

# CUPE 966 Written Submission City of Mississauga Council Meeting

September 25, 2024



The Canadian Union of Public Employees represents over 3,500 public sector workers across the impacted municipalities in the Region of Peel, including the regional municipality, City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, and Town of Caledon. These members are represented by CUPE 966, a composite local made up of 15 bargaining units representing various Region of Peel divisions and its lower tier municipalities.

On July 11, 2024, CUPE 966 deputed at the Region of Peels Council meeting on this topic and received supportive comments from Mayor Parrish, Mayor Groves, Councillor Maederios, and Councillor Rossu. Council passed a motion requesting that the Transition Board and the Government of Ontario recognize and protect CUPE 966 employees in any decision made by the provincial government, and to provide a decision in an expeditious and timely manner.

Changes to the regional delivery of services risk disrupting and negatively impacting the services already being delivered. The economies of scale and scope that made regional delivery efficient in the first place will be lost. Given the low level of public trust in this Provincial Government, it is crucial that this process be guided by transparency and accountability. This must start with broader consultations with the workers and the community, and must include public workplans, a public mandate, and a public set of recommendations.

The Peel Region has existed for almost 50 years. Following the initiative of Progressive Conservative Premier Bill Davis, the County of Peel became the Region of Peel in 1974. The rationale for the introduction of regional government remains relevant to this day: to provide effective local government to address the problems arising from rapid growth and increased development, and to offer a greater degree of sophistication in the planning process and the integration of services.<sup>12</sup>

With the passage of *The Hazel McCallion Act, 2023* (Bill 112), the premier first decided to restructure the entirety the Region by January 1, 2025. This position was scaled back in December 2023, narrowing the scope of the Transition Board to make recommendations only on transferring regional services of land use planning, water and wastewater (including stormwater), regional roads and waste management which includes the community recycling centers.<sup>3</sup> As per Bill 185, as of July 1, 2024 planning responsibilities were removed from the region and passed onto the lower tiered municipalities.

CUPE 966 has several concerns with the ongoing regional municipality restructuring exercise the province has decided to push forward. CUPE 966 represents workers in water and waste water, regional roads and waste management.

## 1. Lack of Transparency

The province and Transition Board continue to hide in secrecy and refuse to publicly release information surrounding the Peel Dissolution. Given the recent mishandling of Government affairs to benefit of private interests, it is unfathomable that a decision as important as this should be made without the benefit of full transparency and public knowledge. Trust in

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<sup>1</sup> Official Report of Debates (Hansard): Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Internet Archive. 1973 vol (3). <https://archive.org/details/v3hansard1973ontauoft/page/2594/mode/2up>

<sup>2</sup> CBC. 2023. "Ontario to Break up Peel Region in 2025, but Mayors Signal It Could Be a Nasty Divorce," May 18, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/peel-region-dissolve-legislation-ford-1.6847519>

<sup>3</sup> "Transition Board - Peel's Transition." n.d. <https://www.peelregion.ca/transition/board/>.

government cannot be restored if crucial policy processes continue to take place in secret, and appear to citizens as another backroom deal.

The Region of Peel has an estimated population, as of 2022, of approximately 1.5m residents. This number is forecast to grow to nearly 2m by 2041. If this region was a province, it would be the 5th largest by population.<sup>4</sup> This is a substantial population of Canadians and Canadian residents. It is also quite unique in its diversity with 52% of its population made up of immigrants<sup>5</sup> which is a ratio that exceeds the immigrant population of multicultural Toronto and the Region of York.<sup>6</sup> Nearly one-in-five of Ontario's immigrant population live in Peel.

The Transition Board's Recommendations to the Minister must be made public so government can be held accountable, and action can be demonstrated to be evidence-driven rather than driven by arbitrary political objectives. It is concerning that the Region of Peel and the councillors elected to represent the constituents of Peel have been excluded from any of the decision making, consultation, and are forced to react or make plans based on assumptions.

## 2. Water Privatization Threat Concerns

The regional restructuring introduces the threat of privatizing public services, specifically water, roads and waste management. Public services ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability. Most importantly, public services ensure access to all constituents – not just those who can pay more money for the services. When services are contracted out to a private corporation, the corporation's mandate is to make a profit, not to provide high-quality service that meets the community's needs. Private corporations are also not accountable to the public in the same way as public entities.

Repeatedly, we have seen examples of contracting out and privatization of public services imposing risk and resulting in huge costs, increasingly inequitable access or no access. Costs rise, quality suffers, and local control is weakened. Services become less accessible, projects are delayed, and public taxes are diverted from core services to corporate profits.

Of particular concern is the threat of privatized water services in Peel. Dozens of countries around the world have discovered the dangers of privatizing water utilities. Water privatization is a red flag to every Ontarian who remembers the tragedy of the [Walkerton](#) scandal, which was linked to the privatization of municipal water testing. The report issued after the disaster stated: "The evidence showed that the commissioners concerned themselves primarily with the financial side of the PUC's operations and had very little knowledge about matters relating to water safety and the operation of the system."<sup>7</sup> Due to the private public utilities commission (PUC) setup, the municipality relied solely on the PUC, which ultimately prioritized its profits.

CUPE is alarmed with the possibility of a commission or water agency taking over the water and wastewater services. Who would this commission or company be accountable to? Water is ultimately life and controls everything from the food we grow, bathing ourselves and keeping us hydrated. The World Health Organization (WHO) states: "Safe and readily available water is

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<sup>4</sup> This comparison is made by comparing the 2021 Peel population consensus figures against provincial population in the same year - Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0002-03 Population and dwelling counts: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions (municipalities)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.peelregion.ca/planning-maps/newcomers>

<sup>6</sup> [Immigration, citizenship and mobility 2021 | Census Information Hub \(arcgis.com\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/inside-walkerton-canada-s-worst-ever-e-coli-contamination-1.887200>

important for public health, whether it is used for drinking, domestic use, food production or recreational purposes. Improved water supply and sanitation, and better management of water resources, can boost countries' economic growth and can contribute greatly to poverty reduction.<sup>8</sup> The UN General Assembly has explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation for over a decade and states: "Everyone has the right to sufficient, continuous, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use."

This is a disaster in waiting for anyone who has followed global stories of privatized water. Shoddy work by private water operators have led to several public health disasters in nearby cities, such as in Hamilton. In 2004, Hamilton took back control over its water and wastewater system in 2004, after private providers oversaw drastic job cuts and massive raw sewage leaks for more than a decade. The city is still suffering the long-lasting consequences of that decision to privatize their water services. In November 2022, city workers discovered a sewer hole that allowed 337 million litres of raw sewage to be flushed directly into Hamilton Harbour for more than 25 years. Their investigation traced the accident to a private contractor who incorrectly set up a sanitary sewer pipe to drain into a pipe that was supposed to flow stormwater into Lake Ontario. The city said fixing the hole cost them almost \$30,000.

The UK's largest private water operator, Thames Water, provides us an example of the most extreme consequences of water and wastewater privatization. The private corporation racked up billions of pounds of debt since its sale in 1989, while raising little new funding from shareholders and paying out billions of pounds in dividends. On top of that, it was revealed this year that Thames Water oversaw a 163% increase in the duration of sewage dumping into rivers—an issue its management could have fixed if it invested in better infrastructure. Now critics are calling for the private utility to be renationalized.

CUPE continues to see examples of municipalities working to bring services back in-house after horrible experiences with private corporations. A recent example is the City of Toronto's history with private solid waste collection, which has been a failed experiment. There are several key measures that define service excellence in solid waste curbside collection: diversion rates, costs, and complaints (known as service requests). Currently, there are over 18,000 more complaints regarding private side collection than in the public service divisions. This situation has persisted for a long time. Quite simply, based on resident experience, the public sector is better.

CUPE isolated all solid waste collection service requests for the years 2021 through 2023 (accessed through Open Data). Three sets of data were created: west of Yonge, east of Yonge, and wards that intersect Yonge (serviced by both public and private). The breakdown is:

	2021	2022	2023	Total
<b>TO West:</b>	44,678	52,093	44,980	141,751
<b>TO East:</b>	40,313	44,045	38,912	123,270
<b>Mixed:</b>	18,742	21,712	17,881	58,335

In total, excluding the intersecting wards, there are more than 18,000 complaints coming from the west end. When Etobicoke data is considered, it gets worse for the private sector. Sixteen

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water#:~:text=Safe%20and%20readily%20available%20water,contribute%20greatly%20to%20poverty%20reduction.>

percent of total 2023 complaints come from just the three Etobicoke wards. This is the solid waste quadrant that has been private the longest. The City of Toronto is now working to bring curbside collection back in-house in District 2 and has put forward a [motion](#) to start this process.

Ultimately, privatization of water and public services leads to:<sup>9</sup>

- Rate increases
- Lesser quality of services
- Companies that are accountable to shareholders, not consumers
- Increased corruption
- Reduced local control and public rights
- Higher costs – private financing costs more than public financing
- Job losses
- Difficulty to reverse back to public
- Inequitable accessibility (reduces access for low-income)
- Threat of bulk water exports

### 3. Waste Management Privatization and Downloading Threat Concerns

There are six Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) in the Region of Peel. All the CRCs are currently operated by CUPE 966 members. Heart Lake CRC was operated by Miller Waste Systems Inc. when it opened in 2014 with its previous contract ending in November 2021. During this time, Region of Peel staff completed an analysis to determine if the Region should continue to contract the operation of the CRC or move the operation in-house in 2022. CUPE 966 lobbied the Region of Peel to bring Heart Lake in house because we believed that contracting out was more expensive. Region of Peel staff determined that Heart Lake CRC was the most costly CRC when contracted to Miller Waste and a recommendation was made then approved by Council to move Heart Lake in house ultimately saving the Region of Peel \$317 thousand annually and an overall savings of \$0.6 million<sup>10</sup>.

Bringing waste management in house is ultimately better for the environment due to the Region's accountability to all levels of government's environmental goals and the public. Third party contractors are ultimately accountable to their shareholders and profits. Waste diversion and recycling are not top of mind for third party contractors. The Region of Peel has most recently begun diverting rubble (ceramic, dirt, and bricks) meaning that this waste is not going to the landfill.

For instance, The Region's CRCs are one of the few municipalities to implement a Bicycle Recycling Program. The CRC Bicycle Recycling program allows educational/non-profits/charitable organizations to pick up bikes that are collected from the CRCs at no monetary cost. These bikes are refurbished and given back to the community for free. From 2021 year to date, the Region of Peel has collected and donated over 4,065 bicycles and diverted over 56 tonnes of material. The success of this program led to a positive spill over to other municipalities with Barrie, York Region and Thunder Bay implementing similar programs shortly after. Furthermore, this program was the primary reason the Region received the Wally Wells Young Leader award from the Ontario Public Works Association. As a result, many municipalities see the Region of Peel as a leader in Waste Management.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/top10-reasonstoopposewaterprivatization.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://pub-peelregion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=12225>

### How much is a Tonne?

Here are some comparisons to visualize how much a tonne actually is<sup>11</sup>:

100 medium-sized refrigerators  
 50 washing machines  
 25 queen-sized mattresses  
 10 adult polar bears  
 3 adult male elephants  
 1 large male giraffe  
 2,000 domestic cats

Most recently, the Region of Peel began two pilot projects at the CRCs with the goal of reducing cost and improving waste diversion. The first pilot project focuses on diverting Ceramics Tiles, Brick, Dirt and Sod. This material is used to backfill farmland, quarries and excavated areas that will be used for development. This pilot project was estimated to save the Region \$40,000/year and reduce waste outputs at the CRCs by 5%. The second pilot project focuses on diverting office chairs which will generate revenue and improve our waste diversion rate. Currently, the CRCs are performing market research to examine the feasibility of diverting porcelain (Examples: Toilets and Sinks).

Downloading waste management to lower tiered municipalities would mean that lower tiered municipalities would take over their own community depot and amalgamate employees. This would bring up a load of questions that need to be answered. For example. If waste management was downloaded, would a Mississauga Resident be able to drop off material at a Brampton Depot? Second, the Region of Peel operates only one waste transfer station that services all three municipalities. In 2023 this transfer station (PIWMF) handled 69,860 tonnes of waste, 68,990 tonnes of organics and 37,750 tonnes of yard waste. The transfer station is also responsible for composting and sorting. Would this transfer station now become a pay per use service by other municipalities? Or would each municipality build their own transfer station – meaning large capital expense despite being strapped for budget or simply forgoing diverting waste. Compost is a viable product that contributes to diversion levels contributing to the goal of diverting useful material from landfill. The Peel composting facility produced 10,041 tonnes of compost last year.

Another major unintended consequence that will likely happen if waste management becomes downloaded. Currently, all the Region of Peels recycling vendors that deliver commodities to be recycled, offer the Region a more cost-effective rate based on the volume delivered. Vendors offer better pricing to large suppliers as they want a reliable and constant stream of material. The same would apply for revenue generating commodities such as electronics, scrap metal and white goods. Downloading waste management to municipalities will likely lead to greater costs and less revenue when contracts are put out for tender. This will likely affect other departments as well.

In terms of efficiency, the Region has also set up its logistics and runs to best serve the communities. Fragmenting the service through downloading would result in waste management trucks passing each other, affecting the efficiency of routes. The Region of Peel is also able to pull staff from runs and cover areas when operationally needed – an ability that would be lost should the service be downloaded. Ultimately, waste management when operated by the Region of Peel is meant to divert waste from the landfill and recycle/reuse materials. No new landfill permit

<sup>11</sup> <https://busybins.co.uk/blog/waste-disposal-questions>

gas been issued in many years. The Region of Peel's landfill is near Sarnia and the Region's waste management system has made a huge positive environmental impact. The recent introduction of recycling rubble has already diverted several tractor trailer loads of garbage from the landfill this year. Achievements such as this should be recognized, celebrated and supported – not dissolved.

#### 4. Maintain Status Quo

CUPE and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) have both expressed concerns about the cumulative impact of removing regional responsibilities and downloading them to lower-tiered municipalities. Contrary to the province's intentions, these changes will slow project planning approvals and make them more costly for the sector. Many municipal governments and environmental groups have documented these impacts through individual submissions to the province.<sup>12</sup> CUPE has recommended in previous submissions that status quo continue for municipal governance and regional responsibilities.

CUPE and AMO do not support eliminating regional responsibilities – especially when the province has failed to consult with the right stakeholders. The Region of Peel has highlighted that, “services are delivered through a deeply integrated model of service delivery, allowing for economies of scale, efficiencies and value for taxpayer dollars”.<sup>13</sup> In an environment of rapid growth, the absence of a coordinated approach to planning, and building water and wastewater systems, and infrastructure, creates a significant risk of either under-servicing or over-building, which would overburden the property tax base. Often, it is more efficient to provide certain services over an area that includes multiple local municipalities. For this reason, Ontario has used its municipal governance structure and designated regions to provide services to residents and businesses.<sup>14</sup> Changing a governance model with little to no consultation with stakeholders, especially when the system has been working effectively, makes no sense.

The Region of Peel also manages 1700 km of roads, including: upkeep ,repair of signs, manholes, catch basins, curbs, gutters, guardrails and asphalt as well as ditches and culverts. Winter maintenance includes snow and ice clearing through a staff rotation of three shifts and a 24 hour standby team while spring clean up and sweeping upkeep the quality of roads. Roads services make sense to provide in a large geographical planning and infrastructure model through the Region in order to plan for developments, traffic considerations, onramps etc.

The Region is the best positioned to run the services it provides – especially services such as roads and water which have large scale operations and infrastructure planning. Dissolving services currently provided by the Regional Municipality will result in their downloading to the lower-tiered municipalities. Each lower-tier municipality will need to ensure they have the necessary assets, equipment and staffing to provide these services. The local-level delivery of services that have been delivered regionally for the past fifty years will result in duplication, overlap, and poor planning, as each municipality will be focused solely within its boundaries and unable to link services effectively across the region. These are all factors that supported the need for regional municipalities in the first place. Status quo should remain for Ontario's municipal governance structure.

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<sup>12</sup><https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Submissions/2024/AMOSubmissionMMAHENEonBill185OtherEROPostings.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.peelregion.ca/transition/board/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.amo.on.ca/about-us/municipal-101/how-local-government-works>

## 5. Employee Retention Concerns

The announcement of the dissolution of Peel has led to additional negative consequences, including a mass exodus of trained and specialized employees who have left the Region of Peel due to the uncertainty of continuing work. These employees have moved to other municipalities, often accepting lower rates of pay, simply to ensure job security and avoid the possibility of layoffs.

As rumors continue to circulate, employees are applying for and accepting work elsewhere. CUPE Local 966 concluded its bargaining round with the Public Works Division and successfully negotiated higher wage increases along with premiums because the Region was having difficulty retaining its employees after the threat of dissolution was announced. OPSEU has also been vocal about their concerns regarding paramedics leaving the region for other municipalities.<sup>15</sup>

In the August 2023 Region of Peels report to the Transition Board titled “Bill 112: Voice of Peel Employees: Questions & Concerns”, the region stressed that “the announcement of the dissolution of Peel (Bill 112) has understandably triggered significant anxiety and stress amongst Peel employees... Staff are struggling with the news of Peel’s dissolution and the uncertainty it brings to their future, and the future of their families and those who depend on them.”<sup>16</sup>

## 6. If its not broken, don’t fix it.

CUPE questions the provinces intention to spend time, money, and energy in dissolving the Region of Peel’s services, despite the services operating smoothly. In May, to add further insult to injury, the province announced that the Region would be responsible for the costs associated with the Transition Board<sup>17</sup>. Peel taxpayers will be forced to foot the \$4.2million bill despite having no information from the Transition Board to date.

The Region of Peel provides [award winning water services](#) to their constituents. In 2023, the Region of Peel delivered water and wastewater services at a rate which was 30% lower than the GTA average per household, and the regions drinking water system received the highest possible inspection rating of 100% by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.<sup>18</sup> Peel Region’s Water and Wastewater Division was awarded Infrastructure Award of Excellence from the Greater Toronto Sewer and Water Construction Association and the G.E. Booth Water Resource Recovery Facility, received the project of the year award from Ontario Public Works Association.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.insauga.com/paramedic-mass-exodus-over-peel-region-split-could-leave-mississauga-and-brampton-at-risk-union-warns/>

<sup>16</sup> Region of Peel. (August 2023) Bill 112: Voice of Peel Employees: Questions & Concerns. Pg. 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> [Peel Region calls on Ontario to pay for transition board's bills | CBC News](#)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.peelregion.ca/2023-year-in-review/#:~:text=Awards%20and%20recognition,implementing%20leading%20edge%20green%20infrastructure.>

## Conclusion

CUPE continues to protect and improve the public services the residents of Peel rely on, respect, and safeguard the workers who deliver these services, and inject much needed transparency in a process dominated by secrecy and uncertainty.

Dissolving Peel Region will not save taxpayers money. The Ford government has yet to publicly share any reports or Transition Board recommendations that demonstrate taxpayer savings. Previous reports by various firms have consistently emphasized the need for extensive and proper financial and infrastructure support to manage any type of dissolution. At a time when municipalities are strapped for cash, it makes no sense to spend public tax dollars on breaking up services, only to download costs onto the lower-tier municipalities—especially when these services are currently functioning well.

CUPE continues to observe municipalities bringing services back in-house because they ultimately cost less. The premise of cost savings through privatization is not proving to be as advertised. The reality is that public services provide better quality control, flexibility, operational efficiency, increased staff capacity, better staff morale, and better support for vulnerable citizens. Additionally, problems with contractors are avoided. When services are run in-house, local governments re-establish community control of public service delivery.

CUPE 966 asks that Council pass a motion requesting that the Transition Board and the Government of Ontario recognize and protect CUPE 966 employees in any decision made by the provincial government, and to provide a decision in an expeditious and timely manner. CUPE 966 remains available and open to discussions.

### Additional Resources:

[‘The anxiety’: Peel workers concerned Ford government may privatize water and wastewater service, union says](#)

[Water Privatization: Facts and Figures](#)

[Council of Canadians: GOING BLUE: TURNING THE TIDE ON WATER PRIVATIZATION](#)

[CUPE Submission to Transition Board on Peel Dissolution](#)

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