

2022 Region of Peel

Provincial Election Priorities



Introduction

The 2022 provincial election is an opportunity for Peel residents to have their say on the future of Ontario. With their vote, the electorate have the privilege of choosing the direction taken to address the continuing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and to rebuild the economy as efforts turn to recovery. With Peel's population and employment expected to grow to a total of approximately two million residents and 970,000 jobs by 2041, the Region of Peel will be a critical partner for the next provincial government in achieving its priorities.

Peel is facing escalating affordable housing challenges, higher demands for child care, increasing costs to support our aging population, as well as unmet needs for mental health and addiction services. The next provincial government will need to focus efforts to address these evolving needs in Peel.

To ensure that Peel's unique challenges are considered in this important election campaign, the Region has compiled the following key policy priorities and recommendations for local candidates, from all major provincial parties, to consider and advance to meet the needs of the Peel community:



Economic recovery

- o Continue support for pandemic response
- o Support essential services for Peel residents and businesses
- o Stimulate economy through infrastructure funding
- o Collaborate to build a strong, stable child care sector



Partner with municipalities

- o Fair share for municipalities
- o Support new hospital development
- o Focus on affordable housing solutions
- o Enhance the transportation network



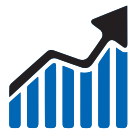
Community for life

- o Safeguard quality of life for seniors
- o Prioritize investment in mental health and addiction services

The Region looks forward to working with the next provincial government to advance these critical priorities that will help strengthen Peel and all municipalities across Ontario.



Summary of priorities



Economic recovery

Continue support for pandemic response

- The next provincial government should work in lockstep with the Region of Peel and the broader municipal sector to support Ontario's COVID-19 response and recovery.



Support essential services for Peel residents and businesses

- The next provincial government should provide adequate funding to offset the Region's substantial incremental costs and loss of revenue associated with the pandemic.
- The next provincial government should provide long-term sustainable operational funding for critical intervention programs in Peel.



Stimulate economy through infrastructure funding

- The next provincial government should work with their federal counterparts to expeditiously provide predictable and sustainable funding for municipal infrastructure projects.

Collaborate to build a strong, stable child care sector

- The next provincial government should provide fair, predictable and flexible funding for child care and engage with municipal partners to meet community needs.
- The next provincial government should implement an Early Childhood Workforce Strategy that addresses the need for fair wages, in addition to recognition and sustained recruitment strategies.



Partner with municipalities

Fair share for municipalities

- The next provincial government should increase funding for provincially mandated services to keep pace with inflation and population growth.

Support new hospital development

- The next provincial government should re-examine the "local share" requirement for new hospital infrastructure to better reflect the limited fiscal capacity of municipalities and the contributions to community health care services they already provide.



Focus on affordable housing solutions

- The next provincial government should take a collaborative and solutions-based approach with all levels of government to address the current housing crisis.
- The next provincial government should commit funding to the Region’s Housing Master Plan to ensure housing units, critical to Peel residents, are built.



Enhance the transportation network

- The next provincial government should invest in sustainable transportation projects in Peel.
- The next provincial government should promote road safety by expeditiously implementing the necessary tools to expand automated enforcement programs.



Community for life

Safeguard quality of life for seniors

- The next provincial government should provide funding to support emotion-based care for seniors and enable dementia friendly design in long-term care.
- The next provincial government should support the expansion of community support services and wrap-around care at the Seniors Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor.



Prioritize investment in mental health and addiction services

- The next provincial government should immediately introduce new funding formulas for mental health and addiction services that reflect population growth and meet service needs.
- The next provincial government should move forward on immediate opportunities to expand service offerings to address chronic and complex care mental health and addiction needs.





Economic recovery

Continue support for pandemic response

The next provincial government should work in lockstep with the Region of Peel and the broader municipal sector to support Ontario's COVID-19 response and recovery.

The Region has been a critical partner in the Province's COVID-19 response efforts since the beginning of the pandemic. Provincial funding received to date for COVID-19 infection control and vaccination has been instrumental in the Region's ability to protect one of Ontario's most vulnerable populations.

This includes the provincial support received for the Mass Vaccination Program in 2021, as it provided 100 per cent of the required funding for direct service provision. As the pandemic continues to evolve, ongoing provincial funding will be required to recover costs to support the Region's COVID-19 response, including continued vaccination efforts, in 2022 and beyond.

Support essential services for Peel residents and businesses

The next provincial government should provide adequate funding to offset the Region's substantial incremental costs and loss of revenue associated with the pandemic.

Over the course of the pandemic, Safe Restart Funding and other federal/provincial COVID-19 related funding initiatives enabled the Region to cover the net costs and pressures experienced by Regionally-controlled programs, which support Peel residents and businesses.

It is critical that the next provincial government recognize the significant fiscal challenges facing the Region and ensure that Peel residents and businesses can continue to have access to safe and high-quality essential services that will be needed as part of Ontario's recovery efforts. This includes the provision of a wide range of core services, such as safe and reliable transportation, water/wastewater infrastructure, as well as accessible paramedic and public health services.

The next provincial government should provide long-term sustainable operational funding for critical intervention programs in Peel.

Moving forward, the Region will also require recovery funding for the reinstatement of in-person services that were paused, such as early intervention programming, to ensure Peel resident's health and service needs are met throughout and beyond the pandemic.

Throughout the rapidly changing environment over the last two years, the Region and its community providers were able to provide critical intervention programs to help support and protect the homeless and other vulnerable populations with temporary and emergency provincial and federal funding. This includes programs like the Primary Pandemic Care Outreach, which provides primary care medical supports to homeless residents. However, this funding is temporary, and the Region requires long-term sustainable operational funding for these critical intervention programs.

Given the current macroeconomic environment, characterized by high inflation and elevated provincial unemployment rate, along with the expiration of some federal COVID-19 income supports, an increased demand for some services is expected in the short to medium term. As such, the next provincial government should continue to provide support to Peel businesses and individuals, through programs such as Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant, the Business Costs Rebate Program and Ontario COVID-19 Worker Income Protection Benefit.

Stimulate economy through infrastructure funding

The next provincial government should work with their federal counterparts to expeditiously provide predictable and sustainable funding for municipal infrastructure projects.

As attention begins to turn towards medium and long-term recovery efforts, there's a greater need than ever to ensure communities have safe, effective and reliable infrastructure. While the \$18.7 million in re-purposed Investing in Canadian Infrastructure Program (ICIP) funding that was allocated under the program's COVID-19 Infrastructure Resiliency Stream has been a positive step, more investment will be needed.

The next provincial government and their federal counterparts should work with the Region and other municipalities to expeditiously implement additional and sustainable funding to build the necessary infrastructure needed for Ontario's economic recovery. This includes funding to support green infrastructure projects.

As well, these programs should implement an allocation funding model to distribute funds, which allows municipalities to invest in priority projects consistent with their asset management plan. To ensure that tax dollars are providing full value, it is also essential that infrastructure investments are not delayed by unnecessary processes or administrative burdens.

Collaborate to build a strong, stable child care sector

The next provincial government should provide fair, predictable and flexible funding for child care and engage with municipal partners to meet community needs.

The newly announced Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System represents a major transformation for child care in Ontario. It is particularly welcome in Peel where for years families have paid some of the most expensive child care fees in Canada. However, the benefits of the new system can only be realized with fair, predictable, and flexible funding, as well as capital investments that fully consider the unique and growing needs of families in Peel.

As a Service System Manager for child care in Peel, the Region sets priorities, helps address community needs and provides system oversight. It will be essential that the next provincial government work closely with the Region to ensure the successful and equitable implementation of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System in Peel.

The next provincial government should implement an Early Childhood Workforce Strategy that addresses the need for fair wages, in addition to recognition and sustained recruitment strategies.

The implementation of a Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System that delivers safe, accessible and high quality care is predicated on having enough qualified staff. Recruiting and retaining Early Childhood Educators was a serious problem prior to COVID-19 and the pandemic further exacerbated these issues.

The next provincial government should continue to improve compensation for Early Childhood Educators, as proposed in the recently signed child care agreement with the federal government. Further, it should also commit to a comprehensive and ongoing approach to recognition, recruitment strategies, professional development and wage support funding to address the child care staffing challenge.



Partner with municipalities

Fair share for municipalities

The next provincial government should increase funding for provincially mandated services to keep pace with inflation and population growth.

Peel is a rapidly growing community and a major economic hub, but it is faced with a rapidly changing macroeconomic environment, which places additional pressure on municipal revenues and finances. Providing essential services and infrastructure needed to keep people safe and healthy is increasingly becoming challenging with the limited financial resources available to the Region.

Funding for many provincially mandated services continues to be outpaced by growth and service demand pressure. When provincial funding does not keep pace with growth and inflation, the resulting deficits are added to the Region's tax base, placing an additional burden on property taxpayers. Increasing service pressures and complex community issues that have been further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic will require focused financial and policy support from the next provincial government.

Organizations such as the Institute for Municipal Finance and Governance and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) have long maintained that responsibility for funding income redistribution programs, such as affordable housing and social services, should not be financed through the municipal property tax base, and is more appropriately funded by provincial sources.

To address this imbalance, the next provincial government should work with the municipal sector to immediately review provincial-municipal service responsibility in the medium and long-term.

Support new hospital development

The next provincial government should re-examine the "local share" requirement for new hospital infrastructure to better reflect the limited fiscal capacity of municipalities and the contributions to community health care services they already provide.

Hospitals contribute to healthy communities and are a critical part of community building; however, Peel has been faced with chronic underinvestment in our community, despite the ever-increasing demand for services stemming from population growth.

While provincial investment in hospitals in Peel is appreciated, the Region and its local municipalities are faced with a massive fiscal challenge as a result. As per the current Province's Hospital Capital Cost Share Policy, hospitals and the communities in which they reside are responsible for funding 10 per cent of the capital/construction costs of hospital projects, as well as costs associated with new furnishings and equipment and also continue to be responsible for replacement equipment (i.e., local share requirement). Regional Council has called for changes to the current provincial funding methodology to avoid placing even more burden on the backs of property taxpayers.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) also argues against the requirement for municipalities to fund provincial responsibilities in other areas, such as the Local Share for new hospital funding. AMO has stated in its report, *Partners for a Healthy Ontario* that: “As healthcare is a provincial responsibility under the Canadian Constitution, costs should not be borne by the property tax base.” Redirection of municipal revenues or reserves towards services that are a provincial responsibility has a negative impact on the Region’s ability to fund service areas that are a municipal responsibility, particularly in a high population growth area, such as Peel.

Focus on affordable housing solutions

The next provincial government should take a collaborative and solutions-based approach with all levels of government to address the current housing crisis.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years has resulted in significant fiscal challenges for municipalities. The Region of Peel’s critical frontline services and programs, including affordable housing and homelessness prevention, have been similarly impacted. However, a key component of the Region’s vision of a *Community for Life* ensures everyone has access to safe, secure housing.

Investments in housing lead to better outcomes for residents, while alleviating provincial financial pressures. Upstream solutions in affordable housing can drive cost savings in government spending, contribute to economic growth and improve the lives of equity-seeking communities in Peel and throughout Ontario. However, the scale of this challenge goes far beyond what the Region alone can pay in order to meet Peel’s housing needs.

Building new units to address this crisis is key, but the Region cannot do it alone. Rather, the next provincial government is encouraged to provide sustainable affordable housing funding in the form of non-repayable grants. This approach will support service managers, like the Region, in building new affordable housing that will support the creation of healthy and prosperous communities, while helping to end the cycle of homelessness.

The next provincial government should commit funding to the Region’s Housing Master Plan to ensure housing units, critical to Peel residents, are built.

Demand for affordable housing for low-income and middle-income households far exceeds supply and subsidy service levels. However, the Region’s Housing Master Plan, when fully implemented, will add more than 5,650 new affordable rental units in Peel. Regional Council has already approved an in-principle allocation of \$1 billion to create an initial 2,240 housing units by 2028. The plan can only be completed if the Region, and the three local municipalities, receive sufficient federal and provincial funding to meet the community’s affordable housing needs.

To date, \$680.4 million of the \$1 billion capital funding envelope has been secured, which includes a 1/3 commitment of Regional funds. However, there remains a funding gap of \$319.6 million. There is an urgent need to fill this gap to complete these units by 2028 to meet timelines related to federal funding committed to the Region. Not funding the gap poses a risk of losing these federal funds, but more importantly, a risk of losing of over approximately 860 new affordable rental units for the Peel community.

Enhance the transportation network

The next provincial government should invest in sustainable transportation projects in Peel.

Peel is home to businesses of all sizes, boasts a robust multi-modal goods movement sector and its diverse communities are among the fastest growing in Ontario. As a destination of choice, Peel is expected to experience sustained economic and population growth over the short and medium-term.

However, in order to support a strong post-pandemic recovery, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and increased road safety, ongoing investments from the next provincial government will be needed.

Building and expanding an integrated and sustainable transportation network will require an all-levels-of-government approach, and this will require collaboration with the next provincial government in support of key transit projects across Peel, including:

- GO Rail service to Bolton
- Two-way, all-day, 15-minute GO Regional Express Rail for Milton
- Continued implementation of two-way, all-day, 15-minute GO Rail Service on the Kitchener Line
- Eglinton Crosstown West LRT Extension to Toronto Pearson Airport

Instead of simply widening roadways and building new highways to increase capacity, Peel has adopted a balanced approach that focuses on more sustainable modes of travel. As such, the Region opposes the construction of the proposed GTA West/Highway 413 and encourages the next provincial government to study alternatives to the currently planned highway project. Peel's vision calls for a 50 per cent sustainable mode share, inclusive of walking, cycling, carpooling and transit and focused provincial investment will be needed to achieve this mode share target.

Promote road safety

The next provincial government should promote road safety by expeditiously implementing the necessary tools to expand automated enforcement programs.

The Region has adopted a 'vision zero' goal to improve road safety in Peel. As such, the Region will look to the next provincial government to advance the necessary tools, such as automated enforcement programs, to help achieve this important objective to ensure a healthy, safe and connected community.

To this end, there has been significant progress made to introduce an Administrative Monetary Penalty (AMP) regulatory framework. This would allow the Region, and other municipalities, to grow automated enforcement programs, such as Red Light Cameras, School Bus Cameras and Speed Enforcement, that are currently limited in scope and are constrained due to capacity limitations of Provincial Offences Courts. The next provincial government should continue to implement the necessary regulatory changes to allow for these programs to be operated under an AMP framework, which will allow Peel and its municipalities to expand existing programs and develop new tools to promote road safety.



Community for life

Safeguard quality of life for seniors

The next provincial government should provide funding to support emotion-based care for seniors and enable dementia friendly design in long-term care.

With seniors being the fastest growing age group in Peel and across Ontario, improving system capacity related to dementia and other complex care needs is a key priority. Enhanced, integrated services and emotion-based supports are needed to help safeguard the health and well-being of seniors.

Emotion-based care for seniors shifts care from being task-oriented to focusing on the person at the centre of care, including their safety, well-being and clinical needs. The Region's Long Term Care (LTC) homes that have adopted emotion-based, person-centred models of care demonstrate that residents become less agitated and react more positively to their social interactions with staff and the dementia friendly home environment, which reduces the need for resource-intensive specialized units.

To build on the work already being done in Peel's LTC homes and to expand this model more broadly, the next provincial government should dedicate additional funding to implement new regulatory requirements, prioritize emotion-based care and enable dementia friendly design in more LTC homes in Peel and across the province.

The next provincial government should support the expansion of community support services and wrap-around care at the Seniors Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor.

The Seniors Health and Wellness Village (SHWW) at Peel Manor is a visionary project aimed at achieving a cost-effective, sustainable community-based LTC program. This facility will not only include exceptional dementia care and design, but will also support integration between acute, primary and community care, and provide high quality emotion-based care to meet the diverse needs of Peel's seniors.

Sustainable operational funding from the next provincial government will be required to support the expansion of community support services and wrap-around care at the Seniors Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor.

Prioritize investment in mental health and addiction services

The next provincial government should immediately introduce new funding formulas for mental health and addiction services that reflect population growth and meet service needs.

When it comes to mental health and addiction services, Peel continues to be challenged by unmet community need with only one in three residents expected to receive appropriate treatment or services when they need it. This leaves an estimated 184,000 Peel residents without the necessary interventions they need. In addition, funding data from 2019-20 indicates that Peel's population (ages 15 - 64) received nearly 40 per cent less per capita funding for mental health services and nearly 50 per cent less per capita funding for addiction services compared to the rest of Ontario.

Similarly, Peel's child and youth population (ages 0 - 17) received only 6 per cent of available provincial funding for mental health transfer payments for this cohort, despite making up nearly 12 per cent of Ontario's child and youth population. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this need, and additional support is required to help increase availability and improve access to mental health and addiction services in Peel.

The next provincial government should immediately implement new funding formulas for mental health and addiction services that reflect population growth and service needs in the community. Improved formulas should consider current demands on services to help reduce wait times and waitlists, improve care options, strengthen service integration and reduce the burden on emergency departments in Peel.

The next provincial government should move forward on immediate opportunities to expand service offerings to address chronic and complex care mental health and addiction needs.

Sustainable and transparent operating funding is needed to meet the increasing demand for mental health and addiction services. This includes funding for initiatives to help address chronic and complex care mental health and addiction needs of Peel residents. Moving forward, the next provincial government should work with the Region on immediate opportunities for investment in Peel, which include:

- Rapid access addiction medicine clinics to provide clinical supports and additional mobile crisis rapid response teams to match population needs
- 24/7 crisis walk-in services
- Stepped care programs to support patients with lower intensity needs to access interventions remotely, to reduce wait times for psychiatric supports and ensure hospital capacity is available to accommodate patients with more complex or higher intensity services
- Permanent, sustainable funding for new supportive housing, including integrated wrap-around supports, for Peel's growing wait list of more than 14,000 individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness
- Harm reduction approaches to respond to the current drug toxicity crisis that has led to 157 opioid-related deaths in Peel in 2020, and upstream interventions to support mental health and substance use prevention

