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DATE: June 1, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **LITERACY MONTH IN PEEL 2010**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That September 2010 be proclaimed Literacy Month in the Region of Peel;**

**And further, members of Regional Council demonstrate their support for Literacy Month by participating in reading activities and events throughout Peel during the month of September.**

### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Almost half of all Canadian adults (48 per cent) have low literacy skills.
- For over forty years, the United Nations International Literacy Day has been celebrated annually in September.
- The Human Services Department and their community partners are committed to promoting literacy within the Region of Peel.
- In September 2010, literacy and lifelong learning will again be celebrated through various activities and events throughout Peel.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Background**

The United Nations International Literacy Day has been celebrated annually in September for over 40 years. The objective of this celebration is to emphasize the importance of literacy and to applaud the efforts made by literacy practitioners and volunteers. Since 2005 Regional Council has approved the Human Services Department's request to proclaim September as Literacy Month in the Region of Peel. The month is used to showcase the wealth of literacy related programs and services offered throughout Peel.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is coordinating the United Nations Literacy Decade under the slogan "Literacy As Freedom". Launched in 2003 and ending in 2012, the Decade aims to increase literacy levels and empower all people everywhere. As part of this work, UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment as a framework for achieving the Decade's goals focussing on policy driven research, capacity building and advocacy. The "Education for All" objective of increasing literacy rates by 50 per cent by 2015 provides the overall target for the Decade.

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The Region of Peel is committed to working with community partners in support of this important target.

In 2007, to give children a voice and raise awareness of children's rights, Success By 6 Peel worked with community representatives, school boards and daycares to create the Peel Children's Charter of Rights. Children throughout Peel Region were asked to give their thoughts and opinions on the basic rights of a child, one of the rights identified was the "Right to Education". Participation in initiatives which promote the growth and development of children displays the ongoing endorsement of the Peel Children's Charter of Rights, specifically The Right to Education. In 2009, Regional Council members and staff demonstrated their support for Literacy Month in Peel and The Right to Education by engaging with the community and participating in reading activities with children throughout Peel.

### 2. Research Findings

Research shows that Canada's literacy rate is below world standards. The Canadian Council on Learning reports that almost half of all Canadian adults (48 per cent) have low literacy skills. They suggest that Canada's low and stagnant rates of literacy are affecting Canadians in a number of ways, from exposing seniors to dangers because they can't understand medical advice or safety instructions, to limiting the career mobility of employees because they do not receive workplace training, to holding back the growth of the country's economy. Canadians with low proficiency in literacy tend to have higher rates of unemployment, work in occupations which require lower skill levels, and have lower earnings.

Yet despite the challenges that individuals with low literacy levels face, less than five per cent currently participate in literacy programs (Community Literacy of Ontario, 2007). The Council believes that improving literacy is a joint responsibility among governments, employers, communities and individuals.

### 3. Literacy Resources in Peel

The Region of Peel Human Services Department and community partners support an array of free literacy based programs and services for children and families, including the following:

- The Family Literacy Program is delivered at 74 sites across Peel including Ontario Early Years Centres, child care centres and neighbourhood based locations. The program is delivered in multiple languages to meet the diverse needs of the community. In 2009, program volunteers provided service to 1752 parents and 2325 children.
- In 2009, Early Literacy Specialists delivered 730 hours of workshop programming to 5,857 participants.
- Over the past three years, Le Collège du Savoir, Peel Adult Learning Centre, Peel District School Board, Sheridan College and Skills for Employment, Life and Family delivered over 900,000 hours of training to over 5,000 learners through their Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading programs.
- Ontario Works in Peel, in partnership with the Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network, provides in-depth literacy screening and referral services for its participants. Over the last year, the program has had 1,144 referrals for literacy screening and provided support to more than 600 adult learners as they upgraded literacy and numeracy skills to prepare for the workforce, support educational goals and enhance everyday life experiences.

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- Multiple literacy based programs are delivered within the Knightsbridge community including Parent and Child Programs, Math Programs, and Summer Fun Programs. The programs are free, family centered, drop-in and welcoming for all to participate.
- The Peel Youth Village homework club in the Acorn Community offers youth ages 12-18 years assistance with their educational needs. Improvement in literacy skills and numeracy skills has been reflected in school progress reports.
- The public library system provides Peel residents with a wide variety of literacy resources and programming for all ages. In 2009, the Mississauga Library served 4,439,550 in person visitors; the Brampton Library served 2,005,606 and Caledon Library served 260,000.
- The Ontario Early Years Centres of Peel provide a variety of literacy based programming for Adults and Children out of their sites and for 2009 these centres received over 200,000 visits to their programs across Peel.
- Currently in Peel, over 28,000 students (Catholic, Public, French and English Boards) are participating in kindergarten programs to enhance their reading, writing, language and numeracy skills. Beginning September 2010, children will be given the opportunity to further their literacy skills as Ontario phases in full-day early learning for all four and five year olds, reaching full implementation by 2016.

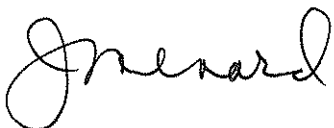
#### 4. Planned Events

During the month of September 2010 many organizations will be hosting educational and fun filled events to celebrate Literacy Month in Peel. Appendix I provides a few events and dates to celebrate literacy month in Peel. Regional Council will be provided with an updated list of events by mid August 2010.

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## CONCLUSION

In support of the planned events and in recognition of the outstanding literacy programming delivered every day, Regional Council is requested to proclaim September 2010 as Literacy Month in Peel and to demonstrate its commitment through the participation by members of Council in literacy activities and events across Peel.



Janet Menard  
Commissioner of Human Services

### Approved for Submission:



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D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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c. Legislative Services

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## APPENDIX I

### LITERACY MONTH EVENTS:

#### Brampton

- Brampton Literacy Committee along with its contributing partners will support the Brampton Day Event again this year at the Brampton Farmer's Market which takes place on Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. This event will mark the end of the annual Brampton Festival of Learning, which is an events listing, showcasing the multitude of programs available in Brampton that support literacy and tie in with literacy month in Peel.
- Brampton Recreation and Parks Division of the City of Brampton will host sessions at South Fletchers out of their Recreation sites. Sessions will be offered in September at South Fletchers, Loafer's Lake, Chinguacousy Wellness, and Howden to facilitate reading and writing information for parents of young children.

#### Mississauga

- Mississauga Literacy Committee will create a calendar of literacy events for Mississauga.

#### Caledon

- Caledon Literacy Committee will provide literacy event happenings and updates on a website hosted by the Caledon Public Library.
- The Caledon Parent Child Centre will host a Pajama Story time to celebrate Literacy Month in Peel.

#### Region of Peel

- The Learn.Play.Care (LPC) Centres of the Region of Peel host parent and child Book Make and Take sessions at Malton LPC on September 29<sup>th</sup>, The Valley LPC on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, and Cooksville LPC on September 28<sup>th</sup>.
- The Human Services Literacy group will provide a training session for Professionals with a focus on Brain Development and Literacy to take place at the Region of Peel on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

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APPENDIX II

# Proclamation

## LITERACY MONTH IN PEEL

September, 2010

WHEREAS, the Region of Peel – Human Services Department is committed to raising awareness of events promoting literacy and lifelong learning in Peel throughout the month of September 2010;

AND WHEREAS, each year United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrates International Literacy Day on September 8th to highlight the importance of literacy to individuals, communities and society;

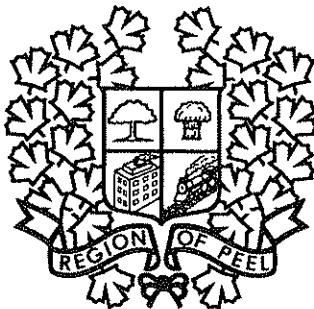
AND WHEREAS, participation in initiatives which promote the growth and development of children displays the ongoing endorsement of the Peel Children's Charter of Rights, specifically The Right to Education;

AND WHEREAS, over the last three years more than 900,000 hours of literacy training was delivered by service providers to more than 5,000 learners;

AND WHEREAS, the Ontario Early Years Centres received over 200,000 visits from parents and children to their literacy rich programs across Peel in 2009;

AND WHEREAS, the regional values include a supportive and respectful environment, teamwork and quality service which are integral in partnerships and in providing quality literacy services throughout the Region;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the month of September 2010, be proclaimed "LITERACY MONTH" in the Regional Municipality of Peel.



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Emil Kolb  
Regional Chair