At Peel Children’s Aid we believe passionately that every child has 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.

As a children’s aid society we have a responsibility to ensure the rights of children and youth are protected and their needs and best interests are put first, always.

Our annual report is an opportunity to share some of the highlights of the year and provide a look ahead to what the coming year will bring. Our goal remains the same – to make the lives of children, youth and families better through their interaction with us.

The majority of our work centres on services to keep children and youth safe in their homes. Family based support represents 90% of the work we do with children and families. Last year we served about 10,000 families facing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, ill health, domestic violence, mental health issues, or caring for a child who has serious physical, emotional or developmental difficulties. We believe that children belong at home and will do everything we can to keep families together. In a small number of cases when children or youth are not safe in their home, we first look for a family member or friend to care for the child while we work to strengthen a family’s caregiving skills and create a safe home. This is known as a kin arrangement. If this is not possible and we need to bring a child or youth into our care for their safety and well-being, we match children with foster caregivers best able to meet their needs.

To ensure youth involved with Peel CAS achieve success, the agency has a Youth Strategy and offers youth programs in the areas of financial literacy, life skills, job preparedness, housing, education, mentorship and youth justice. Our continued focus on youth success has resulted in accomplishments in the areas of youth education, financial literacy and employment, along with engagement, leadership and advocacy. Over the past year our youth have become more involved with our board of directors and have had an active voice at the provincial level.

Over the past year, our agency has continued to make good progress on each of the key initiatives in our 2011-2014 strategic plan, a number of which are reflected in the pages of this report. This progress is helping our agency to deliver on the important outcomes that we have identified for the clients and families we serve and the community within which we operate.

The year ahead

One of the biggest challenges facing Peel CAS is our ability to continue to meet the growing needs of children, youth and families in our community in times of financial constraint. At the end of April 2013, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services announced a new funding model for Children’s Aid Societies in Ontario. We are pleased with the new funding model which recognizes community growth and need. However, we are disappointed with the cap placed on funding which severely limits resources for CASs like Peel.
The new funding model clearly demonstrates that a large gap exists between the additional annual funding that our community is eligible to receive – $31 million – and what we will actually receive – $1.2 million. The cap on funding will make it challenging for us to fulfill our mandate of ensuring the safety and well-being of children and youth because the funding we receive will not cover the forecasted costs to provide services to our growing population in Peel. One of the fastest growing regions in Ontario, Peel has a child population that grew by 7% between 2006-2011. We will therefore continue to advocate for more equitable funding for the children and youth of Peel Region, working collaboratively with our partners. We remain committed to being fiscally responsible and accountable for the careful use of public funds.

In the coming year we will continue to listen and embed feedback we receive from clients and the community to meet the needs of children, youth and families in our community. We have established new Customer Service Commitments which emphasize being helpful, listening, respecting and caring, building a safe and strong community and advocating for children and we will hold ourselves accountable to these commitments.

Our work to engage our community continues and we are pleased to now have in place a Board champion to assist in this work. We will continue to embed our practices of anti-oppression to better serve our large and growing diverse population and create a healthy and supportive workplace. We will continue to forge improved relationships with our community partners. We are pleased with the development of a new mental health strategy involving many community partners such as Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Peel Children’s Centre and Associated Youth Services of Peel and will support its implementation.

We will continue to review how we portray and share information about the services provided by Peel CAS to ensure we clearly reflect the work and philosophy of the agency. We want the citizens of Peel to have a better understanding of child protection and well-being and their role in keeping children safe and ensuring children are living in supportive environments.

We acknowledge all those involved in building a safe and strong community for our children – our community partners for their support and strong relationships; our foster and kin caregivers who look after our children; our many volunteers and donors who contribute in varied ways to the lives of children and youth; and to our dedicated staff who work tirelessly to ensure children are safe. Thank you.

Suzanne Senior-Mitchell
President Board of Directors

Rav Bains
Executive Director
Families first

At Peel CAS we work with parents, caregivers and other organizations to build a safe, strong community. We believe that children belong at home and will do everything we can to keep families together.

There are many reasons why families may need the help of Peel CAS. Families can get stressed and overwhelmed with challenges. Different areas of stress can include poverty, unemployment, ill health, domestic violence, mental health issues, or caring for a child who has serious physical, emotional or developmental difficulties.

When working with parents and caregivers our goal is to keep children with their families whenever possible. If a child or youth is not safe in his or her home, we engage the family and their support system to keep children in familiar environments where they have established relationships. This is known as a kin arrangement. If this is not possible, we recognize the importance of culture and diversity and try and match children with foster caregivers best able to meet their needs.

- From April 2012 to September 2012, 118 children were diverted from care and placed with family members or friends
- From April 2011 to September 2012, we increased the number of children placed with family or friends by 50%
- Caring, loving homes for children in need were provided by 130 kinship families
- Even though we are serving more families, the number of children in care of CAS remains stable
- Last year, permanent homes were found for 43 children through Peel CAS

Youth are our priority

Peel CAS has a Youth Strategy to ensure youth in our care achieve success and offers youth programs in the areas of financial literacy, life skills, job preparedness, housing, education, mentorship and youth justice.

“When I came into the care of Peel CAS it seemed like a pretty big place with a lot of adults around. I started going to agency events as a way to meet other youth. I became involved with the agency’s Youth Steering Committee and eventually joined the agency’s Youth Council as a youth representative. This council met each month and gave me the opportunity to have input into ways youth could make a positive difference for other youth in care of CAS.”

My Van, youth in care
Youth accomplishments and highlights

• A new partnership between Peel CAS and two district school boards has been developed to share data and put supports in place for youth in care. A joint statement is currently being developed between the agency, Peel District School Board and Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board, with the ultimate goal of creating successful education outcomes for youth and improve graduation rates. Currently 44% of youth in care graduate compared to their peers who have an 81% graduation rate.

• Thanks to the generosity of Peel Children’s Aid Foundation donors, 43 youth received bursaries to pursue a post-secondary education and 50 youth are planning to attend post secondary school programs in the next year.

• Peel CAS youth Nancy Dennis was named recipient of the prestigious provincial Clark Bursary and Maytree Scholarship to help her achieve her post secondary education goals.

• Peel CAS youth continue to be active on the provincial Crown Ward Educational Championship Team (CWECT) to improve educational outcomes for crown wards. In May 2013, CWECT launched an educational toolkit to promote understanding of the education options for teachers and child welfare workers to best serve children and youth with crown ward status.

• Almost 200 youth have taken financial literacy training through Peel CAS – which involves youth mentoring youth – to best manage their money and learn how to work and save for school.

• Peel CAS launched a youth employment initiative and found 36 jobs for youth within the community with partners including the Peel Regional Police, Region of Peel and YMCA.

• Youth at Peel CAS are working with the Board of Directors and are able to provide input into agency planning.

• Peel CAS launched a youth website – Youth Success Corner – and a Facebook page for youth to stay connected and informed.

In January 2013, The Ministry of Children and Youth Services announced an additional $24 million annually to help current and former Crown wards complete high school, attend college and university and cover living expenses when they leave foster or group home care. These announced resources and supports give hope and promise to younger children in care that there are provisions in place to help them access and attend post-secondary education and that these supports will not end at 21 before their education is complete.

• 25 universities and colleges have voluntarily offered to jointly cover 100% of tuition with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for Crowns wards and young people involved with CAS.

Child and Youth in Care Day

In honour of the strengths and contributions of youth in care, May 14, 2013 was proclaimed as “Child and Youth in Care Day” by the province. This day is an opportunity to raise awareness about children and youth in care and to recommit to supporting them and helping them reach their full potential. To recognize youth involved with Peel CAS, the agency held a “Night of Rising Stars”, honouring and recognizing the talents, skills, and greatness, of our youth.
What happens when you call

Our job is to do a thorough assessment of any concerns we receive from the community. Whether we are involved with a family for one day, one week or even a year is based on the needs of children and families.

At Peel CAS we understand that people may be hesitant to call us with questions or report concerns about a child or family. This is why we spend time explaining the services we offer when we receive a call. We don’t have call display, don’t record calls and callers are not required to give a name unless it is a professional who works with children, such as a teacher or a doctor.

Calls are answered by a trained child protection worker. These ‘front-line’ workers are part customer service rep, part counselor and their role is to listen carefully so they can understand how to help. There are several teams who work together to provide services 24/7 to the Peel community.

Callers are asked questions to help us determine how much support a family may need. Sometimes we can provide assistance over the phone. Other times, we will recommend that one of our workers set up a time to visit with a family to see if there are any other ways we can help. If we determine a child is at risk, a worker will visit a family right away.

While one call from the community may not always result in Peel CAS involvement, different calls about the same children or family allow us to identify patterns of concern which may indicate the need for further assistance. This is why we encourage concerned members of the community to call and talk to us – no matter how minor or serious their concern for a child.

Children do best when they are at home with their families. Our priority is always to give parents the support they need to create a stable home. In only a small number of cases are children removed from a family. If this has to happen, we first look for a family member or friend to care for the child while we work to strengthen a family’s caregiving skills and create a safe home.
During the past year, Peel CAS’s Advice and Assessment team has been focused on building relationships with clients and community partners. Our “How Can I Help” approach to service guides our work and with this as our starting point, we are building service plans and partnerships together, focused on the things that matter most to all of us. We are striving to deliver the right service at the right time and when we have an opportunity to support families before their situation becomes more serious, we take that opportunity. Our biggest compliment is when families call themselves to seek our assistance – this past year 955 families called us directly for help.

- It’s a community responsibility to keep children safe. At Peel CAS we receive many calls each year from concerned citizens, teachers, police, other agencies and health care professionals about children and families who may need help.
- Last year our agency received 11,922 calls from concerned citizens, doctors, teachers, and the police about children who might be in need of protection. Of these, we worked with 9,755 families and investigated 7,217 reports of child abuse and neglect.
- Over the past year, we cared for 753 children in our foster homes and group homes.
- More than 550 full and part-time social workers, child and youth workers and administrative and support staff serve the diverse communities of Peel Region in the Cities of Brampton and Mississauga and in the Town of Caledon.
Our commitment to those we work with

In 2012, Peel CAS developed and adopted Customer Service Standards with input from staff and clients through client feedback surveys. We know that good customer service gives us a tremendous opportunity to reinforce and grow our relationship with our customers – clients, service users, partners, foster parents and volunteers.

To ensure we are working with others in a way that is beneficial to them and allow us to measure how we are doing, Peel CAS recently established Customer Service Standards. These standards are embedded in how we provide service to children, youth and families and ensure consistent high quality service.

We have created a series of commitments that we use to guide our work. These commitments are displayed in the agency, our residential homes and on our website peelcas.org.

When working with us we want you to feel:
- Respected
- Cared about
- Listened to and heard
- Helped and valued
- Supported, understood and accepted
- Safe, included and non-oppressed
- Treated fairly and humanely
- Welcomed
- Positive about our interactions and our relationship with you
- Engaged
- Comfortable working with us
- That your needs are important to us
- Your concerns are taken seriously by us
- You are involved in decisions that impact you

That we are:
- Responsive
- Open and transparent
- Invested in our relationship
- Tuned in and attentive

That we:
- Work in partnership
- Live up to our promise
- Respond in a timely way
- Learn from you
- Strive to improve our services
Anti-oppression and Diversity

Diversity is a stated value for Peel CAS. All of our work is guided by our commitment to diversity and anti-oppression and being respectful of others. Our job is to listen, respect and work with families to create strong and safe environments for children and youth. Like other CASs, the majority of the children and families we serve experience marginality. Peel CAS is committed to supporting marginalized and ethno-cultural communities. When we work with families, we respect the experience of parents and caregivers and provide services that are culturally sensitive and available in many languages. Peel CAS has committees and groups for both staff and youth that focus on outreach and advocacy.

Ujima – Peel CAS’s Black History Month Committee actively works towards goals that support social change and social justice through education, advocacy and fundraising to better serve our African and Caribbean communities.

The Village is a group for youth that was created to fill cultural gaps that exist for black youth in care of Peel CAS. Youth meet once a month with mentors – Peel Children’s Aid staff members – to explore topics such as black youth identity, wellness and self care, police and youth relations, and Caribbean and African history.

Aawaz – Peel CAS’s South Asian Committee brings increased awareness and knowledge of the complexities and diversity of South Asian families year round to better serve our South Asian clients.

South Asian Youth Alliance (SAYA) – SAYA is a group for South Asian youth to share their experiences, better understand their culture and give the committee members feedback on what they need from the agency.

Asian committee – New this year, Peel CAS has formed a committee focusing on how we can better serve the Asian communities and create awareness and understanding within the agency. The first ever South East Asian Achievement Bursary was awarded in 2013 to an Asian youth to assist with post-secondary education costs.

Aboriginal Initiatives Committee – Also new, this committee is focused on creating cultural safety for First Nations, Metis and Inuit families who come into contact with Peel CAS. The committee is working on improving the identification of these families and improving the ability of Peel CAS to provide services in a manner that acknowledges their distinct cultures.

The United Way of Peel Region’s Black Community Advisory Council (BCAC) recognized Peel Children’s Aid’s program The Village with a Youth Leadership Best in Community Award for black community legacy building and community mobilization. “We are proud to be acknowledged by BCAC for our community building efforts,” says Rav Bains, executive director of Peel Children’s Aid. “Peel Children’s Aid recognizes the importance of focusing on the needs of racialized families and youth in care, while exploring ways to provide better support to them.”
Working together for children and families

Some of Peel CAS’s community partners include – Peel Children’s Centre for mental health services for children, youth and adults; Associated Youth Services Peel to help children and youth experiencing mental illness or trouble with the law; Child Development Resources Peel, which provides a wide variety of support, guidelines and resources for parents, caregivers, and those working in the Early Learning and Child Care field; South Asian Welcome Centre, an educational and social services centre that reaches out to the community, especially south Asians; United Achievers’ Community Services that provides culturally sensitive programs, services and other supports primarily to the Caribbean and Black communities; and Peel Aboriginal Network, a social, cultural, education and awareness network to meet the needs of Aboriginal people—just to name a few. Together Peel CAS and our partners work with children and families for a stronger, healthier community.

The positive working relationships we’ve built with our community partners enhances the quality of services that Peel Children’s Aid offers to families. The agency’s Community Engagement department works with community partners to build integrated services to children and families in Peel. This team works with marginalized and ethno communities in various neighbourhoods within Peel to better understand and assess the needs of residents and serve families within these communities.

Highlights

• Within the past year, outreach has included work with three councils – the Black Advisory Council, South Asian Advisory Council and the Chinese Advisory Council – creating opportunities to partner on events and put resources back into the community including the Black Advisory Council Gala, Apna Gala on Women Empowerment and the Rock the Karaoke event.

• Peel CAS was on the planning committee for Impact of Family Violence – A South Asian Perspective Conference, in partnership with the Social Services Network, York Region Children’s Aid Society, York, Toronto, Peel and Durham Regional Police Services. This five year initiative will highlight the impact of family violence on women, children and families across Peel.

• Other initiatives included a mental health workshop with the Chinese Community Service Hub, a pilot project with Big Brothers and the Black Advisory council to provide mentorship to black children and youth, and partnering with Peel Children and Youth Initiatives (PCYI) to build support and help children in their early years.

• We are committed to keeping the community informed about our services. Over the past year, community education presentations increased by 26 per cent for a total of 121 presentations.
Working together to end family violence

Family violence impacts women, children and families in Peel. Keeping children safe and supporting families is a community effort. Peel CAS continues to work with Violence Against Women agencies to identify opportunities to work collaboratively together to serve women, children and families in Peel.

Peel CAS has a Domestic Violence (DV) Team which works with high-risk cases where children are impacted and/or exposed as a result of domestic violence. We are one of only a handful of CAS domestic violence teams that exist in Ontario. Our DV team is one of nine 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. As a result of this partnership with the Safe Centre of Peel, immediate intervention and assessments break down barriers and create safety for women struggling to break the cycle of abuse.

As of Nov 2012 the Safe Centre of Peel had 1586 clients visits related to Intimate Partner Violence.

Work is currently underway between the CAS and VAW sectors to develop a regional collaboration agreement that will focus on engaging men, high-risk management, and child custody and access issues. This collaboration will draw on best practices to create a consistent approach in the Central West Region.

On December 6, 2012, Peel CAS worked with the Safe Centre of Peel, the Peel Committee Against Women Abuse (PCAWA) and Peel Violence against women agencies on a “Shoe Memorial” to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Held at Celebration Square, this moving and impactful presentation was a spectacular visual tribute in honour of missing and murdered women and girls in Peel.

Other partnerships
- **Peel Children’s Aid Foundation** “leaves no child behind in our community.” The Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of abused, neglected and at-risk children and youth and disadvantaged families who are under the supervision of Peel CAS. The Foundation raises funds for urgently needed programs that offer support, education and hope to children and youth.
- **CART** – As part of the Child and Family Services Act, Peel Children’s Aid is required to form a Child Abuse Review Team (CART). Members of CART come from Peel CAS, the medical community, police, education system, early childhood education, community counseling services and Office of the Crown Attorney. This team reviews cases of abuse and works together with a focus on prevention and education to raise awareness to prevent child abuse from happening in our community.
- **Foster caregivers and volunteers** – Peel CAS can only achieve our mission to ensure the safety and well-being of children and strengthen families with the help of our foster caregivers and volunteers. 
  - Foster families are loving, generous people who make a positive difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in our community. Last year caring, loving homes for children in need were provided by 140 foster families and Peel CAS increased the number of foster placements available for children in youth in our care by 8%.
  - Volunteers at Peel CAS are members of the community who give the gift of time and abilities to children, youth and families. Each year, more than 450 volunteers support various agency programs and events at Peel CAS. Last year, volunteers provided more than 40,000 hours of time to the agency.
### Operating Revenue and Expenses April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013 (in thousands of dollars)</th>
<th>2012 (in thousands of dollars)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Child and Youth Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior year</td>
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<td>Income from other sources</td>
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<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption costs</td>
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<td>Boarding rates</td>
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<td>Clients’ personal needs</td>
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<td>Office administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other program costs</td>
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<td>Promotion and publicity</td>
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<td>Purchased services-client</td>
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<td><strong>Fund balance – End of year</strong></td>
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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, 2012 to March 31, 2013. For a list of our Board of Directors and more information about Peel CAS please visit [www.peelcas.org](http://www.peelcas.org).