

City Council

Motion without Notice

MM20.38	ACTION			Ward: All
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Release the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefits! Province Must End Delays so People Can Secure Housing - by Councillor Alejandra Bravo, seconded by Councillor Gord Perks

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

** This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate.*

Recommendations

Councillor Alejandra Bravo, seconded by Councillor Gord Perks, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Government of Ontario to immediately provide the City of Toronto with its Year 5 Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit allocation.
2. City Council request the Government of Canada and Government of Ontario to ensure Toronto's Year 5 Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit allocation is \$54 million, to enable at least 300 households per month to move into permanent housing.
3. City Council direct the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat and the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, upon receipt of the allocation for Year 5 of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit from the Government of Ontario, to immediately allocate benefits to Toronto shelter operators and partners in accordance with Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program guidelines.

Summary

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program is funded by the Federal and Provincial governments, to help people and families that are experiencing homelessness secure permanent housing that they can afford. The program funding is administered by the Ontario Government. Since the program's inception in 2020, the Ontario Government provides a funding allocation each year to municipalities to enable them to enroll new households into the program.

In 2023, the fourth year of the program, the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit helped transition over 3,000 households from shelters and outdoor encampments into housing. On March 31, 2024, the Ontario Government closed Year 4 of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program, ending any new applications for Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit. While allocations for Year 5 were promised, the Ontario Government has not provided any details of that funding allocation to the City of Toronto to continue to support new households with Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit.

Since April 1, no new households in Toronto have been able to access Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit benefits to help them move out of shelters or out of encampments and into housing. From October 2023 to March 2024, Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit ensured that approx. 300 households (over 450 people) were able to access permanent housing each month. Over the past four months, 1,200 households could have moved into housing with a Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit – if the Ontario Government had provided the City of Toronto with the Year 5 allocation immediately in April.

Toronto's shelter system is well over capacity. Over 230 people each night are not matched to a shelter bed through Central Intake because there is no space available in the shelter system. At the same time, 748 families with children are stuck on the family placement list – up from 150 families only a year ago. The number of people living outdoors in encampments has more than tripled in just two years. The continuation of Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit for the past four months could have provided enough housing benefits to help many of these people secure permanent housing, while creating much-needed space in our shelter system to help more people access indoor space.

The reason for urgency is that the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit is the primary benefit to help people in need exit the shelter system, which is over capacity with over 200 people turned away each evening. This motion seeks to accelerate the release of benefits so people in need can access housing they can afford.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM20.38

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-247917.pdf>)