



**December 12, 2023**

**Presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs**

**Re: 2024 Ontario Budget Consultations**

**From: Larry Whatmore, President, Scarborough Community Renewal Organization**

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Good morning committee members. My name is Larry Whatmore. I am the president of the Scarborough Community Renewal Organization, an all-volunteer organization that strives to bring thoughtful advocacy to Scarborough civic affairs, to create a more livable, dynamic, and prosperous Scarborough, where 650,000 Ontarians have chosen to call home.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our ideas to inform your 2024 budget. My comments focus on the need for bold investments in public transit in Scarborough.

We are all looking forward to the completion of the Eglinton Crosstown project to Kennedy subway station and the completion of the Scarborough subway extension.

But there's more to be done. Even after the completion of these projects, hundreds of thousands of Scarborough residents in east and north Scarborough will continue to endure punishing commute times on congested buses or on congested roads, to travel to jobs downtown or in other parts of Scarborough, or to study at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

And it's going to get worse. Toronto's population is expected to grow by 700,000 between now and the year 2051. At least 175,000 of these new residents will come to Scarborough. How will we all get around? Gridlock is already a serious problem. We're not building any more roads. And buses in the suburbs are jammed. The only solution is a large investment in public transit. And given the long timelines to plan, design, and construct projects of this scale, we need to create a collective sense of urgency now, so we can address the issue that we already face and prepare for the population surge that is coming.

Fortunately, there are three projects in play at this time where the Ontario government's financial participation can make a significant difference.

### **Eglinton East Light Rapid Transit Project**

The first is the proposed extension of the Eglinton East Light Rapid Transit project, from Kennedy subway station to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus and then to Malvern. This project is in the design phase, including a Transit Project Assessment Process, which the City of Toronto is expecting to complete in the spring of 2024.

The City of Toronto has committed \$1.2 billion to this project; no small sum for the City, which illustrates the importance that the City places on this project. But the total price tag is likely to be \$4.6 billion. That's where you come in. But you don't have to do it alone. As you know, the federal government has a public transit infrastructure fund. This project should qualify for federal funding, once the Transit Project Assessment Process has been completed. We are in regular contact with our Scarborough members of Parliament, who

are big champions of this project, and I have also spoken with the Prime Minister directly, who has expressed enthusiasm for this project. Let's work together to make this project happen and bring relief to Scarborough's long-suffering commuters.

The Scarborough Community Renewal Organization is happy to support you in bringing the federal government to the table to support this initiative.

That's the first project.

### **Scarborough Busway**

The second project is the proposed Scarborough Busway.

The Scarborough Rapid Transit line is now permanently closed. The Scarborough subway extension won't be completed until at least 2030. That means several more years of punishing commute times for our residents living in northern and eastern Scarborough.

Toronto City Council and the Toronto Transit Commission have quickly and wisely concluded that the best way to address this issue is through the construction of a busway, providing an express bus connection along the route of the decommissioned Scarborough RT line. The TTC is expecting to complete the design work by June, 2024 so construction can take place in 2024 and 2025.

The estimated cost of this project is \$72 million. I know the City is having discussions now with the Ontario government regarding funding for this project, which we would ask you to seriously consider, as provincial funding of the busway would be a "quick win" for us all.

That's the second project.

### **Sheppard Avenue Transit Extension Project**

The third project is the proposed Sheppard Avenue transit extension. This project seeks to connect the Sheppard subway, which presently ends in Don Mills, east along Sheppard Avenue to McCowan Road, where it would connect with the Scarborough subway extension.

This is a great idea. Sheppard Avenue is going to experience significant intensification over the next twenty years, as condo buildings sprout along the Sheppard corridor. We need to prepare now for the looming increase in the transit dependent local population as this renewal takes place. Furthermore, connecting Sheppard Avenue to the northern terminus of the Scarborough subway will allow the two lines to support each other.

This project is in the community consultation phase and there is significant support for this initiative by the local MPPs. Let's keep the consultation process going and proceed with design work.

### **SCRO Supports the asks of Scarborough Health Network**

One more thing, not on public transit. Rather, it's regarding our hospitals.

SCRO is a big supporter of the Scarborough Health Network and the "Love, Scarborough" campaign, which has done a superb job of bringing political attention to the infrastructure requirements of our aging hospital campuses and has also been a catalyst for a fundraising campaign of unprecedented scale in the history of our hospital, which makes us very proud.

There are significant issues in play at the moment, where proposals have been submitted by SHN that require provincial approval for the emergency department at the Centenary campus, the Centenary campus redevelopment proposal, and for the Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health.

Scarborough Health Network will be making its own submission to you and they can express their requirements more thoroughly. We just wanted you to know that SCRO supports the asks of the Scarborough Health Network, and in particular the important needs of the Centenary campus.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry Whatmore', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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