

2020 Region of Peel

Provincial Pre-Budget Submission



REFERRAL TO _____
RECOMMENDED _____
DIRECTION REQUIRED _____
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Introduction

The Region of Peel is responsible for providing services and programs to a rapidly growing community consisting of the cities of Brampton and Mississauga and the Town of Caledon. Peel is projected to grow from the current 1.4 million people to a population of nearly two million by 2041. The Region's vision for Peel is Community for Life, where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and has access to the services and opportunities they need to thrive throughout each stage of their lives.

To meet the growing needs of Peel residents and businesses, the Region uses best practices based on evidence and risk-informed decision-making, consistently maintains a triple "A" credit rating and is the recipient of Excellence Canada's Platinum Award for continuous improvement efforts.

Peel is recognized as a leader in service and program delivery, however, the Region relies on support from other orders of government. Like many other municipalities across Ontario, the Region is increasingly doing more with less. Without sustainable funding tools, the Region does not have the financial resources to maintain and build the necessary infrastructure and provide the appropriate level of services to support Peel's growth.

The 2020 Provincial Pre-budget submission process presents an opportunity to highlight how the Region can work with the Ontario government to address challenges impacting Peel residents and businesses, as well as work to address the four key priorities identified by the Province. The Region's 2020 Pre-budget submission includes recommendations aligned with these priority areas:

Making Life More Affordable

- Municipal fiscal sustainability
- Affordable housing
- Early Years and Child Care System

Creating a More Competitive Business Environment

- Sustainable infrastructure (program design, climate change)

Connecting People to Places

- Sustainable and integrated transportation

Building Healthier and Safer Communities

- Human sex trafficking
- Public health
- Paramedics
- Supports for seniors
- Mental health and addictions services

Making Life More Affordable

Municipal Fiscal Sustainability

Municipalities are the level of government closest to the people and are therefore most familiar with their hopes, needs and challenges. The infrastructure (roads, bridges, transit, housing, water and wastewater and waste management) and services municipalities provide are essential to maintaining and enhancing the excellent quality of life enjoyed by residents.

Municipalities cannot do this on their own. They need the support of our federal and provincial partners to continue to build safe, healthy and connected communities. Provincial and federal governments are vital partners with municipalities and a modernized, renewed partnership will have a positive, long-lasting impact on communities throughout Peel and Ontario.

The Region, like other municipalities, has limited revenue sources and tools, as mandated by the Municipal Act:

- Property taxes and development charges (DC) are the two core sources of revenue for municipalities.
- Both are land-based and, as a result, are impacted based on how much land is consumed and how it is used. Neither have changed in a very long time.

However, the way land is consumed and how it is used have recently undergone transformative change. Technological change has automated many work processes and contributed to businesses requiring less land and fewer workers. Technology has also enabled a more mobile, globalized labour force.

Employees are now better able to work from outside the traditional office space. This includes work spaces which are not subject to non-residential taxes.

- In 2016, jobs in Peel that were home-based accounted for 6.3 per cent of the total jobs in Peel, up from 5.8 per cent in 2001.
- The number of people in Peel working remotely, over the past 15 years, increased at a faster rate (34.7 per cent) than jobs which were created in a “usual place of work” (24.3 per cent).

In response to this transformation, building forms have become less expansive and production spaces are smaller, but used more intensely. As a result, actual business land consumption has fallen below expected levels and has affected non-residential revenue growth.

In recent years, actual growth has not kept pace with previous provincial forecasts. Peel’s Employment-related DC revenues (which are based on provincial growth forecasts) are falling below planned revenues. From 2002 to 2017, actual DC revenues were only 37.1 per cent of planned DC revenues, translating into a DC revenue shortfall of approximately \$838 million. This has elevated Peel’s risk of stranded DC debt.

These changes have also resulted in a general slowing in the growth of non-residential property tax revenues and a shift in the property tax revenue away from the non-residential sector towards the residential sector. Non-residential tax revenue, as a share of total property tax revenue, has declined from 44 per cent in 2002 to 36.4 per cent in 2017 (2018 tax year). This is a result of outdated municipal revenue tools, which have not evolved to address 21st century economic realities.

If this shift in tax revenues continues, property tax unaffordability risks, as well as risks to the Region's financial sustainability will increase.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Work with federal and municipal levels of government to understand and address the financial challenges created by the changing macroeconomic environment that is shifting property tax from the non-residential to the residential sector.

Affordable Housing

Building healthy and safe communities starts with ensuring every resident has a place to call home. Peel remains one of the fastest growing communities in the province – presenting both opportunities and challenges. The Region has one of the longest waitlists for affordable housing in Ontario and the need is growing.

As Service Manager for housing and homelessness, the Region effectively manages the centralized wait list, creates new housing units, maintains existing stock, and supports housing operations. However, Regional funding alone can only support the completion of a few projects within Peel's Housing Master Plan, which, when fully implemented by 2034, will add 5,364 new affordable rental units, 226 supportive and 60 emergency shelter beds to the housing stock in Peel. However, ongoing and long-term funding, from all orders of government, is required to address most of the affordable housing needs in Peel.

The Region welcomes recent initiatives and investments from the Province aimed at addressing affordable housing challenges, including the recent \$1.4 billion investment by the provincial and federal governments through new Canada-Ontario Housing benefit. The Region will identify and recommend households on the Central West List eligible for the benefit. However, more funding from the Province is ultimately the single most significant determinant of better outcomes for residents in need of safe, healthy and affordable housing.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Ensure that the Region of Peel as Service Manager has the funding and the flexibility to provide housing for low and middle-income households by:
 - o improving access to and increasing the funding contribution for affordable housing based on need, and established targets as stated in the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan
 - o providing greater flexibility and reducing regulatory red tape within the Housing Services Act, 2011, to better determine and implement priorities that address local needs
 - o recognizing that affordable housing is key to business retention and attraction.

Maintaining A Strong Early Years and Child Care System

The Region has launched a new service called EarlyON Child Development Supports, which is the first of its kind in Peel. Parents and caregivers visiting Peel's EarlyON Child and Family Centres will now have access to resource consultants who can answer questions about children's development and provide resources and referral recommendations to specialized services. This is just one of the ways the Region continues to achieve its goal of ensuring families have access to the services they need.

The Region appreciates the fiscal constraints that the Province is operating under and has identified internal efficiencies within the Early Years and Child Care program. In the past year, the Region identified \$1 million in efficiencies within the Early Years and Child Care program by closing standalone programs and reinvesting the money to meet the growing demand for EarlyON services. In addition, the Region proactively applied for the Province's Audit and Accountability Funding to complete a review of the Child Care Fee Subsidy Program. This review was completed in December 2019 and resulted recommendations to avoid and save costs and strengthen accountability.

Peel has also invested \$2.6 million in order to help offset a 20-per-cent reduction in funding for child care services by the Province. However, the Region anticipates reduced funding for child care will result in the creation of significant wait lists for child care fee subsidy and/or children with special needs. Wait lists can represent a barrier to parents joining the workforce or remaining in it. Similarly, the elimination of the Region's Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative will end supports that help make child care more affordable for working families who do not qualify for subsidy. Families will be forced to redirect money from their household budgets to pay the high cost of licensed child care, making life less affordable.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Continue to phase-in proposed changes to provincial funding for early years and child care in order to avoid reductions in the availability of quality child care, EarlyON and Special Needs services in Peel.
- Proactively consult with the Region of Peel on funding and policy changes that impact Early Years and Child Care program delivery and service levels (e.g. any changes to funding formula).
- Provide adequate operating and capital funding to expand access to child care and EarlyON programs in areas of need.
- Continue to make child care more affordable (e.g. updating income test formula to reflect the current cost of living, expanding affordability investments in child care, and consider enhancements to CARE).

Creating a More Competitive Business Environment

Sustainable Infrastructure

Long-term, sustainable investment in municipal infrastructure, such as wastewater plant rehabilitation, inflow and infiltration projects, and road construction (widening and extension) projects, help the Province achieve key priorities, such as creating job growth and, in the latter case, building an integrated transportation network that will help strengthen Ontario's economy.

Consider the following facts:

- For every dollar increase of GDP in Peel, Canada's GDP will increase by \$1.62.
- For every dollar of municipal revenue in Peel due to growth, federal revenue increases by \$6.22.

In addition, efficient and effective utility services require timely and purposeful mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Without such mitigation and adaption, the negative effects of climate change will have costly impacts to balance sheets of businesses and the individual family's monthly/yearly expenses.

For fast-growing municipalities, such as Peel, providing and maintaining infrastructure is becoming increasingly difficult, due to unpredictable and unsustainable funding sources. The Region relies on collaboration with the provincial and federal levels of government to plan, build and maintain the infrastructure required to meet the needs of their communities. As such, the Region acknowledges the steps the Province has already taken to address concerns related to Phase 1 funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan (ICIP). These include:

- Making the Public Transit stream funding intake predictable and allocation-based;
- Extending the Phase 2 project implementation periods;
- Dropping the language of 'incrementality' from Phase 2 program guidelines and adding a requirement that projects be informed by an applicant's asset management plan; and
- Including both mitigation and climate change resiliency considerations in the made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which was recommended by the Region in its submission to the Province on the Plan.

While these measures are positive steps forward, the Region would like to identify further opportunities to improve the design of infrastructure funding programs.

Funding application assessments should be transparent

Infrastructure funding program design is a critical factor to the overall cost for municipal infrastructure projects. As a result of the restrictive timelines and lack of flexibility under Phase 1 of ICIP, project costs were elevated by an average by 30 per cent due to the lack of available contractors, high demand for materials, and municipalities going to market for similar materials and services at the same time. A 30-per-cent premium on \$30 billion in investments under Phase 2 would translate into \$9 billion in lost purchasing power. This must be avoided.

Transparency around project funding criteria allows the Region to begin the process of identifying and planning for these potential projects early, managing challenges, such as elevated per unit costs and the availability of contractors that directly impact the cost of projects, and achieving a more seamless integration with long-term plans. The Region seeks transparency regarding how submitted projects are assessed by the Province before being forwarded to the federal government for its consideration.

In addition, to ensure Ontario's long-term infrastructure foundation, municipalities need an allocation-based approach in which funding can be invested in priority projects consistent with each municipality's asset management plan and price spikes, and contractor shortages associated with application-based funding can be avoided.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Favour an allocation-based approach for distributing infrastructure funding; and
- Ensure that infrastructure funding programs promote the best use of resources by implementing timelines for project completion that reflect the reality of the construction and development processes.

Meeting federal climate change objectives

Extreme weather events, such as more frequent flood events and ice storms, are increasingly impacting the condition and resiliency of municipal assets and infrastructure. For example, the Region has seen an increased impact of climate change on its water and wastewater infrastructure, which is only expected to intensify.

As the Province moves forward to opening the Phase 2 Green Infrastructure Funding Stream for large municipalities, under ICIP, the Region is urging the Province to ensure it uses a climate change lens which meets the federal climate change objectives. This will help the flow of federal funds to much needed municipal infrastructure projects across Ontario. Applying a climate change lens to infrastructure planning will help:

- With the development of timely and purposeful mitigation and adaptation measures that are needed for efficient and effective utility services
- Reduce the increasing cost associated with climate change, which are being absorbed by businesses and families

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Ensure a climate change plan is in place that meets the criteria set out by the federal government.
- Work with its federal counterparts to ensure \$1.4 billion of Phase 2 federal infrastructure funding is distributed to municipalities in a timely manner.

Support for adaptation and mitigation funding programs

The Region acknowledges an increased focus in the Province's Environment Plan on climate change resilience, as well as the support for the completion of a province-wide risk assessment, as positive steps.

A strong commitment and coordinated action across multiple levels of government, community groups and businesses are required to ensure climate resilient infrastructure is in place. Consistent with this collaborative approach, the Region has increased its capacity to deliver needed adaptation action by providing a combined total of \$175 million in climate change funding to Credit Valley Conservation and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority since 2007.

While the Environment Plan demonstrates the need to address climate change and other environmental issues, more clarity is required in the Plan as to how policy updates and program improvements will be funded and how the effectiveness of new standards will be measured. The Region continues to have interest in provincial support for meeting the Region's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target of 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050 and ensures access to federal infrastructure funding.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Ensure the provincial Environment Plan supports meeting regional and provincial greenhouse gas reduction targets and that sustained adaptation and mitigation funding programs are available to accelerate transformation to a low carbon and resilient community.

Connect People to Places

Sustainable and Integrated Transportation

Growth pressures in the Region continue to drive the need for investments offering more options for getting around Peel and the Greater Toronto Area. If Peel is to remain a destination of choice for innovative businesses, growing families and skilled newcomers, a sustainable and integrated transportation system will be key.

Single occupant vehicle trips continue to account for the largest transportation mode share in the region. The number of vehicles using Peel roadways continues to increase, resulting in lost economic activity, due to congestion, diminished quality of life, green house gas emissions and decreasing competitiveness.

The Region welcomes the Province's recent decision to add more GO train trips to the Kitchener line. The Region is also encouraged by a Ministry of Transportation-led Business Advisory Council on rail transit in the Innovation Corridor Employment Zone to expedite the delivery of two-way all-day GO on the Kitchener line. Many Peel residents and business owners also look forward to the start of construction on the Hurontario LRT. Ongoing provincial investments in transit will be integral to Peel's goal of a 50 per cent sustainable mode share by 2041.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Provide support for key strategic transit projects across Peel, including:
 - o Improving transit connections between Caledon and Toronto
 - o Continue with the implementation of two-way, all-day, 15-Minute GO Regional Express Rail on the Kitchener Line from Mount Pleasant GO Station to Union Station and on the Milton line

Moving Forward with the GTA West Corridor

A critical component of achieving a balanced approach to accommodating growth and Peel's robust goods movement sector is road and highway infrastructure. With Peel being the largest transportation and goods movement hubs in Ontario and amongst the largest in North America, completion of a highway in the GTA West Corridor will boost the goods movement industry. This industry is a key contributor to economic development in Peel and the GTHA:

- The Peel road network serves almost half a million trucks weekly, which accounts for 50 per cent of the weekly truck trips in Ontario.
- The goods movement industry in Peel accounts for 21 per cent of the province's goods movement gross domestic product.
- Goods movement related industries account for 43 per cent of jobs in Peel.
- Pearson International Airport handles more air cargo than the Vancouver and Montreal airports combined, highlighting a need for a robust network to transport goods to and from the airport.

The Region encourages the Province to continue to move forward expeditiously to complete the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment. Constructing a highway in this corridor represents an opportunity for both the Province and the Region to meet their planning objectives.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Complete the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment process expeditiously and move forward as soon as possible with the implementation of a highway and a dedicated transit right-of-way.
- Continues to support the extension of Highway 427 and future alignment with the GTA West Corridor, as shown on the technically preferred route.
- Extend Highway 427 to Highway 9 and beyond.

Build Healthier and Safer Communities

Addressing Human Sex Trafficking

Human sex trafficking is a significant problem in Peel. The most current data shows that Peel Regional Police conducted over half of the human sex trafficking investigations in Canada and 62.5 per cent of Canadian cases originate in the Greater Toronto Area. Peel Region and the City of Toronto are the two most common regions within the GTA in which victims are moved.

In Peel, a group of agencies, including the Region of Peel, have been working collaboratively to provide supports to survivors of human sex trafficking. Through this group, significant gaps in the current system have been identified including the lack of a coordinated approach to prevention programs, the need for simplified systems navigation, and the need for safe, dedicated housing options.

To address human trafficking and bridge the identified service gaps for survivors, the Region is implementing the Strategy to Address Human Sex Trafficking in Peel Region. The Strategy aims to provide services that focus on the individual's needs, are trauma-informed and based on human rights and harm reduction. Specifically, the Strategy focuses on achieving outcomes under three pillars:

- Prevention – increasing awareness of human sex trafficking through coordinated prevention and education programming.
- Intervention – increasing access to dedicated and reliable services that are easy to navigate for victims and survivors.
- Exits/Housing – increasing access to dedicated, safe and supportive housing for victims and survivors.

To address these pillars, a three-year pilot program is being implemented that will provide one safe/emergency house for immediate and secure housing, one transitional house to help victims and survivors who are starting to rebuild their lives, and one service hub that will provide customized services for individuals at-risk, engaged in or transitioning out of sex trafficking. Currently, this pilot program is being funded only by the Region of Peel through reserves. If these services are discontinued at the end of the pilot, the ability to address the needs of sex trafficking victims will be put at risk.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Provide long-term sustainable operational funding to support the costs of housing and support services for victims and survivors of human sex trafficking in Peel.

Public Health

Research shows that every dollar invested in public health programming saves eight dollars of avoided health and social care costs. Sufficient funding will better equip public health organizations to better address provincial and local priorities. Overall funding for local public health should be adequate to achieve the mandate and enable communities to thrive.

Cost-sharing between the Province and municipalities should be achieved in a way that meets community needs and minimizes the burden on the local taxpayer. In Peel, the Region has historically paid more than 25 per cent of public health costs in order to meet community needs, as well as to help offset underfunding from the Province.

Further, additional provincial funding will be required for transition costs if Peel Public Health is required to be part of a large Public Health Unit. The cost of transition could be higher for public health units currently integrated with municipal or regional governments as a result of disentanglement of systems currently integrated within existing municipalities. In the case of Peel Public Health, the magnitude of services, as the second largest public health unit in Ontario, is also likely to increase these transition costs.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Ensure sufficient funding to enhance the capacity of the public health system, including adequate funding to maintain Peel Public Health's capacity to respond to population growth and needs of the community.
- Provide additional provincial funding for transition costs if Peel Public Health is incorporated into a larger geographical Public Health Unit.

Paramedic Services

Peel Paramedic Services protects and improves the quality of life of Peel residents by providing responsive and compassionate pre-hospital and out-of-hospital paramedic-based healthcare in order to reduce the burden on the health system and reduce hallway medicine. However, Peel Paramedic Services faces challenges of rapid call volume growth. It is estimated that at the end of 2019, Paramedic Services were expected to respond to almost 150,000 calls (or 400 calls each day).

Peel values its partnership with the Ministry that ensures that service delivery is locally informed and coordinated with municipal and community partners and is also sustainable and integrated as part of a larger provincial system. However, the provincial subsidy for Paramedic Services continues to be based on 50 per cent of the previous year's approved budget. As such, Peel is challenged to keep up with rapid annual call volume growth and inflationary pressures when provincial funding lags a year behind and does not reflect current year pressures. To strengthen this partnership, the Province needs to ensure a more responsive funding mechanism that addresses this funding lag and that accounts for ongoing system pressures related to inflation and service growth.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Maintain current funding through the 50:50 cost-sharing model between municipalities and the ministry.
- Create a more responsive funding mechanism by addressing the current funding lag from the Ministry of Health, to help account for ongoing system pressures related to inflation and service growth.

Supports for Seniors

Over the next 30 years, the number of seniors in Peel is expected to rise to 414,750 (21 per cent of the population). Given the rapidly aging population in Peel, supports across the entire continuum of care are needed to help end hallway healthcare. Resource allocation should recognize the needs of high-growth and aging communities, such as Peel.

Investment in long-term care homes and Adult Day Services

The Region values the Province's commitment to invest in building new and redeveloping older long-term care homes, however, the dedicated funding does not address the redevelopment of older A-rated homes. The Region of Peel is currently redeveloping the Peel Manor site to ensure that the long-term care home meets current standards. This innovative, integrated service hub is a landmark project that will put the province's vision of providing a flexible mix of healthcare and other supports, into action. The co-location of integrated services can play a significant role in mitigating challenges related to social isolation and the rising costs of acute care, by reducing emergency department visits and premature admission into long term care.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Provide funding to support the redevelopment of the Peel Manor site into a Seniors Health and Wellness Village, which would support:
 - o Physical construction of the new long term care home
 - o Expansion of Adult Day Services capacity to reduce social isolation, improve cognitive and physical stimulation and decrease informal caregiver burden
 - o Introduction of overnight stay respite beds
 - o Development and operations of the new seniors-focused service hub, including seniors dental services

The Region of Peel operates five Adult Day Services (ADS) programs which are co-located in each of its five long-term care homes. Over half of clients (59 per cent) in Region of Peel ADS have been diagnosed with a cognitive impairment (i.e., dementia), and 71 per cent of current clients have complex care needs. Further, average occupancy across all five ADS programs in the Region of Peel's long term care homes is 103 per cent. As the demand for ADS grows in Peel, there will continue to be a need for proportionate funding increases to meet demand. For example, by 2021, an 8.2 per cent increase in funding will be required to meet the current growth in the Region of Peel's own ADS.

Funding remains a risk when meeting overall demand for services as the aging population continues to grow and Peel Region is substantially underfunded for home care on a per capita basis. In Peel, both Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) receive the lowest per-capita funding for Home and Community Care in the province. As of 2016/17, average home care spending across the province was \$3,630 per client. The Central West (CW) LHIN, remains the lowest funded LHIN and received approximately \$702 less per patient than the provincial average. Chronic underfunding limits the availability and accessibility of home and community care, displacing the burden of care to other parts of the health system.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Address the current funding gap in Peel Region and continue to address inequities in funding for home and community care services using a provincial resource allocation strategy that recognizes the needs of high-growth communities; increased capacity needs of the home and community sector and supports for caregivers.
- Increase funding in order to ensure adequate funding for personal support workers to enable older adults to age well at home and thrive in the community.

Dementia supports across the long term care sector

Since 2010, the proportion of people living with dementia in Peel Long Term Care homes has increased by 50 per cent, with two out of every three individuals now impacted by the disease. The Region is committed to meet and adapt to the changing needs of its residents by implementing evidence-informed and innovative approaches to dementia care. Adopting a person-centered, emotional care model has improved quality of life for residents, reduced antipsychotic medications, decreased levels of worsened depression, and improved staff incidental sick time.

The positive outcomes associated with implementing person-centred, emotional dementia care can be seen in overall cost savings. A bed in a Special Behaviour Support Unit costs 41 per cent more than a household bed providing emotion-based dementia care. To continue to expand these positive changes, sustainable funding is needed to support an increase in staffing resources and training (to build staff competencies) and to improve structural design of the homes. It is also recommended that amendments are made to the current restrictive legislation that would support emotional care.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Enhance dementia and emotion-based models of care across the long term care sector through funding that aligns with increasing resident care needs, dedicated and consistent training related to person-centered dementia care, enhanced specialized supports and supportive structural design

Mental Health and Addictions

The Region welcomes ongoing collaboration with the provincial government to improve access to mental health and addiction services. In Peel alone, more than 276,000 people will experience mental health and/or addictions disorders in their lifetime. Only 1 in 3 Peel residents will receive the treatment that they need. This means an estimated 184,000 Peel residents (including approximately 60,000 children and youth) will not receive the care that they need.

Provincial funding for mental health and addictions services has not kept pace with demographic changes and population growth in Peel. While Peel is growing faster than the provincial average, per capita funding for mental health and addictions services for both Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) serving Peel (Central West and Mississauga Halton) are among the lowest in Ontario. Evidence of inequitable funding includes:

- Lower per capita funding allocated to both LHINs servicing Peel's adult (aged 15-64 years) mental health and addictions services; for 2019-2020, Central West and Mississauga Halton LHINs received \$54.23 and \$43.31 respectively for mental health and \$11.46 and \$10.58 respectively for addictions services. This is lower in comparison to Ontario's average of \$86.36 for mental health and \$20.91 for addictions.
- Reported underfunding across Peel's six children and youth mental health agencies (which serve children and youth from birth to age 24 years); according to Peel Children's Centre, Toronto receives six times the funding amount as Peel.

The Region supports provincial plans calling for a \$3.8-billion investment over 10 years to build a mental health and addictions system. However, funding inequities can translate into limited community supports, longer wait times or unmet needs that may show up as emergency department visits, contribute to hallway healthcare, or avoidable interactions with the police. This is amplified by system navigation issues associated with the fact mental health services for children and youth are disconnected from all other health services, in addition to service delivery and coordination managed across multiple ministries.

The Region of Peel recommends that the Ontario government:

- Address historical inequities in funding for mental health and addictions services in Peel to support upstream prevention and improved access to services within the community and ensure that funding matches community needs and is responsive to demographic changes.
- Integrate mental health and addictions system planning and service delivery to ensure seamless access to services across the entire age continuum (children to seniors) and work across ministries on the basic social needs required for mental health promotion and recovery, such as housing.

Conclusion

The Region appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Province's pre-budget consultation process and provide recommendations on issues that are most important to the residents and businesses in Peel. The Region is committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders, including the provincial and federal governments, to improve quality of life, deliver services efficiently, now and in the future, and ensure that our community receives value for tax dollars.

Summary of Recommendations

Municipal Fiscal Sustainability

- Work with federal and municipal levels of government to understand and address the financial challenges created by the changing macroeconomic environment that is shifting property tax from the non-residential to the residential sector.

Affordable Housing

- Ensure that the Region of Peel as Service Manager has the funding and the flexibility to provide housing for low and middle-income households by:
 - Improving access to and increasing the funding contribution for affordable housing based on need, and established targets as stated in the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan
 - Providing greater flexibility and reducing regulatory red tape within the Housing Services Act, 2011, to better determine and implement priorities that address local needs
 - Recognizing that affordable housing is key to business retention and attraction.

Maintaining a Strong Early Years and Child Care System

- Continue to phase-in proposed changes to provincial funding for early years and child care in order to avoid reductions in the availability of quality child care, EarlyON and Special Needs services in Peel.
- Proactively consult with the Region of Peel on funding and policy changes that impact Early Years and Child Care program delivery and service levels (e.g. any changes to funding formula).
- Provide adequate operating and capital funding to expand access to child care and EarlyON programs in areas of need.
- Continue to make child care more affordable (e.g. updating income test formula to reflect the current cost of living, expanding affordability investments in child care, and consider enhancements to CARE).

Sustainable Infrastructure

- Favour an allocation-based approach for distributing infrastructure funding; and
- Ensure that infrastructure funding programs promote the best use of resources by implementing timelines for project completion that reflect the reality of the construction and development processes.
- Ensure a climate change plan is in place that meets the criteria set out by the federal government.
- Work with its federal counterparts to ensure \$1.4 billion of Phase 2 federal infrastructure funding is distributed to municipalities in a timely manner.
- Ensure the provincial Environment Plan supports meeting regional and provincial greenhouse gas reduction targets and that sustained adaptation and mitigation funding programs are available to accelerate transformation to a low carbon and resilient community.

Sustainable and Integrated Transportation

- Provide support for key strategic transit projects across Peel, including:
 - Improving transit connections between Caledon and Toronto
 - Continue with the implementation of two-way, all-day, 15-Minute GO Regional Express Rail on the Kitchener Line from Mount Pleasant GO Station to Union Station and on the Milton line
- Complete the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment process expeditiously and move forward as soon as possible with the implementation of a highway and a dedicated transit right-of-way.
- Continues to support for the extension of Highway 427 and future alignment with the GTA West Corridor, as shown on the technically preferred route.
- Extend Highway 427 to Highway 9 and beyond.

Addressing Human Sex Trafficking

- Provide long-term sustainable operational funding to support the costs of housing and support services for victims and survivors of human sex trafficking in Peel.

Public Health

- Ensure sufficient funding to enhance the capacity of the public health system, including adequate funding to maintain Peel Public Health's capacity to respond to population growth and needs of the community.
- Provide additional provincial funding for transition costs if Peel Public Health is incorporated into a larger geographical Public Health Unit.

Paramedic Services

- Maintain current funding through the 50:50 cost-sharing model between municipalities and the ministry.
- Create a more responsive funding mechanism by addressing the current funding lag from the Ministry of Health, to help account for ongoing system pressures related to inflation and service growth.

Supports for Seniors

- Provide funding to support the redevelopment of the Peel Manor site into a Seniors Health and Wellness Village, which would support:
 - Physical construction of the new long term care home
 - Expansion of Adult Day Services capacity to reduce social isolation, improve cognitive and physical stimulation and decrease informal caregiver burden
 - Introduction of overnight stay respite beds
 - Development and operations of the new seniors-focused service hub, including seniors dental services
- Address the current funding gap in Peel Region and continue to address inequities in funding for home and community care services using a provincial resource allocation strategy that recognizes the needs of high-growth communities; increased capacity needs of the home and community sector and supports for caregivers.
- Increase funding should also ensure adequate funding for personal support workers to enable older adults to age well at home and thrive in the community.
- Enhance dementia and emotion-based models of care across the long term care sector through funding that aligns with increasing resident care needs, dedicated and consistent training related to person-centered dementia care, enhanced specialized supports and supportive structural design.

Mental Health and Addictions

- Address historical inequities in funding for mental health and addictions services in Peel to support upstream prevention and improved access to services within the community and ensure that funding matches community needs and is responsive to demographic changes.
- Integrate mental health and addictions system planning and service delivery to ensure seamless access to services across the entire age continuum (children to seniors) and work across ministries on the basic social needs required for mental health promotion and recovery, such as housing.