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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner of Social Services  
Report: #2023-INFO-10  
Date: February 3, 2023

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## **Subject:**

2022 Durham Access to Social Housing (DASH) Wait List Statistics

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## **Recommendation:**

Receive for information

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## **Report:**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The Durham Access to Social Housing (DASH) wait list provides valuable information about the housing needs of low- and moderate-income households seeking affordable housing in Durham Region (Durham).
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of the DASH wait list at December 31, 2022, including statistical information about rent-geared-to-income (RGI) and modified housing applicants on the wait list, as well as those housed in an RGI or modified unit or otherwise provided financial housing assistance in 2022.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Regional Municipality of Durham (Region) is responsible for the administration of the wait lists for RGI and modified housing under the Housing Services Act (HSA). Applicants for RGI or modified housing in Durham apply through the DASH wait list, which is managed by the Housing Services Division.
- 2.2 DASH determines initial and ongoing eligibility for RGI and modified units, manages applicants on the wait list, and refers interested applicants to housing providers for RGI and modified unit vacancies.
- 2.3 The DASH wait list is vacancy driven. Applicants securely log in to the [DASH Vacancies Site](http://www.durham.ca/dash) at [www.durham.ca/dash](http://www.durham.ca/dash) to view and express interest in RGI and modified unit vacancies that meet their needs and preferences.

- 2.4 DASH applicants can also express interest in portable housing benefits and affordable housing vacancies posted to the site.

### 3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 Report #2022-SS-3 2021, Durham Access to Social Housing (DASH) Wait List Statistics and Critical Priority.

### 4. Overview of DASH Wait List

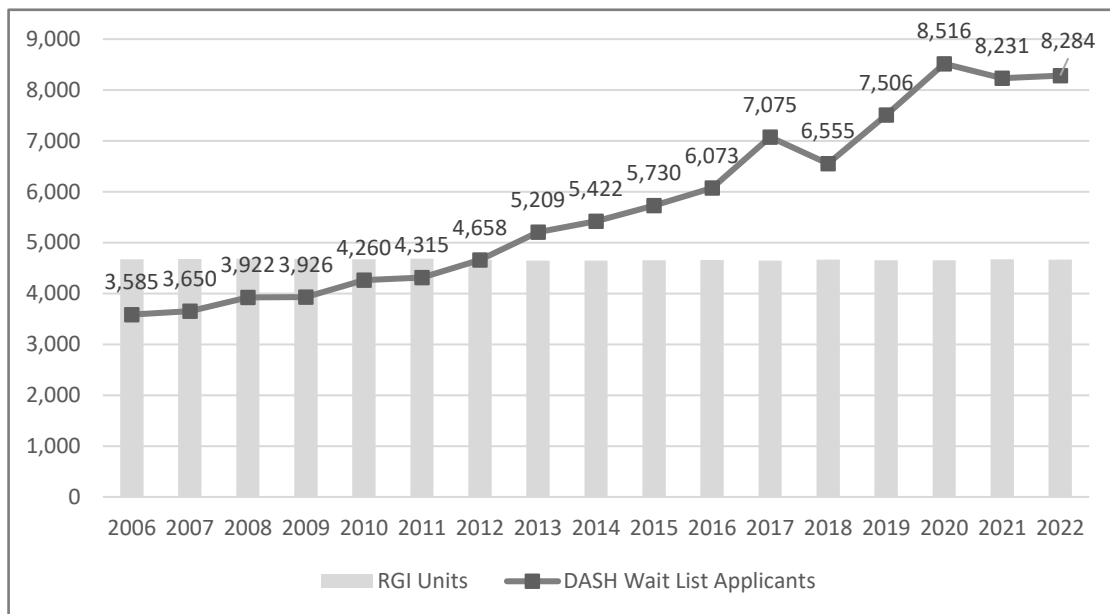
- 4.1 At the end of 2022, there were 8,284 low-income applicants on the DASH wait list for RGI units, and an additional 79 applicants for modified units.
- 4.2 There were 565 applicants with Special Priority (SPP) status on the DASH wait list, giving them first access to available units. SPP is a provincially mandated priority for victims of human trafficking or family violence, where the applicant intends to permanently separate from an abusive family member with whom they are residing. SPP applicants have priority over all other applicants on the DASH wait list.
- 4.3 The following table sets out the types of applicants and their priority status on the DASH wait list:

**Table 1**  
**Households on DASH Wait List at December 31, 2022**

Priority	Seniors	Singles	Couples	Families	Total
No Priority	2,138	2,025	86	3,470	7,719
Special Priority (SPP)	17	135	2	411	565
<b>RGI Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>2,160</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>3,881</b>	<b>8,284</b>
<b>Modified Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>79</b>

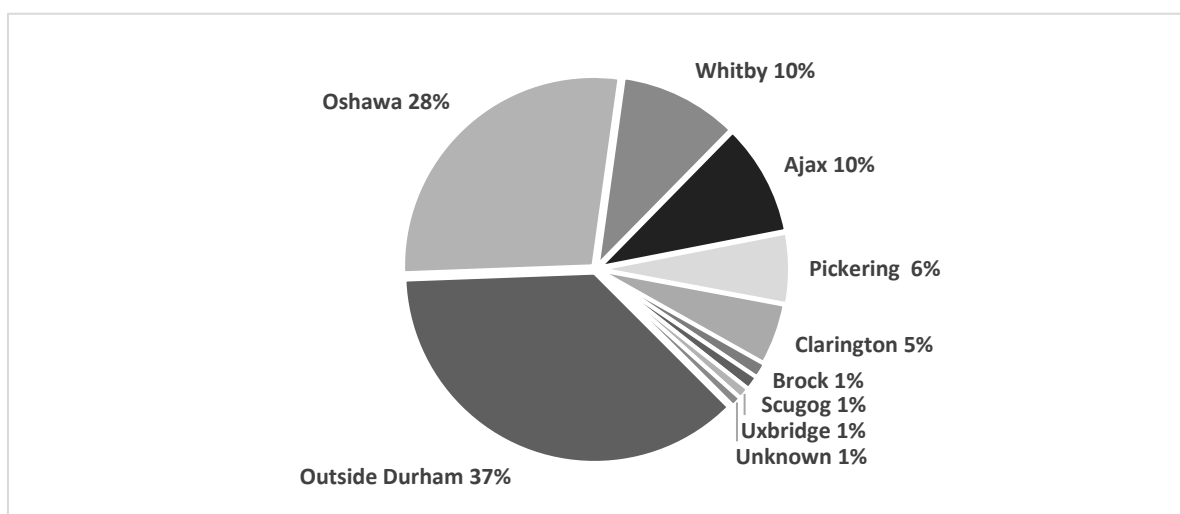
- 4.4 There are an additional 825 applicants on the DASH wait list who currently live in an RGI unit in Durham and are requesting a transfer to a different community housing property in Durham; 111 of these applicants (about 13.5 per cent) are required to transfer because they are living in a unit that is too large for their household (overhoused). In 2022, 18 DASH applicants were transferred to another unit in Durham.
- 4.5 Although the RGI wait list has more than doubled since 2006, the number of available RGI units has remained relatively stagnant.

**Figure 1**  
**DASH Wait List 2006-2022**



- 4.6 Low vacancy rates and an extremely limited number of affordable options in the private rental market have contributed to the growing number of low-income applicants seeking RGI in Durham.
- 4.7 RGI and modified housing applicants may be on multiple wait lists across Ontario, including the DASH wait list. Currently 37 per cent of DASH applicants (3,058) live outside of Durham. Under the HSA, the Region must allow eligible non-resident applicants on the DASH wait list and cannot prioritize applicants based on where they live.

**Figure 2**  
**Municipal Addresses of DASH Applicants**



- 4.8 About 30 per cent of DASH applicants residing in Durham are homeless (5 per cent are living in emergency shelter or unsheltered) or provisionally accommodated (25 per cent) meaning they live in temporary accommodation or lack security of tenure (e.g., staying temporarily with friends or family) and have no protections under the Residential Tenancies Act.
- 4.9 Most applicants on the wait list have insufficient income to find suitable and affordable accommodation in the private market in Durham. About 66 per cent of DASH applicants are on fixed income (28 per cent ODSP, 20 per cent Ontario Works and 18 per cent Old Age Security and other seniors' pensions), and average income is in the lowest tenth percentile in Durham for all household types (singles, families, seniors).

## 5. DASH Applicants Housed or Assisted

- 5.1 In 2022, 232 RGI and modified units became available in community housing or rent supplement units with landlords under agreement with the Region.
- 5.2 An additional 295 applicants were removed from the wait list because they were granted the Durham Portable Housing Benefit (Durham PHB) or the provincially funded Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB). Unlike RGI, these benefits are not tied to a specific unit. People can use the Durham PHB to live anywhere in Durham, and the COHB to live anywhere in Ontario.
- 5.3 The following table illustrates the number of applicants removed from the wait list in 2022 because they were housed or provided financial housing assistance.

**Table 2**  
**DASH Assisted Applicants – 2022**

	Seniors	Singles	Couples	Families	Total
<b>Housed</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>232</b>
RGI units – chronological	123	4	0	1	128
RGI units – special priority (SPP)	8	11	1	62	82
Modified and supportive units	17	3	0	2	22
<b>Housing Assistance</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>295</b>
Durham PHB	0	1	0	1	2
COHB	51	86	0	156	293
<b>Total Assisted Households Removed from DASH</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>527</b>

- 5.4 Average wait times for RGI vary according to priority on the wait list, household size, household type (i.e., seniors, singles, families), applicant preference and turnover of units at specific community housing properties or in area municipalities – making future wait times difficult to predict. On average, non-priority applicants housed in 2022 had been on the wait list for about 6.5 years and priority applicants for about 1.7 years.
- 5.5 Most applicants housed from the DASH wait list were either seniors (about 60 per cent, excluding seniors with SPP) or SPP applicants (about 35 per cent).
- 5.6 Single non-seniors remain the most under-served cohort on the DASH wait list, even with priority on the wait list. This is due to the relatively low number and turnover of single non-senior units in the community housing portfolio. As these chronically underserved applicants age, this has led to a higher concentration of high need seniors in buildings mandated for seniors, for which there is little or no support.
- 5.7 In 2022, there were only 5 non-senior applicants housed without priority. All were housed in Durham Rent Supplement or Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP)<sup>1</sup> units, which are not required to follow provincially legislated priority rules – enabling the Region to address the needs of people in Durham who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as other locally identified priorities per At Home in Durham, the Durham Housing Plan 2014-2024.
- 5.8 The Durham PHB and COHB are also exempt from provincial priority rules. About 90 per cent of applicants assisted under these programs were chronological applicants, who might not otherwise have received an offer of housing. However, many low-income people receiving these benefits continue to struggle due to high average market rents in relation to low incomes, limited supply and availability of purpose-built market rental housing, and low vacancy rates in Durham.

## **6. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Goal 5: Service Excellence – To provide exceptional value to Durham taxpayers through responsive, effective, and fiscally sustainable service delivery.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 At the end of 2022, there were 8,284 households on the DASH wait list for RGI units, and an additional 79 applicants requesting modified or accessible housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly Strong Communities Rent Supplement.

- 7.2 The amount of community housing in Durham is insufficient to meet the needs of applicants on the DASH wait list. This is especially true for single non-senior applicants, who are generally unlikely to receive an offer of housing until they become a senior – placing undue pressure on community housing providers who lack appropriate supports for high need seniors.
- 7.3 Most low-income applicants, including applicants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, will continue to be displaced by incoming SPP applicants who are provincially mandated to have the highest priority on the wait list.
- 7.4 Regional programs like the Durham Rent Supplement and Durham PHB programs ease some of this pressure. However, the success of these benefits is hindered by the low turnover in the small number of benefits that are available, as well as larger rental housing pressures in the private market in Durham.
- 7.5 In order to address the goals of At Home in Durham, the Durham Housing Plan 2014-2024, Durham needs to both invest in the short term through financial housing assistance programs like the Durham Rent Supplement and/or Durham PHB, and over the long term through the preservation of existing community housing and a significant increase in the supply of affordable and community housing.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou  
Commissioner of Social Services