

## ***Community Benefits Agreements***

In many jurisdictions around the world, working people have endeavoured to ensure that major development projects bring benefits to their communities. In Toronto, there is a long practice of negotiating local improvements under Section 37 of the planning act in exchange for greater height or density. Elsewhere, the goals include a wide range of benefits, such as:

- Support for new local businesses and industries,
- A special role for existing local businesses,
- Environmental improvements,
- Jobs for local residents (especially those facing systemic barriers)
- Improved streetscapes, local infrastructure and services.

Today, a number of community organizations are seeking to secure a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with Metrolinx for the Toronto Light Rail Transit project. They believe that a new LRT network at the cost of \$8.4 billion dollars over the several years should not only provide better transportation for our city, but should also improve the lives of many people in other ways as well.

A Community Benefits Agreement can help address social inequalities by including measures designed to provide employment and training opportunities for members of marginalized low-income communities. By asking Metrolinx to commit to certain targets for local hiring and training, employment opportunities will be created for people (i.e. youth, women, and foreign trained professionals) who would otherwise receive minimum benefits from this public investment.

The construction unions in Toronto have already created programs to reach out to young people from marginalized communities. These include **CHOICE** (Carpenters Union) and **Hammer Heads** (Central Ontario Building Trades Council) that offer skill and employment-based training leading to good careers within the construction industry. Those programs are well-designed to ensure that hiring under a CBA would be successful and comprehensive.

Ensuring that the labour movement is working closely with local activists in fighting for community benefits is an important aspect of our social justice and equity agenda. This can be a powerful campaign with real roots in key communities in the city.

The Executive Board recommends:

Labour Council support and work with affiliates and community allies to secure a Community Benefits Agreement with Metrolinx for transit expansion in Toronto, while continuing to oppose the P3 framework of the LRT project and calling for all transit to be publicly owned and operated.