

“When I hear the  
word **TOGETHER**, I  
think of all those  
penguins when they  
are gathered up.”

Lilly, age 6

when asked what  
“together” means to her  
during filming of a video  
about Peel CAS

2013-2014 Annual Report



Supporting. Protecting. Caring. Together.  
Soutien. Protection. Bienveillance. Ensemble.

# Message from Executive Director Rav Bains and



*R. Bains*



*Shama*

**At Peel Children's Aid, we believe passionately that all children have the right to grow up in an environment where they are loved, nurtured and cherished. As a community, we share a responsibility to ensure that our children are in supportive environments.**

To build awareness and a broader understanding of our work, the agency recently launched a new video that highlights how Peel CAS works together with partners throughout Peel to keep children safe and build strong families. It's important to the work we do that the community is aware of our services and how we can help. As the video demonstrates, keeping children safe is a shared responsibility. It is available on our [website](#) and [YouTube](#) so please watch and share!

The agency board of directors has also been advocating on behalf of the agency, and has held meetings with elected officials to build awareness of the complexity of the work being done with children, youth and families and the need for more equitable funding. Most recently, two youth were welcomed to the agency's Board of Directors to integrate youth leadership and give those who have experienced being in care an active voice at the board level – a first for Peel CAS. We are also pleased to share some quotes from supporters within the community who continue to work with us to advocate for children, youth and families involved with our agency.



# Board President Harry Mann

Last year, a new funding formula was introduced by the Ministry of Children and Youth services. As part of this new formula, Children’s Aid Societies are required to sign accountability agreements with the Ministry. These included balanced budgets and performance indicators which will help us assess our performance and improve our services. As you read through the pages of this report, you will hear directly from our staff about the services we provide and how they are linked to these indicators.

Margaret shares her work with families experiencing Domestic Violence, which accounts for 30 per cent of the agency’s investigation and assessments. And Elizabeth shares her experiences working with extended families to ensure children and youth remain in familiar environments with a family member or friend – a commitment that has resulted in a 67 per cent increase in children placed with kin over the past three years. We hope you will take a few minutes to read these stories that provide a snapshot of the work we do at Peel CAS.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge the hard work of our staff, foster and kin caregivers and volunteers. It is their commitment that helps families feel safe, listened to and cared for. Together we are making a difference in the lives of children, youth and families in our community.

“The staff, foster caregivers and volunteers at Peel Children’s Aid should be very proud of what they do. I know I am. Many children, youth and families have been helped over the years and the agency should continue with the good work it is doing.”

Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion



# TOGETHER...we support

**“I GET a picture of help, like  
when you want to give up,  
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE THERE  
To support you.”**



**Ben, AGE 14**



At Peel Children's Aid we support families facing various types of challenges and sometimes families just need parenting support. We strive to keep children and youth in their homes with their families. Keeping families together provides stability, familiarity and a sense of belonging and identity for children and youth.

## **Margaret**

People don't really want to talk about domestic violence (DV), but it is something that touches many families. More than a third of the cases the agency works with involve DV. As a member of the Domestic Violence Team, I work with high-risk cases where children are impacted or exposed to violence. Members of our team have developed relationships and partner with service providers to ensure families experiencing DV receive the support they need, when they need it. The families we work with are in crisis mode and we need to do work collaboratively with them to ensure safety, with the understanding of their unique situation. I worked with a woman once who was being severely abused by her husband. She had a small baby and was worried for her safety and that of her child, but she didn't have any money, food or a place to stay. Through collaborations with our partners we set up support in each of these areas. This meant she had the control to make a decision to leave the situation.

We are all human beings and we make mistakes. In my work, I listen but don't judge. I do this by relating to families on a human level, as a woman and a mother with many experiences to draw from. Every now and then a family comes back to see me and tells me that their work with us saved their marriage. Through shared tears, I realize that the rewards of this work are great.



Peel CAS has one of only a handful of CAS domestic violence teams that exist in Ontario. The DV team is one of 10 community partners housed at The Safe Centre of Peel, a multi-service centre where families and individuals impacted by violence and abuse can access many of the services they need in one place.

Other community agencies in the centre include: Associated Youth Services of Peel, Catholic Crosscultural Services, Family Court Support Worker, Family Duty Counsel (Legal Aid Ontario), Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin, India Rainbow Community Services of Peel, Legal Clinic, Trillium Health Partners, and Victim Services of Peel.



## Andrea

As a member of the Adolescent Team, I work with families who have adolescent youth. We know that youth do better when they remain at home. All families go through tough times and my role is to support families and youth to strengthen the family as a whole and keep youth from coming into care.

Building a rapport with parents and youth creates trust and we are able to work together on solutions. It is really rewarding when youth open up about the challenges they are facing. I also help them to see things from a different perspective and listen without judging. Youth also know that I will always advocate for them, whether it is at school or at home. They become empowered when they have an ally on their side. Building on a family's strengths and natural support systems means bringing less youth into care. Parents have reported feeling a renewed sense of hope. And by enhancing their parenting skills parents feel better able to navigate their youth's teenage years. Developing relationships with parents and youth to help them get through their challenges is what I enjoy the most about this work.

**“PROTECTING means To me  
STANDING up for one another  
and HELPING someone if  
They ARE GETTING HURT.”**



**JAKE, age 7**



## **TOGETHER...**we protect

Child abuse and neglect does occur in our community. Protecting children and keeping them safe is a community responsibility so if you have a concern about a child the best thing to do is call CAS.

### **Wendy**

As a member of the screening team, I receive many calls each year from concerned citizens, teachers, police, health care professionals and other agencies, about children and families who may need help. And we want to help. We understand people may be hesitant to call us but without the community's help, we have no way of knowing that a child or youth may need assistance. If you have a concern, it is very important to contact us. Our work with families is confidential and we don't record calls or have call display. Working together with our community is fundamental to protecting children and keeping them safe.

Support to families in Peel is available 24/7 thanks to Peel CAS's Emergency After Hours Team. This small team works after business hours to answer child protection calls and support existing families or youth involved with the agency if they need help. This team also works directly with community partners such as the police, hospitals and EMS to ensure children and families are safe.

## Child Abuse Review Team

Peel CAS's Child Abuse Review Team (CART) creates an ongoing opportunity for community members to work together on child abuse education and prevention. It gives community partners access to information relating to child abuse prevention, statistics, trends and research which they can share with their colleagues in their individual agencies to raise awareness of the importance of working together to keep children safe. It also provides an opportunity for Peel CAS to keep its partners informed of the agency's latest initiatives, programs and strategies to strengthen families and keep children in family based care settings.

## Child Advocacy Centre

Many partners work together in Peel to support child and youth victims of abuse, violence and crime. And while there are strong collaborations and multiple service agencies devoted to this work, there are always ways to continuously improve services. In October 2013, Peel CAS participated in the launch of a Regional Assessment that examined the strengths and challenges of Peel's current system to support abuse victims and identify suggestions and alternative models to best serve the community. One of the recommendations involves exploring a Children's Advocacy Centre model.

Children's Advocacy Centres provide a seamless, coordinated and collaborative approach to addressing the needs of child victims or children who have witnessed crime. These centres provide a community-based, child and youth focused, culturally competent, multidisciplinary team approach to the investigation, treatment, management, and prosecution of child and youth abuse. **What did we learn?** Although the specifics of a made-in-Peel model still need to be sorted out, and important questions still need to be answered, it is clear that our community wants the best possible responses for child and youth victims of violence. Feedback indicates that Peel is ready to further explore a Child Advocacy Centre model and Peel CAS is excited to be part of this work.

Peel is a growing community with a diverse population. The Child Abuse Review Team is committed to ensuring its work is in line with the principles and philosophy of diversity and anti-oppression. Every different partner within CART plays a role in helping children and youth and in building healthy families.

In 2013-2014:

- Peel CAS received 12,132 calls from concerned citizens, health care professionals, teachers, and the police about children who might be in need of protection, and investigated 7,515 reports of child abuse and neglect.
- Our agency served 10,612 families in the Region of Peel.

# TOGETHER...we care

**“When I think of caring, I think of a mother, because a mother cares for you, wants the best for you and doesn't want to see you get hurt.”**



**Kieron, age 14**

All children need a family. And whether through birth, a relative such as a grandparent, an adoptive or foster caregiver, families come together in many different ways. Peel is a large, ethnically diverse community. Our staff and services are culturally sensitive and guided by a commitment to treat everyone equitably and with respect. We believe that being a caring organization is the best way to make a difference in the lives of people in our community. And that's why we're here.

## Elizabeth

At Peel Children's Aid we believe that children belong at home and will do everything we can to keep families together. We work with parents, caregivers and other organizations to build a safe, strong community. Our goal is to make the lives of children, youth and families better through their interaction with us. If a child or youth is not safe in his or her home, we work with the family and their support system to keep children in familiar environments with a family member or friend. This is known as a kin arrangement. In this setting, we work together with a family member or friend to keep children safe with people they know and have established relationships with. Our goal is always to reunify a child with their birth family. When a child is staying with kin, there is often still contact with one or both parents. However if reunification isn't possible, the kin may become the child's permanent caregivers. Either way, we always put the needs of the child first.

- Last year, caring loving homes for children in need were provided by 114 kinship families.



## Mohammed

As an immigrant myself, I am aware of some the challenges facing children, youth and families who are new to Canada. My background helps me understand the complexities of immigration, settlement and the direct link to permanency. And because I also have a passion for working with children, it was such a great opportunity to become part of Peel CAS's immigration team a little over 10 years ago. The Immigration team works closely with Immigration lawyers, the Canadian Border Services Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Immigration and Refugee Board and more recently, Foreign Affairs Canada, in assisting children and youth navigate the complex immigration system. Some of our work involves supporting unaccompanied minors under the age of 16 years who arrive in Canada through the Pearson International Airport. These children are often on their own, and sometimes don't have the proper documentation or identification to allow them to stay in Canada.

I once worked with a youth who was 14 years old when he arrived. By navigating the system, and being an advocate for him through his refugee claim and appeals, he was eventually granted permanent residence status on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Although the process was challenging, I didn't give up and feel like I made a difference in his life. As a team, we are committed to continuous learning and development of immigration and settlement issues to provide the best possible service to children, youth and families facing these challenges.



“As an immigrant myself, I am aware of some the challenges facing children, youth and families who are new to Canada.”

# Moving forward... **TOGETHER**

**“When I THINK of TOGETHER,  
I THINK of a GROUP of friends  
That just KEEP walking  
beside EACH OTHER no  
MATTER WHERE They Go  
because GLUE is STUCK  
To Them.”**



**Alex, age 8**

“I am a proud Champion of Peel Children’s Aid – Our hope for a better tomorrow lies with the children and youth of today – let’s make sure they have everything they need for a brighter tomorrow for us all.”

Emil Kolb, Peel Regional Chair & C.E.O.

We have many partners – schools, health care, daycares, police, the Region of Peel and more to support families when they need help. We work closely with community organizations such as mental health services, multi-cultural and settlement services and youth organizations, to help children and families receive the services they need. And our work couldn’t be done without the help of our volunteers who are an integral part of how we work together to provide support to families.

## **Mental Health Strategy means better service to children, youth and families**

Peel CAS is developing a Mental Health Strategy which involves forming a partnership with service agencies to provide better support to clients experiencing mental health issues. Peel CAS approached Peel Children’s Centre, Associated Youth Services Peel and William Osler Health Systems to work in partnership to offer better mental health services to children, youth and families involved with our agency.

With the commitment from our community partners to form a multi-agency team, the next phase of planning has begun. This will include choosing the right tool to assess mental health needs, appropriate training for staff and developing processes and policies that will provide the best service and support to families with mental health needs.

## Working together for youth success

Peel CAS is committed to supporting children, youth and families in our community. Our work includes providing youth with financial literacy skills, ensuring they graduate from high school, and helping them pursue post secondary education with bursaries made possible through the generosity of donors.

Community partners are working with our agency to ensure the success of youth. Peel CAS's employment partnerships with the Region of Peel, the YMCA – GTA, Peel Regional Police, the Brampton Multicultural Centre, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Peel Children and Youth Initiative has created summer and long term employment opportunities for youth involved with the agency. Last year 70 youth from Peel CAS worked in summer employment programs.

## Meeting the diverse needs of our youth

Peel CAS works in partnership with Peel Children's Aid Foundation to provide key programs for youth involved with our agency. These programs are funded through the generosity of donors that support the Foundation and the work of the agency.



Peel CAS youth bursary winners 2014  
Photo credit – Custodio's Photography Studio Inc.

## THE VILLAGE

For five years, The Village has been providing a safe and inclusive space for youth of African and Caribbean heritage to share their stories, thoughts and feelings through meetings, activities and special events. Peel CAS staff serve as mentors to youth and help youth establish a sense of belonging, build positive relationships and an increased knowledge and awareness of their heritage and culture.

“The Village is a place where we can have discussions about our history, talk about issues of cultural relevance, oppression and education. We feel love, trust, respect and honesty and leave feeling empowered.”

VILLAGE members

## SAYA

Peel CAS's South Asian Youth Alliance (SAYA) is celebrating its one year anniversary. A safe space for youth of South Asian, West Asian and Arab heritage to share their story, thoughts and feelings through gatherings which include monthly meetings, recreational activities and social events, these gatherings are also an opportunity for learning, create a sense of belonging through familiarity, establish community connections and build peer/mentor relationships.

“Saya has made a tremendous impact on my understanding of myself. Through group discussions, activities and education I have rekindled my relationship with my faith which was previously lost. I am confident this group will continue to help me build a strong connection to my heritage.”

SAYA member

# Accountability

## Operating Revenue and Expenses April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014

	2014 (in thousands of dollars)	2013 (in thousands of dollars)
<b>Revenue</b>		
Ministry of Child and Youth Services		
Current year	62,691	63,499
Prior year	84	17
Income from other sources	<u>132</u>	<u>139</u>
	62,907	63,655
<b>Expenses</b>		
Adoption Costs	537	372
Boarding Rates	12,296	13,791
Building Occupancy	2,887	2,836
Clients' Personal Needs	1,362	1,366
Employee Benefits	8,051	7,363
Health and Related Costs	807	971
Miscellaneous	226	225
Office Administration	332	209
Other Program Costs	97	187
Promotion and Publicity	187	185
Purchased Services-Client	1,245	1,772
Purchased Services-Non-Client	418	398
Salaries & Wages	33,620	34,092
Technology	525	658
Training and Recruitment	299	375
Travel	1,853	1,962
Amortization	151	114
Total Expenses	<b>64,893</b>	<b>66,876</b>
Expenditure Recoveries	<u>2,503</u>	<u>2,653</u>
	<b>62,390</b>	<b>64,223</b>
Surplus (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures	517	(568)
Fund balance – Beginning of year	<b>1,341</b>	<b>1,909</b>
Fund balance – End of year	<b>1,858</b>	<b>1,341</b>

Full audited Financial Statements are available upon request. Please call 905-363-6131, ext. 3337.

Thank you to everyone who shared their stories and participated in creating this report.

All statistics included throughout the report are for fiscal year April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014

For a list of our Board of Directors and more information about Peel CAS please visit

[www.peelcas.org](http://www.peelcas.org)