

May 4, 2023

REGION OF PEEL

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK



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MAYOR PATRICK BROWN

May 2, 2023

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Sent via: minister.edu@ontario.ca

Re: Youth Mental Health in Brampton

REFERRAL TO _____
RECOMMENDED _____
DIRECTION REQUIRED _____
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED ☒ _____

Dear Minister Lecce,

I would like to start by recognizing the recently introduced *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*, which among other things will improve student outcomes in important life-long skills like reading, writing and math. I would also like to commend you and your government on your announcement on May 1, 2023 of additional funding to address youth mental health and updating the Grade 10 Career Studies curriculum as well as introducing mandatory resources for teachers and students on mental health literacy in Grades 7 and 8.

On behalf of the Brampton City Council I'd like to bring to your attention mental health crisis, including youth, we are facing in the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton. We appreciate your government's commitment to funding for the Peel Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Centre of Excellence and other Mental Health supports.

At the April 13, 2023 Peel of Region Council meeting our Councillors had an opportunity to speak briefly with Minister Jones and Minister Tibollo. We welcome the commitment from Minister Tibollo to attend a roundtable in Peel Region on youth mental health and see this a first step in a long journey ahead to get the supports we need in our community.

In January 2020, Brampton City Council declared a health care emergency. Our community continues to experience significant health care capacity pressures due to Brampton's rapid population growth, aging demographics, high prevalence of chronic disease, and historical funding inequities. While we appreciate and welcome the recent provincial investments in our city's health care infrastructure and services, Brampton's need for health care and hospital services continues to outpace current capacity.

Mental health presents a growing challenge for our health care system with complex and growing needs for support across our community. The Children's Mental Health Ontario's (CMHO) report titled "Kids Can't Wait" showed Peel Region as among the highest in wait times in the province, reaching as high as 566 days for counselling and therapy for those under 18 years old, for more intensive mental health services the wait is even longer reaching

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737 days, or over two years. CMHO considered Peel a "hot spot" for long wait times because funding for many mental health services has not kept pace with the Region's population increase in recent years with 90 percent of that growth occurring in Brampton.

Peel Region's own data demonstrates that the mental health and addictions system in Peel is challenged with growing waitlists and unmet community needs. On April 13, 2023 the Region of Peel passed a motion introduced by Councillor Rowena Santos, asking that Peel Region enhance communication and collaboration with school boards to enable access to supports for youth in crisis. This motion is an important step in the crisis but Peel Region needs more help from the Ontario government:

- Only one in three Peel residents are expected to receive mental health or addictions treatment or services when they need it, which leaves an estimated 184,000 Peel residents (including just over 60,000 children and youth) without the necessary interventions they need.
- Substance-related harms continue to increase in Peel with 654 lives lost between 2017 and 2021. In 2021, there was a 133% increase in deaths compared to 2017. Responding to drug toxicity related harms is a top priority for Peel Public Health and community partners.
- The Region of Peel chronic under-funding for mental health support is evident when looking at the per capita funding (2019) that was calculated to be \$48 and \$36 per resident for Central West and Mississauga Halton LHINs respectively, which is significantly lower than the per capita funding of \$80 for other Ontarians.
- The funding inequity also impacts child and youth mental health services wherein Peel's average per capita funding for child and youth mental health is significantly lower at \$76.38, while average per capita funding in Ontario is \$152.48.

Despite ongoing advocacy by the Region, the City of Brampton and local community system partners, there continues to be an inequity in provincial funding for mental health and addictions services in the Peel service area.

The Region of Peel, Public Health report titled "Changing Landscape of Health in Peel" (2019) identified Emergency Department (ED) visits for mental health to be the highest among youth under age 24 (more than doubled over the same time period for youth under 14) and individuals who accessed care for a mental illness had 3 or more repeat hospitalizations. The same report found that incidents of suicide/self harm have increased significantly among female youth under age 24 and discovered that 33% of students in

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Grades 7–12 (44% for females) did not know who to turn to when needing to discuss a mental health issue.

The limited access to mental health supports for students, result in them turning to their schoolteachers and administrative staff for support but staff lack the professional training to address or keep up with demand. Unlike other School Boards across the province (such as the Upper Grand School Board which provides specific psychological and mental health services) the Peel District School Board and Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board, do not adequately provide mental health supports for students in crisis. On Feb 15, 2023, the Peel District School Board hosted an Advisory Council Meeting regarding the development of their Mental Health Strategy and flagged collaboration with other levels of government as an urgent priority.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) launched the “Act of Mental Health Campaign” pressing our national leaders to fund mental health care, recognizing that kids are getting sicker, and increasingly post-pandemic, because they cannot receive mental health care when they need it and are winding up in Emergency Departments and in hospital because their mental health is not treated soon enough.

In October 2020 the Region of Peel Council approved the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, with a focus to use upstream approaches to tackle systems-level challenges including family violence, mental health, addictions, and systemic discrimination. Recently Peel’s Community Safety and Well-Being Mental Health and Addictions Action Table, comprised of over 15 organizations, put forth a pre-budget submission with the following recommendations:

- Ensure provincial health human resource policies and compensation practices are supportive of building and retaining a robust Peel MHA workforce and repeal the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019.
- Increase funding for MHA in Peel to meet population needs, correct for historical underfunding, and tackle unprecedented crisis level demand.
- Provide sustained funding and approvals for consumption and treatment services to combat the drug toxicity crisis impacting Peel.

The City of Brampton Community Safety and Well-being Action Plan approved in September 2022, is committed to enhancing community resilience through cross-sector engagement, collaboration, and advocacy. It clearly identifies increasing mental health supports and programming, especially for children and youth and considers the growing challenges felt by

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this demographic during the pandemic. Brampton also works closely with key partners such as the Algoma University, which is planning to establish a Mental Health and Addictions Research and Training Institute in our City.

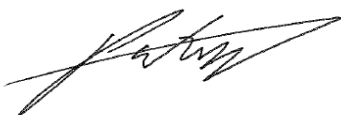
Furthermore, the City is developing two youth hubs dedicated to supporting and empowering Brampton's youth. A crucial component of that work is support for the provincial government to ensure adequate supports and ongoing programs are available to Brampton youth to mitigate and address root causes of mental health crisis in our community.

The mental health crisis in Brampton and across Peel Region is rooted in decades of underfunding and unprecedented population growth that have continuously challenged our health care system and support services.

The 2023 Ontario Budget commits \$425 million over three years for mental health and addictions services. I call on the provincial government to specifically increase mental health funding and supports for youth in Brampton, and to work with the City of Brampton, the Region of Peel, our local school boards, and all relevant stakeholders to ensure coordinated and holistic action is taken on improving mental health in our community.

I have also shared this information with your Cabinet colleagues Minister Jones and Minister Tibollo, and I look forward to working with you to support our youth in this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Patrick Brown
Mayor

cc:
Peel District School Board
Dufferin Peel Catholic School Board
Regional Council
Brampton MPPs

Attachments: City of Brampton Motion, Region of Peel Motion