

May 21, 2020

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2S9

RE: Cancellation of the Consolidated Halton Courthouse

Dear Premier Ford;

United Way Halton & Hamilton has a long history of supporting the elimination of poverty in our local community by investing in a wide range of programs that target career building, mental health supports, and afterschool programming. The research is clear, that in order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, pathways towards employment for historically disadvantaged and equity seeking groups are crucial.

As such, UWHH has been excited to support the global movement to include Community Benefit Agreements (CBA) into infrastructure and public procurement. Community benefits initiatives provide a key opportunity to maximize the benefits from public infrastructure investments by fostering a more equitable and inclusive society. These benefits can include local job creation and training opportunities for those disadvantaged in the labour market; social procurement to purchase goods and services from local businesses or social enterprises; improvements to public spaces; or any other benefit identified by the community. CBA's can offer an opportunity to engage youths, newcomers, and historically disadvantaged and equity seeking populations in a range of quality job opportunities as part of a large infrastructure investment. Community benefits processes offer a way for government to multiply the impact of their spending without increasing the cost of a project.

Over the last year, UWHH has supported the Halton Community Benefits Network conduct extensive consultations through the Halton Poverty Roundtable (HPRT) in preparation for the Consolidated Halton Region Courthouse, which was selected as an Infrastructure Ontario (IO) CBA pilot project. This \$250-500 Million dollar project would have generated hundreds of local jobs and provide an historic opportunity to create meaningful jobs for the local community through targeted hiring and training opportunities which would lead to reducing poverty. By creating opportunities to introduce new workers from disadvantaged communities, women and newcomers to Canada to careers in the skilled trades, Halton Region would have seen significant benefits beyond those of economic growth.

Over the last six months as we have conducted community consultations in preparation for the build, it was clear that our partners in business, labour and the non-profit sector were ready to seize this opportunity and were eager to work in partnership with the proponent to explore a path forward. The UWHH is committed to advocating for the role of CBAs and of social procurement in general, especially as COVID-19 threatens to ravage the economic foundation of the community. Infrastructure spending is a proven method for stimulating the economy and introducing an equity lenses and addressing barriers to employment would allow the government to simultaneously address post pandemic recovery, encourage and support individuals to enter the work force, and address structural inequalities that prevent marginalized groups from fully participating in society.

As an organization, the UWHH strongly supports non-partisan, evidence-based ways for addressing issues such as poverty, social isolation, and mental health. CBAs are a powerful tool in the arsenal of public policy that have been deployed by governments around the world on every part of the political spectrum. COVID 19 is putting significant strains on budgets of all organizations and we hope that CBAs and social procurement will retain a place in the recovery toolbox.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BRAD PARK', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brad Park,
President and CEO