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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Regional Council  
From: Chief Administrative Officer  
Report: #2025-COW-43  
Date: December 17, 2025

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**Subject:**

Continuation of the Durham Humanitarian Response Program (DHRP) through the Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) Grant

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**Recommendation:**

That Regional Council approve:

- A) That staff proceed with a capital acquisition of a property in the City of Pickering (Confidential Report #2025-COW-48) and any facility capital improvements to create a purpose-built, dedicated housing facility for interim asylum claimant accommodations and continue delivering the Durham Humanitarian Response Program to provide wraparound settlement services for asylum claimants to facilitate transition to independent living to be financed as detailed in Confidential Report #2025-COW-48; and
- B) That the estimated annual operating costs for this dedicated interim housing facility estimated at \$7,075,000 be financed as follows:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>
Federal Interim Housing Assistance Grant	\$5,306,250
2026 Budget Provision – Property Tax Levy	884,375
2026 Budget Provision – Operating Impact Stabilization Reserve Fund	884,375
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,075,000</b>

**Report:****1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report provides Regional Council an update on the Durham Humanitarian Response Program (DHRP), including program trends and client outcomes, and the funding received from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP).

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In August 2022, the Region entered into a partnership agreement with Community Development Council Durham to deliver resettlement programming to Ukrainian nationals arriving through Canadian-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel visa.
- 2.2 Responding to the continued influx of asylum claimants in 2023, the DHRP expanded to accommodate all claimants from different countries of origin.
- 2.3 Currently, the DHRP provides temporary accommodations to asylum claimants in three hotels across Durham Region. Claimants who enter the DHRP receive wraparound supports from CDCD such as settlement services, employment and job readiness support, language training, access to health care, and housing navigation to facilitate transition to independent living.
- 2.4 Until December 2024, the Region received federal reimbursement of up to 95% for all costs incurred through the DHRP through the IHAP administered by IRCC.
- 2.5 In August 2025, the Region successfully secured \$48.03 million in upfront IHAP funding to support capital and operating costs for the DHRP from January 1, 2025, to March 31, 2027.

**3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 [Council Information Report #2024-INFO-47](#), dated July 26, 2024, which provided an update on the federal funding received under the Interim Housing Assistance Program to support asylum claimants between January 1 and March 31, 2024.
- 3.2 [Committee of the Whole Report #2024-COW-24](#), dated June 12, 2024, which sought Council approval for an extension of the agreement with Community Development Council Durham (CDCD) for settlement services for asylum-seekers through December 2024, to develop and implement of a more sustainable asylum seeker response, and to seek funding from the federal government to support Durham's asylum claimant response.

- 3.3 [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.
- 3.4 [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.
- 3.5 [Council Information Report # 2023-INFO-81](#), dated September 28, 2023, which provided a comprehensive update on the Region of Durham's humanitarian response for asylum-seekers and refugees.
- 3.6 [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. Durham Humanitarian Response Program**

- 4.1 Operated by CDCD, the Region's humanitarian response program continues to be the primary source of support for temporary accommodations and settlement support asylum claimants arriving in Durham Region.
- 4.2 The Region's Program is currently operating out of three hotels in Pickering, Whitby, and Oshawa and is supporting 242 asylum claimants or 133 households as of October 2025.
- 4.3 The asylum claimant population is nearly evenly split, with 131 individuals (56 per cent) identifying as male and 111 individuals (44 per cent) identifying as female. Most of the asylum claimants are between 31 and 45 years old (36 per cent), followed by children 12 and younger (23 per cent).
- 4.4 Most claimants continue to be from African countries, particularly Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Ghana, with some recent arrivals from Romania, Iraq, and the Bahamas.
- 4.5 Figure 1 below illustrates the intake and outflow of asylum claimants since February 2023 across all three hotel sites. A significant number of individuals arrived in Ajax at the end of June and September 2023, when the third hotel site was secured for additional accommodations.
- 4.6 In recent months, the DHRP has achieved notable success in transitioning asylum claimants into stable, independent housing, resulting in a higher rate of program exits than new intakes.

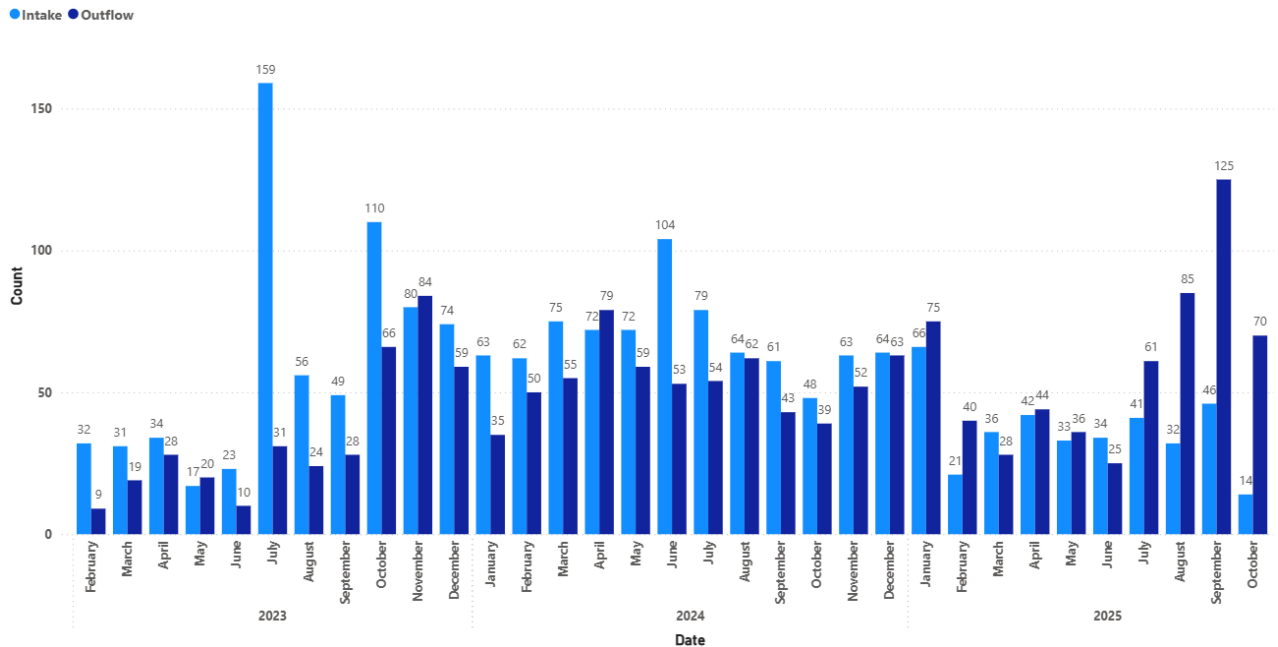


Figure 1: DHRP Monthly Intake and Outflow – February 2023 to October 2025

4.7 To date, the Region and CDCD have successfully assisted 1,873 asylum claimants through the DHRP, relocating 1,628 individuals to stable and independent housing. Of those who have moved into independent living, 1,189 or 63 per cent secured housing in Durham Region.

**5. Interim Housing Assistance Program**

5.1 As reported in #2024-INFO-47, the Region received \$4.6 million in federal reimbursement through IHAP for costs incurred by the DHRP in 2023. The Region received an additional \$13.0 million for operating costs incurred in 2024, bringing the total amount received by the Region to \$17.6 million from 2023 to 2025.

5.2 In the 2024 federal budget, the federal government committed another \$1.1B over three years to extend IHAP. The renewed IHAP directives provides an upfront provision of funding for sustainable and cost-effective solutions, including capital costs that facilitate housing independence.

5.3 The IHAP directives have a cost matching provision, with the federal government committing to cover 95% of eligible activities (e.g. sustainable housing solutions) in 2025-26, and 75% in 2026-27. Non-eligible activities (e.g. hotel accommodations) are funded at 75% in 2025-26 and 50% in 2026-27. The Region must fund the remaining share through provincial, territorial, or municipal sources.

5.4 With Council’s directive to seek federal reimbursement and explore sustainable, cost-effective approaches to support asylum seekers as approved in #2024-COW-24, the Region submitted an IHAP application under the new program directives.

- 5.5 In August 2025, IRCC confirmed that the Region will receive \$48.03 million of the \$52.8 million requested for the period of January 1, 2025, to March 31, 2027, for capital and operating costs associated with the DHRP.
- 5.6 The approved grant brings two key program provisions: a) the efficient use of program funding to facilitate housing independence of asylum claimants as soon as possible, with a target maximum stay of 90 days in IHAP-funded accommodations, and b) increased municipal coordination to maximize capacity across facilities.
- 5.7 Given the limited IHAP funding available, securing 91 per cent of requested funding amount is a substantial federal investment and a strong outcome for Durham Region.
- 5.8 This federal contribution allows the Region to acquire a new capital asset that provides long-term value and flexibility for future program use and continue the provision of wraparound settlement services that have been critical in facilitating claimants' community integration and transition to independent living.
- 6. Property Acquisition – Durham Reception Centre**
- 6.1 The primary pillar of the Region's IHAP application is the acquisition of a capital asset that will serve as a dedicated interim housing facility (i.e., Durham Reception Centre) for asylum claimants and as the primary service location for the DHRP and its partners. Staff have identified a potential property in the City of Pickering that will be suitable for the Durham Reception Centre (#2025-COW-48).
- 6.2 This property acquisition allows the Region to transition away from the costly and unsustainable reliance on hotels for temporary accommodations, align with municipal best practices in asylum claimant response as demonstrated by the early successes in Peel and Ottawa, and secure a federally funded capital asset that will remain under Regional ownership beyond the expiry of IHAP in 2027.
- 6.3 The Durham Reception Centre aims to have a maximum service and interim housing capacity for 300 asylum claimants.
- 6.4 Once operational, asylum claimants who are currently in hotel accommodations will be transitioned to Durham Reception Centre. New admissions will also only be accepted at the reception centre.
- 6.5 While the Region continues to advocate for the continuation of IHAP funding after 2027, staff are also exploring alternative funding or program options beyond 2027, including potential use for other Regional programming. Potential uses of the site include converting the site to a service hub that provides supports to newcomer groups and other residents, from employment, language assistance, mental health, support groups, educational workshops, and a community programming site.

## 7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Confidential Report #2025-COW-48 provides details on the capital costs associated with the property acquisition and associated financing. As the capital purchase qualifies as a sustainable housing solution under IHAP guidelines, 95 per cent of the capital costs can be covered by federal funding.
- 7.2 The following table provides details on the estimated annual operating costs associated with the proposed Durham Reception Centre and the associated financing.
- 7.3 Through the IHAP, the federal government has committed to fund 95% of eligible activities (e.g. sustainable housing solutions) in 2025-26, and 75% in 2026-27. Non-eligible activities (e.g. hotel accommodations) are funded at 75% in 2025-26 and 50% in 2026-27 up to a maximum of \$48.03 million. Unless the federal government extends funding under the IHAP program, ongoing annual operating costs for this facility will be the responsibility of the Region as of April 1, 2027.

	<b>Proposed Annual Budget</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>	
Program Costs	\$6,500,000
Facility Operating and Maintenance Costs	\$575,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$7,075,000</b>
<b>Financing:</b>	
Federal Interim Housing Assistance Program Grant	\$5,306,250
2026 Budget Provision – Property Taxes	884,375
2026 Budget Provision – Operating Impact Stabilization Reserve Fund	884,375
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>\$7,075,000</b>

## 8. Risk Considerations

- 8.1 **Conclusion of IHAP grant in 2027** – IRCC has not announced an extension of IHAP funding after 2027.

- a. Regional staff are working with intergovernmental stakeholders, including the province and other municipalities, to emphasize the federal government's jurisdictional responsibility and advocate for continued federal support to support asylum claimants. At funding end, the Region will have the opportunity to explore how the capital investments enabled by IHAP can be leveraged to continue supporting asylum claimants and other in-need populations.
- b. Staff will explore alternative and/or shared uses for the property acquired that support other Regional programming or community stakeholders. Regional staff will seek Council decision for alternative use or disposal of the property, if needed.

- 8.2 **Evolving federal immigration landscape** - there have been significant federal policy and program developments affecting all immigrant groups, including asylum claimants. The federal government's Budget 2025 notes that asylum claims have declined by one-third so far in 2025, which may lead to adjustments in IHAP funding commensurate to the decline in asylum claimants.

Additionally, IRCC closed down federally-operated hotels for asylum claimants as of September 30, 2025. This has resulted in the DHRP admitting some claimants from these hotels. To mitigate these risks:

- a. Staff will continue to monitor trends in asylum claims and legislative and policy changes to adjust service capacity accordingly.
- b. Staff will continue working closely with the program operator to ensure program compliance and that asylum claimants transition to independent housing as soon as possible and within the 90-day IHAP provision.

If these changes result to the DHRP operating below service capacity, staff will explore opportunities to leverage the property for other regional needs and programming.

## 9. Next steps

- 9.1 Upon Council Approval, Real Estate staff will conclude negotiation of the Purchase Agreement for a property in the City of Pickering that will be used for the Durham Reception Centre. The details of this property acquisition are set out in 2025-COW-48.
- 9.2 Staff will maintain active oversight and coordination of the DHRP, including regular communication with CDCD to monitor occupancy levels, service delivery, claimants' progress and address any issues that may arise.

## 10. Relationship to Strategic Plan

10.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. Connected and Vibrant Communities
  - C2. Enable a full range of housing options, including housing that is affordable and close to transit.
- b. Healthy People, Caring Communities
  - H2. Collaborate with partners to respond to complex social issues that improve community safety and well-being, including mental health and addictions.
  - H3. Integrate and co-ordinate service delivery for positive life outcomes, including investments in poverty prevention, housing solutions, and homelessness supports.
  - H6. Collaborate with partners to co-ordinate settlement supports for newcomers.
- c. Resilient Local Economies
  - R3. Develop, attract, and support a skilled and qualified workforce, including youth and newcomers.
- d. Strong Relationships
  - S1. Enhance inclusive opportunities for community engagement and meaningful collaboration.
  - S3. Collaborate across local area municipalities, with agencies, non-profits, and community partners to deliver co-ordinated and efficient services.
  - S4. Advocate to the federal and provincial government and agencies to advance regional priorities.
  - S5. Ensure accountable and transparent decision-making to serve community needs, while responsibly managing available resources.

10.2 This report aligns with/addresses the following Foundation(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. Processes: Continuously improving processes to ensure we are responsive to community needs.

**11. Conclusion**

- a. Funded in large part by the federal IHAP grant, the DHRP is the Region's primary response to refugee claimants arriving in Durham Region. The 2025-2027 IHAP grant agreement allows the Region to acquire a capital asset that is more sustainable and cost-effective than providing temporary housing through hotel accommodations.
- b. A detailed program budget, site and program governance and coordination plan will be developed to ensure the successful execution of these initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer