

For Information

DATE: April 13, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **PEEL REGION RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE REGION OF PEEL - 2005 TO 2009 TRENDS**

FROM: David Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

**OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this report is to highlight trends about Peel Resident attitudes towards the Region of Peel. Resident attitudes are measured through surveys conducted by an external research firm, Environics Research Group.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Peel residents feel that transportation, taxes, development/infrastructure and crime are the most important problem areas facing the Region today.
- More than eight in ten (82 per cent) of survey respondents are satisfied with Regional government; a ten point increase compared to 2005.
- The top spending preferences for Peel Residents include public health, services for people with disabilities, network of roads, air quality improvement and services to seniors.
- About eight in ten (79 per cent) of survey respondents rated the quality of life in Peel either excellent or good.
- Survey respondent concern for climate change, while still high, has lessened in intensity since 2007.

**DISCUSSION****1. Background**

Regional Council's Accountability and Transparency policy includes direction to regularly measure and report on the awareness of, and satisfaction with, the programs and services provided by the Region of Peel.

Environics Research Group (ERG) is a private research firm which conducts semi-annual surveys on citizen attitudes towards government across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The survey is called Focus GTA.

The Region of Peel has subscribed to the survey each year, beginning in 2005, to track Peel residents' attitude toward general municipal issues, as well as their perceptions and attitudes toward the Region of Peel.

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Anywhere from 500 to 800 Peel residents are interviewed by telephone within each iteration of the survey. For the most recent results, November 2009, 525 Peel adult residents were interviewed between October 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The sample has been weighted to ensure that it is representative of the actual populations of the municipalities of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga.

The information presented in the following pages are survey results as reported by ERG. No additional analysis is provided.

**2. Focus GTA Survey Results and Trends****a) Most Important Local Problem**

When Peel Region residents are asked what is the single most important problem facing their municipality today (asked unprompted, without offering response choices), the largest concerns have been consistently around Transportation, Crime, Taxes and Development/Infrastructure, over the past four years (see Table 1).

Crime in particular was a hot topic in the second half of 2008, overtaking Transportation as the most important perceived problem. However in 2009, Crime concerns have declined to the lowest levels in four years.

**Table 1: Most Important Local Problem (2005-2009)**

	Apr 2005 %	Oct 2005 %	Apr 2006 %	May 2007 %	Nov 2007 %	May 2008 %	Nov 2008 %	Apr 2009 %	Nov 2009 %
Transportation	18	16	23	21	21	19	17	15	14
Transit	4	4	9	9	10	7	8	8	6
Traffic	14	11	13	12	11	11	9	6	8
Taxes	5	9	9	9	11	7	9	6	8
Development/infrastructure	7	10	6	9	7	10	7	5	7
Uncontrolled/urban sprawl	6	8	5	9	6	5	6	4	4
Road/infrastructure issues	-	-	1	-	-	5	2	1	3
Economics	>1	1	2	4	1	2	6	10	7
Crime	10	12	14	11	10	9	19	9	6
Road repair/snow removal	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	5	5
Environment	9	4	7	13	6	7	4	7	4
Hospitals/health care	6	6	4	4	9	6	5	3	4
H1N1 flu/pandemic/vaccination	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4

For the most part, results tend to be somewhat consistent year after year. One area experiencing an increasing trend in more recent years is the area of economic concerns. Results are notably higher in 2008 and 2009 compared to previous years. Also, hospitals/health care concerns appear to have peaked in the later half of 2007, and declining since then.

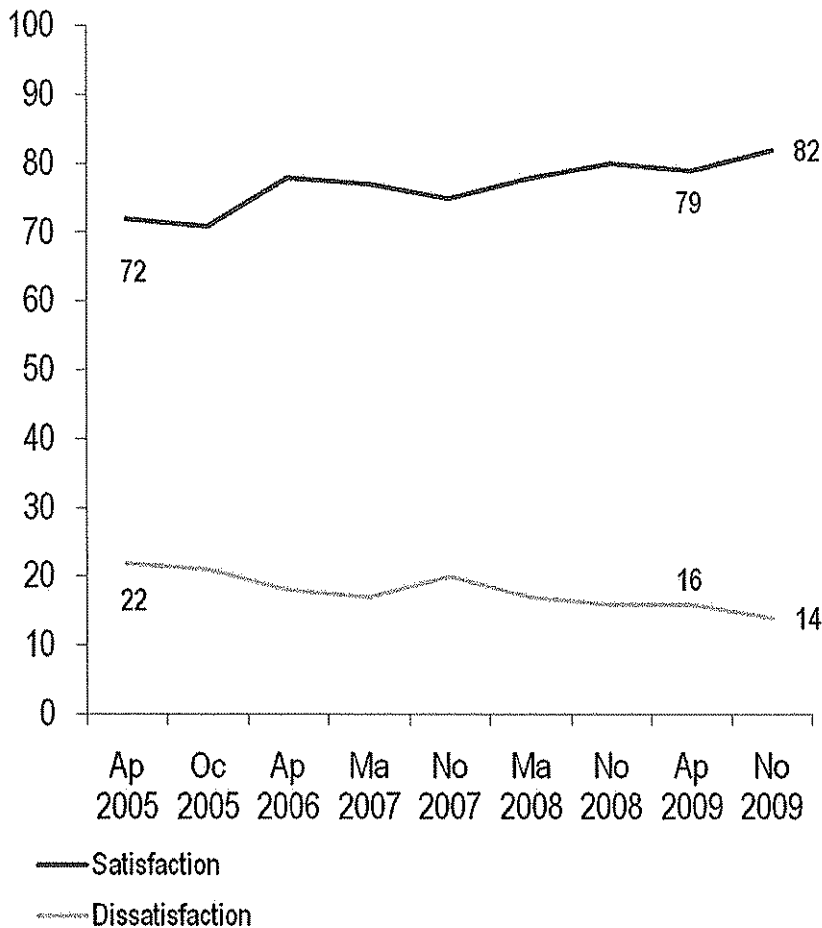
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**b) Satisfaction with the Region of Peel Government**

In the fall of 2009, when residents were asked how satisfied they were with Region of Peel, more than eight in ten were satisfied (82 per cent) with their Regional government. Fewer than two in ten were dissatisfied (14 per cent). Two percent offered no opinion. Overall, satisfaction has consistently trended upwards, increasing 10 per cent over a four-year period starting from the spring of 2005 (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: Satisfaction with the Region of Peel Government**



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**c) Spending Preferences**

Residents were asked about their spending preferences on 19 Regional services. For each service, respondents were specifically asked "Keeping in mind that taxes may increase, if spending increases, do you think that the Region of Peel should be spending more, less or about the same as now on each of the following services...?". Table 2 shows the per cent of respondents who said that the Region of Peel should spend more on the service, ordered from highest to lowest in the last 2009 iteration of the survey.

**Table 2: Spend More on Regional Service (2005-2009)**

	2005 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %
Public health	70	56	54	54
Services for people with disabilities	61	60	57	53
Network of roads	52	55	51	47
Measures to improve air quality	-	-	50	47
Services for seniors	51	60	58	46
Employment services	-	36	41	44
Measures to improve water quality	52	50	42	43
Mental health services	-	50	42	42
Child care	52	50	50	41
Police services	51	44	48	34
Ambulance services	38	38	36	33
More and better recycling programs	-	-	-	33
Social housing	30	37	34	29
Social assistance	25	39	39	23
Services to immigrants	25	28	26	23
Financial assistance to local community groups	30	26	28	21
Disposal of garbage	26	29	24	20
Arts and culture	-	23	21	17
Garbage collection at curbside	17	17	16	11

The top spending preferences for Peel Residents include Public Health, services for people with disabilities, network of roads, air quality improvement and services to seniors. These five areas of services are historically consistent also, although water quality, child care and Police services experienced higher results in previous years.

Garbage collection and disposal, and the Arts are services that are historically the least favoured candidates for increased spending.

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**PEEL REGION RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE REGION OF PEEL - 2005 TO 2009 TRENDS****d) Quality of Life in Peel Region**

Residents were asked how they rate the quality of life in Peel. About eight in ten respondents rated the quality of life either excellent or good. Table 3 shows the historical results for the same question. Overall, the results appear to be consistent year-over-year, except for a dip in the fall of 2008. It is speculated that the November 2008 result was likely due to the economic downturn that we experienced during that time, however, this cannot be verified with the survey results.

**Table 3: Perceived Quality of Life in Peel Region**

	<b>Apr 2006</b>	<b>Nov 2007</b>	<b>May 2008</b>	<b>Nov 2008</b>	<b>Nov 2009</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Excellent	21	29	28	17	26
Good	59	56	56	60	53
Fair	16	12	13	20	19
Poor	4	3	2	2	2

It is interesting to note that those who are very satisfied with the Region of Peel government are more likely to rate the quality of life in Peel Region as excellent. In other words, the data shows a positive correlation between views of government and views of the quality of life in the Region.

Respondents were also asked to rate 33 services which contribute to quality of life, both on importance and on performance. Appendix I and Appendix II provides a summary of results from this analysis. Almost half of the 33 services were rated both high performing and important (see quadrant B in Appendix II).

There are nine services which were deemed to be of high importance, but are performing below average (see quadrant A in Appendix II). These are areas of opportunity. By increasing the performance of these services it may be possible to improve positive perception of government in the Peel Region. The areas of opportunity tend to focus around housing policy and programs.

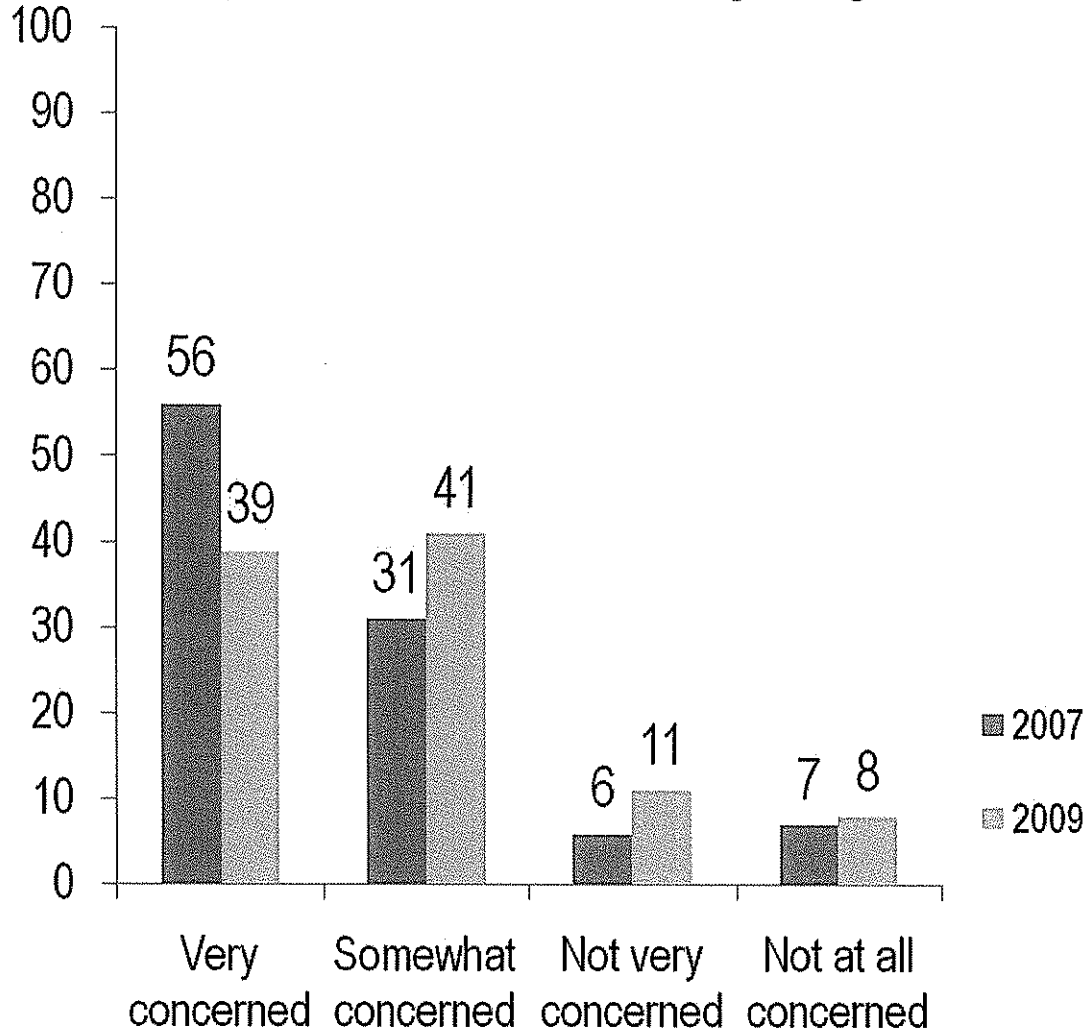
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**e) Concern about Climate Change**

In recent years, the topic of climate change has gained a lot of attention in the scientific world as well as the media. Residents of Peel were asked about their concerns over climate change in 2007 and 2009. The results are represented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Concern about Climate Change among Peel Residents**



Over two years, the level of concern about climate change has remained relatively high, although the intensity of concern has decreased from a high of 56 per cent in 2007, to 39 per cent in 2009. There is also a similar pattern regarding support efforts to address climate change; efforts such as the Region of Peel changing practices and policies by reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions and that of the Region as a whole.

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**CONCLUSION**

The research administered by ERG has many possible uses. Information obtained from the Focus GTA survey can be used as an additional resource to inform and influence Peel's public policy agenda. The survey results help keep Peel on top of citizen priority areas and identify potential public policy gaps.

Overall, residents are generally satisfied with Regional Government. Many services deemed important for quality of life in the Region, are performing well. We also see that there are potential opportunities for improvement, especially in the area of housing policy and programs.

Crime has been declining as a top-of-mind local concern. However, this may be due to the increased attention on economic issues due to the recent economic downturn. While concern with economic issues has increased in importance, more residents continue to be concerned with transportation issues. It is helpful for us to understand that results are consistent with Council's emphasis on goods movement and protection of corridors and significant to any consideration of capital improvements that includes roads, transit ways and transit hubs.

Finally, climate change continues to be a concern among residents although today it is with less intensity than two years ago. Good air quality is reported as an important factor for the quality of life in the Region and many residents feel that spending more on air quality programs is appropriate.

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**Approved for Submission:**



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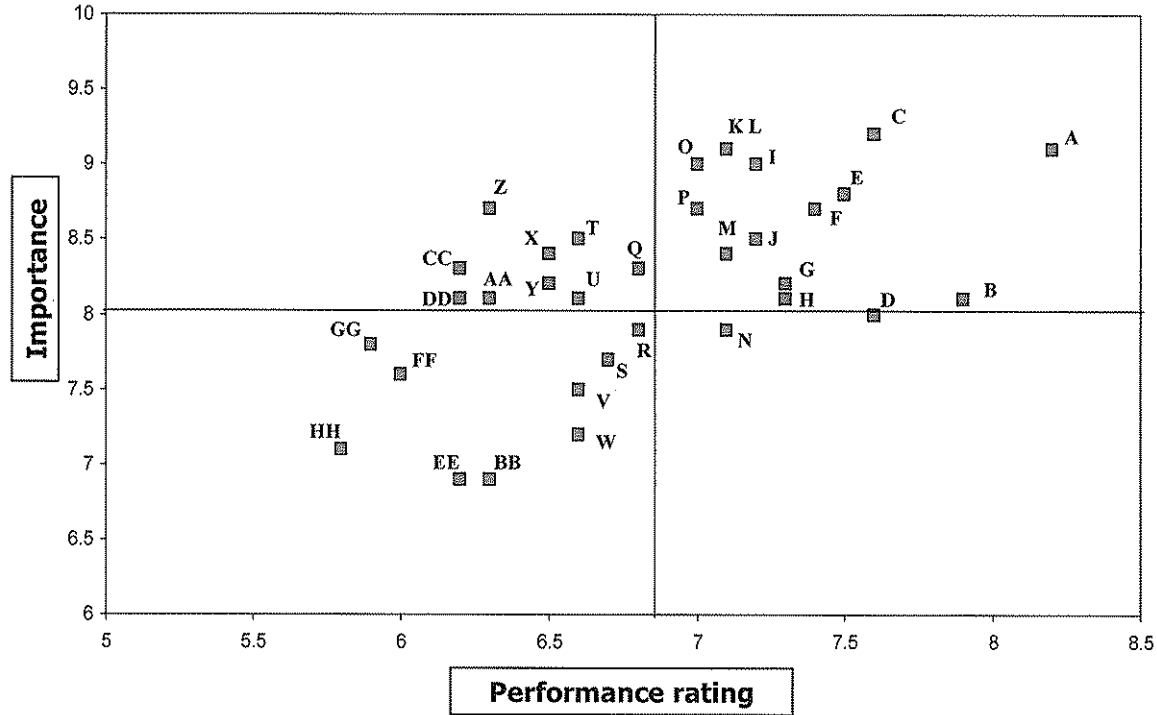
c. Legislative Services

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APPENDIX I

Quality of Life in Peel Region - Importance to Performance Ratings (Nov 2009)





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APPENDIX II

Quality of Life in Peel Region – Quadrant Analysis November 2008-2009\*

Areas of opportunity – Quadrant A

(Areas that perform below average but correlate high with overall satisfaction.)

- > Housing/support services for seniors (Q)
- > Emergency housing for women/children fleeing family violence (T)
- > Low poverty levels (U)
- > Housing/support for disabled/mentally ill youth at risk (X)
- > Good public transit system (Y)
- > Good employment opportunities (Z)
- > Housing for all stages of life (AA)
- > Opportunity to engage in decision-making (CC)
- > Keeping taxes low (DD)

Drivers of satisfaction – Quadrant B

(Areas that rank high in overall importance and satisfaction.)

- > Good quality/enough water (A)
- > Collection of organics and recyclables (B) **Moved from Quadrant C to B**
- > Public safety (C)
- > Healthy environment (E)
- > Good air quality (F)
- > Clean/well-maintained buildings (G)
- > Tolerance of ethnic diversity (H)
- > Well-managed local government (I)
- > Access to post-secondary education/training (J)
- > Access to health care/public health info clinics/classes (K)
- > Low crime rate (L) **Moved from Quadrant D to B**
- > Well-maintained roads (M)
- > Well-managed regional government (O)
- > Strong local economy (P)
- > Parks and green spaces (D) **Moved from Quadrant C to B**

Non-factors – Quadrant D

(Areas that rank below average in performance, but also are not considered of highest importance.)

- > Accessible info about government (R) **Moved from Quadrant C to D**
- > Training/education for new immigrants (S) **Moved from Quadrant A to D**
- > Successful integration of immigrants (V)
- > Community involvement in charities/events (W)
- > Infrastructure for cycling (BB)
- > Enough land for future growth (EE)
- > Services for homeless (FF)
- > Short commuting times (GG)
- > Services in walking distance (HH)

Expected factors – Quadrant C

(Areas that rank high in performance, but are not considered of highest importance. They have little impact on overall satisfaction unless done poorly.)

- > Affordable/adequate supply oil/gas (N) **Moved from Quadrant A to C**

\*The movement of factors from one quadrant to another is noted beside the factors that have shifted quadrants since 2008.

Q.7PE i) On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not important at all and 5 means very important, how important, in your opinion, are each of the following factors to achieving a good quality of life in your community?

Q.7PE ii) Second, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means poor and 5 means excellent, how would you rate your community on each of these factors?