

## **Intergovernmental Advocacy Efforts on Toronto's Refugee Claimant Shelter Response**

**Date:** March 22, 2023

**To:** City Council

**From:** City Manager

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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The City of Toronto is facing ongoing challenges and occupancy issues in the shelter system. Toronto has exhausted its resources and is unable to support an ongoing, dedicated response to refugee claimant (asylum seeker) arrivals in our shelter system without adding to our operating budget gap and/or making cuts to the capital budget.

The City continues intergovernmental advocacy for tri-level collaboration to address the current surge of arrivals, and to develop a formal inter-governmental strategy for dealing with unplanned and sudden large-scale asylum seeker arrivals.

This advocacy is ongoing. In order to provide accurate and updated information, a supplementary report with additional details will be provided.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Funding of \$97 million to sustain the City's Refugee Response Initiative in 2023 is included in Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) 2023 Approved Operating Budget with full reimbursement for program expenditures expected from the Federal government. Actual spending in 2023 will be limited to the approved budget for this initiative in SSHA's 2023 Council Approved Operating Budget.

Additional details and updates will be provided in the forthcoming supplementary report.

The City does not have adequate funding provisions to continue to deliver the Refugee Response Initiative without sustainable funding commitments from the federal government.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as contained in the Financial Impact Section.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on February 7, 2023, City Council adopted EC1.5 – "COVID-19 Shelter Transition and Relocation Plan Update 2023", including a recommendation for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration to work with regional Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area partners to establish a coordinated regional response to support the arrival of refugee claimants and to work with the Federal and Provincial Governments to provide funding for this purpose. City Council also requested the Federal and Provincial Governments to provide support for the planning, programs and services related to large-scale refugee claimant arrivals, including additional dedicated allocations as part of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EC1.5>

At its meeting on April 6 and 7, 2022, City Council adopted EC28.9 "COVID-19 Shelter Transition and Relocation Plan Update", which consisted of six core components, including the creation of a refugee specific shelter sector which would operate in parallel to the existing base shelter system. City Council also requested the Federal and Provincial Governments for support, including the establishment and implementation of an immediate federal and provincial intergovernmental strategy for large scale arrivals of refugee claimants.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EC28.9>

## **COMMENTS**

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The City continues to see increasing challenges and occupancy issues in Toronto's shelter system. The opening of Canada's borders means more people need the City's services than ever before. This demand trend among asylum seeker arrivals is projected to continue, particularly considering global developments.

There is a funding risk to the City and to asylum seekers as the Interim Housing Assistance Program is scheduled to end on March 31, 2023, and the Federal government has not indicated how or if it will fund these costs beyond March 2023. Without continued federal funding support, the City will be required to reduce programming for this vulnerable population or rely on limited reserve funding to temporarily continue operating the program. Doing so will deplete City funds and affect other commitments to service delivery and COVID-19 related impacts, for which the City will no longer have funding.

## **CONTACT**

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Gordon Tanner, General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration  
[Gordon.Tanner@toronto.ca](mailto:Gordon.Tanner@toronto.ca), 416-392-5417

## **SIGNATURE**

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Paul Johnson  
City Manager