

York Region seeks further funding for handling asylum seekers

Communities like the Region of York need further support from all levels of government to address the needs of asylum claimants.

This was a resolution coming out of Regional Council recently, which goes on to request compensation for expenses to date and ensure that accommodations can continue at the same level going forward.

“Like many municipalities across the Province, York Region is experiencing an influx of asylum seekers and refugee claimants,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson in a statement. “Successful integration of newcomers, including asylum seekers, requires a coordinated operational effort by all levels of government. We are pleased the Government of Canada is acknowledging the work municipalities continue to do on this critical issue and look forward to [details on how additional funding](#) will be allocated locally. Without this coordination, municipalities are at risk of experiencing an unsustainable demand for resources.” Compensation, the Region announced, came in at \$2.7 million in 2023 and an additional \$14.1 million has been requested to offset the estimated costs of the Region's interim housing and supports to such claimants this year.

An increase in the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit to “at least match enhanced Provincial allocation of \$2.4 million” was requested to enable claimants to settle and find more stable housing.

Further coordination, they added, would help address the increase in asylum claimants in Canada and further funding directly to community organizations, such as faith organizations giving a hand to asylum claimants, would help alleviate pressures.

“York Region remains focused on supporting people, including providing safe accommodations and access to settlement services needed to find employment and stable housing as quickly as possible,” said City of Vaughan Regional Councillor Gino Rosati, Chair of Community and Health Services. “Every level of government is needed to deliver long-term, sustainable and compassionate measures allowing our most vulnerable newcomers to have a safe place to stay.” On January 31, Federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Millar announced \$362.4 million of additional funding to support the Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) as part of the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Through the IHAP, the Government of Canada provides funding to provincial and municipal governments, on a cost-sharing basis, to address “extraordinary interim housing pressures resulting from increased volumes of asylum claimants.”

“This new funding will support provinces and municipalities experiencing a surge in demand for shelter space and help prevent asylum claimants from experiencing homelessness.”

Said the Minister in a statement: “Provinces and municipalities are critical partners in helping respond to the rising number of asylum claims and supporting the needs of those fleeing persecution, oppression and conflict. Today's announcement will help ensure that asylum claimants and refugees have a roof over their heads and are protected from the cold. We will continue to be there to support vulnerable people and the communities that provide them shelter.”

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