

For Immediate Release

TTC Blinkered by Tunnel Vision

Toronto – October 25, 2012

The City of Toronto's Ombudsman says the Toronto Transit Commission made a mess of public consultation when it announced plans for second exits at the Donlands and Greenwood subway stations.

Fiona Crean today released her report *"Tunnel Vision: An Investigation into the Toronto Transit Commission Second Exits Project at Donlands and Greenwood Stations."*

In the report, Crean found that, as part of a plan to improve fire safety, the TTC chose its preferred locations for the second exits in December of 2009, but failed to tell affected residents for six months. In fact, it had planned to hold information sessions only after the plans were approved by City Council.

The Ombudsman says "this was just the first in a series of failures by the TTC to engage in any meaningful public consultation. When public information sessions did occur they were held two weeks before the Commission was to approve the projects. This left local residents without any ability to have input into the plans."

"The TTC did such a poor job of communicating" says Crean, "that it left many residents with the feeling that the TTC had already made up its mind, and was not serious about public consultation."

- Local residents were only notified of the projects in a flyer contained in a blank envelope addressed "To Occupant." The flyer omitted any mention of expropriation.
- Many of the homeowners whose properties could have been expropriated were never contacted before the flyer went out.
- One homeowner and his terminally ill spouse learned from a reporter that the TTC might want their property. TTC officials only met with the homeowner and his daughter the same morning the plans were to be discussed by the Commission. That left them with just an hour to prepare their deputation. The homeowner is still in the dark as to whether the TTC will need his property.

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- The TTC hired an architectural and design firm to examine a number of options for the Donlands station. TTC staff first tried to change the firm's evaluation criteria, then rejected the final report because it did not support the TTC's preferred option.
- Many nearby residents are unaware the TTC is still planning to build second exits at the two stations. A construction budget for the Donlands exit was approved this January.

The Ombudsman says "I am happy to report this failure of public consultation should be just a bad memory for residents and the Toronto Transit Commission. The TTC and the City of Toronto have accepted every one of my seven recommendations."

These include a TTC promise to develop a public consultation policy by the end of this year and a commitment to notify residents and Councillors as early as possible about construction projects in their neighbourhood. The CEO or a senior executive of the TTC will also notify residents of the current status and next steps for the Donlands and Greenwood projects. Recommendations include skills training for TTC officials and better coordination between the TTC and the City's Real Estate division.

Copies of the report "*Tunnel Vision: An investigation into the Toronto Transit Commission Second Exit Project at Donlands and Greenwood Stations*" are available on the Ombudsman's website, www.ombudstoronto.ca

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Toronto's Ombudsman is an impartial and independent officer of City Council, providing an appeal of last resort for residents who feel they have been adversely affected by a decision, act or omission of City Administration.