



— OBCM —  
Ontario's Big City Mayors



**Motion Requesting that the Federal Government immediately reverse the recent changes to the Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) to ensure municipalities can continue providing shelter supports to refugee claimant arrivals.**

**Moved by Mayor Olivia Chow - Toronto and Seconded by Mayor Patrick Brown (Brampton)**

**WHEREAS** refugee claimants experiencing homelessness deserve dignified shelter and housing. No one should be forced to sleep on the street or in unsafe conditions.

**WHEREAS** in the last few years, cities across Ontario have seen a significant increase in the number of refugee claimant arrivals seeking emergency shelter, amidst a growing homelessness crisis. This unprecedented, rapid growth has put tremendous strain on municipal service systems, which are not designed to respond to international migration but rather to support the local homeless population.

**WHEREAS** the recent changes to the Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) including, reduced funding levels, changes in eligible activities, and new cost-share requirements pose significant financial and operational risks for municipalities.

**WHEREAS** the federal government has previously made commitments to municipalities under IHAP and municipalities have incurred costs to deliver shelter services under the expectation of those funding commitments being fulfilled.

**WHEREAS** new IHAP cost-share requirements gradually shifts responsibility onto municipalities, creating an unsustainable burden for local governments, despite the federal government having the overall authority over immigration.

**WHEREAS** IHAP changes undermine the ability of municipalities to transition to more sustainable and cost-effective shelter solutions, and without stable, predictable funding, these new shelter models cannot be maintained.

**WHEREAS** these federal funding changes fail to recognize the vital role municipalities play in ensuring that emergency shelter needs of those that arrive to Canada for safety and protection are met.

**WHEREAS** national coordinated refugee response system is critical to alleviate pressures on local governments and to ensure a compassionate, and efficient response to large- scale arrivals of refugee claimants.

**Therefore be it resolved** that Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) requests

1. The Federal Government to maintain its commitment under IHAP to reimburse municipalities at 95% for costs incurred, instead of providing grant funding.
2. The Federal Government restore the 95% federal cost-share of IHAP funding for eligible expenses, enabling municipalities to continue providing shelter and housing supports to refugee claimants.



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3. The Federal Government to establish a nationally coordinated refugee response system, ensuring access to available capacity across all IHAP-funded programs, and to provide municipalities information about programs funded in Ontario as soon as possible so that their coordination can start.
4. The Federal Government expand the federal definition of the term “refugee protection claimant” as eligible for IHAP-funded services to include those who have initiated a refugee claim and haven’t completed it yet, and those who arrive to Canada with the intention to make a refugee claim and are preparing to make it.
5. The Federal Government remove the expectation of 90-day maximum length-of-stay for all IHAP-funded interim accommodations, ensuring equitable treatment for all individuals seeking emergency shelter support.
6. The Federal Government process refugee claims within the legislated timelines of sixty days, noting that the current wait time for a first-level decision is 29 months.