

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2305.



# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

---

To: Committee of the Whole  
From: Commissioner of Finance, Commissioner of Social Services and Chief Administrative Officer  
Report: #2024-COW-24  
Date: June 12, 2024

---

**Subject:**

Moving Toward a Sustainable Approach for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees in Durham

---

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That Regional staff be delegated authority, for purposes of the Region's Humanitarian response to asylum-seekers and refugees, to extend the Region's agreement with Community Development Council Durham until the end of 2024, execute any transfer payment agreements, expend funds up to a maximum of \$9.9 million in accordance with the program guidelines, make any modifications to the program(s) to ensure desired outcomes are achieved, receive any federal and/or provincial funds for this response, and waive the Region's Purchasing By-law and Budget Management Policy as required for this response;
- B) That any costs associated with the extension of this agreement not reimbursed under the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program, or any other upper-level government investments be funded at the discretion of the Commissioner of Finance;
- C) That Council endorse the development and implementation of a more sustainable, intentional, distributive GTHA-wide asylum claimant response appropriate to the current and anticipated volume of asylum claimants arriving in Canada;
- D) That this response incorporates an all-of-government approach to ensure proper coordination and resourcing to accommodate asylum claimants arriving in Canada;
- E) That funding from programs like Reaching Home, Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), and base Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit remain dedicated to addressing the needs of local homeless residents, rather than redirected toward newcomer asylum claimants;

- F) That staff be directed to seek additional incremental funding from the Province through the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit program to support Durham in providing urgent assistance to a rapidly growing number of asylum claimants and other at-risk populations, similar to the funding provided in Fall 2023;
  - G) That staff be directed to seek annual funding per asylum claimant from federal and provincial governments to support an asylum claimant with temporary and permanent housing, health, and other social and settlement services to fully integrate into the communities upon exit from the proposed Peel Regional Reception Centre;
  - H) That staff be directed to coordinate with municipal and association partners to implement an advocacy strategy that supports funding and implementation of this new and sustainable model;
  - I) That staff be directed to wind down operations of the Durham response, effective December 31, 2024, unless a commitment is received from the federal government for future planned allocations along with reimbursement of costs prior to that date; and
  - J) That a copy of report #2024-COW-24 be sent to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area municipal partners, and all local Durham MPs and MPPs.
- 

## Report:

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval to extend the current agreement with Community Development Council Durham (CDCD), for purposes of the Regional Municipality of Durham's (Region) Humanitarian response to asylum-seekers and refugees, for an additional six months from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024. Any costs not reimbursed under the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) or other upper-level government investments are recommended to be funded at the discretion of the Commissioner of Finance.

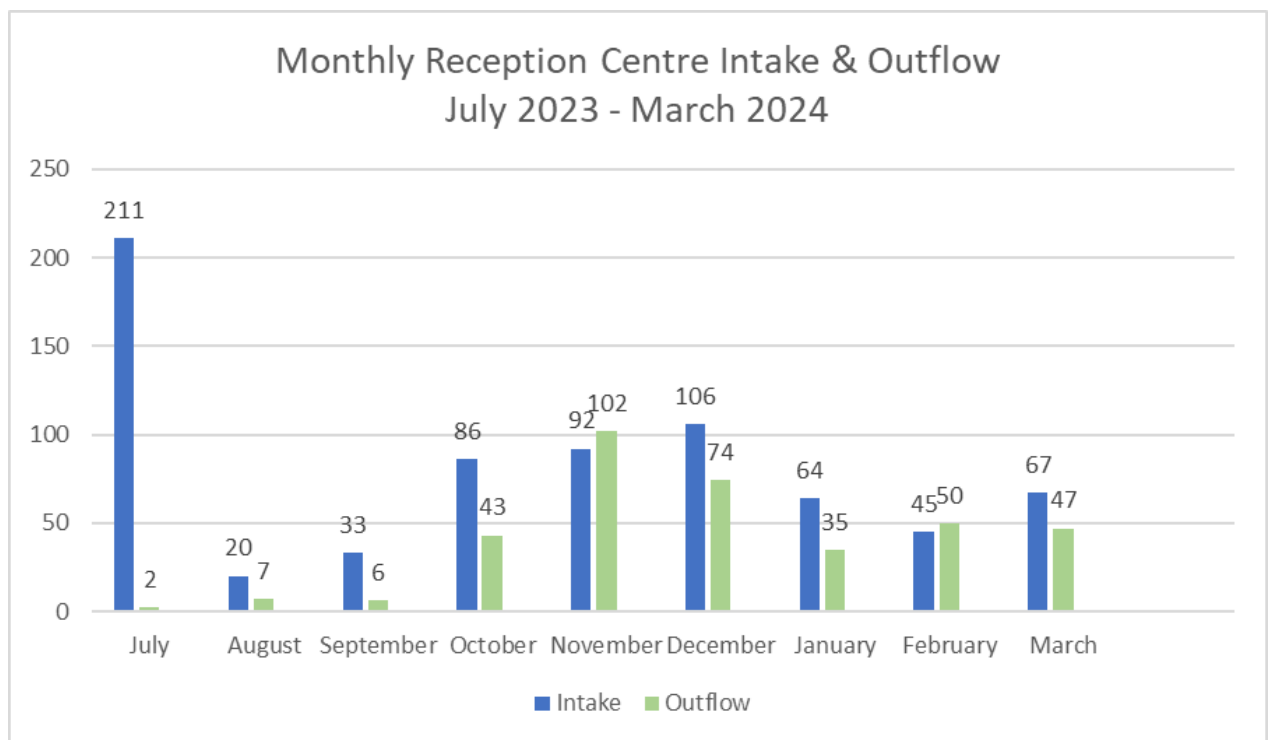
### 2. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 2.1 [Finance and Administration Report #2024-F-3](#), dated March 19, 2024, which sought Council approval for an extension of the agreement with Community Development Council Durham for settlement services for asylum-seekers and refugees through June 30, 2024.
- 2.2 [Finance and Administration Report #2023-F-27](#), dated November 14, 2023, which sought Council approval for an extension of the agreement with Community Development Council Durham for settlement services for asylum-seekers and refugees through March 31, 2024.

- 2.3 [Council Information Report #2023-INFO-81](#), dated September 28, 2023, provides a comprehensive update on the Region of Durham’s humanitarian response for asylum-seekers and refugees.
- 2.4 [Council Report #2022-A-22](#), dated June 28, 2022, which sought Council approval on an agreement with Community Development Council Durham for settlement supports related to individuals arriving in Durham via the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel.

**3. Update on Durham’s Humanitarian Response for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees**

- 3.1 Since June 2023, the Region has coordinated support for asylum-seekers in conjunction with CDCD and other community partners through existing programs.
- 3.2 CDCD has a proven history of successfully delivering a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) in Durham and continues to lead the efforts of settlement and integration within our communities. CDCD is the host organization of the Ajax Welcome Centre, one of Durham’s primary and longstanding settlement service providers. Since August 2022, the Region has been in a partnership agreement with CDCD to deliver resettlement programming to Ukrainians. Responding to the influx of asylum-seekers, the program further expanded to accommodate all refugees. To date, the Region and CDCD have successfully assisted 596 households (991 individuals), relocating 413 families to affordable long-term housing.



- 3.3 The above chart illustrates the intake and outflow of asylum seekers since July 2023 across all three hotel sites in Durham. A significant influx of individuals arrived in Ajax at the end of June 2023 and were quickly provided with shelter at hotels in Ajax and Pickering. Rooms at a third hotel site were secured by September 2023. The increases of outflow in November and December 2023 can be attributed to Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit where the Region received 70 benefits to assist asylum seekers transition to longer term housing.
- 3.4 The unexpected influx of new refugee claimants and asylum-seekers in Durham has created a strain on services throughout the Region, leaving refugees entering Durham to face hardship and difficulties in obtaining housing, employment and other important resettlement supports. As of May 21, 2024, three hotel sites are sheltering 408 individuals.
- 3.5 CDCD is seeking an extension of their existing partnership agreement with the Region including additional funding of up to \$9.9 million to further support the influx of refugees entering Durham from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024. This 6-month extension will allow CDCD to make longer term plans with respect to operations and staffing for the response. The funding will be used to provide temporary sheltering for approximately 400 asylum-seekers and refugees along with staffing required to provide wraparound supports, resettlement and housing outreach assistance.

#### **4. Moving to a Sustainable Person-Centred Approach**

- 4.1 The Region's initial response to sheltering and other support needs of the unanticipated influx of asylum seekers was necessary at the time, but this approach is no longer sustainable or cost effective. Staff have been in conversations with our Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipal partners around a longer-term approach for supporting the settlement of asylum-seekers.
- 4.2 On April 23, 2024, Nando Iannicca (Regional Chair and CEO of Peel Region) sent a letter to the federal Minister Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship) and Provincial Minister David Piccini (Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development) to propose a new sustainable model for the Asylum Claimant Response. The proposal was built around two main components: the establishment of a Regional Reception Centre, with coordinated exits to other municipalities, and the creation of dedicated shelter facilities specifically for asylum claimants.
- 4.3 As noted in the Peel proposal, the Centre would serve as a hub for consolidating resources and in-land and port-of-entry asylum support expertise in one location, including temporary housing and an allocation-based funding benefit attached to each in-land and port-of-entry asylum claimant. Such an approach will enable the effective communication and coordination among different communities, service providers, stakeholders, governments, and claimants, thereby mitigating the risks that are present with the existing ad hoc, decentralized, uncoordinated approach.

Specifically, a dedicated approach to in-land and port-of-entry asylum claimants is critical to supporting their settlement and integration journey and allowing better allocation of resources towards local residents.

- 4.4 Central to the success of the Peel proposal, is the coordination of supports across municipalities within the GTHA. The Region's current response has been mainly centred around the utilization of hotel/motel rooms located in three municipalities across Durham (Ajax, Pickering, Whitby). The inflow of asylum seekers vs outflow to transitional and permanent housing will be dependent on sustainable, predictable and portable funding attached to each claimant, so receiving municipalities are not incurring additional fiscal pressures to support the response.
- 4.5 To date Peel has not received a decision to move forward with their proposal from the upper levels of government. Peel is bringing together interested municipalities to discuss next steps for advocacy on their proposal, which has included Durham staff.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The estimated cost to the Region of extending this agreement with CDCD from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, is \$9.9 million.
- 5.2 To date, regional staff have applied for \$7.0 million in federal funding under IHAP for reimbursement of costs incurred to date and those projected to be incurred up to and including March 31, 2024.
- 5.3 On March 13, 2024, the Regional Chair received confirmation from the Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P. that the Region would be reimbursed for \$4.6 million related to expenses claimed under IHAP for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, for the period up to December 31, 2023.
- 5.4 On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Federal Budget announced a plan to provide \$1.1 billion over three years, starting in 2024-25, to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to extend IHAP. Funding in 2026-27 will be conditional on provincial and municipal investments in permanent transitional housing solutions for asylum claimants. IRCC staff have been in contact with Regional staff, noting that further details will be provided around the expectations for provincial and municipal contributions for future years.
- 5.5 Funding from programs like Reaching Home, Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), and Canada Ontario Housing Benefit must remain dedicated to addressing the increasing needs of local homeless residents, rather than redirected toward newcomer asylum claimants.
- 5.6 It is recommended that any costs associated with the extension of this agreement not reimbursed under the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program or any other upper-level government investments be funded at the discretion of the Commissioner of Finance.

## 6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- Goal 2 Community Vitality – to foster an exceptional quality of life with services that contribute to strong neighbourhoods, vibrant and diverse communities, and influence our safety and well-being.
- Goal 4 Social Investment – to ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need, so that no individual is left behind.
- Goal 5 Service Excellence – to provide exceptional value to Durham taxpayers through responsive, effective and financially sustainable service delivery.

## 7. Conclusion

7.1 With the recent and ongoing influx of asylum-seekers and refugees, the Region is looking to extend its existing partnership agreement with CDCD for settlement services from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, at an estimated cost of \$9.9 million. The Region has applied for funding under the federal government's Interim Housing Assistance Program to cover these costs. Any costs associated with the extension of the agreement not reimbursed under the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program or any other upper-level government investments would be funded at the discretion of the Commissioner of Finance.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

---

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou  
Commissioner of Social Services

Original signed by

---

Nancy Taylor, BBA, CPA, CA  
Commissioner of Finance

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

---

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer