

# Income Support

2023–2026 Business Plan  
and 2023 Budget

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# Executive Summary

Mission: To provide income and stability supports to Peel residents to enable self-sufficiency and improved quality of life.

## Services we provide:

- Helping Peel residents navigate and access income and community supports and services
- Application and assessment services for Ontario Works, Child Care Fee Subsidy and Housing Services programs
- Ongoing case management and stability support services for social assistance clients to help them to move toward employment
- Ontario Works program oversight, and accountability

## Interesting facts about this service:

- Approximately 23,000 Peel residents (1.6% of our population) receive Ontario Works assistance
- Throughout the pandemic, the Ontario Works caseload in Peel decreased by approximately 30% as many clients received federal pandemic benefits which were higher than Ontario Works benefits
- 100% of Ontario Works benefit costs are paid by the province and rates have not increased since 2018
- In 2022, the maximum monthly Ontario Works benefit for basic needs and shelter for a single person is \$733, less than a third of Peel’s Living Wage (the wage a worker needs to cover their basic needs and community participation)
- Ontario Works benefits paid to Peel clients is projected to increase to more than \$156M in 2023
- The province has made changes to social assistance including moving employment services to Employment Ontario and shifting Peel’s focus to providing stability support services to help clients become employment-ready

## Highlights of the Business Plan:

- Steady growth of the 2022 Ontario Works caseloads due to the ending of federal pandemic benefits and the addition of Ontario Disability Support Program non-disabled adult clients
- Increasingly complex client barriers to employment such as mental health challenges and addictions
- Realigning the service delivery model and staff roles to improve efficiency and service experience
- Creating more equitable opportunities for clients through inclusive, modernized services and better access to digital solutions
- Ensuring Peel’s needs are well represented as the province designs a new Social Assistance Renewal Plan (also known as Social Assistance Transformation) by participating in client, employee, and community partner engagement
- Greater program accountability by doing audits to make sure program rules and requirements are being followed
- Ensuring staff are trained and supported to provide services that achieve successful client outcomes

Net Investment (\$000s)	2023	2024	2025	2026
Operating	27,275	29,002	30,515	32,071
Capital	-	-	-	-
Full Time Equivalents	372.8	372.8	372.8	372.8

# Core Service

## Vision, Mission, Goals of Service and Service Delivery Model

### Vision

To help lift Peel residents out of poverty by supporting them to take steps towards employment, greater independence, and an improved quality of life.

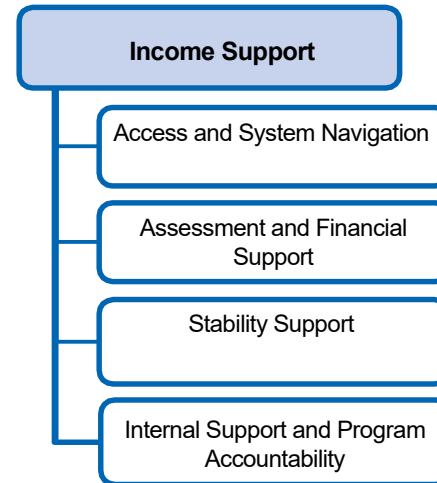
### Mission

To provide income and stability supports to Peel residents to enable self-sufficiency and improved quality of life.

### Goals of Service

1. Modernize our services to meet evolving community needs and system changes
2. Provide responsive, efficient, and inclusive services to Peel residents
3. Strengthen system planning through increased partnerships and influencing system change
4. Promote and maintain an engaged and enabled workforce

### Service Delivery Model



# Service Levels and Trends

## Service Levels

Income Support Services provide centralized assessment services for Human Services programs and is the delivery agent for the provincial Ontario Works (OW) program in Peel. The 2021 service levels and trends are summarized below.

**Access and System Navigation:** We are the first point of contact to provide system navigation to Peel residents. The in-person reception was closed to the public due to the pandemic but has since reopened with an average of 600 client interactions monthly. Interactions will continue to increase as in-person client appointments resume.

**Assessment and Financial Support:** We triage and assess applications for Child Care Fee Subsidy, Housing Services, and Income Support programs such as emergency assistance, funeral support, Ontario Works, and discretionary benefits for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). In 2021, over 23,000 applications were reviewed for Human Services and Income Support programs.

**Stability Support:** We provide intensive case management support to social assistance clients and help them navigate and access programs and services in the community. This allows residents to take steps towards employment, greater independence, and an improved quality of life.

In 2021, an average of 11,500 Peel households accessed stability support services monthly.

The OW program has undergone significant, provincially-directed transformation over the last two years, including social assistance employment supports moving from the Region to Employment Ontario and our focus shifting to stability support services. In 2021, following this change, we referred 6,500 social assistance clients referred to Employment Ontario for job search assistance.

**Internal Support and Accountability:** Provides internal support and enables program accountability. Quarterly audits are conducted to ensure program compliance and to support continuous improvement. In 2021, over 1,500 file audits were completed; 15% of the average OW caseload is projected to be reviewed annually.

## Trends

The population in Peel is diverse and continues to evolve, requiring varied supports and services to meet unique needs. The following trends demonstrating impacts to Peel residents requiring income and stability support services because of political, economic, demographic, and social factors, have been observed.

### Sector:

The provincial government is transforming the social assistance system in Ontario. The goal is to realign responsibilities and create a more responsive system that helps people get back on their feet. Regional caseworkers provide assistance in helping clients get the supports they need, including mental health and addiction counselling, financial literacy, housing, and childcare. However, many services are not readily available, and waitlists can be long. The future success of this transformation will rely on sufficient funding for staff and for the community services clients need.

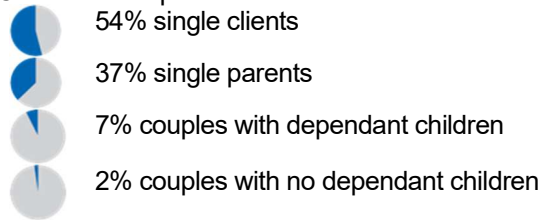
### Service Delivery:

In 2021, our services continued to be delivered digitally to accommodate pandemic restrictions and to increase service options for clients. Digital services will continue to be aligned with provincial program direction and identified community need.

### Client and Caseload:

The OW caseload composition has remained consistent with single clients making up the majority of clients served. Youth clients make up 9% of clients across all case types. On average 1.03% of the caseload (110 clients) exit OW each month and move to employment.

Caseload composition includes:



During the pandemic, the OW caseload decreased as clients were eligible to receive federal benefits. As clients are returning to us they continue to have complex needs and barriers to gaining employment.

Top five client barriers include:

1. Caregiving responsibilities
2. Mental health
3. Financial
4. Education
5. English as a second language

Given the long-lasting impact that the pandemic has had, mental health is expected to be an ongoing and significant barrier.

In 2022, caseloads are increasing due to the ending of federal benefits and other factors. This trend is anticipated to continue given the uncertain and unpredictable economic environment and it is expected that by 2024 caseloads will surpass pre-pandemic levels. As a result, a wide range of services and support will be required to meet residents' growing and increasingly complex needs. As the need for service grows, additional staff will be required to accommodate increased service demands.

Another relevant trend impacting Income Support Services is the significant rise in the cost of living over the past two years. However, the OW benefit rates have not changed since 2018. This trend, combined with growing and increasingly complex caseloads may mean that additional funding is required in future years.



*Figure 1 Providing ongoing case management and stability support to social assistance recipients*

## Performance Measures and Results

The Region of Peel is committed to delivering services economically and efficiently. The Region's performance measures are used to help assess how well we are doing at achieving our goals and where we need to improve operations. The results also inform decision-making and strengthen accountability.

**Program Measures:** As a delivery agent for the OW program we have provincially mandated performance measures. The measurements determine the effectiveness of the program in providing stability support and moving clients towards employment readiness and self-sufficiency.

Income Support service measures include an 80% target for the completion of timely reviews to ensure ongoing program eligibility and client participation. In 2021, we maintained a 92% monthly average for eligibility reviews completed within the required 24-month period and an average 70% of cases remained on track with their participation reviews.

New program measurements and local targets were finalized by the province in October 2021 and preliminary results will be reported at the end of the 2022 calendar year.

New measurements will include data on:

- Clients who have a plan to help them become employment ready and self sufficient
- Clients who have successfully achieved the goals in their plan
- Clients who have been referred to employment services

Quarterly audits are also completed with a compliance target of 80%. Audits are conducted to:

- Assess program effectiveness
- Monitor operational performance
- Evaluate program compliance with legislation and statutory requirements

**Client Measures:** The development of an ongoing client engagement plan supports a collaborative, 'Working with You' culture for program design and delivery.

In 2021, we engaged with social assistance recipients to gather feedback regarding their digital service experience; a total of 3,144 responses were received.



80% of respondents were satisfied with digital services

84% of respondents stated they would continue to use digital services in the future

Plans are underway to ensure continued client engagement as it guides which services most effectively support clients.

**Employee Measures:** The development of an employee engagement, communication and training plan promotes an engaged and enabled workforce and strengthens divisional culture through inclusivity and a shared vision.

Providing staff with appropriate training, tools, and resources to effectively support clients and manage their role responsibilities.

# Awards and Achievements

## Awards

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) awarded Peel the 2022 Local Municipal Champion Award to our Youth Caseworker teams who provide support to youth 14-29 and to families providing temporary care to children in Peel. This award recognizes the great work done in advancing excellence in human services integration and service system management by teams from municipalities across the province.

The dedication and model of care demonstrated by Peel's Youth Caseworker Teams has contributed to integration through enhanced case management supports, and working in partnership with community agencies, housing providers, health services, school boards, trusteeship programs, and others to provide wrap around care and support to youth in need.

## Achievements

Transformation: Peel was an early adopter of the Province's Social Assistance Renewal Plan which included acting as a prototype and pilot site for:

The shift of social assistance employment services with Employment Ontario

Centralizing and automating service delivery by implementing a risk-based intake and eligibility review system

The employment project for youth with disabilities.

In 2021, the Income Support OW program successfully transitioned to its new service delivery model and led over ten engagement opportunities with clients, community agencies and staff to inform the province's design of the new social assistance system.

We also worked collaboratively with provincial, community and internal partners to support clients and transformation initiatives. Success was demonstrated in the transition of over 11,000 clients to the new service model within a six-month period while onboarding new clients and maintaining service level requirements.

Influencing System Change: Income Support Services took an active role influencing system planning and policy direction to sustain funding and programming through representation at OMSSA (Ontario Municipal Social Services Association), Provincial-Municipal Human Services Collaborative, Peel Poverty Reduction System Table, and the Employment Income Network.

Oversight and Accountability: We implemented the audit strategy to promote responsive program stewardship.

In 2021, we also successfully launched an integrated performance dashboard to strengthen planning and decision-making with evidence-based performance outcomes. The dashboard identifies service workload impacts, outcomes, and budget expenditures.

Enabling Technology and Digital Solutions: To improve digital access, we provided 376 computers to OW clients, helping them stay connected, building capacity for self-sufficiency and improving their employment and educational prospects.



# The 2023 -2026 Business Plan Outlook

## Planning for the Future

### Service Delivery

Income Support Services aligns with the “Living” focus area of the Strategic Plan by ensuring that the lives of Peel residents are improved in their time of need, with access to appropriate supports and services at every stage of life.

The province’s vision for social assistance will be completed in phases. We will continue to support the future design and implementation of the provincial Social Assistance Renewal Plan, collaborating for improved, sustainable, and inclusive social assistance programs for Peel residents.

### Workforce Enablement

Income Support Services will implement strategies aligned with strategic and operational priorities, to manage change, support staff health, succession planning, growth, and development. Staff will receive the appropriate tools, training, and resources to enable them to provide stability support services through a diverse, equitable, and inclusive lens.

### Expanding Digital Delivery Solutions

The availability of modern, digital solutions allows more opportunities to change the way we deliver service. We will implement new digital solutions to:

- Increase access to support and services
- Reinforce service modernization
- Find operational efficiencies

We will also dedicate benefits and increase community partnerships to support client access to digital literacy programs, affordable monthly internet plans, and hardware.

### Community Engagement:

Helping community agencies to understand the barriers that clients face through partnerships and participating with community tables.

# Finding Efficiencies

## Continuous Improvement

The objective of the Region's Continuous Improvement Program is to optimize service delivery and maximize value for tax dollars spent. The completion of continuous improvement initiatives positively impacts client experience, employee engagement, cost savings and cost avoidance.

Income Support Services' Continuous Improvement initiatives include:

- Realigning the service delivery model and staff roles to improve service experience
- Formalizing a service performance framework
- Implementing modern, cost-effective, digital solutions to optimize operational efficiencies, and strengthen program planning, decision making and service improvements
- Enforcing responsible program stewardship through the administration of ongoing compliance audits (15% of the annual OW caseload) and the completion of follow-up items to satisfy compliance requirements
- Engaging with key stakeholders to collaboratively inform and design inclusive client services.

# Proposed Operating Budget

This part of the Business Plan sets out the financial resources required to deliver the proposed 2023-2026 Business Plan. Information is provided by major expenditures and revenue. The costs to maintain existing service levels and operationalize prior decisions are identified in the base budget changes separately from proposed changes. The net cost for the service in 2022 was \$26.4 million and the proposed budget for 2023 is \$27.3 million

## Net Expenditures: \$27.3 million (Total Expenditures: \$213.0 million)

Description	Proposed 2023 Budget	Approved 2022 Budget	\$ Change Over 2022	% Change Over 2022
Operating Costs	2,370	2,583	(213)	(8.3) %
Labour Costs	39,891	38,925	966	2.5 %
Reserve Contributions				-
Debt Charges				-
Grant Payments	158,909	155,319	3,590	2.3 %
Facility, IT, HR and other support costs	21,989	22,203	(214)	(1.0) %
Recoveries	(10,206)	(10,555)	348	(3.3) %
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>212,953</b>	<b>208,475</b>	<b>4,478</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
Grants and Subsidies	(185,678)	(182,087)	(3,590)	2.0%
Supplementary Taxes				-
Fees and Service Charges				-
Transfer from Development Charges				-
Contributions from Reserves				-
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>(185,678)</b>	<b>(182,087)</b>	<b>(3,591)</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>\$27,275</b>	<b>26,388</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>3.4%</b>

Note: May not add up due to rounding.

## 2023 Operating Budget Pressures

\$'000	Total Expenditures	Total Revenue	Net Cost 2023 vs 2022	
<b>2022 Revised Cost of Service</b>	<b>208,475</b>	<b>182,087</b>	<b>26,388</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Cost of Living/Inflation<sup>1</sup></b> Labour costs and Goods and services	1,072	-	1,072	
<b>Cost Mitigation<sup>2</sup></b> Cost Containment	(185)	-	(185)	
<b>Base Budget Changes Subtotal</b>	<b>887</b>		<b>887</b>	
<b>Service Level Demand<sup>3</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ontario Works Benefit increase due to change in monthly caseload (increase from 14,525 to 14,837)</li> </ul>	3,591	3,591	-	
<b>Service Level Changes Subtotal</b>	<b>3,591</b>	<b>3,591</b>	<b>-</b>	
<b>Total 2023 Budget Change</b>	<b>4,478</b>	<b>3,591</b>	<b>887</b>	
<b>2023 Proposed Budget</b>	<b>\$212,953</b>	<b>185,678</b>	<b>27,275</b>	<b>3.4%</b>

Note: May not add up due to rounding

### Operating budget pressure notes:

#### Cost of Living/Inflation<sup>1</sup>

- Cost of Living increase for staffing costs is \$866K, and the impact for 5 Integrated Business Support Division (IBSD) FTE (Full Time Equivalent) transfer is \$206K

#### Cost Mitigation<sup>2</sup>

- Miscellaneous savings of \$185K resulting from the ongoing review of budgets; these reductions will not impact service levels

#### Service Level Demand<sup>3</sup>

- 2023 average monthly budgeted caseload increased from 2022 budget of 14,525 to 14,837. Benefit costs are fully funded by the province so no net impact on the budget due to the caseload change

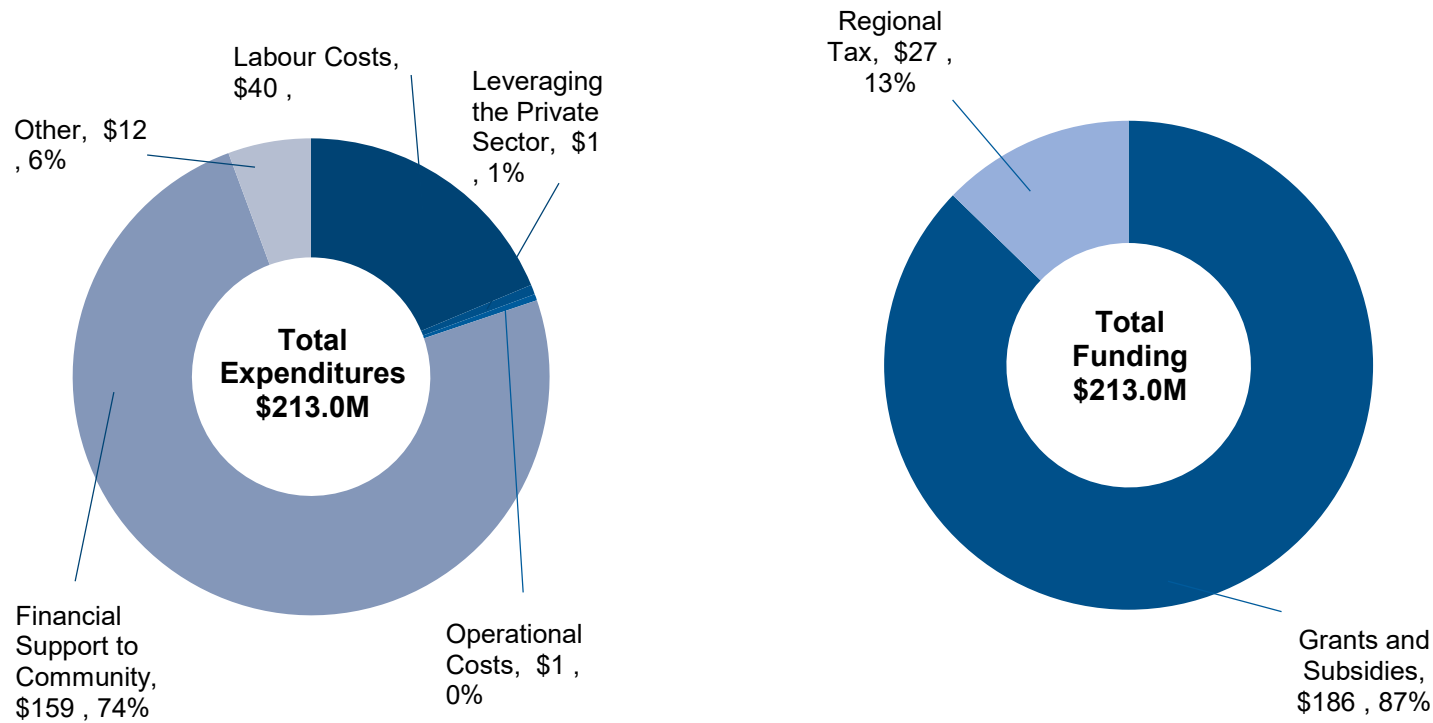
- Cost per caseload rates reflects no change. Province has not increased the rates since 2018
- 2023 budget assumes no funding changes

## Staffing Resources to Achieve Level of Service

2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
372.8	372.8	372.8	372.8	372.8

Note: Staffing resources are regular positions (Full Time Equivalent, FTE)

## 2023 Total Expenditures & Funding Source (In \$M)



## 2023 Budget Risks

- 2023 funding will remain at the 2022 levels. The province is currently reviewing the existing funding formula.
- Uncertainty in caseload numbers due to economic uncertainty

## 2024 - 2026 Operating Forecast

	Budget			Forecast					
	2022	2023		2024		2025		2026	
	\$'000	\$'000	%	\$'000	%	\$'000	%	\$'000	%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	208,475	212,953	2.1%	241,564	13.4%	258,489	7.0%	269,055	4.1%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	(182,087)	(185,678)	2.0%	(212,562)	14.5%	(227,974)	7.3%	(236,983)	4.0%
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	26,388	27,275	3.4%	29,002	6.3%	30,515	5.2%	32,071	5.1%

Note: May not add up due to rounding

- In 2024
  - Caseload is increased to 17,424, no net impact
  - The net increase is driven by cost of living, inflation rate 3.3%
- In 2025
  - Caseload is increased to 18,840, no net impact
  - The net increase is driven by cost of living, inflation rate 2.8%
- In 2026
  - Caseload is increased to 19,774, no net impact
  - The net increase is driven by cost of living, inflation rate 2.8%
- Cost per case remains unchanged in the forecast
- Ontario Works administration funding and stabilization supports are held at the 2022 actual funding amount for the next four years
- Staffing levels were kept flat for next four years, but if the caseload increases as projected, additional staff may be required to maintain service quality