



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

**PAAWG 2026-01 Meeting Minutes**

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) met on February 20, 2026, 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:**

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Raphael Adegboye, Representative of the Agricultural Community  
Pat Fortini, Regional Councillor, Peel Region  
Karen Hutchinson, Vice-Chair, Caledon Countryside Alliance  
Dwight Matson, Peel Federation of Agriculture  
Britt McKee, EcoSource  
Manjari Mehta, Citizen-at-Large  
Gary Mountain, Chair, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association  
Ed Russell, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association  
Mario Russo, Regional Councillor, Peel Region  
Brian Wannamaker, Citizen-at-Large

**Members Absent:**

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Patrick Brown, Mayor, City of Brampton  
Tom Dolson, Peel Federation of Agriculture  
Mark Vanderwees, Citizen-at-Large

**Staff:**

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Tara Buonpensiero, Director, Peel Region  
Heather Hewitt, Intermediate Planner, Peel Region  
Learie Miller, Manager, Peel Region  
Melanie Williams, Advisor, Peel Region  
Karen Buckle, Co-Ordinator, Agricultural Extension, Credit Valley Conservation  
Deborah Kenley, Manager, Credit Valley Conservation  
Holly Shipclark, Sr, Co-Ordinator Agricultural Extension, Credit Valley Conservation  
Patrick Esson, Sr. Project Manager, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Fallon Hayes, Project Co-Ordinator, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Jessie Spasov, Project Co-Ordinator, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

**Guests:**

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Rebecca Pearce-Cameron, ALUS National  
Ben Roberts, Senior Economic Development Officer, Town of Caledon  
Katelyn Macdonald, Peel Region  
Jeremy Schembri, Peel Region

Yvette Roy, Credit Valley Conservation  
Namrata Shrestha, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Elizabeth Speller, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Monika Mugel, Urban Agriculture, EcoSource

### **1) Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) was called to order with quorum at 7:02pm by Melanie Williams. Melanie Williams acted as Chair until the appointment of the PAAWG Chair and Vice-Chair. Attendance was called and quorum confirmed.

### **2) Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair**

*Melanie Williams, Peel Region*

Peel staff, acting as Election Chair, called the election to order and opened the floor to nominations for the position of Chair. Nomination of Gary Mountain for Chair was made. No other nominations were brought forward. Gary Mountain agreed to stand for nomination.

Moved by Karen Hutchinson, seconded by Councillor Mario Russo

*That Gary Mountain be appointed Chair of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group for the term ending December 31, 2026, or until a successor is appointed.*

Carried PAAWG 2026-01

The floor was opened to nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. Nomination of Karen Hutchinson for Vice-Chair was made. No other nominations were brought forward. Karen Hutchinson agreed to stand for nomination.

Moved by Gary Mountain, seconded by Britt McKee

*That Karen Hutchinson be appointed Vice-Chair of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group for the term ending December 31, 2026, or until a successor is appointed.*

Carried PAAWG 2026-02

Peel staff concluded the election process with testimony of the wonderful work undertaken by PAAWG. Staff expressed gratitude for the continued participation and dedication of PAAWG members and the newly elected Chair and Vice-Chair.

The meeting was then turned over to Gary Mountain as Chair.

### **3) Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were identified by members in attendance.

#### 4) Review and Approval of February 19, 2026 Agenda

Moved by Karen Hutchinson, seconded by Ed Russell

*That the Agenda for the February 19, 2026, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be approved.*

Carried PAAWG 2026-03

#### 5) Review and Approval of Minutes of November 20, 2025 Meeting

Moved by Britt McKee, seconded by Karen Hutchinson

*That the minutes of meeting 2025-04 of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, held on November 20, 2025, be approved.*

Carried PAAWG 2026-04

#### 6) Peel Region Biodiversity & Climate Change Strategy

*Katelyn Macdonald, Peel Region*

*Yvette Roy, Credit Valley Conservation*

*Elizabeth Speller, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority*

Peel Region, with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), are developing a 10-year Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy to guide the Region and Conservation Authorities programs addressing building climate resilience in Peel's natural heritage system. The Strategy will identify Peel's long-term vision, guiding principles, and strategic plan for climate resilience in its programming. Project staff reviewed comments received through the Strategy engagement, on the agriculture sector in Peel.

##### **Questions/Discussion:**

PAAWG inquired what data sources are being used to develop the Strategy. Project staff identified that a literature review of current and historical data sources within Peel Region, the Conservation Authorities and Local Municipalities were used. No new data was collected at this time but will be part of the recommendations and evaluation of the climate change models. Conservation Authority climate scientists will continue to be engaged in data collection.

PAAWG directed staff to the Peel Region and TRCA Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment that was completed for Peel's agricultural commodities, and the Region's Land Evaluation and Area Review, as additional information sources.

## 7) Ecosource Urban Agriculture

*Monika Mugel, Ecosource*

Ecosource presented on their Local Food Program of which the City of Mississauga is a partner. Ecosource has been leading the development of community gardening programs in Peel Region since 2006, and currently oversees 13 food growing sites in Peel. Their Iceland Teaching Garden provides hands-on learning opportunities to grow fresh, culturally appropriate food for the community as well as educating on urban agriculture programs and engaging corporate groups in team building opportunities that support local food security. In addition, Ecosource operates a teaching kitchen where they run field to table programming. In 2025, 2,300 residents engaged in Ecosource's food system programs, giving 12,8777 volunteer hours and 12,500 pounds of food grown for donation to local food banks, individuals and families in Mississauga. In 2026, Ecosource continues to expand its Local Food Program with workshops to increase capacity in personal food gardening and to support partner agencies in delivering urban agriculture education.

### Questions/Discussion:

PAAWG was supportive of Ecosource's initiatives and encouraged their programming to be expanded throughout Peel Region. PAAWG also asked how Ecosource's funding model was structured to enable program growth.

## 8) PAAWG Work Plan 2025

*Melanie Williams, Peel Region*

The 2026 PAAWG work plan was brought forward for PAAWG's review and comment. It was noted the work plan is subject to modification to reflect changes any Provincial changes. The work plan will be provided to Regional Council in the annual PAAWG report.

### Questions/Discussion:

There were no questions.

## 9) Peel Rural Water Quality Program and ALUS Peel

### a) Financial Report

*Holly Shipclark, Credit Valley Conservation*

*Patrick Esson, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority*

The 2026 Peel Rural Water Quality (PRWQP) program year has a budget of \$70,000.00. As presented, pending approval, the total remaining PRWQP budget balance for 2026 is \$67,100.00.

The 2026 ALUS Peel contribution for new annual payments is still being confirmed by ALUS National. As presented, requested new annual payment grant allocation is \$0.

**b) PRWQP and ALUS Peel 2025 Memorandum**

In 2025, PAAWG approved 12 PRWQP and six ALUS Peel projects, distributing \$51,825 in PRWQP grant funding, leveraging \$18,918 in external funding and \$13,736 in landowner contributions. The ALUS Peel program enrolled 7.38 acres (3 acres), with commitments of 10 years of annual payments. Since 2004, the programs have implemented 259 agri-environmental projects valued at \$5.2 million.

**Questions/Discussion:**

There were no questions.

**c) ALUS National Conference**

*Karen Buckle, Credit Valley Conservation*

ALUS Peel program staff were able to attend the ALUS National conference, held in south-western Ontario. Staff visited other ALUS communities and will be able to use shared knowledge findings to enhance the ALUS Peel program.

**d) 2026 Peel Farm Tour**

*Fallon Hayes, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority*

TRCA will be the lead on hosting the 2026 Peel Farm Tour. PAAWG and program staff identified preferred dates, themes and guest speakers for the tour.

**Questions/Discussion:**

There were no questions.

**d) Project Applications**

*Karen Buckle, Credit Valley Conservation*

**I. 01-CVC-26 Cover Crop (PRWQP)**

The application 01-CVC-24 proposes \$2,900 for 50 acres (14.16 ha) of cover crops. 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 a highly vulnerable aquifer.

**Questions/Discussion:**

PAAWG reviewed if the current cover crop grant amount is adequate to cover the cost of the seed and labour. PAAWG also provided feedback on how to present the Project Summaries more clearly.

Moved by Councillor Mario Russo, seconded by Brian Wannamaker.

*That application 01-CVC-26 be approved and that Peel Rural Water Quality Program funding be provided in the amount of \$2,900.00, under the category "Cover Crops".*

Carried PAAWG 2026-05

## **Communications and For Information**

*Melanie Williams, Peel Region*

### **1) Grown in Peel**

Grown in Peel is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026. An anniversary logo has been developed for branding the year. PAAWG members were encouraged to provide Peel staff with ideas on how the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program could be recognized.

To complement the Grown in Peel posters that are used to promote the program, a new promotional postcard has been developed to encourage new farms and farmers' markets to list for free on the guide.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

Ideas were generated for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration including reels showing the history of farming in Peel and going beyond the food to showcase farming. New venues and promotional partnership opportunities were also identified.

### **2) Provincial AIA Guidelines**

In 2018, PAAWG was consulted on the Province's draft Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) guidelines. The new Provincial AIA guidelines were released January 2026 and are now in-effect. The comments that PAAWG provided to the Province in 2018 were addressed.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

There were no questions.

## **11) Round Table and Other Business**

None

## **12) Adjournment**

Moved by Councillor Mario Russo.

*That the February 19, 2026, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be adjourned.*

Carried PAAWG 2026-06

The meeting adjourned at 8:48pm. The next PAAWG meeting will be held in-person at the Peel Conference and online via Microsoft Teams on May 21, 2026, at 7:00pm.