



**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL:
PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP**

PAAWG 2023-05 Meeting Minutes

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) met on November 16, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Peel Conference Centre located at 10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite B, Brampton, Ontario. The meeting was also available through virtual participation via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present:

Raphael Adegboye, Representative of the Agricultural Community
Karen Hutchinson, Vice-Chair, Caledon Countryside Alliance
Dwight Matson, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Britt McKee, EcoSource (7:30pm)
Manjari Mehta, Citizen-at-Large (7:40pm)
Gary Mountain, Chair, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Ed Russell, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Mark Vanderwees, Citizen-at-Large
Brian Wannamaker, Citizen-at-Large

Members Absent:

Tom Dolson, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Annette Groves, Mayor, Town of Caledon
Patrick Brown, Mayor, City of Brampton
Pat Fortini, Regional Councillor, Region of Peel

Staff:

Learie Miller, Manager, Region of Peel
Melanie Williams, Principal Planner, Region of Peel
Aylise Cooke, Junior Planner, Region of Peel
Duncan Ivany, Co-ordinator, Agricultural Outreach, Credit Valley Conservation
Holly Shipclark, Senior Co-ordinator, Agricultural Outreach, Credit Valley Conservation
Fallon Hayes, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Patrick Esson, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Guests:

Ben Roberts, Economic Development Officer, Town of Caledon
Rebecca Pearce Cameron, ALUS

1) Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) was called to order at 7:05 pm by Gary Mountain, Chair, who called attendance.

2) Declarations of Conflict of Interest

None identified.

3) Review and Approval of November 16, 2023 Agenda

One amendment was requested to include Grown in Peel under the 'For More Information' section.

Moved by Raphael Adegboye

That the Agenda for the November 16, 2023, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be approved as amended.

Carried PAAWG 2023-37

4) Review and Approval of Minutes of August 17, 2023 Meeting

Moved by Karen Hutchinson

That the Minutes of Meeting 2023-04 of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, held on August 17, 2023, be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2023-38

5) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Announcement on [Winding Back Changes to Official Plans](#)

Melanie Williams, Region of Peel

On November 4th, 2022, the province approved the new Region of Peel Official Plan with 44 provincial modifications to the Official Plan's text, schedules and figures. On October 23rd, 2023, the province announced revisiting these Provincial modifications and are considering reverting some of their modifications.

In Peel, two of these modifications were directly related to agricultural and rural lands within the Town of Caledon, as shown on the Regional Official Plan Schedule D-1 Rural System. The first modification redesignated two areas totaling approximately 390 hectares (ha) from the Prime Agricultural Area designation to Rural Lands. The second modification redesignated 247ha of Prime Agricultural Area to within the Region's 2051 New Urban Area.

Region staff are meeting with each of the local municipalities to review the 44 Provincial modifications made to the Regional Official Plan and will provide a

recommendation report to Regional Council identifying which Provincial modifications should be maintained or request to be reverted.

Questions/Discussion:

PAAWG member inquired about ownership of the lands brought into the Region's 2051 New Urban Area, wanting to know if ownership had changed recently in response to Provincial modification. Conservation Authority staff inquired about how the Province undertook its analysis to redesignate the lands as rural instead of prime agricultural.

Learie Miller, confirmed that the Province did not provided the Region with further information on how the decisions on the 44 modifications were made. Region staff are also not able to comment on property ownership.

6) Peel Rural Water Quality Program and ALUS Peel Pilot

Holly Shipclark and Duncan Ivany, Credit Valley Conservation

a) Financial Report

As an end of year financial report, the total income, expenditure, and balance of the PRWQP and ALUS Peel Pilot was discussed. The 2022 PRWQP program carryover, along with the contributions from the TRCA, ALUS Canada and the PRWQP provided a 2023 budget for project establishment of \$119,469.

To date, the total budget approved for project establishment grants is \$104,857. The carry-over from the 2023 balance is \$14,612.

The 2023 ALUS Canada contribution for annual payments for projects approved in 2023 was \$55,829.50.

Questions/Discussion:

PAAWG members inquired if there were any applicants who had been approved for ALUS Peel Pilot annual payments who were still waiting for allocation from ALUS Canada. Program staff explained that all applicants who had been approved for annual payments had been allocated funding. Annual payments will be provided at year-end after program staff complete their annual site monitoring visits.

b) Project Applications

I. 11-CVC-23 Cover Crops (PRWQP)

The application 11-CVC-23 proposes to support the establishment of a cover crop on a 100-acre farm parcel situated in a Wellhead Protection Area D. This project helps the establishment and overwintering of cover crops, contributing to the reduction of erosion, enhancement of area conditions, and reduced risks

related to wind erosion. It also increases natural cover which helps to protect the highly vulnerable aquifer proximal to the farm property.

The applicant established the cover crop in Spring 2022. The cover crop was maintained throughout 2023 to maintain cover on the fields and terminated in August 2023. Program staff received an application for the project in September 2023.

The PRWQP guidelines state that an applicant will:

- Contact program staff prior to project implementation to enable staff to verify site conditions;
- Destroy the cover crop by June 1st; and,
- Having the cover crop verified by program staff prior to destroying to ensure there was at least 50% ground cover across all of the enrolled lands.

Questions/Discussion:

PAAWG members and program staff discussed the benefits of retaining different types of cover crops, such as red clover, past the PRWQP guideline termination date, provided there was no economic gain. More information was needed on the nitrogen scavenging process provided by the cover crop.

PAAWG members discussed the timeline in which the project was initiated and completed without the applicant engaging program staff, leading to the project not aligning with the PRWQP guidelines for the project category. While the project showed merit, there was concern that approval of the project could set a precedent for the program. PAAWG encouraged program staff to continue to work with the applicant and apply again.

That application 11-CVC-23 be denied funding from the Peel Rural Water Quality Program as the project is not eligible in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Moved by Raphael Adegboye

Carried PAAWG 2023-39

7) Peel Rural Water Quality Program Guideline Review Workshop

Holly Shipclark, Credit Valley Conservation

In 2023, program staff initiated a five-year strategic review to assess the Peel Rural Water Program Guidelines as required by PAAWG's Terms of Reference. Program staff presented their methodology, findings and recommended guideline changes for discussion by PAAWG. Program staff will take the direction and feedback from PAAWG to develop a draft PRWQP guideline incorporating the changes. The draft guidelines will be circulated to PAAWG for their endorsement at the February 2024 PAAWG meeting.

It is important to note that the current Regional Council adopted PRWQP Guidelines will continue to be used until December 31, 2024. The draft PRWQP guidelines will be used to capture guidance from PAAWG on how the program could continue to support Peel's agricultural community and to inform future agri-stewardship program planning.

Some guideline changes focused on adjustments to project grant caps to account for an overall increase in project material costs (e.g., cement). This was identified for:

- Barnyard Runoff Control and Clean Water Diversion
- Education and Training
- Fuel and Chemical Storage
- Livestock Restriction Fencing
- Manure Storage & Handling Systems and Composting Facilities
- Silage Storage Enhancement and Relocation

PAAWG was supportive of these changes.

Housekeeping changes were also presented to:

- clarify interpretation on how the farm unit and corresponding properties are identified for funding eligibility;
- to update project category names; and,
- to align with current Provincial tax eligibility for defining a farm operation.

PAAWG was supportive of these changes.

80/20 Cost-Share Funding: Since the programs inception in 2004, grants have been provided on an 80/20 cost-share basis, with the program, combined with other funding partners, providing no more than 80% of the total project cost, with some exceptions. Today, many agri-environmental stewardship programs now allow to applicants to combine funding up to 100% of the project costs. Program staff recommended that the program's project caps remain the same however, that the guidelines be revised to enable applicants to receive 100% funding from program partners. PAAWG was supportive of these changes.

Cover Crops: Program staff proposed two revisions to this category to increase long-term participation in the project category. This includes extending the grant to additional acreage for a longer-term evaluation of project benefits. For example:

- Current Cost Share Rate and Cap: \$100/Acre up to 50 acres
- Proposed Cost Share Rate and Cap: \$100/Acre for the first 50 Acres, \$40/Acre for acres 50-300 per farm business *maximum cover crop grant per year is for 50 acres

Guidelines revision were also proposed to the cover crop category to allow for cover crop grazing so to recognize the benefits of integrating livestock into a soil management system. Currently cover crops that are grazed or harvested are ineligible for funding. It is proposed that livestock grazing of a cover crop be permitted when a minimum 50% cover is maintained at 50% of the grant amount.

PAAWG members requested further evaluation of alternative eligible cover crops that will support erosion control on regenerative fields. Crops that could be harvested for commercial gain or for the creation of permanent pasture would be ineligible. Program staff will provide further information on the Cover Crop category at the next PAAWG meeting.

Natural Area Enhancement and Creation: The creation of grasslands under the Natural Area Enhancement and Creation category is an emerging project option as it is supported through addition funding from ALUS Canada. As these projects can have a higher per acre investment, project category rates and caps are being proposed:

- Current Cost Share Rate and Cap: 100% up to \$20,000
- Proposed Cost Share Rate and Cap: Maintain the current cap, and add wording in the guidelines to indicate that funding will not exceed \$3,500/acre for grassland projects.
- Eligible Projects: Grasslands, meadow and prairie enhancement/creation projection up to a maximum of \$3,500 per acre of restoration.

PAAWG was supportive of these changes.

Tree Planting: The project eligibility for this category identifies that only native species are eligible for funding. Currently, some Conservation Authority and other tree planting programs will introduce non-native, non-invasive species within the planting areas to support native tree species establishment (e.g., in areas of higher soil erosion exposure). Program staff propose to expand the eligibility to the use of non-native, non-invasive species when the type and percentage of the species within the tree planting can be justified and approved by Conservation Authority forestry staff. Region staff noted concern on the use of non-native species and the affect that this could have in the future protection of significant woodlots in the Region. Further information was requested.

Program staff introduced two new project categories for discussion:

Crop Nutrient Planning

- Purpose: To encourage the most effective use of available nutrient resources, optimize yields, and protect groundwater and surface water on cropping operations without livestock housing.
- Cost Share Rate and Grant Caps: 70% up to \$3,000 for first plan, 35% up to \$1,500 for plan updates completed following the end of the first plan period (minimum of 3 years)

Forest Plantation Management

- Purpose: To promote good forestry practices to maintain healthy, sustainable forests, that improve landscape resilience to climate change and prevent soil erosion, mitigate flooding, and reduce contamination of local waterways
- Proposed Eligible Projects, Funding Caps and Rates:
 - Preparation of a Forest Management Plan: 30% up to \$500
 - Inventory, Silviculture Prescriptions, Marking, Tendering and Thinning for improved forest health – 50% up to \$6,000

PAAWG was supportive of the proposed new project categories.

8) Communication and For Information Items

Melanie Williams, Region of Peel

The following correspondence were received:

- a) Honourable Minister Thompson, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs – Increasing Deadstock Capacity Initiative
- b) Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association [Maple Production Improvement Initiative](#)
- c) Soil and Crop Improvement Association [Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program \(RALP\)](#)
- d) [Grown in Peel](#) 2024 recruitment period begins December 1, 2023

9) Round Table and Other Business

No other business stated.

10) Adjournment

Moved by Karen Hutchinson

That the November 16, 2023, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be adjourned.

Carried PAAWG 2023-40

The meeting adjourned at 9:31pm. The next PAAWG meeting will be held will be held in-person at the Peel Conference and online via Microsoft Teams on February 15, 2024, at 7:00pm.