
- Establishing the coalition and carrying out this upfront work requires significant financial and other resources to invest in organizing, learning and knowledge-sharing
- Solidarity and a disciplined mobilizing strategy are important for resolving dilemmas and ensuring all partners are focused on shared goals
- Role fluidity, trust, and a commitment to learning together are crucial for resolving dilemmas and maintaining the momentum of community benefits
- Once shared values and a mobilization strategy are established, it is important to identify political assets, strategically exercise political capital, and identify internal champions that are supportive of community benefits
- Establishing clear, measurable, and enforceable targets for community benefits is critical for making community benefits a reality and building a strong foundation for more ambitious community benefits “asks” in the future
- As the focus turns to implementation, monitoring and compliance, it is important to clarify roles, accountabilities and governance structures that institutionalize new ways of working together

What's next?

Coalition actors identified the following areas of focus moving forward:

- Working together to leverage future infrastructure investment dollars for community benefits, incorporating lessons learned from the Eglinton LRT project
- Ongoing resident engagement, community mobilization and capacity-building to strengthen the social infrastructure of the community benefits movement and build broad-based support for future community benefits projects
- Advancing the community benefits conversation to include broader opportunities related to housing, neighbourhood economic development, community improvements and environmental impacts
- Continued focus on advocating for broader policy changes at all levels of government to support community benefits
- Working with employers and unions to support new apprentices on the job site to support apprenticeship completion, in addition to broader shifts in workplace culture and diversity in the construction industry
- Leveraging raised expectations of residents that come from early successes to continue to build broad-based community organizing power to tackle other issues