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**For Information**

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**REPORT TITLE:**      **Region of Peel Archives at the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA)**

**FROM:**                Sean Baird, Commissioner of Digital and Information Services

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**OBJECTIVE**

To raise awareness of the role and services offered by the Region of Peel Archives to local municipalities.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Region's Archives is responsible by legislation or agreement to preserve the archival government records in the Peel area, as mandated by the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
  - The Archives at the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives is the Region's official repository for government and private sector archival records.
  - The Archives plays a unique stewardship role in Peel, by providing professional archival services for the Region of Peel, City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, and the Town of Caledon.
  - The Archives preserves the official record of the activities of the municipalities and ensures residents' rights to access to information supporting open government.
  - The current extent of records in the Archives is approximately 1.5 linear kilometres and includes close to two million photographic images, hundreds of maps, plans, posters and microfilm resources, and an increasing number of born-digital and digitized records. The collection is highly regarded and is a valuable asset of the Region.
  - In 2019 the Archives handled approximately 2,631 reference and research inquiries from public employees, residents, historians, scholars, authors, consultants, and genealogists.
  - The current collection, processing and public access space in Peel's historic county jail at 9 Wellington Street, Brampton is limiting future growth.
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**DISCUSSION**

**1. Background**

**Mandate:**

The Region's archival collection has grown in the last decade with the acquisition of private records and with large transfers of critical government records. These records help us to build our understanding of the history and development of the Peel area.

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The Archives' responsibility for the preservation of and public access to government records is rooted in provisions found in the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (referred to as *MFIPPA*). The *Municipal Act* stipulates that the Region must retain and preserve the records of the municipality in a secure and accessible manner (including those deemed to possess archival value); and *MFIPPA* requires that "every person has a right to access a record or part of a record in the custody or under the control..." of the Region.

The Archives provides archival services for the Region of Peel, the City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, the Town of Caledon and predecessor municipalities such as the County of Peel (see Appendix I for a listing of current and antecedent municipalities in the Peel area).

### **Stewardship Role:**

The Archives preserves and makes available a collection of more than 1.5 linear kilometres of records, stored in more than 5,000 archival boxes. It also holds approximately two million photographic images and other extensive assets in audiovisual and digital formats. The collection is a rich historical repository documenting multiple facets of life and business in the Region for the last two hundred years, as well as research documenting the pre-colonial history of Peel.

Archival records include the following: council and committee meeting minutes, by-laws, reports, correspondence, postcards, assessment and collector's rolls, legal agreements and deeds, financial ledgers, diaries and journals, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, posters and broadsides, newspapers, audio and video recordings, and much more. As a body, the public and private records of Peel's member municipalities are complementary and often interrelated.

The Archives acquires significant, complementary and highly regarded collections that include: the Wm. Perkins Bull fonds, the records of Ron Duquette and Peel District Public School Board. Families, businesses and organizations trust the Archives to accept and preserve important records like these that otherwise might have been lost, broken up or destroyed.

### **Public Access:**

The Archives also has an important public-facing role. Researchers travel from other regions, provinces, and countries to visit the Archives. Historians, urban planners, archaeologists, authors, scholars, students, genealogists, legal counsel, newcomers to Canada, business-people, artists, and many others access and use the documents in the Archives.

Requests for research and reference services have been generally growing steadily in recent years. The Archives averages about 1050 in-person visitors to the reading room each year. Total research actions over the last three years (i.e. reading room visits, emails, phone calls and correspondence) is broken down in the following chart:

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	2017	2018	2019
Total Research Actions	1938	2699	2631
Change up or down year over year:	+70%	+39%	-2%

The jump in reference activity in recent years is possibly due in part to the expanded role of the Archives as the repository of archival government records in Peel, and the expanded profile of the Archives blog series. Despite the complexity and scope of most of these reference requests, generally research actions are handled by staff within one business day.

The Archives has implemented a digitization plan and technology to support management and access to archival records with a Content Management System (CMS) promoting boarder citizen access and open government. Design and development of the new CMS is nearing completion. Implementation of the new CMS, which includes a public access catalogue of our collections, is imminent. Deployment is scheduled for Spring 2020 [dependent on impacts of Covid-19 on municipal operations].

The Archives works with several partners and stakeholders such as public libraries, school boards, historical organizations, Regional and local municipal departments. Collaborations in 2019 included work with Museums of Mississauga and with Brampton Cultural Services on the Arts Walk of Fame.

Working with our community stakeholders and government partners, the Archives provides effective collaboration on a wide range of special projects, off-site exhibits in malls, libraries and community facilities; and provides support for events such as the marking of the end of the Avro Arrow program, Peel's 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Canada150 celebrations and assisting our partners with historical research on the naming of municipal assets.

The Peel Archives blog (<https://peelarchivesblog.com/>) has significant exposure with 32,265 views in 2019, readers in about 180 countries, and links from more than 55 prestigious academic and cultural institutions.

### Current Space Considerations:

The Archives collection is currently located at 9 Wellington Street, Brampton (the old County Jail) as part of the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA). The relationship with Art and Museum has been advantageous overall for the Archives program including greater accessibility, visibility, richness of exhibitions and events at PAMA. This unique partnership represents one of the few of this type across Canada integrating all three services.

However, as the Archives continues to grow, in order to preserve Peel's rich and dynamic community, additional collection storage space with proper HVAC controls, record processing facilities and research space is necessary.

Staff will identify, through the 2021 budget process, a request for leased space to address immediate space needs.

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### CONCLUSION

In addition to serving as a historical and community memory resource, information in the Archives safeguards good faith and legally sound relationships between residents and the public service.

The health and availability of its archival program can be considered as a sign of a government's commitment to open government and acts of good will for the current population and future generations.

With that in mind, PAMA is being proactive and projecting future growth and demands on the Archives.

### APPENDICES

Appendix I – Current and Antecedent Municipalities in the Peel Area (2019)

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*For further information regarding this report, please contact Karla Hale, Director, Community Connections, Ext. 4998, [Karla.Hale@peelregion.ca](mailto:Karla.Hale@peelregion.ca).*

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***Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:***

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



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N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer