



2023

Peel Region Accessibility Status Report

Ensuring Accessibility through Times of Uncertainty

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Peel Region 2023 Accessibility Status Report

Peel Region Accessibility Status Report 2023 – Ensuring Accessibility through Times of Uncertainty

This annual report describes the progress and measures taken by the Regional Municipality of Peel (Peel Region) to remove barriers and improve accessibility while implementing the requirements set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). It outlines the progress made in 2023 to implement Peel Region’s 2018-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

2023 started out as a year of hope and promise as we envisioned getting back to some form of normalcy after three years in a pandemic response. Peel had started to exit the acute phase of the pandemic, and programs and services were returning to a new normal, all while taking a safe and cautious approach.

Then, on May 18, the Province introduced Bill 112, *The Hazel McCallion Act*, which was passed on June 6, 2023. The Act would dissolve the Regional Municipality of Peel effective January 1, 2025. As Peel managed to absorb this news and determine what this meant for its programs, services and facilities, our focus continued to be on the delivery of inclusive and accessible services for all members of the community, including persons with disabilities.

This report highlights some of those efforts in removing barriers and making Peel more accessible. It goes above and beyond legislated requirements, ensuring that impacts to service delivery were mitigated as we navigated through times of uncertainty.

To review Peel Region’s 2018-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and previous accessibility status reports, visit peelregion.ca/accessibility.

Statement of organizational commitment to accessibility

Peel Region is committed to implementing, maintaining, and enhancing accessibility with respect to employment and the use of all regional goods and services, programs, and facilities for all persons with disabilities in a manner that:

- respects their dignity and independence and is sensitive to their individual needs;
- ensures reasonable efforts are made so that service outcomes are the same for persons with disabilities as those without disabilities; and
- allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services as those without disabilities, in the same location and in a timely and similar manner considering the nature of the service accommodations.

Office of Culture and Inclusion

The Office of Culture & Inclusion (the Office) continues to support Peel Region on its culture journey to build an environment that is open, dynamic, innovative, collaborative, and inclusive. It influences the planning and development of internal and external programs and services to ensure their delivery recognizes and advances the principles of accessibility, reconciliation, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A number of initiatives undertaken by the Office have successfully contributed to its efforts in creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace:

- Peel's first Observance and Recognition Policy was introduced in 2023. The Policy supports a diverse and inclusive workplace through the recognition of various corporate-wide observances that are faith-based, cultural and diversity related, including accessibility-related observances such as National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).
- Peel's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy and Implementation Plan was launched in 2023 and is focused on two pillars: Workforce and Community.
- The recruitment of an Indigenous Engagement Advisor allows Peel Region to lead meaningful efforts towards reconciliation.
- Customized learning modules and trainings launched in 2023 have accelerated necessary knowledge and skill-building opportunities. These opportunities encourage programs and services to begin their journey towards understanding and embedding the principles of accessibility, reconciliation, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Inclusion is built in as a core competency in Peel's performance management program, to assist staff in their DEI journey towards a greater understanding of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of colleagues and community members and better meet the diverse needs of the community.



Peel Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

In 2023, new members were appointed to serve in Peel's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The AAC guides Regional Council on accessibility issues by helping to identify ways to improve accessibility and remove barriers with respect to regional programs, services, and facilities. The AAC monitors the progress of regional accessibility initiatives, which are reported annually to Regional Council. Its members, the majority of whom are persons with disabilities, advocate for accessibility and bring with them the desire to affect change and help improve the lives of persons with disabilities. Congratulations to our new AAC members:

- Nando Iannicca
(Regional Chair),
- Dennis Keenan
(Regional Councillor),
- Matt Mahoney
(Regional Councillor),
- Mario Russo
(Regional Councillor),
- Mohammed Ali
(Community Member),
- Michelle Bilek
(Community Member),
- Carol-Ann Chafe (Vice-Chair),
- Mary Daniel (Chair),
- Cecile Gooding
(Community Member),
- Venkatraman Iyer
(Community Member),
- Azhar Karim
(Community Member),
- Kathleen Lynch
(Community Member),
- Angela Shaw
(Community Member),
- Priyanka Sheth (Community Member),
- Kevin Wilson
(Community Member)

Consultation with AAC continues to be an integral part of ensuring our programs, services and facilities are accessible and that barriers to access are mitigated and removed. In 2023, members were consulted on the Chelsea Gardens site plan review (see page 10), participated in user testing of Peel Region's website (see page 4), supported A2A's Adaptive and Inclusive Micro-mobility initiative, provided input into Peel Living's Accessibility Design Guidelines (see page 10), and participated in community events and consultations.

2023 Accessibility Initiatives

Peel: A digital government

Digital Peel is intended to improve ease of access to services. It provides a better customer experience through the modernization of technology platforms and supporting models. The project's mission is "To provide digital services to residents to meet their needs". Transforming into a digital government will assist in meeting the service expectations and digital needs of residents. This will increase transparency and improve service delivery.

As part of this initiative, a new website is being introduced in 2024. Peel's website is being shifted from having an organization-based structure to one that is organized by service-areas. This is a major step in making Peel Region a digital government.

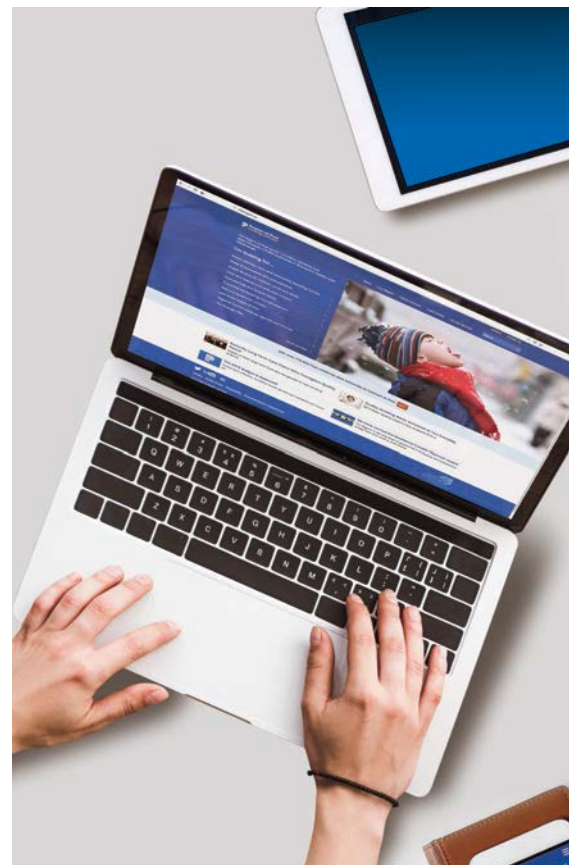
In 2023, efforts continued to ensure that Peel's website and web content were accessible and complied with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) requirements. In March, Peel shared with the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility its website compliance plan. The tasks and initiatives that will be undertaken to meet compliance requirements were included in the report. A number of initiatives were carried out to advance digital accessibility and support website compliance. Some of these initiatives include:

Digital online forms:

Part of becoming a digital-first government and ensuring website compliance required the removal of non AODA-compliant PDF online forms from our website. Over 80 PDF and web-to-email forms were replaced and AODA compliant forms were launched. These new forms reduce security risks, enable process efficiencies, ensure accessibility, and create a better customer experience. AAC members were consulted to assist with testing the forms from an end-user experience.

Digital accessibility training and enabling staff:

Improving digital accessibility literacy among Peel staff is a priority. In 2023, digital accessibility training was piloted. The purpose of the training is to ensure content creators and publishers understand their role and responsibility in creating accessible digital content. In addition to training, branded accessible templates, PDF remediation software, and software to verify compliance are available for staff use.



Website accessibility statement:

Peel Region launched a web accessibility statement for content providers, including external vendors. The statement outlines Peel's requirements under the AODA as it relates to website compliance and redirects accountability of compliance to content providers. In order to maintain website accessibility, the web accessibility statement requests that digital content provided to Peel Region, including PDFs, must be accessible and AODA compliant. Proof of conformance to WCAG 2.1 or PDF/UA standards is required. Peel's web accessibility statement includes guidelines and resources to achieve accessibility and is integrated into Peel's procurement process.

Accessibility training refresh for volunteers:

As legislated under the AODA, all Peel Region employees, including volunteers, must complete AODA training. AODA training for volunteers was outdated and required revisions. This revised training is on brand and reflects current information in line with Peel's programs and services. The training also includes the ability for volunteers to submit their acknowledgment of compliance electronically for ease of record keeping.

Review of Peel's 2018-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Peel Region must review and update its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every five years, as required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). Peel's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the steps and actions Peel Region will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, while meeting AODA requirements. In 2023, Peel carried out a five year review of its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Internal departments were consulted and updates and revisions were shared. Feedback has been compiled and any changes or revisions will be incorporated in the next iteration of Peel's multi-year plan.

2023 AODA Compliance Report

In the fall of 2023, Peel Region filed its Accessibility Compliance Report with the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. After consultation with internal departments and staff, Peel confirmed being in compliance with all the questions posed in the report, with the exception of one related to accessible website and web content. Peel continues to reiterate that any claim to web compliance is a snapshot in time as a small error, such as uploading one non-accessible document, could easily bring us back to non-compliance. Accessibility is an ongoing journey as opposed to an end goal. It entails going beyond meeting a set of guidelines and includes a focus on end-user experience. Peel Region continues to work with the provincial government to ensure we are moving forward with our compliance efforts.

Accessible EV charging stations

Peel Region has explored the creation of accessibility design guidelines for Peel Region owned electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. In 2023, a preliminary investigation to evaluate the accessibility of EV charging stations for persons with disabilities was undertaken. Many opportunities were identified to improve accessibility. Guidelines for Peel's existing and future charging station installations for staff and public use are under development.



Seniors' Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor

Construction of the new Peel Manor Long Term Care Centre at Peel Manor facility, which includes a Seniors Health and Wellness Village (SHWV) offering seniors-focused health, social and community services, continued into 2023. The SHWV at Peel Manor facility includes a wide array of physical accessibility features, including wide doorways and ceiling lifts in resident rooms. The long-term care center offers beds that occupy the majority of the space in the new facility, while the main floor will house a list of comprehensive service offerings and programming that support the needs of seniors and caregivers in the community, including:

- Adult Day Services (ADS);
- Integrated Care Centre (ICC);
- Respite Centre; and
- Community Spaces.

Residents' move-in date to the new centre is tentatively targeted for April 2024.



Adult Day Services

In 2023, the Peel Region Adult Day Services (ADS) program launched a direct referral pathway to virtual ADS through the Central West Home and Community Care Support Services, which increased access for residents of Peel, including those who are home and/or bed bound. Virtual ADS includes interactive social, physical, and intellectual recreation programs that take place over the computer or phone.

Fixed public health clinics

Immunization Clinics are located at regional and community sites at 10 Peel Centre Drive in Brampton, 7120 Hurontario in Mississauga, Meadowvale Town Centre in Mississauga, and Caledon Community Centre in Caledon. Locations are accessible by transit and car. Within the clinics, large spaces have been incorporated to accommodate mobility devices, private areas have been designed to meet privacy and confidentiality requirements, and accessibility buttons have been installed at the entrance of the clinics and washrooms. Clinic sites are on the main floor of buildings for easy access.

Clinics for dental (children and youth) and healthy sexuality services are currently open at 10 Peel Centre Drive and on Fairview Street in Mississauga. Actions have been taken to ensure accessibility and to remove barriers to washroom facilities at these clinics. One bathroom at each of the clinics is gender neutral and equipped with braille signage. The bathroom at 10 Peel Centre Drive is also equipped with an accessible door that automatically opens, closes, and locks.

Mobile public health clinics

In school and community settings that host immunization, dental screening and mobile preventive service delivery, Peel employees work with the clinic host to ensure on-site locations meet the needs of those who may need accommodations. This includes access to rooms, adequate spacing, locations that are free from stairs, translation supports, translation, deaf and hard of hearing services. Parents and support workers are welcome and provide support to their children during the delivery of services.



Accessibility considerations for Supervised Consumption Services in Peel

In 2023, following an extensive site search, regional headquarters located at 10 Peel Centre Drive in Brampton was selected as Peel's first interim Supervised Consumption Services Site. The interim site will provide a space where people can use their own substances in a safe environment under the supervision of medically trained staff who are knowledgeable, non-judgmental, and trauma informed.

Throughout the site selection process for this much needed service, accessibility was a key consideration for ensuring that the site would meet the needs of the community through its inclusive design and access to public transportation. In consultation with Moyo Health and Community Services as the operator of the Supervised Consumption Service, WellFort Community Health Services as the clinical lead, and people with lived/living experience of substance use, the Real Property Asset Management Division helped to create an accessible space to ensure code compliance and exceed accessibility requirements by implementing the following features:

- Large space with barrier-free design for mobility devices;
- Accessibility buttons upon entering and within the site;
- An accessible washroom located within the site;
- One extra spacious booth with electronic adjustable surface; and
- Additional surface lighting in consumption booths.

The Supervised Consumption Service will also connect service users to health and social services, such as mental health, addictions and housing. Operations are anticipated to commence in early 2024.



TransHelp

Peel's specialized door-to-door public transit provider, TransHelp, continues to provide accessible and barrier-free service for Peel's residents with disabilities. TransHelp's Passenger Satisfaction survey revealed 86% overall satisfaction. As a result of the feedback, service improvements and efficiencies implemented in 2023 include:

- Shortened passenger pick-up window to 30 minutes;
- Extended booking hours in the evenings;
- Implemented new service contracts;
- Launched Passenger Orientation Sessions causing a reduction in calls and complaints;
- Introduced shortened renewal application form;
- Upgrades to Trapeze scheduling software; and
- Started implementation of tablets on all vehicles to enhance self-service capabilities, fleet visibility and location, improve on-time performance, and improvement in passenger trip experience.



Transportation

In 2023, *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* upgrades to traffic signals and street lighting were completed on the following intersections:

- Cawthra Road at Silvercreek Boulevard (Mississauga);
- Derry Road at Airport Road (Mississauga);
- Derry Road at McLaughlin Road (Mississauga);
- Erin Mills Parkway at Leanne Boulevard/Fowler Drive (Mississauga);
- King Street/Harvest Moon Drive at Coleraine Drive/Emil Kolb Parkway (Caledon); and
- Queensgate Boulevard at Landsbridge Street (Caledon).



As part of the environmental assessment planning process, all public notices, study materials, and public information centres were AODA compliant. To fulfill the environmental assessment requirements for transportation planning, a new approach was introduced called "Complete Corridor Study" to create complete streets that safely support all modes of transportation, including infrastructure that is accessible and barrier-free for Peel residents with disabilities.

Affordable housing

The site plan for the Peel affordable housing project Chelsea Gardens, located in the City of Brampton, was presented to the AAC for review and support. Chelsea Gardens is part of Peel's Housing Master Plan, an action under the 10-year Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan (PHHP), which aims to increase Peel's housing stock by adding over 5,620 new affordable rental units by 2034. The project includes 200 affordable housing units comprised of a mixture of one, two, and three-bedroom units, of which 26 per cent (51 units) will be fully barrier-free. The project aims to achieve outcomes on affordability, accessibility, and energy efficiency and will meet or exceed all applicable legislative and municipal accessibility requirements. As such, the project will be well equipped to accommodate tenants and visitors with accessibility requirements.



Peel Housing Corporation accessibility design guidelines

Peel Housing Corporation (PHC), also known as Peel Living, is Peel's largest community, not-for-profit housing provider. Peel Living provides safe, affordable, well-maintained housing for low and modest-income families, singles, and seniors. To increase accessibility and enable safe, clean, and affordable renovations, accessibility design standards were introduced to standardize capital projects. These requirements foster innovation, efficiency, and functional living environments that inspire pride for the many residents that call their place home. The standards align with industry best practices, comply with all local building and fire codes, the requirements of local jurisdictions, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).



Accessible Early Years and Child Care Services

Early Years and Child Care Services (EYCCS) has undertaken various initiatives to enhance accessibility for the community within their spaces. Creating accessible documents has been a priority and has been a collaborative effort across EYCCS; initiatives include updating guideline documents, standardizing plain language in funding agreements, and ensuring that public-facing documents are accessible. EYCCS continues to provide access for our French community and comply with French Language Service requirements as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, training will be provided to staff on the use of plain language and how to develop documents that meet accessibility requirements. As part of continuous improvement, EYCCS will continue to collect sociodemographic data to understand the evolving needs of the community and to ensure that services offered are diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible.



Early years & child care expansion:

There has been notable work done to enhance access to EarlyON child and family centers. This includes the addition of 46 core weekly hours to meet program demand and increase in programs to support mental health for children and their families. The Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care program is increasing the number of licensed child care spaces in Peel beginning in 2023 with the goal of adding 11,980 new child care spaces by 2026 to improve access for under-served and under-represented families.

Child care subsidy:

EYCCS is also adapting to remote service delivery, offering a 'How to Apply' video on the website, and implementing measures like an online family portal for secure communication and document submission. Regular communication with families, reduced verification requirements, and a continuous update of information on the website further contribute to the ease of access to the child care subsidy program.

System navigation:

The System Navigation Service operates in collaboration with Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP). It provides support to families in their search for Early Years and Child Care programs through an online childcare search tool as well as phone, live chat, and email. This service also assists in making appropriate referrals to other community supports, ensuring that residents have the necessary resources to navigate the Early Years and Child Care system.

Human services

Peel Region's mission is to create a healthy, safe, and connected community. The delivery of our social services is achieved by planning, managing, and delivering diverse and integrated services and resources. Accessibility is a key component in ensuring that our residents have access and can participate in a fast-growing and changing community.

Accessible service and communication channels for social assistance clients:

The Income and Social Supports (ISS) service in Peel continues to deliver accessible services to residents through flexible appointment and communication channels to meet client needs. The continued hybrid appointment model allows clients to meet with their caseworker virtually or in person at one of the Peel Region office locations. ISS also offers multiple communication channels, including translation support services, for clients to connect with their Caseworker and to submit information.

Access to technology and digital literacy:

The ISS service expanded its digital partnerships in 2023 to provide accessible digital support to social assistance clients in Peel through access to technology, affordable internet, and digital literacy training. ISS provided over 1,000 computers to social assistance clients and partnered with 13 community agencies to deliver digital literacy programming to over 900 Peel residents, helping them stay connected, building capacity for self-sufficiency, and improving their employment and educational prospects. In 2023, ISS also implemented an affordable internet program to increase digital access to support clients with goal achievement.

Mental health supports and services:

The ISS service has partnered with 22 community agencies offering mental health and addictions support to people in receipt of social assistance. The Wellness Response and Assistance Program (WRAP) supports new projects or increases existing program capacity for mental health and not-for-profit agencies in Peel. These supports encompass a range of tailored services, including mental health and addictions counselling and programs, vital health education, and assistance navigating the health system and accessing professional supports.

Community investments that support persons with disabilities

The Community Investment Program (CIP) provides grants for not-for-profits to better deliver human and social services to Peel's most vulnerable residents. Our funding strengthens not-for-profit organizational capacity and Peel's overall human services system to address social challenges, including inclusion, accessibility, family services, and more. In 2023, a conscious effort was made to ensure that grants that were awarded to community agencies included agencies whose organizational mandate is to provide services to people with disabilities.

Improvements to regional office environments and facilities

Despite the impending news of the potential dissolution of Peel Region, work continued to ensure that Peel's infrastructure and spaces continued to be accessible. Peel's workspaces continued to be updated and modernized with accessibility improvements. Older-style workstations were retrofitted with raised power outlets to make plugging in devices more accessible and easier for all. An additional 215 height adjustable tables were installed to allow users to adjust worksurface height to meet individual needs.

Improvement to facilities included the installations of two new accessible door operators at Peel headquarters in Mississauga to improve accessibility and ease of access in a high traffic area.

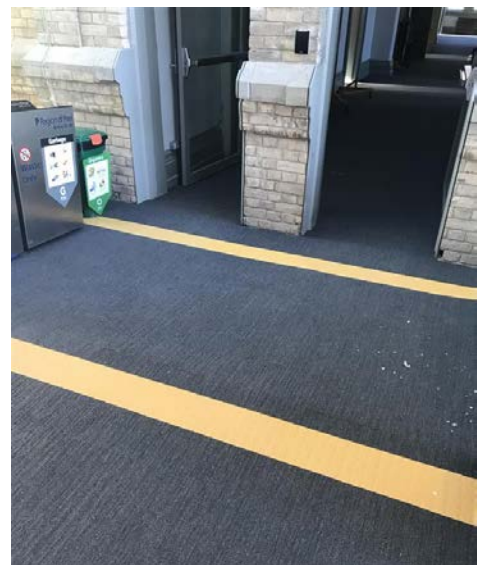
To promote inclusivity, the implementation of gender-neutral washrooms began in 2023 at two of Peel's Paramedic reporting stations. Construction of these facilities is currently underway.

In addition, improvements were made to the floor situated between two buildings of Peel's Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (pictured right). In consultation with a mobility device user, an updated flooring system was designed and installed on a sloped floor area. The new flooring now includes high contrast, tactile strips notifying all users of the sloped surface with both visual and tactile cues.

Before



After



Accessible council meetings

Hybrid/virtual council meetings:

In response to the pandemic, amendments were made to the *Municipal Act, 2001* to permanently permit electronic participation of members of Council and Citizen Members in open and closed meetings outside of an emergency. This decision was built on the successful implementation of electronic meetings by multiple municipalities and in response to advocacy efforts of various municipal stakeholders.

Since 2020, members of Council and the public have participated in Council and Committee meetings virtually or through a hybrid model. As a result of the many benefits that hybrid meetings provide, including more opportunities for community participation, options for accessibility measures such as closed captioning and increased flexibility for Council members, there is a preference to continue hybrid meetings.

Streaming council and committee meetings:

Prior to the pandemic, only Regional Council meetings were accessible via a live stream link on Peel's website. Peel Region now offers a variety of options for public participation in both Council and Committee meetings, including in-person attendance, or a live stream option.

Peel Region will continue to explore new technologies and find ways to engage residents without an in-person connection to ensure that Council and Committee meetings are accessible to residents who cannot or would not attend a meeting in-person and to engage residents who have not previously interacted with their local government.

In addition, at the request of AAC members, the Committee agenda and minutes templates were revised to ensure clearer, more concise information is available, including names and positions of those present at meetings.



2023 Events and Observances

In 2023, Peel launched its Observance and Recognition Policy. The Policy aligns with Peel Region’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and recognizes relevant cultural, religious, and other diversity-related observances in order to promote a sense of belonging for employees, residents, and communities. Also recognized are accessibility-related observances that promote knowledge, understanding, and advocacy for persons with disabilities.

National AccessAbility Week was acknowledged through a virtual event titled, “Beyond the Barriers”. Attendees heard from keynote speakers, Kevin Wilson and Marya Bangash, who shared stories about their journey with their disability and how intersectionality played a role in their experiences and career trajectories. Tips were also shared on how to move beyond barriers into action. The speakers challenged us to think about the role we all play in changing assumptions and misconceptions about disabilities that have contributed to systemic ableism.

In addition, the following accessibility-related observances were recognized internally in 2023:

- World Down Syndrome Day (March 21);
- World Autism Awareness Day (April 2);
- National Disability Employment Awareness Month;
- Treat Accessibility (October); and
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3).



Peel Region
working with you

Recognizes

International Day of Persons with Disabilities
December 3

Embrace diversity and empower all abilities on International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
[Visit the Events and Observances page on Pathways+ to learn more.](#)

The graphic features the Peel Region logo, the text 'Recognizes', the title 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' with the date 'December 3', and a short paragraph with a link. The background shows two women, one wearing a blue hijab, standing under a white umbrella outdoors.



Region of Peel
working with you

Recognizes

World Autism Day
April 2

This day highlights the need to help improve the quality of life of those with autism so they can lead full and meaningful lives as an integral part of society.
[Visit the DEI Portal on Pathways+ to learn more.](#)

The graphic features the Region of Peel logo, the text 'Recognizes', the title 'World Autism Day' with the date 'April 2', and a short paragraph with a link. The background shows a man and a woman looking at a document together.



Peel Region
working with you

Recognizes

Disability Employment Awareness Month
October

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month which recognizes the contributions of people with disabilities in the workplace.
[Visit the Events and Observances page to learn more.](#)

The graphic features the Peel Region logo, the text 'Recognizes', the title 'Disability Employment Awareness Month' with the date 'October', and a short paragraph with a link. The background shows a woman with a prosthetic leg sitting at a desk and talking to another woman.

A Community for Life that is Inclusive and Accessible

2023 was a trying and difficult year for Peel Region. The announcement of Bill 112, *The Hazel McCallion Act*, brought on uncertainty and insecurity to the organization because it was unclear what dissolution meant for the future of Peel's programs and services, or what its impact on the community would be. Despite the challenges posed, Peel's efforts continued to be focused on the delivery of accessible and inclusive services and ensuring that staff and the community were supported during the dissolution transition.

On December 13, 2023, the provincial government announced that Peel would not be dissolved and that a recalibrated focus would be applied on options to support building more housing faster. Despite continued uncertainty for some program and service areas, Peel will continue to fulfill its accessibility mandate to go above and beyond AODA requirements so that Peel residents, including people with disabilities, have access to the programs and services they need to thrive, no matter what the governance model.

We Welcome Your Feedback

Your feedback is important to us. Please let us know if you have any questions or feedback about the programs or services mentioned in this report, Peel Region's 2018-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, or about accessibility in general.

To request a copy of this report in an alternate format, please contact us at:

Call

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