

May 18, 2018

Request for Federal and Provincial Response – Refugee Claimant Arrivals to Toronto

Overview

- Since 2016, the proportion of refugee claimants using the shelter system has increased significantly. The number of refugee claimants in Toronto's shelter system on an average monthly night has increased from 459 (11.2% of the total system) in 2016 to 2,683 (40.8% of the total system) in May 2018.
- To ensure that Toronto remains a safe, welcoming and accessible place for all, the City of Toronto requires urgent action be taken by the provincial and federal governments to help facilitate a coordinated and regional response to this increasing and acute challenge.
- Since early 2017, City Council has made repeated requests to the federal and provincial governments to provide additional funding to help manage this surge.
- Cumulatively, in 2017 and 2018 (actual and projected), the City will have incurred at least an additional \$64.5 million in direct costs related to its providing shelter and housing to refugee claimants:
 - In 2017, the City of Toronto incurred an additional \$15.6 million in unanticipated, direct costs (food, accommodation and staffing) related to the refugee claimant response.
 - Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) base operating budget was increased by \$18 million in 2018 to sustain the continued operations of the motel programs dedicated to new arrivals.
 - In the first quarter of 2018, the City spent \$7.6 million in direct costs for its refugee claimant response.
 - At the current spending rate, the existing budget for these costs will likely be exhausted by the end of June, leading to an anticipated further \$25 million operating budget shortfall for 2018 (should the proportion of refugee claimants remain at approximately 40 per cent).
- An effective and well-resourced long-term solution is required including support from all three levels of government.

Request of provincial and federal governments

- The City has reached the limits of its ability to independently absorb the impact of on-going migrant resettlement issues. In April 2018, the City requested that the provincial and federal governments urgently establish a response that would include:

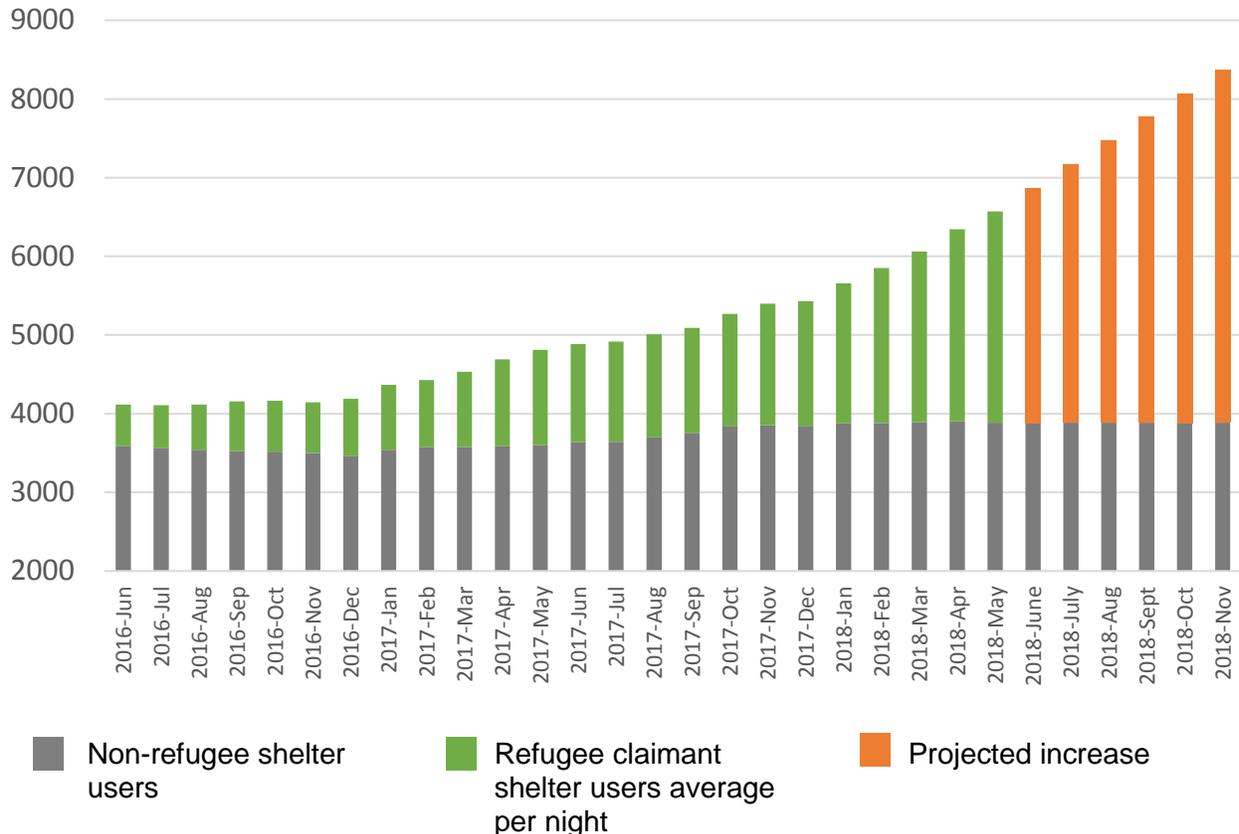
- Federal and provincial-level co-ordination to facilitate the immediate placement of new arrivals to regional locations outside of the City of Toronto's shelter system.
- Dedicated staff to facilitate this co-ordinated regional service delivery and placement.
- Provision of additional resources – including non-municipal facilities and the staff and human resources to operate those facilities.
- The introduction of a sustainable federal and provincial funding mechanism to address increases in housing and shelter demand at the municipal level and pressures related to irregular migrants/refugee claimants in particular.
- Reimbursement for all costs – including those incurred in 2017 and projected for 2018 – in responding to the needs of refugee claimants in Toronto, including \$64.5 million for direct operations.
- Federal-level action to better manage inter-provincial flow of refugee claimants and to facilitate faster processing of refugee claims through adequate Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) resources directed to process refugee claims in as short a period as possible.
- The introduction of a federally managed information sharing system that would notify cities outside of Quebec of upcoming arrivals of refugee claimants, so we have an idea of who is coming and when.
- An increase in the total contribution for the portable housing benefit to assist in facilitating housing for many refugee claimants.
- Exemption of any City financial benefits to migrant families as income for the purposes of determining Ontario Works eligibility.
- And consideration of additional financial benefits that may be extended to service users in cases of demonstrated and extreme need.

Unprecedented and continuing demand

- Since early 2016, there has been a sharp increase in the number of refugee claimants in Toronto, a trend that intensified in 2017 and has surged in 2018. This has resulted in a significant increase in refugee claimants accessing emergency shelter services and has stretched the family shelter sector to its limit creating an unsustainable risk.
- Starting in December 2016, SSHA has responded by bringing additional motel programs online to address the increased demand for service by refugee claimants.
- To date, 448 rooms have been added with over 1,700 beds within four hotel/motel sites. SSHA is also continuing to add additional rooms where possible – an additional 25 rooms are expected to come online over the next week.
- From January 1, 2017 to May 16, 2018 the City has successfully housed 1,720 refugee claimants from motel programs to private market housing. However, the inflow of refugee claimants to the shelter system continues to be greater than the outflow.
- The City's total shelter system currently (May 17, 2018) has a capacity of 6,991 beds, and operates regularly at an occupancy rate of 95 per cent and above.

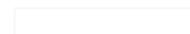
- As of May 17, 2018, there are 2,683 refugee claimants in the shelter system, making up 40.8% of the entire system. At the current rate of arrivals and assuming other occupancy remains the same, refugee claimants will represent 53.6% of the system (4,485 people) by November 2018.

Increased demand by refugee claimants



Average nightly number of refugee claimants in Toronto's shelter system has increased from an average of 459 per night in 2016 to 2,683 in May 2018.

- A further increase in shelter demand in Toronto will necessitate activation of the City of Toronto's Contingency Plan for Emergency Social Services, through the City's Office of Emergency Management.
- This would involve opening multiple emergency reception centres that would provide a temporary housing solution for these new arrivals.
- Additionally, this approach would activate community recreation centres as part of the response – potentially displacing programming within these communities. Each emergency reception centre would operate on a 24/7 basis.



Quebec context

- Currently, in Quebec, the provincial government is projecting daily arrivals of 400 refugee claimants. In April, the Quebec Immigration Minister announced that the province will stop accepting new arrivals to their shelter system once they reach 85 per cent capacity.
- The Quebec government has also called on the federal government to reimburse \$146 million in unanticipated costs related to the arrival of refugee claimants in 2017, and to help establish a process to facilitate movement of claimants to other provinces and cities.
- In response, the Federal government has agreed to:
 - quickly move refugee claimants who have crossed the border who intend to settle in other parts of Canada to those locations while their immigration cases are resolved
 - add \$74 million to the national claim-processing system
 - ask asylum seekers immediately upon arrival on their willingness to go to regions of Quebec experiencing labour shortages
 - agreed to meet with officials from the Province of Quebec to discuss their request to receive \$146 million to cover expenses from 2017.
- The federal government has established a working group with Quebec and Ontario to develop a triage system to allow alternative movements for refugee claimants arriving in Quebec.
- Based on information from the City's Newcomer Office in 2017, half of all refugee claimants to Canada made their claim in Quebec (24,980 out of 49,775). This is a significant increase from 5,525 refugee claims in 2016, and largely made up of arrivals of refugee claimants originally from Haiti.
- Since the beginning of 2018, 1,117 of the more than 6,100 claimants who have arrived in Quebec are in the Greater Montreal area. Considering the significant increase in shelter users in Toronto during the same period, it is feasible to infer many of those no longer housed in Montreal's shelters have already moved to Toronto.
- Given the now acute pressures in Toronto's shelter system as well as the anticipated continued and increased flows from Quebec, the City has taken the following actions to prepare for and mitigate adverse impacts on existing and potential new service users.
 1. As of April 24, SSHA and TESS secured an additional 25 hotel rooms as a first day reception for newly arrived families to ensure their emergency lodging needs are met; however, these rooms are now filled. Staff continue to look for additional rooms to support this initiative.
 2. TESS has begun providing direct onsite support for these families, and will continue to do so for additional rooms brought into the system.

3. TESS is ensuring all City and OW benefits are provided to eligible clients.
4. Central Intake – which coordinates referrals to shelter beds – will improve data collection by implementing new questions to determine the pathway of recent arrivals to Toronto.
5. SSHA is making use of portable housing benefits (funded through Investment in Affordable Housing) for families in the shelter system.
6. TESS and SSHA, working in collaboration, have establish a consistent funding mechanism to sustain homeless families in their temporary lodging until a space in the shelter system opens up.
7. SSHA and SDFA continue engaging with community partners.

Toronto Employment and Social Services

- Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and SSHA have developed a shared protocol to support eligible refugee families in obtaining emergency assistance funds for temporary lodging, when the shelter system is at capacity.
- TESS offices have seen an increase in the number of refugee claimant families applying for assistance.
- When TESS' Ontario Works mandatory benefits increase beyond the budget forecast, those costs are covered 100% by the province. This is in contrast to the shelter system which is funded via a fixed funding envelope.

Timeline of Toronto City Council Decisions and Actions

City Council on April 26, 2018

CD27.3 Proposed Canada-Ontario-Toronto Memorandum of Understanding on Immigration and Settlement (MOU)

2. City Council request an urgent federal and provincial response to the increased refugee arrivals in the Toronto shelter system, including:
 - a. federal and provincial-level coordination to facilitate the immediate placement of new arrivals to regional locations outside of the city of Toronto's shelter system;
 - b. engagement with the Urban Commissioners for a coordinated regional response;
 - c. dedicated staff to facilitate this coordinated regional service delivery and placement;
 - d. provision of additional resources, including non-municipal facilities and the staff and human resources to operate those facilities;
 - e. the introduction of a sustainable federal and provincial funding mechanism to address increases in housing and shelter demand at the municipal level and pressures related to irregular migrants/refugee claimants in particular;

- f. reimbursement for all costs, including those incurred in 2017 and projected for 2018, in responding to the needs of refugee-claimants in Toronto, including \$64.5M for direct operations
- g. federal-level action to better manage inter-provincial flow of refugee claimants and to facilitate faster processing of refugee claims through adequate Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada resources directed to process refugee claims in as short a period as possible in order to ensure work permits are issued at the earliest opportunity;
- h. the introduction of a federally managed information sharing system that would notify cities outside of Quebec of upcoming arrivals of refugee claimants, so we have an idea of who is coming and when;
- i. an increase in the total contribution for the portable housing benefit to assist in facilitating housing for many refugee claimants;
- j. exemption of any city financial benefits to migrant families as income for the purposes of determining Ontario Works eligibility; and
- k. consideration of additional financial benefits that may be extended to service users in cases of demonstrated and extreme need.

3. City Council request the Mayor and the City Manager to write letters to the Provincial and Federal Governments outlining these requests and providing information about the current state of the Toronto shelter system and additional spaces and services that have been added in recent months.

4. City Council request the City Manager to review staffing needed to adequately handle refugee flows into Toronto.

5. City Council reaffirm its support for the settlement and integration of newcomer communities across Canada, and Toronto's leadership as a welcoming and inclusive City for all.

6. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, as part of any future Canada-Ontario-Toronto Memorandum of Understanding on Immigration and Settlement, to request the inclusion of a shelter-temporary housing shared funding provision and to report to the July 23, 24 and 25, 2018 City Council meeting with any updates related to these discussions.

*City Council on March 26 and 27, 2018
CD26.5 - Emergency Shelter Services – Update*

6. City Council request the Provincial Government to provide a response to City Council's previous request to immediately re-introduce funding mechanisms to offset the cost of sudden and prolonged increases in demand for emergency shelter space in Toronto.

8. City Council request the Provincial Government to convene a regional Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area homelessness Service Manager action group, to identify opportunities to enhance collaborative regional service planning and services for people experiencing homelessness.

February 22, 2018

- Letter from Mayor Tory to the Minister of Finance outlining the City of Toronto 2018 Pre-Budget Submission to the Government of Canada.
- The requests related to newcomer settlement include:
 - i. Increase federal capacity to process refugee claims
 - ii. Additional funding to better support City programs and resources necessary for settlement
 - iii. Additional funding to stakeholder agencies in Toronto and surrounding areas

City Council on January 31 and February 2, 2018

CD25.5 - Review of Current Winter Respite and Shelter Services during the Recent Cold Weather

3. City Council request the Federal Government to consider the uploading and/or sharing of costs, operations and management of housing and shelter-related services including hotel contracts, for specialized populations which the Government of Canada is currently responsible for such as for asylum seekers, refugees, veterans and Indigenous persons and to ensure that culturally and linguistically appropriate wrap-around community service supports are in place for such residents.

January 17, 2018

- iiii. Letter from Mayor Tory sent to the Prime Minister reiterating City Council requests to the federal government regarding the management of refugee flows.
- v. The letter emphasizes the request that the Federal Government pay for all necessary resources, including affordable housing and shelter costs, for refugee populations that have moved to Toronto over the last three years.
- vi. It also requests The Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario provide additional funding to the City of Toronto to better support necessary programs, given the increased pressure on the shelter system, the Toronto Newcomer Office and social programming systems from refugee and refugee claimants.

January 16, 2018

- Meeting between DCM Cluster A, SSHA staff and provincial staff regarding Toronto's shelter system

City Council on December 5, 6, 7 and 8, 2017

CD24.7 - 2018 Shelter Infrastructure Plan and Progress Report

24. City Council request the Province of Ontario to:
 - b. reintroduce funding mechanisms to offset the cost of sudden and prolonged increases in demand for emergency shelter space in Toronto.

26. City Council request the Federal Government to pay for all necessary resources, including affordable housing and shelter costs, for any refugees that have moved to Toronto over the last three years.

City Council on November 7, 8 and 9, 2017

CD23.12 - Managing Refugee Flows

3. City Council request the Federal Government to increase its capacity to process refugee claims so that it can meet the legislated timelines.
4. City Council request the Provincial Government to re-introduce funding mechanisms to offset the cost of sudden and prolonged increases in demand for emergency shelter space in Toronto.

April 4, 2017

- Letter from Mayor Tory addressed to the Prime Minister regarding City Council item MM24.10 "Encouraging sponsorship of Syrian refugees" adopted on January 31, 2017

City Council on April 26, 27 and 28, 2017

CD19.9 - Refugees, Refugee Claimants and Undocumented Torontonians - Recent Trends and Issues

4. City Council request the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario to provide additional funding to the City of Toronto to better support these necessary programs, given the increased pressure on the shelter system, the Toronto Newcomer Office and social programming systems from refugee and refugee claimants.

CD19.11 - Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

- Staff report considered by Council includes reference that the "City's shelter system has continued to face increased occupancy pressure primarily due to increased demand from refugees." (page 1 and within body of the report)

January 6, 2016

- Letter from Mayor Tory sent to the Prime Minister and Minister of Refugee, Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship regarding the Syrian Refugee Crisis – City of Toronto Resettlement Program

November 9, 2015

- Letter from Mayor Tory sent to the Prime Minister and Minister of Refugee, Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship regarding the Syrian Refugee Crisis – City of Toronto Resettlement Program
- The letter emphasizes the importance of working together to ensure the successful settlement of Syrian and other refugees through the delivery of key City services, as

well as to share the associated cost burden, especially as it relates to affordable housing, social assistance and child care.

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