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May 25, 2015

The Honourable Grant Crack, Chair
Standing Committee on General Government
Ontario Legislature
C/o Sylwia Przezdziecki, Clerk of the Committee
By email: sprzezdziecki@ola.org

Re: Bill 6, An Act to enact the *Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014*

To the Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to add the voices of the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) to the broad coalition of organizations seeking to have the importance of community benefits recognized in Bill 6, the legislation that will guide Ontario's infrastructure investments in the coming decades. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective.

ONN is the provincial network for the 55,000 nonprofit organizations across Ontario that make communities more vibrant, innovative and inclusive places to live, work and play. The community nonprofit sector employs over a million people, including part-time employees, and contributes \$50 billion to Ontario's economy.

There are compelling reasons to include community benefits in this statute. Infrastructure projects that include community benefits leverage public dollars that are already being spent to benefit Ontario communities, aligning the Government's infrastructure spending

with other policy goals, such as job opportunities and training for diverse populations, small business and social enterprise promotion, affordable housing, and healthy communities.

Specifically, community benefit agreements (CBAs) provide a mechanism to create locally-driven benefits for specific local communities. For example, they can tackle youth unemployment and looming shortages in key trades via training, apprenticeships, and quality job opportunities. CBAs also strengthen social and economic development in communities by supporting social enterprise activity. The Eglinton Crosstown community benefit framework, for instance, is a good example of how to engage marginalized populations, including youth and newcomers, in professional, administrative and technical job opportunities as part of a large infrastructure investment.

Adding a community benefits clause to Bill 6 would serve to cement the commitment the Ontario Government has already shown to spending infrastructure dollars in a way that benefits local communities. For instance, Metrolinx recently adopted a Five-Year Strategy (2014) that called “*systematically leverag[ing] public investment for community benefit*” a way to “*model responsible operations and best practices.*”¹ Premier Kathleen Wynne has noted that “*the community benefits process signals a new era of collaboration... bringing the goals of government, labour, not-for-profit and business closer together.*”² Moreover, the 2014 Budget committed the Ontario Government to enhancing procurement models “*by ensuring that, beginning with the Eglinton Crosstown, future infrastructure projects include plans for providing opportunities for apprentices and supporting the completion of apprenticeships, with focused programs for at-risk youth, local communities and veterans.*”³

Last week, Premier Wynne reiterated the Government’s commitment to community benefits in her keynote speech to the United Way-McMaster University “Precarity Penalty

¹ Metrolinx. 2015-2020 Five Year Strategy. September 2014. p. 23-24.

² Remarks by the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, MPP, Premier of Ontario, at the Unifor “Good Jobs Summit.” October 4, 2014.

³ Ontario Ministry of Finance. Ontario Budget 2014. p. 21.

Symposium.” Noting that CBAs “*advance our core values,*” she pledged, “*With another decade of historical infrastructure investments ahead, we want to duplicate this model as part of our work together.*”⁴ Including community benefits in the Act would therefore formalize a position the Government has already adopted in principle.

Defining community benefits

We recommend that “community benefits” be defined and included in the legislation as a principle and as a criterion for investment decision-making. Community benefits should be defined as “*tangible social and economic opportunities and outcomes for communities, especially historically disadvantaged groups, including but not limited to jobs, training, and apprenticeships; procurement from local businesses and/or social enterprises; and other benefits as determined in consultation with the local community.*” For specific recommendations for Bill 6 amendments, please see Appendix 1.

Regulations

Bill 6 establishes principles and criteria which will require further definition in regulations. We urge the Government to involve a broad range of stakeholder groups, including industry, workers, community nonprofits, and workforce development, in the development of these regulations. Finding meaningful and practical ways to implement this act will be critical, and the Minister can benefit from the input of stakeholders and community groups who have expertise to offer in areas ranging from job training to construction to community engagement. A hallmark of successful community benefit agreements is *early and meaningful consultation*, and the same applies to the development of regulations governing their inclusion in Bill 6.

In closing, we would like to reiterate that there is a broad coalition of nonprofits, funders, and labour organizations seeking to have community benefits included in Bill 6. Communities

⁴ Remarks by the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, MPP, Premier of Ontario, at the United Way-McMaster University “Precarity Penalty Symposium.” May 22, 2015.

across Ontario, large and small, urban and rural, would stand to benefit from the inclusion of language that would ensure our public dollars are invested in a way that supports community needs for training and apprenticeships, vibrant social enterprises and small businesses, and other community amenities. With Bill 6, the Ontario Government has a historic opportunity to significantly advance many of its policy goals by enshrining support for community benefits in legislation. We urge all the members of the Standing Committee to support this important amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cathy" and last name "Taylor" clearly distinguishable.

Cathy Taylor

Executive Director

Appendix 1: Proposed amendments to Bill 6

Purpose

Add “community benefits” to the purpose of the Act as follows:

1. The purpose of this Act is to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, **community benefits**, economic growth and protection of the environment, and incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning.

Definitions

Add the following definition:

2. In this Act,
“community benefits” means “tangible social and economic opportunities and outcomes for communities, especially historically disadvantaged groups, including but not limited to jobs, training, and apprenticeships; procurement from local businesses and/or social enterprises; and other benefits as determined in consultation with the local community.

Principles

Add “community benefits” to the following principle:

3. The Government, and every broader public sector entity, shall consider the following principles when making decisions respecting infrastructure:
[...]
5. Infrastructure planning and investment should promote economic competitiveness, productivity, **community benefits**, job creation and training opportunities.

Criteria for prioritizing foundational infrastructure projects

Add “provide measurable community benefits” to the criteria as follows:

6. (1) When evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of an infrastructure asset, the government shall consider,
[...]
(c) whether the construction of the infrastructure asset would reasonably be expected to,
[...]

(NEW iv) **provide measurable community benefits,**
[re-number iv and subsequent sub-clauses.]