

Responses from federal candidates in Toronto Danforth to Save Jimmie Simpson's questions about the Ontario Line

Q1: Do you think the Ontario Line is a federal issue? Why or why not?

Julie Dabrusin (Liberal): All parties agree transit is critical for the future of Toronto. The federal Liberal government is a strong partner for Toronto, and cost sharing on public transit is part of that arrangement. Both Ontario and the City of Toronto have provided funding for the Ontario Line, and it is only fair that the federal government lives up to its commitment and play its part.

Clare Hacksel (NDP): Whenever a government puts in a third of the funding, in this case about \$4 billion, it becomes an issue for that government. Delivering sustainable transit is critical to taking on the climate crisis. However, Federal funding cannot be a blank cheque for Doug Ford and his friends at Metrolinx to do whatever they want. Instead, the Federal government has a responsibility to be a leader in supporting transit and has a duty to ensure it is done right. I support the community's call for a Federal Impact Assessment.

Maryem Tollar (Green): I think the Ontario Line is a federal issue. I took a tour today with Shelley Kline [*of the LSECAC; unrelated to the SJS candidate survey*] and I understand that the federal government can have an impact in the direction that this line will take, funding 40% of this project. There are many considerations and the federal government can influence what direction this project takes.

Liz White (Animal Protection Party): Although this project involves several levels of government, this line is clearly a federal issue since the federal government has established conditions that the province and Metrolinx must meet to acquire the funding. The question remains, will the Liberal or NDP candidates in this riding commit to holding Metrolinx and the provincial government to those conditions. If elected, I will work tirelessly to make sure that federal conditions be met. This fight reminds me of the battle over the Spadina Expressway and its obvious devastation to City neighbourhoods. The community won the Spadina fight. Our community can win this too.

Q2: Do you think the Ontario Line, as it is currently proposed, is of benefit to Toronto Danforth? Why or why not?

Julie Dabrusin: The benefits of good transit are seen across the whole GTHA, and benefits everyone. Good public transit supports jobs and prosperity for everyone. The Ontario Line is still being planned - and under the right conditions it could be a benefit to Toronto-Danforth. That is why I advocated for and obtained federal funding conditions before entering into a preliminary agreement with the province of Ontario. While the federal government does not attach design criteria, I recognize that Metrolinx needs to be held accountable to our community. Draft contribution agreements are set to be ready for review by mid-2022. The Treasury [100-word limit reached here] Board has imposed conditions which include going back to them on program outcomes for approval prior to executing any contribution agreements and the release of any funding. These conditions are critical to holding Metrolinx to account and I look forward to updating our community for feedback if re-elected.

Clare Hacksel: Though a rapid transit line is needed to deal with the congestion in the subway system, and across Toronto-Danforth, the proposed line's above ground sections creates substantial problems for our community and should be modified to actually deliver the benefit needed. A line that is entirely underground in our riding would be a benefit. Metrolinx has a responsibility to ensure that all areas of concern, from vibrations to noise pollution to air quality, are reviewed and the results are made

available to the community; and that their proposed mitigation strategies are supported by a comprehensive environmental and health assessment.

Maryem Tollar: The Ontario Line, as it is currently proposed can have a negative effect to Toronto Danforth because it will impact many parks and species that are at risk. There are parks and trees that will have to be torn down and it will have a negative impact on the residential areas in the community. The Lakeshore East Advisory Committee showed me an alternate route that could be taken that would not have to go through these neighbourhoods, and that the line could be put underground. I feel that there needs to be a proper environmental assessment, as well as an [100-word limit reached here] impact on the health on the residents of the neighbourhood before this project goes any further.

Liz White: I am not sufficiently apprised of all aspects of the proposal. What I do know that it is unacceptable for Metrolinx to push for an above ground route that will so negatively impact the neighbourhoods of Riverside and Leslieville. All levels of government should decide to bury the line the entire way to leave these vibrant communities intact. The above ground approach is unacceptable and short sighted. The Animal Protection Party calls on the incoming federal government to require the entire route to be underground and make it part of the funding requirement.

Q3: What do you know about the “alternative alignment” that has been suggested for the Gerrard to East Harbour segment? Do you support it? Why or not?

Julie Dabrusin: I am supportive of a below grade alternative. I have and will continue to encourage our decision-makers at the provincial and municipal level to explore this alternative. I am hopeful that strong local advocacy can create positive changes for our communities in Toronto-Danforth.

Clare Hacksel: I support an underground line. This is a good option for an alternative alignment and should be costed and reviewed for technical issues. This option should also be subject to an environmental assessment which includes a public health lens to ensure that it is designed right. Any proposed route should go through these steps and be informed by the results of the studies.

Maryem Tollar: I know that the alternative alignment is something that the municipal government supports and that it goes through an area that is just now starting to plan for the development, so it will not impact residents in the same way, since it has not yet been developed. I fully support this alternate alignment and I would advocate for putting conditions on the funding from the federal level to help this alternative alignment happen.

Liz White: Again I am not sufficiently apprised of the “alternative alignment” so I am not able to support one proposal over the other. However, the Ontario line as proposed will have significant impact on the communities around Jimmie Simpson park, including increased frequency of trains above ground. If the Ontario line is the one chose, all efforts should be employed to significantly minimize the impact including putting the entire line underground.

Q4: If elected, what role, if any, do you see yourself playing regarding the Ontario Line?

Julie Dabrusin: If I am re-elected, I will continue to advocate for the below grade alternative, convene stakeholders on the subject, and take every opportunity to make transit decision makers at all levels of government aware of the concerns of the Ontario Line in Toronto-Danforth.

Clare Hacksel: The role of any MP is to represent the interests of their community and Toronto-Danforth has made it clear that we want transit done right. I would see my role as fighting for my

community to achieve this goal. A sound plan is one that is informed by data, consultation, costing, and impact assessments - not the whims of the provincial government. I would advocate that the Federal government uses its financial clout and its regulatory ability to ensure that the route and the steps to mitigate its impact is shaped through public consultation; and that the community is protected.

Maryem Tollar: If elected, I would work with community groups such as the Lakeshore East Advisory Committee, and *Save Jimmie Simpson* and to try to put forth proper community consultation, proper environmental assessments and health impact assessments, and I would do what was in my power to give the municipal government more support and funding to follow through with this project.

Liz White: Whether I am elected or not I am interested in contributing to the discussion in whatever way is helpful to the community.