

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming  
Federal Budget

By: **Scarborough Community Renewal Organization**

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**Recommendations:**

That the government provide funding in the amount of \$3 billion, spread over the 2026-27 and 2027-28 fiscal years, from the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund, for the construction of the Eglinton East Light Rapid Transit Extension project in the City of Toronto.

## Body of Submission

### BACKGROUND

The Scarborough Community Renewal Organization (“SCRO”) is an organization of engaged volunteers and thoughtful advocates that seeks to “*connect, promote and renew Scarborough*”, so Scarborough can be strong and prosperous within the City of Toronto.

Scarborough is on the cusp of enormous population growth. The Province of Ontario has instructed the City of Toronto to prepare its updated official plan assuming that 700,000 more residents will live in Toronto by 2051. Realistically, at least 175,000 of them will choose to settle in Scarborough, which is 30% of Toronto’s land area and has 23% of Toronto’s population. ***That’s a 27% increase in Scarborough’s population in the next 27 years!***

Toronto City Council is committed to enabling the construction of the additional housing stock that a population surge of this scale will require.

However, Scarborough’s public transit network is woefully unprepared for a population growth on this scale. Investment in public transit in Scarborough has lagged our population growth for decades. This is beginning to change, thanks in part to federal and provincial funding of the Scarborough subway extension, which will add three subway stops in Scarborough when it opens in 2031.

But much more needs to be done. Even after this extension opens, 230,000 residents in eastern and northern Scarborough will continue to rely on jammed buses or, in the alternative, driving on roads that are already heavily congested. We’re not building any more roads, so one can only imagine how much worse our traffic congestion will be, and how jammed our buses will be, when we have 175,000 more residents using them.

Hence the need for the Eglinton East Light Rapid Transit extension project (“EELRT”), which will connect Kennedy subway station with the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, and then run north to the transit-dependent community of Malvern.

### THE CITY OF TORONTO IS ON BOARD

The City of Toronto recognizes the urgent need for this additional transit capacity. In fact, the City has committed **\$1.2 billion in capital funding** for this project, which is now being used for community consultation, project design, and engineering work. The provincially-mandated Transit and Rail Project Assessment Process (TRPAP) is well under way and should be complete by the fall of 2024.

A \$1.2 billion funding allocation by the City is significant commitment to this project, given the City’s fiscal limitations. But much more is needed to bring this project to life. Preliminary costing indicates that the capital cost of this project will be in the range of \$4 billion.

That’s where the Canada Public Transit Fund comes in. An allocation from this fund, spread over two years, will move this project from “shovel-ready” to “under construction”.

## THE CITY OF TORONTO'S BUSINESS CASE IS THOROUGH AND COMPELLING

In October 2023, the City of Toronto completed an Initial Business Case for this project. This 90 page document provides a thorough and compelling strategic, economic, financial, and operations case for this project. You can access the document here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-241047.pdf>

Here are some of the key messages from the Initial Business Case, supported by actual quotes from the document (some segments have been bolded by SCRO, for emphasis):

1. **Constructing the EELRT is far better than not doing so (i.e. the “base case”):**

*“(The) EELRT is preferred over the Base Case as **the projected demand in 2041 along the study corridor far exceeds the capacity that can be practically provided by the Base Case**”.*

2. **The economic case is strong:**

*“(The) EELRT is expected to deliver almost **\$1.4 billion in discounted benefits** with an expected Net Present Value (NPV) of \$4.4 billion”*

3. **We can better serve equity-deserving groups in Scarborough, which are located along the EELRT corridor:**

*“(the EELRT) provides new and additional higher-order transit **in reach of seven of the City’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), supporting sustainable mobility in historically underserved communities**”.*

4. **If we don’t act, our equity-deserving groups will be hurt the most:**

*“More low-income residents reside in Scarborough (21.4%) compared to the citywide average (20.2%). Additionally, **there are substantially more first-generation immigrants in Scarborough** than in other parts of the City. **Scarborough lacks both intracommunity and intracity transportation connections, perpetuating a cycle of inequity.** As the population of the region increases, traffic congestion is expected to worsen due to the lack of alternatives.”*

5. **High transit dependency by Scarborough’s equity-deserving groups, coupled with poor transit infrastructure, is making it more difficult for our equity-deserving groups to access jobs and community services:**

*“Access to transit service in Scarborough, particularly higher-order transit, is lower than in other parts of the city. **The average Scarborough resident can access only half the number of jobs that the average Toronto resident can access using transit.** Transit use is higher than average for residents living within NIAs in Scarborough; in some NIAs, up to 50% of residents use transit to commute to work, compared to a city-wide average of 37%. **Transit access in Scarborough to key destinations, such as community services,***

*jobs, and educational opportunities, falls below Toronto's benchmark, as defined by TSNS 2020. The introduction of higher-order transit improvements would better serve equity-deserving residents of these NIAs and Emerging Neighbourhoods, allowing for improved transit reliability within Scarborough and to other parts of the City."*

6. The University of Toronto Scarborough's ability to serve students will be impaired without this service:

*"University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) has ambitious plans for expansion which are linked to improved transit service." "While it is estimated that 56% of students travel to campus by local transit, many experience long travel times."*

7. If we don't act now, Scarborough faces transit paralysis by 2041:

*"The projected demand in 2041 along the study corridor far exceeds the capacity that can be provided by the Base Case (buses). A peak point ridership of over 3,700 passengers per hour would require buses every one minute or less. ... Higher order transit is required to serve the study area reliably, comfortably, and sustainably."*

8. If we don't act now, inequity will become worse:

*"Increasing traffic congestion over time will continue to degrade the existing transit service, thereby increasing the cost of living and degrading quality of life, perpetuating a cycle of further inequity."*

9. In summary, we need much better transit access for our marginalized communities:

*"Scarborough residents have poor access to reliable, frequent, and fast transit; access to higher-order transit options is even lower, relative to the rest of Toronto. Unreliable and slow transit ... have a disproportionate impact on communities experiencing inequity. Nearly all neighbourhoods along the Eglinton Avenue East and Kingston Road corridor between Kennedy Station and Morningside Avenue have been identified by the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 as "Neighbourhood Improvement Areas".*

The City's Initial Business Case makes compelling arguments to move this project forward, to address the population surge that is coming and to address serious inequities in transit access for Scarborough's equity-deserving groups in our Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

#### LET'S MOVE THIS PROJECT FROM "SHOVEL-READY" TO "UNDER CONSTRUCTION"

The time to act is now. Public transit projects of this scale take a decade or more to complete: for consultation, planning, design, tendering, and financing, followed by several years of construction.

But there's good news here: ***much of the pre-work is already done!*** The Transit and Rail Project Assessment Process (TRPAP) is almost complete and design work is well under way, thanks to the \$1.2 billion of funding provided by the City of Toronto.

## SUMMARY

The City has presented compelling arguments in support of this project. SCRO agrees with the rationale presented by the City in this Initial Business Case.

Furthermore, this project will provide significant spin-off benefits: construction jobs for thousands of Scarborough residents and development renewal along portions of the transit corridor.

Scarborough's population surge is coming. In fact, it has already started. We need to get ready.

Let's get out in front of this by providing the necessary public transit funding now so that the infrastructure is ready when the housing is built and the surge of newcomers arrive.

Thank you.

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