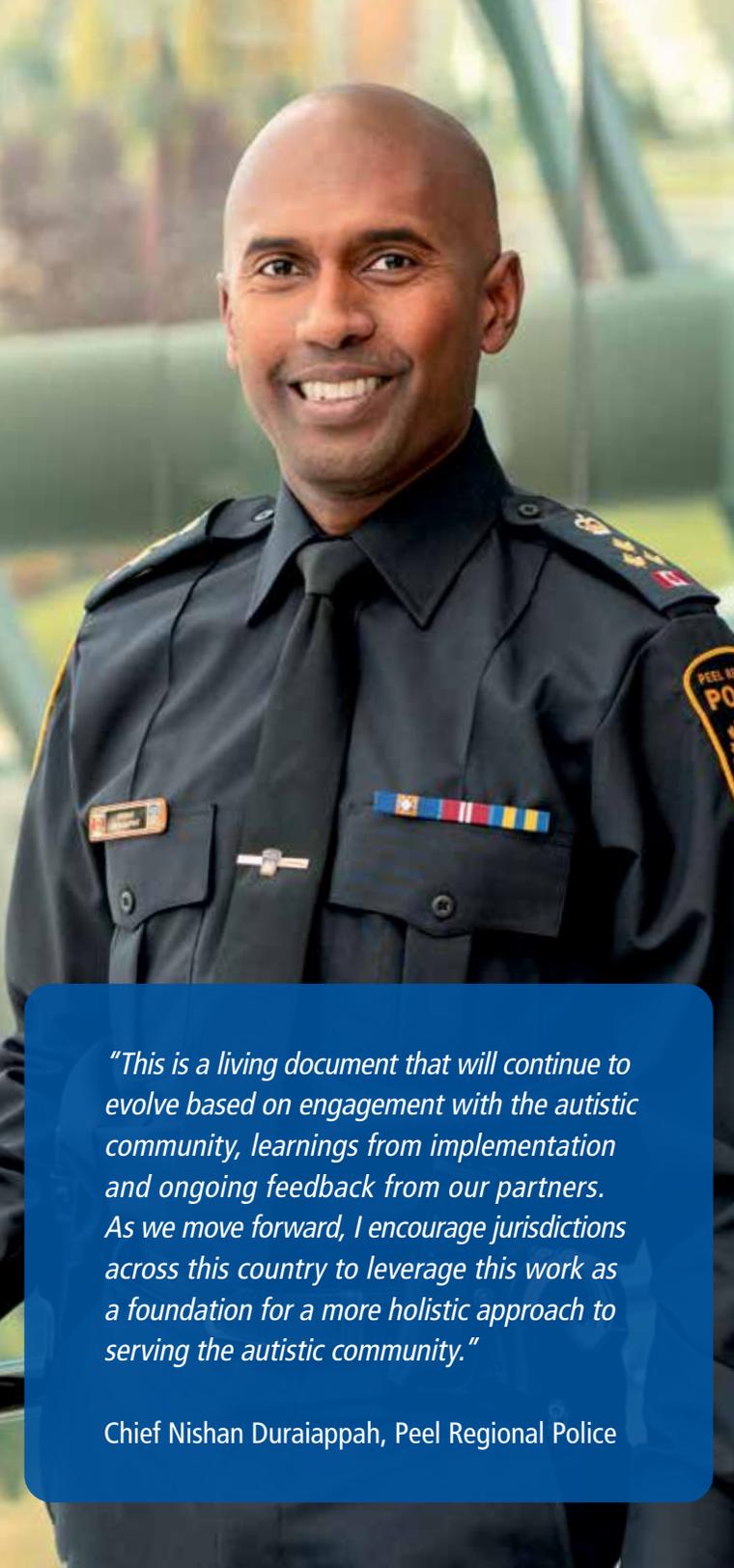




Serving Peel Region's Autistic Community

A first step to Peel Regional Police's commitment, in partnership with the Peel Autism Collaborative.



Building on our Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

On behalf of Peel Regional Police and our community partners, we are pleased to present this strategy to serve Peel’s autistic community.

It has become increasingly clear that the policing sector needs to do more to effectively understand, engage and respond to autistic individuals and their families. This document is the result of a highly collaborative approach between Peel Regional Police and many agencies that are invested in achieving the best outcomes for individuals with autism. It builds on a number of steps that we have taken to enhance service to priority populations and is a direct extension of the **Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) plan** that we launched in June 2022, to realign our service delivery model with the current and emerging needs of our communities.

In November 2022, Peel Regional Police reached out to community partners and members to explore opportunities to best serve Peel’s autistic community and their families. Through these conversations, and ongoing engagement, the Peel Autism Collaborative (PAC) was formed to guide Peel Regional Police and create a forum to identify opportunities and recommend strategies to enhance how we serve individuals in the autistic community. Peel Regional Police would like to thank and recognize the following partners for their contributions and ongoing collaboration.

“This is a living document that will continue to evolve based on engagement with the autistic community, learnings from implementation and ongoing feedback from our partners. As we move forward, I encourage jurisdictions across this country to leverage this work as a foundation for a more holistic approach to serving the autistic community.”

Chief Nishan Duraiappah, Peel Regional Police



Mr. Majd Darwich

Serving the autistic community

Autism is present across all intersectionalities including culture, ethnicity, race, and gender identity. Approximately 1-2% of the Canadian population is on the autism spectrum.

Every autistic individual is unique. How one person might present during an interaction with police or other first responders may be entirely different to another. In one Ontario-based study, it was identified that 16% of autistic individuals (participating in the study) had an interaction with police over an 18 month period.*

To ensure these interactions result in positive outcomes, it is important for officers to have a working knowledge of autism to recognize the indicators and tailor an appropriate response – there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach. Beyond the initial response, there are steps that police and other first responders can take further ‘upstream’ to build relationships with the autistic community, establish greater familiarity and comfort with police and reduce the likelihood of a crisis response in the first place.

Through this strategy, Peel Regional Police and its partners have adopted a comprehensive approach to improve service delivery that we will monitor and assess over time.

*Source: Tint, Palucka, Bradley, Weiss and Lunsky (2017)

What is Autism?

*Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts the way a person communicates and relates to people and the world around them. It can affect body language and posture, social interactions and relationships and sensory processing. Being autistic means that your brain may process information differently than someone who is non-autistic or ‘neurotypical’.

Autism exists on a spectrum. While all people on the spectrum will experience some of the differences attributed to autism, the degree to which each autistic person experiences them, and the amount of support they need, varies considerably. This is sometimes influenced by whether the person has co-occurring health conditions as well as the accessibility and relative safety of the environment they are in.

*Adapted from Autism Ontario

An estimated
135,000

people in Ontario are on the autism spectrum.



1 in 66
children

are diagnosed with autism.

Males are
4X more likely

to be diagnosed with autism.



Our Approach – Four Key Pillars

In consultation with members of the Peel Autism Collaborative, we have established a strategy based on four key pillars to guide how Peel Regional Police and community partners work together to strengthen service to the autistic community. The approach is supported by five key principles and is aligned with the Provincial Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) framework (see page 7).

1

Training and Education

Support officers to effectively respond to the needs of autistic individuals through enhanced knowledge and training.

2

Community Engagement

Proactively engage with the autistic community to build mutual understanding, partnerships and awareness.

3

Collaborative Service Delivery

Work with our partners to establish a coordinated approach to serve autistic individuals and their families.

4

System Enhancements

Explore opportunities to improve existing processes and systems to enhance the effectiveness of service delivery.

Five Guiding Principles

Culturally Responsive:

Develop approaches that are culturally responsive, equitable, inclusive and in keeping with the diverse needs of the autistic community.

Collaboration and Partnership:

Build effective partnerships and collaborative solutions to best serve the community.

Evidence-Based:

Ensure decisions are based on data and evaluation and that we set goals that are Strategic, Measurable Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound (SMART).

Inclusive:

Incorporate the perspectives of autistic people and caregivers in how we implement this strategy.

Communication:

Engage in ongoing, two-way communication with our partners and communities.

Actions

In partnership with the Peel Autism Collaborative, the following actions will guide how we implement our strategy to serve the autistic community in Peel.

Strategic Pillar: Training and Education



Key Actions

- Provide ongoing training for all front line officers at Peel Regional Police to recognize autism indicators and tailor an appropriate response
- Enhance existing training on supporting persons in crisis to include a greater focus on autism and other neurodiversities and seek opportunities to integrate an autism lens into other training curriculum
- Establish an Internal Support Network (ISN) comprised of Peel Police employees who have family members with autism/allies to provide awareness, education and support
- Deliver specialized training for a cross-section of mobilization officers and uniformed members
- Explore the development of an integrated approach to training with our partners including culturally responsive and scenario-based approaches

Strategic Pillar: Community Engagement



Key Actions

- Seek opportunities for feedback from caregivers and individuals with lived experience in collaboration with our partners
- Develop a 'non-crisis' model of engagement to strengthen connections between officers and the autistic community with consideration to intersectional identifiers and the diversity of Peel
- Establish cross representation between the Peel Autism Collaborative and the Chief's Resource Council and seek other opportunities to build relationships with leaders in the autism community
- Create opportunities for new and existing members to attend agencies/programs that provide services to the autistic community
- Establish workshops and other knowledge mobilization opportunities to continue to build community awareness jointly with the Peel Autism Collaborative

Strategic Pillar: Collaborative Service Delivery



Key Actions

- Work with the Peel Autism Collaborative to establish clear channels and pathways to refer individuals and families who are not connected with resources
- Establish joint safety planning practices and protocols to support a coordinated approach between Peel Police and community partners
- Utilize the Peel Autism Collaborative as a community of practice to share information, resources and to jointly plan for complex situations
- Seek opportunities to follow-up on calls for service with our partners to provide additional support, build relationships and reduce the need for ongoing crisis response

Strategic Pillar: System Enhancements



Key Actions

- Explore opportunities to strengthen how officers receive information on vulnerable persons when responding to calls for service (Vulnerable Person's Registry)
- Work with our partners to identify innovative approaches to mitigate risk associated with wandering and missing persons
- Enhance data collection practices to help shape further programming and initiatives
- Leverage the Peel Autism Collaborative to identify and address barriers and gaps in service to the community

How this strategy aligns with the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) framework

Peel Regional Police has adopted the provincial CSWB Framework as a core foundation for our Service. The framework is a tool or 'lens' that shapes how we support the safety and well-being of our communities by focusing on four key areas of intervention: Incident Response, Risk Intervention, Prevention and Social Development. The following outlines how this Strategy aligns with the CSWB framework.



INCIDENT RESPONSE

Responding to circumstances that require an urgent or non-urgent response by police or other crisis-driven services.

Alignment: Providing access to education and training to ensure an effective and supportive response to autistic individuals.

RISK INTERVENTION

Identifying and mitigating circumstances where there is an elevated risk of harm.

Alignment: Working with our community partners to provide timely supports to individuals and families to address immediate needs e.g. joint safety planning and complex case coordination.

PREVENTION

Proactively addressing community needs and risk factors that are likely to result in harms if left unmitigated.

Alignment: Collaborative approaches to service delivery to reduce incident response and establish clear channels and pathways to connect individuals to appropriate services.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting and maintaining safety and well-being through collaboration and upstream approaches.

Alignment: Ongoing engagement with the Peel Autism Collaborative/individuals with autism and their families, e.g., initiatives to proactively connect with the autistic community.

A SAFER COMMUNITY TOGETHER

PeelPolice.ca/CSWB

