



Community Safety and Well-Being

2025 Annual Report

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Land Acknowledgement

The City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations. This includes Alderville First Nation, Chippewas of Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations. This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.



Introduction

In May 2024, the City of Pickering adopted its Community Safety & Well-Being (CSWB) Plan, establishing a shared framework to guide how City departments and community partners work together to support a safe, connected and inclusive community. The Plan identifies seven priority areas that shape both day to day program delivery and longer-term planning across the City.

In 2025, the City advanced these priorities through coordinated work across departments and with community agencies, the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor, and the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisory Committee (CSWBAC). Initiatives included safety education and awareness, health focused programming, support for residents experiencing homelessness, neighbourhood-based activities and culturally responsive engagement.

The City also contributed to regional and municipal planning processes on violence prevention, road safety, housing and homelessness, community infrastructure and equity informed policy development. Where relevant, the Committee supported implementation by providing advice and by endorsing initiatives in 2024 that continued into 2025.

Together, these efforts demonstrate Pickering's commitment to building a community where all residents feel safe, supported, connected, and valued. The following report summarizes 2025 progress toward the Plan's action items and highlights concrete examples of impact across programs and services.

Pickering's Priorities

Pickering's CSWB Plan includes seven priority areas and 60 action items. This Annual Report has been organized by these priorities:

1. Improve Community Vitality
2. Strengthen Learning, Education, Partnership and Creative Communities
3. Create Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods
4. Increase Physical Health and Mental Wellness
5. Improve Living Standards
6. Support Basic Needs
7. Promote Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Reconciliation



1. Improve Community Vitality

Objective:

Strengthen residents' sense of belonging by delivering targeted initiatives that promote social connection, reduce isolation, and build community pride through volunteering opportunities, inclusive programs, and community events.

Community Safety Meetings

Human Trafficking Awareness Session

In partnership with Victim Services of Durham Region (VSDR) and local community associations, the City hosted a Community Safety Meeting that focused on prevalence and realities of human trafficking, how traffickers identify and target victims, early warning signs and practical safety strategies. The session welcomed 33 participants and included on site community resources and free children's recreation to support accessibility, directly advancing early identification and prevention objectives under the Plan.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) Awareness Event

During Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Month, residents engaged with VSDR and Herizon House to learn about forms of abuse, local prevalence and available support. With 42 participants and outreach tables from more than nine service providers, the session encouraged help seeking and strengthened community knowledge of supports.

Online Safety Session

In collaboration with Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) and community associations, the City delivered an Online Safety Meeting that helped 26 participants build practical skills in protecting privacy, recognizing scams, and participating safely online, reinforcing a proactive approach to community safety.



Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteerism continued to grow, with 186 new volunteers onboarded and a total of 274 volunteers contributing 10,544 hours across programs. Volunteers supported Community Services, Animal Services, major City events, sustainability initiatives and equity, diversity and inclusion programming. New initiatives such as City Centre Awareness, PetSmart Adoption Week, Animal Services fundraisers, Durham Pride Parade support, Hip Hop in the Park, Fairy Tour After Dark, Saturday S'mores at Pickering Museum Village, Family Adventure Day, World Environment Day, the We Grow Food workshop and the Beekeeper and The Honeybees workshop broadened opportunities for residents of all ages.



Community Pride

In 2025, the City and the Pickering Public Library (PPL) continued to champion inclusion and belonging through a series of Pride-focused programs. Collaboratively, the City and PPL delivered 17 Pride events, creating safe and welcoming spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ residents and allies. These programs contributed to strengthening community connections, fostering education, and supporting a more inclusive Pickering.

Community Environmental Stewardship



Park Stewardship Program

This City program encourages businesses and community groups to help keep local parks clean. As of 2025, there are 22 active groups who volunteer to be Park Stewards by making a commitment to do litter cleanups and promote a positive image in their neighbourhood park.

Community Litter Cleanups

Volunteers participated in litter cleanup initiatives through Pickering's 20-Minute Makeover, Litter & Plastics Challenge, and the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. This year, 50 community cleanups took place throughout the City, representing over 3,220 participants — a 21 per cent increase from 2024.

Take Pride in Pickering

In collaboration with Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), the City hosted its annual Take Pride in Pickering Day in the spring, where over 100 community members volunteered to plant 250 trees and clean up litter in Alex Robertson Park. In the fall, the City partnered with OPG, 10,000 Trees, and TRCA for another Take Pride in Pickering Day event, where 75 volunteers planted 500 trees and shrubs.

Pickering City Centre Farmers' Market

The City hosted another successful year at the Farmers' Market to help residents connect with local farmers, bakers, artisans, and small local businesses. Residents enjoyed weekly entertainment by local artists and special events like a corn roast. The market ran for 17 weeks, with approximately 22,300 visitors, supporting upwards of 25 vendors.



2. Strengthen Learning, Education, Partnership and Creative Communities

Objective:

Provide meaningful opportunities for residents to learn about community safety and well-being, and to actively contribute to community solutions through creative engagement, education, and collaborative initiatives.

Lunch & Learns

Throughout 2025, a series of lunch and learn sessions were offered to build staff awareness and strengthen understanding of key community safety and well-being issues. These sessions were delivered in partnership with local experts and supported by the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor, providing accessible opportunities for staff to learn, ask questions, and deepen their knowledge of emerging and complex topics affecting residents.

Human Trafficking Awareness

In April, VSDR facilitated a lunch and learn focused on human trafficking. The session explored how trafficking occurs, who is most at risk, the techniques traffickers use to recruit and groom individuals, and how to recognize early warning signs. Participants also learned how to respond safely and connect individuals to specialized support. A total of 41 staff attended the session.

Intimate Partner Violence and Gender-Based Violence

In June, Herizon House delivered a lunch and learn, and provided an overview of different forms of abuse, the populations most affected, and the local, provincial, and national prevalence of IPV. Presenters also shared information about Herizon House programs and guided staff on how to safely support someone who may be experiencing violence. A total of 21 staff participated in this session.

Dementia-Friendly Communities

In November, the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region (ASDR) delivered a Dementia Friendly Communities Lunch and Learn that equipped staff with practical tools to recognize signs and symptoms of dementia, adapt communication approaches and respond with empathy using supportive and de-escalation techniques. Through real world scenarios, 25 staff strengthened their confidence when engaging with individuals who may be vulnerable or experiencing cognitive decline.

Beyond this single session, the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor continued advancing the broader Dementia Friendly Communities initiative throughout 2025. In partnership with the ASDR, training opportunities were offered to staff, residents and community partners to increase awareness and build capacity across the community. In total, 182 participants have now completed the training, including 39 new participants in 2025. The dementia initiative provides residents and staff with concrete strategies that support dignity, accessibility and safe community interaction, directly advancing the Plan's goals for an inclusive and age friendly Pickering.

Durham Community Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence

In 2025, the Durham Community Walk to End IPV brought together more than 300 residents, survivors, service providers and partners, with CSWBAC members walking alongside City staff to show a shared commitment to prevention and survivor support across Pickering and Durham Region.

Organized by the Regional Community Safety and Well-Being team, the walk was supported by eight organizations including Bethesda House, Victim Services of Durham Region, Safety Network Durham, Y's Wish Shelter, Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre, Luke's Place, The Denise House and Herizon House.

Starting at Region of Durham Headquarters, the event honoured survivors, remembered lives lost and called for continued and collective action. In 2024, there were 2,638 IPV related criminal charges in the Region and six women were killed; by fall 2025, Victim Services of Durham Region had already supported more survivors than in all of 2024, underscoring the urgency of prevention, intervention and public education.

The walk aligned with both the Regional and City Community Safety and Well-Being Plans by emphasizing violence prevention, community education and improved supports for vulnerable residents.

Ontario Works & Ontario Disability Support Program Partnership

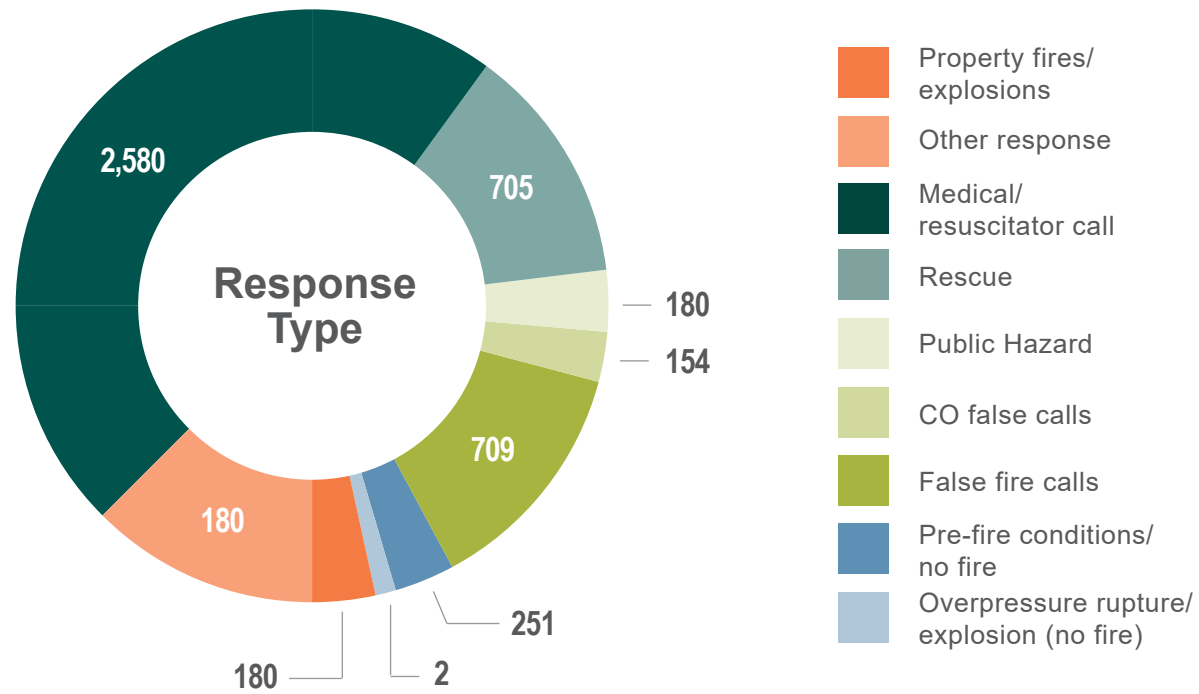
PPL continued to host weekly walk-in supports for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), providing low-barrier access to essential social services.

In 2025, OW and ODSP staff supported 48 resident interactions, assisting with financial resources, housing connections, food security supports, counselling referrals, government ID replacement, and help with online government applications. These services ensured that residents could easily access income supports and personalized guidance without the need for appointments.



Fire Safety

In 2025, Pickering Fire Services responded to 5,470 calls, a 1.9 percent decrease from 2024, with incidents spanning property fires and explosions, pre-fire conditions, false fire and carbon monoxide alarms, public hazards, rescues, medical calls and other responses.



Key prevention and education programs included Adopt a School for grade one, Learn Not to Burn for grade three, the Arson Prevention Program for Children or youth exhibiting fire play or fire-setting behaviours, Older and Wiser for older adults and After the Heat neighbourhood outreach following residential fires.

Seasonal and community campaigns featured the door-to-door FireSafe Pickering initiative each spring and fall, plus Emergency Preparedness Week, Fire Prevention Week, Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, and 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety, alongside fire extinguisher and workplace safety training, station tours, school fair visits and community truck visits.

Readiness activities included annual joint training and drills with Ontario Power Generation for the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station and corporate Emergency Management training for City staff, with exercises focused on cybersecurity and nuclear emergency preparedness at the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station.

Together, these efforts reduce preventable incidents, strengthen public awareness and ensure coordinated emergency response capacity, directly supporting CSWB priorities for safety education, early risk identification and protection of vulnerable residents.



3. Create Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods

Objective:

Create safe, clean, attractive, and welcoming public spaces by enhancing park design, neighbourhood beautification, safe and active transportation routes, public art, outdoor recreation spaces, lighting, cameras, and other features that support health, safety, and community pride.

Professional De-escalation and Mental Health Training

In 2025, the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor continued to expand staff capacity to navigate high pressure and emotionally charged situations. Building on the 2024 cohort, where 13 front-facing staff completed Professional De-escalation and Mental Health training, an additional 30 staff members received the same specialized training in 2025. In total, 43 City staff have now completed the program.

Delivered by Step Training Inc., the training provided practical tools to strengthen emotional regulation, enhance situational awareness and maintain professionalism when supporting individuals in distress. The program

included two days of Professional De-escalation training, one day of mental health training, scenario-based learning with real world application and a six month online refresher to support long term retention.

Participants strengthened their ability to recognize signs of emotional escalation, respond safely and calmly and engage residents using trauma-informed and compassionate approaches. This ongoing investment ensures staff are well prepared to navigate complex interactions while fostering a safe, respectful and supportive environment for all community members.



Safety, Self-Defence & Walking Home

In 2025, the City continued offering accessible programming that helps residents feel safer moving through their community. In response to strong feedback from the Community Safety Survey, the City delivered a free introductory personal safety and self-defence session in partnership with Villari's Martial Arts Centre.

The workshop supported 71 participants in building awareness, enhancing personal safety and increasing confidence in everyday situations. Led by Master Rob

Bartlett, a seventh-degree black belt with more than 30 years of teaching experience, the session provided practical and accessible strategies suitable for all skill levels.

Participants learned core skills such as situational awareness, boundary setting and simple defensive techniques for real world scenarios. By offering the program at no cost, the City advanced community safety priorities and responded directly to identified resident needs.

Naloxone Training

In its second year of offering Naloxone training to enhance safety in municipally operated buildings, the CSWB Advisor and Community Services continued to expand and strengthen the program for First Responders. This initiative ensures that designated staff have the knowledge and skills needed to respond effectively to opioid overdoses using Naloxone, a lifesaving medication. By the end of 2025, a total of 130 staff members had completed the training.

The program provides education on recognizing signs and symptoms of opioid overdoses, proper administration of Naloxone, and key safety protocols. Staff also learn about associated risks, including the need to perform CPR when required and the possibility that multiple doses may be necessary. Naloxone kits are positioned near Automated External

Defibrillator stations and are maintained by First Responder Coordinators who oversee replenishment of supplies and ensure training remains current.

This continued investment demonstrates a proactive commitment to safeguarding employees and the public by ensuring a rapid and informed response to opioid-related emergencies in the workplace.



Security Cameras

In 2025, the City continued expanding and upgrading its closed-circuit television network. New cameras were installed in the following areas to support community safety and well-being:

- Rick Johnson Park
- Glengrove Park
- Pine Grove Park
- Amberlea Park
- Kinsmen Park (two cameras installed)
- Dunmoore Park
- Beachfront Boardwalk (two cameras installed)
- East Shore Community Centre (four cameras installed replacing older units)

Road Safety

In 2025, the City continued advancing road safety initiatives in response to community concerns, traffic data and recommendations from the CSWBAC. The City discontinued Automated Speed Enforcement in Community Safety Zones and shifted toward expanded use of radar speed message signs and additional traffic calming tools.

The City now operates 15 radar speed message signs. One is permanently installed, while the remaining units rotate to locations identified through resident feedback, staff review and information from DRPS. The City also expanded painted Slow markings on select residential streets and continued using seasonal PedZone bollards and signage to create pinch points that help reduce vehicle speeds.

Beyond these measures, the City supported broader community road safety initiatives, including the Please Slow Down lawn sign program and the Ajax Pickering Road Watch Program, where volunteers work with DRPS and City staff to promote driver awareness and assist with monitoring speeding through portable radar signs and licence plate reporting.

Looking ahead, the City has engaged consultant CIMA plus to develop Pickering's Traffic Calming Guidelines Policy, which will guide future decisions and incorporate public consultation. The City is also expanding the use of pedestrian crossings to improve safety when crossing busy streets.

In 2025, the City launched a shared e-scooter pilot program to offer an affordable transportation option for those without access to a car or transit, or for individuals who may find walking or biking long distances challenging. This program will continue in 2026 and is being monitored by City staff.





4. Increase Physical Health and Mental Wellness

Objective:

Support physical health and mental wellness by creating and enhancing community spaces such as community centres, community gardens, and libraries, and by offering programs that promote active living, social connection, and overall well-being.

Lakeridge Health COPD Program

In 2025, the City continued its partnership with Lakeridge Health to deliver the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Community Exercise Clinic at Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex (CHDRC). Launched in 2024 to address a gap in community-based COPD care, the clinic has become a key health and wellness resource. To date, it has supported more than 200 patients across Durham Region with 2,500 patient visits.

The clinic offers weekly, low intensity, supervised exercise and education delivered by Lakeridge Health kinesiologists. Each class includes a 30-minute education component and a 30-minute exercise session, with individualized assessments, action plans and ongoing wellness counselling. Participants report improvements in breathing, mobility, confidence and quality of life, including reduced anxiety and better self management of symptoms.

To maintain access, Council approved renewal of the licence agreement with Lakeridge Health, allowing the clinic to operate through 2026 at no cost to participants.

By providing space at the CHDRC, the City removes cost and travel barriers and reduces reliance on hospital-based services.

This program advances the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan by supporting physical and mental wellness through accessible health education, strengthening municipal health partnerships, reducing barriers to preventive care for vulnerable residents and contributing to improved long term health outcomes.

Vibe Check: Mental Health 101

In 2025, the CSWB Advisor coordinated Vibe Check, a Jack Talk delivered in partnership with Jack.org. This youth led session brought together 11 participants to explore real stories, ideas, and strategies for strengthening mental health. Designed by youth, for youth, the program created an open and supportive space for participants ages 13 to 26 to connect with one another, challenge stigma, and build practical skills to support themselves and their peers.

Through engaging discussion and relatable examples, the session encouraged honest conversations about mental health and empowered young people to take an active role in fostering positive change within their communities. This initiative reflects the City's commitment to promoting mental wellness and amplifying youth voices in meaningful and accessible ways.

Mental Wellness Committee

In 2025, the Mental Wellness Committee launched a range of initiatives to support workplace mental health. Highlights included Mental Health First Aid training for an additional 21 staff (an initiative that began in 2024), seminars addressing trauma and stress management and suicide prevention workshops. They also led Conversation Circles, giving employees an opportunity to come together and explore helpful strategies for managing stress and staying mentally healthy.

To foster connection and physical well-being, the Committee organized art therapy workshops, a pushup challenge for suicide awareness, and increased employee participation in the Terry Fox Run. Therapeutic Paws of Canada also visited City facilities, offering moments of comfort.

Ongoing awareness efforts included sharing mental health resources, key observance dates, and a flag-raising event to reinforce the City's commitment to mental health advocacy.

Financial Assistance

Recreation Card Program

In partnership with the Region of Durham, the City of Pickering continued to support the Recreation Card Program, which helps families access seasonal recreation opportunities. In 2025, 348 participants accessed the program, reflecting a ten percent increase. This program provides families with access to seasonal registered activities, including Winter Break Camp or March Break Camp, and two summer camp opportunities.

Low Income Scholarship

This scholarship provides a 50 percent fee reduction for either a registered activity or a membership at the CHDRC. In 2025, 87 residents accessed this support.

Disability Scholarship

This scholarship offers a 50 percent fee reduction for a registered activity or membership, supporting residents eligible under the Disability Tax Credit

or ODSP. In 2025, 79 residents accessed this funding, representing a 33 percent increase.

Canadian Tire Jumpstart Foundation

This program provides financial support to ensure children can participate in City-run recreation programs. In 2025, ten families accessed Jumpstart funding, reflecting a 37 percent decrease.

Durham Region Daycare Fee Subsidy

This subsidy supports families with childcare costs based on income and is available for City of Pickering summer camps and March Break programs. In 2025, 599 families received this subsidy, reflecting a 39 percent increase.

These programs continue to reduce financial barriers and ensure that residents of all ages can participate in recreation, wellness, and community programs that support overall well-being.

Increase in High Demand Programs

Family Day and Community Events

In 2025, free drop-in programs continued to draw strong community participation. A total of 250 residents engaged in arts and crafts at the Creative Centre, 20 families took part in a pottery workshop, and 200 participants received a take home art activity at the Art Studio. These programs supported accessible creative opportunities for residents of all ages.

The Aging Well Together and Active Living Fair Information Expo welcomed more than 1,000 participants, connecting older adults with community resources related to health, community safety, artificial intelligence (AI), and financial security. The event also featured art and fitness demonstrations tailored to adults 55-plus. The Spotlight Series, hosted in partnership with the 55-plus Recreation Committee, delivered information sessions to over 100 participants.

Summer Camp Expansion

To respond to increased demand and support positive youth development,

the City expanded its summer camp offerings in 2025. Popular Specialty Camps returned, including the Specialty Arts Camp, Firefighter Camp, and Skateboard Camp. Programming was also extended to the Claremont community to offer more convenient options for local families. This expansion resulted in 3,748 camp registrations in 2025, providing more children with access to inclusive, fun, and enriching summer experiences.

Teen Engagement

The PAC4Teens Committee, working alongside the City, strengthened youth-led community impact through its annual food collection initiative. In 2025, the group collected 695 lbs. of non-perishable food for St. Paul's on the Hill Community Food Bank as part of regional Hunger Action Month efforts. Across Durham Region, this contribution supported a total collection of 4,239 lbs. of food, demonstrating the meaningful role youth play in advancing community well-being.



Earth Month

To celebrate Earth Month, the City hosted free educational workshops with expert guest speakers. In total, 338 participants attended sessions on topics such as vegetable gardening, beekeeping, gardening for City lots and local bird species.

Beyond Earth Month workshops, more than 1,500 residents participated in a variety of events and activities, including:

- Birds in Your Neighbourhood
- Winter Wonders
- Know Before You Throw
- Compost Giveaway and Bin Exchange
- Everything Maple Syrup
- Salmon Hatchery
- Energy Incentives Workshop
- Heat Pump Training for HVAC Contractors
- Home Winterproofing Energy Workshop
- Home Energy Efficiency Retrofit Orientation
- Sustainable Home Expo
- Environment Day
- Nature Journaling Workshop

Together, these offerings provided hands on learning, strengthened environmental literacy and encouraged practical, sustainable practices across the community.



5. Improve Living Standards

Objective:

Improve accessibility and equity by offering low cost, subsidized, or free programs and services, supporting food security and community accessibility, and encouraging business growth that brings new employment opportunities to Pickering.

Support Community Efforts Through Grant Programs

The City's Environmental Schools Grant Program provides Pickering students with the opportunity to implement activities that contribute to a healthy environment. In 2025, projects included creating native flower gardens to attract pollinators, running a Ride or Roll to School campaign with new bicycle and scooter racks, and building outdoor learning spaces with benches and exploration tools. Schools also delivered citizen-science workshops focused on plants and soil, explored the benefits of nature-based learning, observed the monarch lifecycle through a Monarch Butterfly kit, and expanded vegetable and fruit gardens with new materials to enhance outdoor learning.

Ovee Outreach Vehicle – Expanding Library Access

Ovee, PPL's outreach vehicle, remained a vital tool for extending library access into neighbourhoods farther from existing branches. In 2025, Ovee completed 281 community visits and engaged 4,920 participants. Residents used the mobile unit to browse materials, attend programs, pick up holds, sign up for library cards, and access information, bringing library services directly into the community.

Seed Library Project

The Seed Library Project continued to promote sustainability, community gardening, and food security. In 2025, PPL distributed 10,000 seed packs to residents, supporting local biodiversity and encouraging residents to grow their own produce. This ongoing initiative strengthens environmental stewardship and increases access to low cost-food options.





Snow Clearing

The City offers senior citizens and people with permanent physical or cognitive disabilities, a snow clearing service to assist them with their sidewalk snow clearing responsibilities, and access to their home.

To qualify, participants must meet the following criteria:

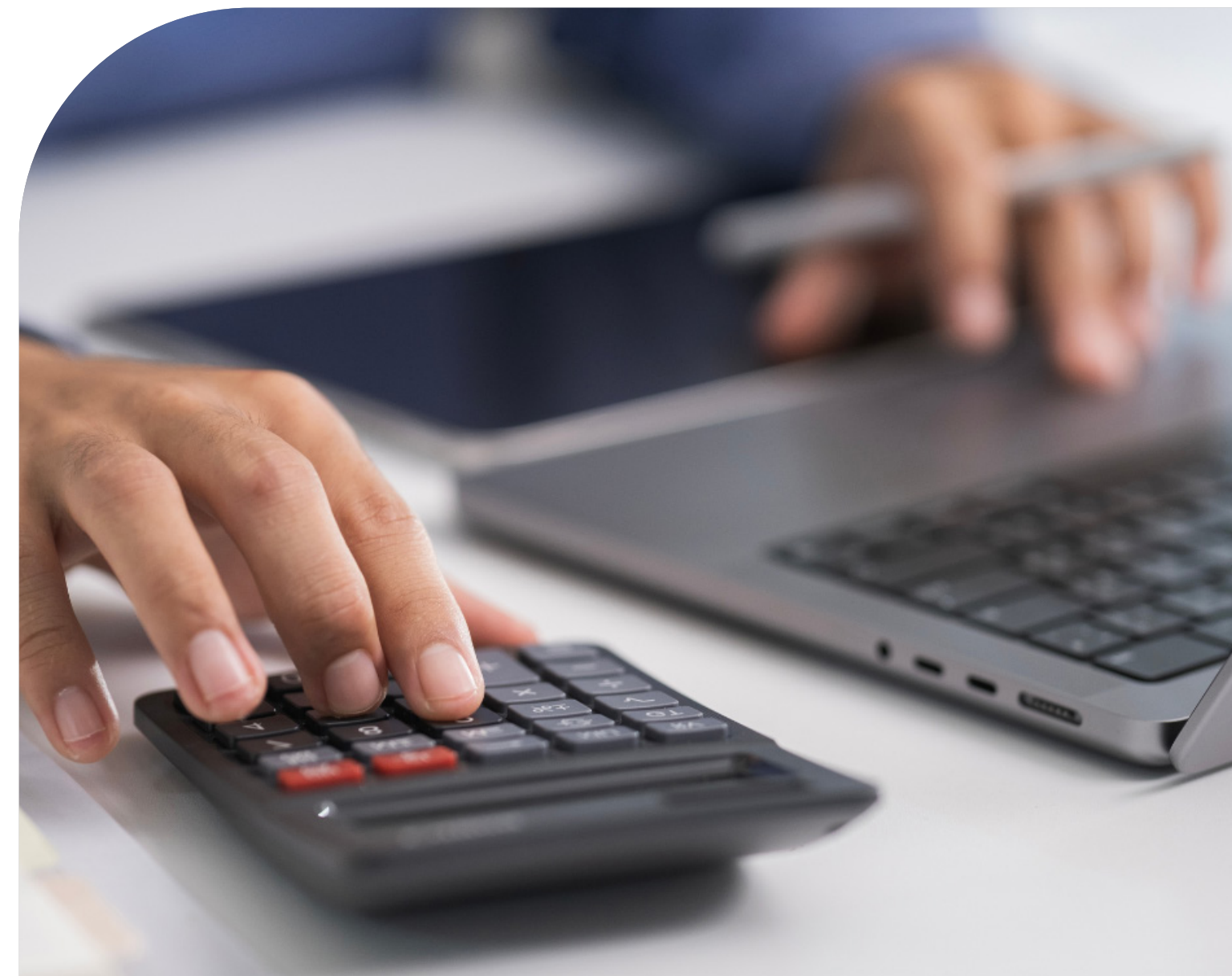
- **Be over the age of 65, or if under 65 years, have proof of permanent physical or cognitive disability.**
- **Live within the urban area of Pickering (south of Taunton Road), or within the hamlets of Brougham, Claremont, Greenwood & Whitevale.**
- **There is no one under the age of 65 residing in your home (except for a person with a permanent physical or cognitive disability).**

Employment & Skill-Building Workshops

To support job readiness and financial independence, PPL delivered 57 employment and skill-building workshops in 2025. These programs focused on job searching, career pathways, interview preparation, resume development, and financial literacy. Together, these sessions helped residents strengthen their skills, prepare for employment opportunities, and navigate a changing workforce.

Supported Self-Filing Tax Workshops

PPL offered Supported Self-Filing Tax Workshops to help residents learn to complete their own tax returns independently. In 2025, PPL delivered five workshops, supporting 33 attendees in navigating the filing process and building long-term financial confidence.



Eligibility Tier	Fee	Participants	Percent of Total
Gains / GIS (guaranteed annual income system)	\$0.00	108	27.3 %
Income under \$86,912	\$128.82	204	51.5 %
Income \$86,913–142,609	\$186.45	67	16.9 %
Income \$142,610–199,900	\$240.69	17	4.3 %



6. Support Basic Needs

Objective:

Improve access to nutritious food, safe shelter, and essential personal care and hygiene products by strengthening programs and services that support residents experiencing basic needs.

Homelessness Subcommittee Initiatives

In its second year, the Homelessness Subcommittee continued to advance the City's coordinated approach to addressing homelessness and housing insecurity. The Subcommittee identifies priorities, supports community engagement, conducts research, and provides strategic advice to the CSWBAC on issues related to homelessness and basic needs. Working closely with Durham Region, other levels of government, and community partners, the Subcommittee focuses on solutions that include mental health support, substance use services, wraparound programming, and access to transitional and supportive housing. While the Subcommittee is composed of non-voting members, all recommendations are presented to and approved by the CSWBAC.

Throughout 2025, the Subcommittee supported several major initiatives that strengthened public awareness, enhanced access to services, and fostered compassion-driven approaches within the community.

As part of its work, the subcommittee helped lead five key initiatives this year:

Whiskers and Wellness

Whiskers and Wellness Day marked its second successful year in 2025, reaffirming the City's commitment to compassionate, accessible, and community-informed support for vulnerable and housing-insecure residents and their companion animals. Held on October 5, the initiative reflects a growing recognition that pets play an essential role in stability, mental health, and connection for many community members. Grounded in a 'One Health' approach, the program acknowledges the interconnected well-being of people, animals, and the broader community.

The event is delivered through a strong partnership between Animal Services, the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor, local veterinarians, frontline service agencies, and dedicated volunteers. By working together, partners ensure that residents facing hardship can access practical support in a dignified, barrier-free environment.

To promote fairness and accessibility, attendance was coordinated through referral pathways established with community agencies. Onsite services included core veterinary supports such as free vaccines, nail trims, flea treatments, ear cleaning, and minor grooming. Each participant received a backpack containing essential supplies, while pets went home with food and items selected to support continued care. A warm meal was also provided, creating a welcoming and supportive space for attendees.

In 2025, 32 animals and 26 owners registered, with 24 pets attending alongside several walk-ins. The event was made possible through the commitment of three veterinarians, 17 volunteers, and five partner agencies, supported by a dedicated bus service that ensured safe and reliable transportation for both residents and their pets. This coordinated effort demonstrates the strength of Pickering's community partnerships and the City's leadership in mobilizing care where it is needed most.

Overall, the 2025 Whiskers and Wellness Day demonstrated how thoughtful municipal leadership, coordinated partnerships, and a commitment to dignity can meaningfully improve the lives of both residents and their animals.

World Homeless Day

World Homeless Day, on October 10, was led by Durham Region and held at Regional Headquarters. The event began with an opening drumming presentation from local Indigenous artists, followed by speeches from individuals with lived experience. A flag raising and public education segment emphasized shared responsibility, human dignity, and the need for coordinated responses to homelessness across the Region. The City's involvement reinforced its ongoing commitment to awareness, reconciliation, and collaboration.



Us and Them Film Screening

The Homelessness Subcommittee and the GAP Committee co-hosted a screening of *Us and Them*, a documentary chronicling Krista Loughton's ten-year journey alongside four individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Through personal stories, the film highlights the power of connection, trust, and human resilience.

The event began with a panel discussion facilitated by the GAP Committee and featuring community experts, service providers, and individuals with lived experience. 34 community members attended the screening, engaged with the panel, and participated in thoughtful dialogue about homelessness in Durham Region. Light refreshments were provided, and attendees were invited to submit questions in advance. This event supported the Subcommittee's goal of raising awareness and fostering informed, compassionate conversation across the community.

DARS This Is Home Documentary Premiere

The Subcommittee also supported the premiere of *This Is Home*, a 2025 documentary directed by Eric M Walker. The film highlights the work of Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS) in transforming a 100-year-old farmhouse into a transitional home for individuals exiting homelessness. Through stories of hope, perseverance, and community support, the documentary showcases the profound impact of stable housing and wraparound care.

The premiere took place in November at St. Martin's Anglican Church and drew 79 attendees, including community members, service providers, and local leaders. The production was supported by DARS and Thompson and Pollock Wealth Inc and serves as an important account of ongoing homelessness response efforts in Pickering.

Coldest Night of the Year

In 2025, the Homelessness Subcommittee supported Durham Youth Services as they hosted the Coldest Night of the Year event at Peace Lutheran Church in Pickering. Held on February 22, this national fundraising walk raises awareness and funds for organizations supporting individuals experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness. The Pickering event brought together 89 walkers, 10 teams, 32 volunteers, and a total of 121 participants who gathered in solidarity to support youth facing housing instability. Three members of the CSWBAC joined the Community Safety & Well-being Advisor to participate in the walk, demonstrating strong civic support for Durham Youth Services and their mission.

Durham Youth Services successfully raised \$30,000, meeting their community driven goal and helping sustain their in-school housing support program for youth. These funds directly support prevention, rapid rehousing, and ongoing stabilization services for young people experiencing homelessness in Durham Region.

The event showcased the power of community collaboration and compassion, reinforcing the Subcommittee's commitment to supporting local partners who deliver critical front-line services to residents in need.

Overnight Warming Centre

For the 2025 to 2026 winter season, the Overnight Emergency Warming Centre continued to be fully funded by Durham Region and facilitated by DARS at Peace Lutheran Church. Although this is not a City-operated program, the City actively referred residents and shared public information to ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness were aware of available supports.

A major change for the 2025 to 2026 season was the shift to an 'every night' model, operating seven days a week from December 1 through March 31. This approach ensured consistent access regardless of weather fluctuations and provided a reliable, safe space throughout the winter months. The Centre remained open overnight from 8:00 pm to 8:00 am and continued to welcome pets alongside their owners. Guests received warm meals, snacks, clothing, and take-home non-perishable items in a low-barrier, accessible environment.

Throughout the season, the Centre has operated at over 100 percent capacity, demonstrating the strong need for this service. DARS continued to provide compassionate, community-based support while connecting individuals to additional resources and assistance through its broader outreach efforts. Durham Region's ongoing funding and DARS' commitment to service delivery ensured that residents facing housing insecurity had a safe and dignified place to stay during the coldest months of the year.



Extreme Heat

The City provided designated public facilities when an extreme heat warning was issued. During the operating hours of the facilities, residents were able to seek shelter to ensure public safety and well-being. Facilities have included the Central Library, CHDRC, and East Shore Community Centre.

Shower Access

In 2025, the shower program at the CHDRC arena dressing rooms continued to be operated by DARS, with the City providing the facility space at no cost. While the service is fully facilitated by DARS, the City supports the program by offering the venue and sharing information so that residents who are experiencing homelessness are aware of this essential resource.

DARS staff welcome participants on site, provide towels and hygiene packages, and help individuals connect to additional community services. Since assuming responsibility for the program in early 2023, DARS has expanded its reach each year, responding to the growing need for basic hygiene supports among residents facing homelessness.

Participation rose sharply in 2025. A total of 332 individuals accessed the shower program this year. This more than doubles the number served in 2024, demonstrating sustained growth in demand for this service. This significant year over year increase highlights the continued need for accessible hygiene supports within the community.

Council has approved a Memorandum of Understanding for the period of January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026, ensuring that DARS can continue delivering this vital service with the City providing space at no cost.

Wellness Checks

In 2025, the City of Pickering, supported by the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor, continued to collaborate with local organizations and City departments to respond to the rising challenge of housing insecurity. Wellness checks were led by the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor with support from the Customer Care Centre, Operations, Bylaw Services, Community Services, and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. These checks were carried out in partnership with several external organizations and outreach teams, including DARS, Durham Region's 24-hour Street Outreach Team, the Mental Health Outreach Program, the Primary Care Outreach Program, the TRCA, and the John Howard Society of Durham Region. Together, these coordinated efforts contributed to both direct wellness checks and the development of municipal encampment strategies.

By the end of 2025, approximately 61 individuals were identified as experiencing housing insecurity. This represents a 135 percent increase from 2024. It is important to note that this figure does not fully capture the number of individuals who chose not to be included on the Region of Durham's By Name List.

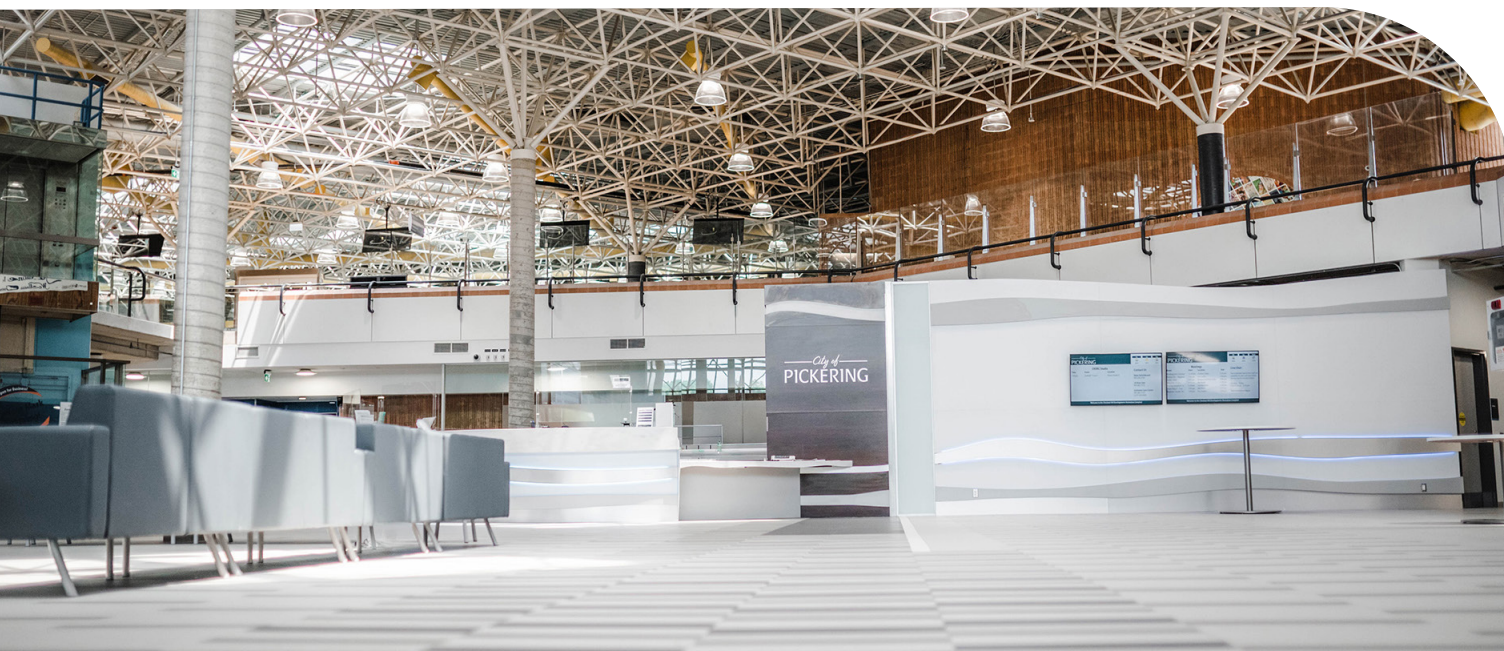
The By Name List, maintained by Durham Region, is a continuously updated real time registry of individuals experiencing homelessness. It helps service providers monitor needs, coordinate supports, and prioritize access to housing and essential services based on individual circumstances. Participation in the By Name List is voluntary, meaning the actual number of housing insecure individuals living in the community is likely higher than what is recorded.

Access to Wi-Fi

PPL continued to provide free Wi Fi hotspots and Internet access kits for borrowing, supporting residents with digital connectivity for education, healthcare, housing, and income supports. In 2025, hotspots were circulated 120 times, helping ensure equitable access to reliable Internet for residents across the community.

Community Climate Adaptation Plan

In May 2025, Pickering Council endorsed the City's first Community Climate Adaptation Plan (CCAP). Developed with input from residents, community organizations, technical experts, and regional partners, the CCAP serves as a roadmap to integrate climate resilience into City operations, services, and the broader community. The Plan outlines practical, measurable actions to help prepare for and respond to the impacts of extreme heat, heavy rain, and severe weather, with a strong focus on climate equity to support vulnerable populations.



Zoning Update Supports Vertical Farming

The City's Consolidated Zoning By law 8149/24 formally recognizes vertical farming as a permitted use within Light Manufacturing Facilities. This definition allows vertical farms in designated Employment and Mixed-Use areas. The updated zoning also supports other urban agriculture uses, including community gardens, rooftop farms, and plant-based manufacturing. These changes help expand opportunities for food production and agri-food innovation across Pickering.

Pickering Prom Boutique

To ensure equitable access to prom and graduation celebrations, PPL hosted its annual Prom Boutique, where residents donated gently used formal wear for local youth. In 2025, the event supported 112 students, helping them access free dresses, suits, and accessories for milestone events.



7. Promote EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), Accessibility & Reconciliation

Objective:

Strengthen community connection by creating opportunities for engagement and relationship building through safe community spaces, inclusive programs, events, and forms of community expression. This priority supports all focus areas and will continue to evolve based on community needs and context.

Protect Your Crown – Black Hair Care and Braiding Workshop

In 2025, the City partnered with Protect Your Crown, a Black-led hair care initiative established in early 2024 and supported through the Region of Durham's Community Safety and Well-Being Micro-Grant program. The workshop aims to empower youth and adults through Black hair care education and the art of braiding, fostering confidence, creativity, and community connection.

Protect Your Crown delivered a four-hour, hands-on training session that teaches participants foundational braiding skills including basic braids, cornrows, and French braiding. Each training session creates a safe and supportive space where participants can learn new techniques, build confidence, and explore potential pathways toward financial independence or future career opportunities.



The program has continued to grow in popularity, with waitlists of youth and adults eager to participate. Through this partnership, the City helped expand access to culturally relevant programming that supports belonging, self-expression, and positive identity development for residents who identify as Black. Future collaboration will continue to help reach more youth, parents, and community members interested in protective styling and caring for afro textured hair.

Egale Canada Workplace Inclusion Training

In 2025, the City partnered with Egale Canada to deliver two specialized Workplace Inclusion training sessions aimed at building staff and leadership capacity to foster safer, more inclusive, and affirming work environments for 2SLGBTQI colleagues, community members, and service users. Egale Canada is a national leader in human rights, equity, and inclusion education, offering high quality training that strengthens understanding of gender and sexual diversity and equips participants with practical strategies to promote respectful and inclusive workplaces.

Workplace Inclusion for Staff

On November 27th, Egale delivered its Workplace Inclusion for Gender and Sexual Diversity session to 72 staff members from across City departments. This foundational 90-minute training introduced participants to key concepts related to gender identity, sexual orientation, inclusive language, and the diverse identities captured within the 2SLGBTQI acronym. The session also explored how everyday workplace norms, structures, and interactions can unintentionally create barriers for 2SLGBTQI individuals. Participants left with practical strategies to foster safer and more affirming interactions with colleagues and community members.

Workplace Inclusion for Leaders

On November 18th, 48 people leaders and managers participated in Egale's specialized Workplace Inclusion for Leaders session. This training built on foundational concepts by focusing on the unique role of leaders in setting expectations, modeling inclusive behaviour, and shaping policies and environments that support 2SLGBTQI inclusion. Through guided reflection, real world scenarios, and actionable tools, leaders explored how to apply cultural humility, challenge bias, and strengthen team cultures where all staff feel respected, valued, and supported. The session also emphasized the importance of building allyship skills, recognizing subtle forms of discrimination, and fostering psychologically safe spaces within teams.

Together, these two sessions helped reinforce the City's commitment to inclusive workplace culture and provided staff and leaders with the awareness and skills needed to support equity and belonging across the organization.

First Peoples Group Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training for Leaders

In 2025, the City partnered with First Peoples Group to deliver an Indigenous Cultural Awareness training tailored for managers and supervisors, with 43 leaders in attendance. First Peoples Group is a 100 percent Indigenous-owned and operated firm with a team of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit facilitators who bring deep community knowledge and lived experience to their training. Their approach centres storytelling, traditional teachings, and practical reflection to support meaningful learning and reconciliation in the workplace.

The session was facilitated by a three-person team of senior Indigenous presenters who grounded the day in an invocation and traditional teaching, and guided participants through contemporary and historical context, respectful and inclusive practices, and tangible actions leaders can take to advance reconciliation in their teams. Participants received a digital manual with background research and additional resources to continue their learning beyond the session.

Key focus areas included understanding Indigenous histories, cultures and current realities as they relate to municipal service delivery; reflecting on reconciliation and how leadership decisions shape respectful and inclusive practices; and applying learning through dialogue and scenario-based discussion rooted in the presenters' teachings and lived experience.

This training supports the City's ongoing commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action by strengthening our capacity to engage respectfully with Indigenous partners, staff, and community members. As part of this continued work, the City is exploring the possibility of undertaking a Reconciliation audit in 2026 to help guide future actions and assess progress.

Hidden Disability Sunflower Program

The City of Pickering has joined the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower (HDS) Program, becoming one of the first municipalities in Ontario to do so. This initiative equips staff with the knowledge to recognize and support individuals with non-visible disabilities, using the internationally recognized Sunflower symbol. Once 80% of staff have completed the training, Pickering will be officially designated a "Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Destination", reinforcing its commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Currently, 353 employees have been trained.

Supporting Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

In 2025, the City continued implementing its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, building on work completed in 2024 and advancing efforts across its five priority areas. The City strengthened partnerships with regional municipalities, equity focused organizations and community advisory groups to amplify diverse voices, celebrate cultural traditions, advance anti-racism work and encourage shared learning.

Key 2025 EDI Achievements

Throughout 2025, the City supported, partnered in and organized a range of equity focused initiatives across Durham Region, reinforcing its commitment to collaboration and to uplifting equity deserving communities. Initiatives included the Big Drum Social for National Indigenous Peoples Day, Youth Pride Durham, the Durham Region Pride Parade, Emancipation Day, the International Day for People of African Descent Celebration and Movie Night, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Community Gathering and the Black Joy Holiday Market. This non-exhaustive list reflects the City's broader role in supporting equity driven and community led initiatives throughout the year.

EDI Staff Training and Capacity Building

The City strengthened staff learning through a series of EDI training sessions focused on cultural understanding, accessibility awareness and inclusive practices. Training opportunities included Unpacking Islamophobia with the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, an Indigenous Beading Workshop for Red Dress Day, Introduction to Deaf Culture, ASL and Accessibility, a learning session for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Introduction to Toronto Caribbean Carnival, Treaty Relations and Indigenous Ways of Knowing and a staff book club featuring *Disfigured* by Amanda Leduc. These sessions deepened understanding of diverse cultures, identities, histories and accessibility and supported staff in serving Pickering's diverse community.

Conclusion

The progress highlighted throughout this report demonstrates the City's continued commitment to advancing the seven priorities of the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan. With the collaboration of community partners, service providers, City departments, and residents, 2025 marked a year of significant expansion, innovation, and measurable impact across all areas of the plan.

Each priority area saw meaningful action, from improving access to basic needs and strengthening mental health supports, to enhancing community spaces, promoting belonging, and creating opportunities for engagement. These achievements reflect the collective dedication of those who work every day to ensure that all residents feel safe, supported, connected, and valued.

As our community continues to evolve, our work will evolve with it. The City remains committed to listening to community voices, adapting our initiatives to emerging needs, and investing in collaborative solutions that promote safety and well-being for everyone. This progress is only possible through the shared efforts of residents, partners, and frontline organizations whose commitment drives the success of the plan.

Together, we will continue moving toward a future where every resident can thrive, where support is accessible, and where a strong sense of connection and belonging is felt throughout Pickering.



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