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The Regional Municipality of Durham
Information Report

From: Commissioner of Social Services and Chief Administrative Officer
Report: #2024-INFO-47
Date: July 26, 2024

Subject:

Update on Federal Funding received under the Interim Housing Assistance Program

Recommendation:

Receive for Information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Regional Municipality of Durham's (Region) federal funding received under the Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) to support asylum claimants between January 1 and March 31, 2024.

2. Background

2.1 Since June 2023, the Region has coordinated support for asylum-seekers in conjunction with Community Development Council Durham (CDCD) and other community partners through existing programs.

2.2 On March 14, 2024, the Region received \$4.6 million, under IHAP, in reimbursement for interim housing costs for asylum claimants incurred in 2023. The IHAP provides cost-sharing financing to provincial and municipal governments to address interim housing pressures resulting from increased volumes of asylum claimants.

2.3 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 June 30, 2024, three hotel sites are sheltering approximately 424 individuals.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 [Committee of the Whole Report #2024-COW-24](#), dated June 12, 2024, which provided an update on the Region of Durham's response and sought Council approval for an extension of the agreement with Community Development Council Durham for settlement services for asylum-seekers and refugees through December 31, 2024.
- 3.2 [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.
- 3.3 [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.
- 3.4 [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.
- 3.5 [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.

4. Updated Allocations Received from the Federal Government

- 4.1 On April 16th, 2024, the Federal Budget announced a plan to provide \$1.1 billion over three years, starting in 2024-25, to IRCC to extend IHAP. Funding in 2026-27 will be conditional on provincial and municipal investments in permanent transitional housing solutions for asylum claimants.
- 4.2 On July 5, 2024, the Region received notification from IRCC that they were prepared to offer the Region \$2,376,000 in total reimbursement for the expenses incurred from January to March 2024. This amount represents approximately 95% of the total expenses incurred by the Region during this period which is comparable with the Peel Region reimbursement rates.¹
- 4.3 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.

¹ [PowerPoint Presentation \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

5. Intergovernmental Response and Proposals from Other Municipalities

- 5.1 The City of Toronto coordinated an 'Intergovernmental Roundtable on Asylum' meeting on June 24, 2024. The meeting took place at Toronto City Hall in Council Chambers and included representatives from municipalities that are currently responding to the influx, as well as senior leadership from various ministries both within the federal and provincial government.
- 5.2 During the roundtable meeting, the City of Ottawa and the Region of Peel presented on proposals for consolidated supports and reception centres.
- 5.3 Peel's proposed model for managing asylum claimants includes the establishment of a Regional Reception Centre capable of assisting up to 1,300 individuals monthly. The Centre aims to rapidly assess needs, provide on-site settlement, legal, and health services, and coordinate transitions to receiving municipalities for ongoing support. Additionally, it will offer short-term shelter for up to 200 individuals and respite accommodation for families and couples. Peel seeks funding totaling \$3.6 million for start-up costs of the Centre, \$9.9 million annually for its operation, \$6.4 million for asylum-specific shelters, and \$25.8 million annually for their operation. They also request \$35,735 per asylum claimant in Peel for housing and services upon exit from the Centre, and \$62,000 per claimant in other areas. They also emphasized the need for coordinated federal and provincial efforts to alleviate the strain on municipalities and ensure sustainable support for asylum seekers.
- 5.4 The City of Ottawa is considering using a tent-like sprung structure to accommodate asylum seekers amidst a surge in irregular migration. Council had directed staff to explore this option, highlighting its ability to rapidly provide emergency and transitional housing. These modular buildings feature aluminum arches covered with a weather-resistant membrane and can be customized with amenities like washrooms and kitchens, meeting local building codes. Although some concerns have been raised about the temporary nature of these structures and their effectiveness in addressing long-term housing needs, Ottawa aims to assess potential sites and possibly deploy the facilities by 2025, emphasizing their quick deployment capability and adaptability to varying needs.
- 5.5 Durham staff continue to explore opportunities for a longer-term sustainable model for supporting asylum seekers in our community. Currently, coordinating efforts through the lead local settlement agency (CDCD) and various hotels across the municipality have proven to be sufficient, but not sustainable or preferable for a longer-term response.
- 5.6 During the meeting, participating municipalities reiterated the urgent need for sustainable, up front, allocation-based funding focused on settlement outcomes with clear guidelines and policy parameters.

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 fiscally sustainable service delivery.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Staff will continue to meet regularly with counterparts from IRCC to advocate for additional funding for costs incurred by the Region to support asylum seeker claimants.

7.2 Staff will continue to meet regularly with counterparts across the GTHA to coordinate resources, share best practices and approaches to service delivery, and collaborate advocacy efforts for additional funding and policy changes.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou
Commissioner of Social Services

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer