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**For Information**

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**REPORT TITLE: Year in Review of Peel's 2023 Accomplishments and Awards**

**FROM: Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Chief Administrative Officer**

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**OBJECTIVE**

To share the remarkable achievements of Peel employees, during a year of strained resources, disruption and uncertainty, they maintained business continuity, responded to every single aspect of our operational and capital plans and strategic vision while balancing Bill 112 response.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Despite 2023 being a year of COVID-19 recovery, uncertainty, disruption, multiple social and economic challenges coupled with multiple legislative changes, Peel employees demonstrated resilience and a commitment to the delivery of high quality and efficient services to the residents and businesses in Peel.
- In 2023, the introduction of multiple provincial Bills, particularly Bill 112, *The Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution)*, 2023 to dissolve the Regional Municipality of Peel created uncertainty and instability for the 6,500 Peel Region employees.
- Peel Region experienced challenges participating in the dissolution process coupled with managing unprecedented service delivery pressures due to broader social and economic factors in 2023.
- Peel Region is a high-performing, two-tier model serving the needs of residents, businesses, and the community for over 50 years.
- Peel employees demonstrated unparalleled focus and resilience in 2023 by achieving significant accomplishments, such as:
  - Peel's drinking water system receiving the highest possible inspection rating of 100 per cent by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.
  - Delivering water and wastewater services at a rate which is over 30 per cent lower than the GTA average for an average household.
  - Incredible effort to respond to new housing targets by the province and ensure infrastructure planning, design and construction will meet the needs of the community.
  - Introducing Ontario's first electric waste collection vehicle which is a first step towards a low carbon emitting fleet.
  - Developed an emotion-based dementia training program to support first responders with strategies to deescalate emotional responses during calls for support in the community.

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- Sustainable responses for in-land asylum claimants to provide safe space and appropriate supports for this group.
- Fit to Sit program implementation to address the offload delay times at hospitals by supporting the transfer of eligible, low risk patients to the emergency department waiting areas for hospital staff to triage and register patients.
- Peel received 24 awards and recognition associated with organizational and employee achievements in leadership, innovation, continuous improvement, and excellence, such as S&P Global Ratings, and Moody's Investors Services affirms Peel Region's AAA credit rating and Ontario Public Works Association Public Works Project of the Year Award to the G.E. Booth Water Resource Recovery Facility.
- Peel's culture of continuous improvement led to the completion of 31 service delivery improvements, resulting in \$0.9 million in cost savings and \$3.3 million in cost avoidance.
- Peel's overall customer satisfaction remains high at 82 per cent in 2023 (80 per cent in 2022)
- Over \$800 million in external funding was secured in 2023 to support ongoing annual operations of services allowing for critical programming and services such as Housing, Early Years and Child Care, Public Health, Seniors Services, Paramedic Services, and Income Support.
- About \$965 million of spending occurred on approved capital projects, representing a 55 per cent increase in capital implementation over the average annual capital spending of \$620 million.

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## DISCUSSION

### 1. Background

Peel is a growing and thriving community of 1.5 million residents and over 200,000 businesses that is facing a changing and dynamic environment. Peel Region delivers services through a deeply integrated model of external and internal facing services that has been evolving for 50 years, allowing for economies of scale, efficiencies, and value for taxpayer dollars. This is accomplished through Peel Region's highly qualified and committed employees who are valued by our community.

As one of the most impacted regions during the COVID-19 pandemic, Peel Region relied on cross departmental supports, along with experience of employees, community and systems to maintain business continuity during the pandemic. In 2023, recovery and remobilization were the focus in transforming COVID-19 response into sustainable operations, such as establishing the Immunization Services Division to serve as a singular and integrated vaccination program.

Peel Region is at the center of several broader social and economic challenges that demand attention and action including:

- Lack of affordable housing.
- Responding to the influx of asylum claimants.
- Infrastructure needs to support more homes.
- Tackling the climate change emergency.
- Increasing health care system pressures.
- Increasing cost of living for Peel residents and businesses.

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For example, the influx of asylum claimants overwhelmed Peel's emergency shelter system in 2023. Historically Peel had an average of 5 per cent of asylum claimants occupying the emergency shelter system. As of January 21, 2024, 72 per cent of all emergency shelter and overflow hotel users are asylum claimants. This is a total of 1,475 unique asylum claimant individuals being supported. In an unprecedented pressure on the community, Peel employees and community partners responded by providing emergency housing and supports at volumes never experienced before.

The delivery of quality uninterrupted services to the Peel community was also challenged throughout 2023 as the Provincial government introduced several significant legislative changes to support the creation of more housing, specifically Bill 23. Peel employees have responded to the new provincial housing targets in an unprecedented manner by implementing tactics to advance infrastructure planning, design and construction to address the dynamic needs of our local municipalities and ensuring sustainable growth and development.

The most significant and disruptive legislation was the introduction of Bill 112, *Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution)*, 2023 on May 18, 2023, to dissolve the Regional Municipality of Peel impacting approximately 6,500 Peel Region employees as well as partners, community agencies and vendors.

The uncertainty and change brought on by the dissolution of Peel and the increased demands placed on Peel Region employees to respond and support the dissolution process with the Transition Board and the local municipalities created additional pressures on service delivery and were further compounded by increased workload, staff retention challenges and ongoing increased service demand.

Many retention policies and employee health and wellness programs were implemented with the support of Regional Council resulting in the retention of existing employees and attraction of new employees. However, many employees chose to leave the organization after the announcement to dissolve Peel.

On December 13, 2023, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) announced that Peel Region would not be dissolved and that the mandate of the Transition Board would be recalibrated to a focus on making Peel Region more efficient and responsive to taxpayers specifically related to land use planning, roads, waste management, water and wastewater services, While alleviating uncertainty for some, approximately 25 per cent of the workforce remain unsure and anxious about the future of the services they deliver.

### **2. Excellence in Customer Experience**

Tangible results on how the community views Peel's service delivery is an opportunity to improve trust and confidence by ensuring service delivery meets the expectations of our community. In 2022, Peel had an 80 per cent customer satisfaction rating, as measured through 68,000 real-time surveys on phone, email, chat and counter channels. In 2023, the satisfaction rating improved to 82 per cent, as measured through over 68,409 surveys.

Despite all the uncertainty and changes brought on by Bill 112, as well as the challenges related to staffing and service levels, the overall satisfaction with Peel's customer service remained high in 2023. This is another example of the professionalism and pride that Peel employees take in their work.

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### **3. Prudent Fiscal Management and Financial Sustainability**

Peel has a long-standing history of prudent fiscal management and strong financial sustainability as validated by its twenty-eighth consecutive Triple "A" credit rating from both Moody's and Standard & Poor's. As part of its overall long term financial strategy, Peel keeps a close eye on key indicators and future financial pressures to ensure tax and utility rate payers' dollars are maximized and used in a responsible manner.

#### **Key financial highlights for 2023 include:**

- Over \$800 million in total external funding secured to support ongoing annual operations of services such as Housing, Early Years and Child Care, Public Health, Seniors Services, Paramedic Services and Income Support.
- \$23 million of additional external funding secured to advance climate change initiatives, support asylum claimants, enhance dental care for seniors and to support heritage, arts and culture.
- \$965 million of spending on approved capital projects including growth-related infrastructure, housing state of good repair, new housing development, roads, paramedics facilities and the state of good repair of long-term care homes for seniors. This represents an increase of 55 per cent in capital implementation over the average annual capital spending of \$620 million.
- \$5.7 million shortfall in Provincial funding identified through the 2024 Operating Budget for programs including Public Health, Seniors Services (Long Term Care) and Housing Support. Provincial funding is not keeping pace with inflation and population growth requiring increases in property taxes to maintain current service levels for a growing population.

### **4. Significant Accomplishments Achieved in 2023**

Peel Region employees help make this organization one of the best-run, efficient and effective municipalities in Canada, a model for service delivery and an anchor institution.

Coming out of the pandemic years, 2023 was full of promise of being a year of stability for employees and the community, normalizing services and looking ahead to continue building a Community for Life. Instead, Peel employees were faced with uncertainties around job security and equity in processes for employment opportunities, growing service level pressures and demands, and contending with staff retention challenges following the announcement of Peel's dissolution on May 18, 2023.

Despite this, Peel Region continued to provide the residents and businesses in Peel with the seamless delivery of high-quality, efficient services they expect and rely on every day, and more, as demonstrated through the People of Peel series on [www.peelregion.ca/people](http://www.peelregion.ca/people).

Peel employees demonstrated commitment to customer service, continuous improvement, delivery of enhanced service outcomes that provide value for taxpayer dollars and advancements towards Peel's Strategic Plan and vision of a Community for Life. The following list provides examples of the significant 2023 accomplishments while a more comprehensive list is available in Appendix I.

- Achieved a 100 per cent performance inspection rating for Peel Region's drinking water systems from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

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- Efficiently and effectively delivered water and wastewater services at a rate over 30 per cent lower than the GTA average for an average household.
- Introduced Ontario's first electric waste collection vehicle to advance efforts towards a low carbon fleet.
- Continued advancement of infrastructure planning strategy to respond to new provincial housing targets while addressing the dynamic needs of our local municipalities and ensuring sustainable growth and development.
- Developed Canada's first emotion-based dementia training program geared towards first responders (Peel Paramedics, Peel Regional Police, Caledon OPP).
- Led the design and implementation of a more sustainable response for in-land asylum claimants, which includes a Regional Reception Centre.
- Implemented the *Fit to Sit* program to address the offload delay times of patients by saving 3,119 hours in the emergency health system.
- First public health unit in Ontario to restart screening of immunization records of school-aged children including the administration of 88,168 routine school immunization doses of Meningococcal, Human Papillomavirus and Hepatitis B vaccines.
- Continued to meaningfully engage with partners and the community to advance health equity and community safety and wellbeing priorities.
- Procured approximately 50 Zero Emission Vehicles for Peel Region and Peel Regional Police and operated more than 100 charging stations, thus avoiding an estimated 418 tonnes of GHG emissions which is an equivalent to taking 128 gasoline powered cars off the road.
- Eight new construction projects are currently being designed or built to the Region's Net Zero Emissions Building Standard for New Construction.
- Supported 613 victims and survivors of human sex trafficking through targeted programs and services, provided transition and safe housing for over 25 victims and survivors aged 16 to 24, as well as trained 1,000 regional and municipal employees on anti-human sex trafficking prevention.
- Received approval to launch the new Non-Profit Housing Development Program to support non-profit housing providers build more deeply affordable community and supportive housing.

### 5. Peel's Notable Awards and Recognition

Peel has an outstanding reputation for excellence and innovation and received many awards that recognize our commitment to leadership, innovation, continuous improvement, and service excellence. The significant 2023 awards and recognition are highlighted below while all 24 awards and recognition received by Peel are listed in Appendix II.

- S&P Global Ratings, and Moody's Investors Services affirms Peel Region's AAA credit rating.
- Ontario Public Works Association Public Works Project of the Year Award in the \$10 to \$50 million project category for the G.E. Booth Water Resource Recovery Facility.
- Peel's Water and Wastewater division awarded Infrastructure Award of Excellence from the Greater Toronto Sewer and Water Construction Association.
- Green Cities Award from Credit Valley Conservation recognizing Peel Region for implementing leading edge green infrastructure in both new development and existing urban areas.
- Paramedic Chiefs of Canada Award of Excellence for a Quality Workplace awarded to Peel Paramedic Services for the External Violence Against Paramedics program.

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- Social Assistance Caseworker Award from the Employment Ontario Service System Manager in Peel (WCG Services) to three Peel Region's Income Support employees for exceptional client service and collaborative efforts toward successful client outcomes.
- Brampton Guardian Readers' Choice Diamond Award to Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives.

### **6. Culture of Continuous Improvement**

Peel has a culture of continuous improvement and welcomes opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services which provide value for tax dollars.

As shared in a Regional Council report titled "Improvements in Service Delivery 2023", 180 continuous improvement initiatives have been completed between 2018 to 2022, resulting in \$17.9 million of cost savings and a further \$20.2 million in cost avoidance. In 2023, a total of 31 continuous improvement initiatives were completed with \$0.9 million in cost savings and \$3.3 million in cost avoidance achieved. Cost savings from these initiatives also contributed to the achievement of Peel's annual cost containment targets which, for 2024, was estimated to be \$5.8 million.

Notable initiatives completed in 2023 include:

- Reduced energy use on peak demand days at Water and Wastewater facilities and received lower electricity fee rates, resulting in a cost avoidance of \$1.84 million above the \$6.6 million in cost avoidance reported in 2022.
- Reinforced blue box recycling requirements in curbside and multi-residential dwellings, resulting in \$0.2 million in cost savings in collection and processing costs.
- Digitized the water billing process to achieve efficiencies and improve client experience, resulting in cost savings of \$0.2 million.
- Optimized use of internal staff for transport of vaccines and dry supplies reducing dependency on vendors, resulting in cost avoidance of \$0.2 million.
- Automated core functions in Treasury Services to advance more efficient investment trading, resulting in cost avoidance of \$0.4 million.

In addition to the financial benefits, other benefits, such as improved client experience, employee engagement and environmental benefits have also been achieved through the noted 31 continuous improvement initiatives.

### **RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

As the new mandated work for the Transition Board intensifies, there continues to be anxiety amongst employees about the future state of Public Works, especially as it relates to questions around job security.

Continued focus on employees' well-being and retention will continue to be crucial during this period to ensure business continuity to Peel's 1.5 million residents and over 200,000 businesses.

Ongoing regular communication to employees will continue to be critically important.

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### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Peel employees will continue to deliver services as approved through the 2024 Budget and through previous approved Council reports and continue to review and report on operating and capital spending, external funding opportunities and any provincial funding shortfalls through the lens of this new mandate and other provincial legislation to support the creation of more housing.

To support the future growth and unprecedented needs of our community while delivering shared priorities such as building homes, shelter support for asylum claimants and addressing housing affordability will require Peel Region to advocate for new deals and assistance from other orders of government to achieve long term financial sustainability.

### **BILL 112 IMPLICATIONS**

As announced by the Minister on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Peel Region awaits the introduction of new legislation to amend or repeal Bill 112.

Staff will report back to Council the recommended direction of key initiatives that were paused as a result of Bill 112 once the recommendations of the Provincial Efficiency review are known such as; the implementation of a vacant home tax, a number of Public Works projects and internal efficiency and effectiveness projects.

### **CONCLUSION**

The services provided by Peel Region touch the lives of residents across all of Peel in essential ways and contribute to the ability of residents, businesses, and communities to thrive. Peel Region employees continue delivering services and programs that provide value for taxpayers, advance the Strategic Plan towards the vision of a Community for Life and address the priority needs of the community, such as housing affordability, enabling growth for a growing population and public safety and well-being.

Despite 2023 being a year of uncertainty, disruption, multiple social and economic challenges coupled with multiple legislative changes, Peel employees continued to deliver high quality and efficient services to the residents and businesses in Peel. Thank you to all Peel Region employees for their resiliency and unwavering commitment to serving the community.

In 2024, Peel Region along with Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga will be celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is a proud moment for Peel's collective history and connection to the community. As Peel Region celebrates this milestone, it is an opportunity to reflect on the experiences and accomplishments that have shaped the community, partners and employees.

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix I - List of 2023 Peel Accomplishments

Appendix II - List of 2023 Awards and Recognition

## Year in Review of Peel's 2023 Accomplishments and Awards

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Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Chief Administrative Officer

*Authored By: Joe Vieira, Project Manager, Corporate Project Management Office*