

Asylum Claimant Response

Support for Peel Region's Asylum Claimant Proposal

Policy Opportunity

In response to the significant increase in asylum claimants in Peel and throughout the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), there is urgent need for the federal and provincial governments to work together to provide immediate and sustainable financial support to address current and ongoing funding shortfalls for much-needed supports.

Peel Region, along with Toronto and other GTHA municipalities, is actively working with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada on a model that includes dedicated shelters and a Regional Reception Centre, as well as housing subsidies and other settlement supports to independently house asylum claimants in communities.

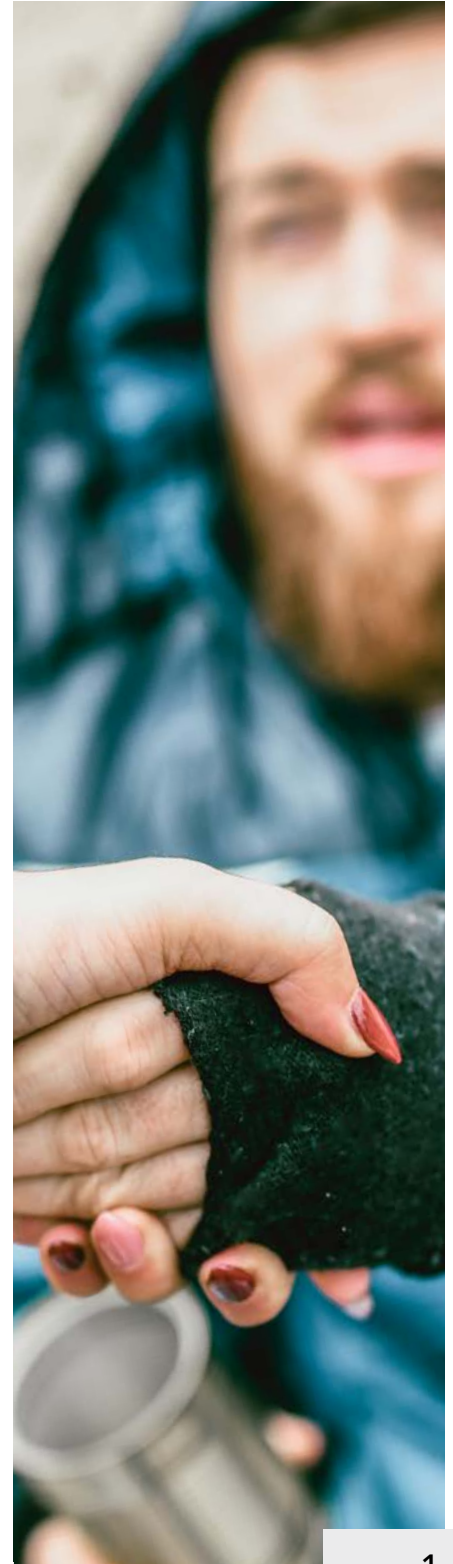
Funding Solutions

To alleviate the current pressure in Peel's emergency shelter system and support the proposed model to successfully integrate asylum claimants into communities, sustainable funding for housing and settlement services from the provincial government is required.

Background

Peel Region, along with other GTHA communities, has experienced a sharp increase in asylum claimants. In January 2022, Peel's shelter system had 30 asylum claimants per night. By January 2023, this number surged to at least 1,400, excluding those potentially turned away. In all, from January 1, 2023, to June 3, 2024, 3,279 asylum claimant households or 4,045 individuals have been provided with emergency shelter in Peel. Over the same time period, asylum claimants have comprised 71 per cent of Peel's total shelter population on average, a number that has historically been closer to 4-5 per cent. The substantial rise has overwhelmed local homelessness systems:

- Peel's shelter system has exceeded 400% capacity, necessitating high-cost emergency hotel accommodations.



- Two deaths have been associated with the asylum claimant surge in Peel.
- Up to 1,300 new claimants are estimated to arrive monthly requiring emergency supports, including housing.

All of Government Response is Required

Peel Region cannot serve as the sole destination for asylum claimants due to the current housing crisis. To effectively settle asylum claimants, it is crucial to involve communities beyond Peel. To that end, Peel Region has partnered with Toronto and other GTHA municipalities on a proposed system that will implement a coordinated approach to transition claimants to other areas with the necessary support services while they await Immigration and Refugee Board decisions. This approach includes:

- **Regional Reception Centre:** Assesses needs, provides basic necessities, and offers up to five days of respite for 200 individuals.
- **Discharge Planning:** The reception centre provides transition plans for asylum claimants moving to other municipalities.
- **Receiving Municipalities:** Provide services such as temporary shelter, Ontario Works, housing subsidies, and additional support services with provincial and federal funding.

Coordination among all levels of government is essential to support asylum claimants effectively and prevent the current bottleneck in Peel's emergency shelter system. Successful discharge into receiving municipalities depends on upfront, sustainable funding for housing and settlement services.

Proposal for a Sustainable Model

A total funding request of **\$157.5M** has been made to address both one-time capital 2024 operating, and asylum claimant housing support costs.

- \$12.0M in capital funding for the Reception Centre and an additional shelter facility.
- \$61.3M operating funding (Reception Centre - \$4.5M, Shelter facility- \$6.5M, and Hotels -\$50.3M).
- \$84.2M for housing supports for 15,600 claimants (annualized).

To date, the federal government has committed **\$22M towards the capital and operating costs** of the proposed model; continued discussions are required on funding the total on-going costs.

This model will allow asylum claimants to settle within a year but can only be implemented with dedicated federal and provincial funding. Negotiations are currently underway with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada officials however, **the provincial government needs to be at the negotiating table so that a sustainable solution involving all three levels of government can be developed.**

In particular, provincial funding is needed to support housing subsidies required to move claimants out of the shelter system and into independent housing in the community.

