

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Community and Health Services
March 9, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Ukrainian Humanitarian Crisis and York Region's Response

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

1. Approve continued operation of temporary accommodation and wrap-around services for those arriving in York Region under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel who need assistance until June 30, 2023, after which Regional staff will initiate closure of the site unless otherwise directed by Council.
2. Authorize the Regional Chairman to communicate to the Federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing reiterating the need for funding to offset municipal costs.
3. Direct staff to report back to Council when federal or provincial funding offset is confirmed, or by June 30, 2023 (whichever is earlier), to confirm next steps for York Region's response to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis.
4. Circulate this report to York Region Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament.

2. Summary

This report provides information about the Region's response to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis and seeks Council approval to continue providing temporary accommodation and wrap-around services until June 30, 2023. Staff propose to report back to Council before the end of June on the status of federal and/or provincial funding commitment and will seek Council direction at that time on whether to continue the response or move forward with initiating closure of operations.

Key Points:

- In June 2022, Council approved temporary accommodation and wrap-around supports to help individuals arriving to York Region under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), as part of a coordinated effort by

municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and subject to federal or provincial funding

- York Region and other municipalities have been pursuing federal and provincial funding to offset costs, but to date no financial commitment has been made
- Ukrainians needing assistance continue to arrive to Canada, Ontario and the GTHA, and the value of these municipal supports have been acknowledged by both the Province and the federal government
- Without federal or provincial funding, operation of these municipal supports and services will continue to rely on municipal tax levy funding, and as this is not sustainable, scaling down and eventually closing municipal sites may be necessary.
- Regional staff propose keeping the site in York Region running until end of June, and will, before the end of June, report back on the status of senior government funding and confirm Council direction on whether to continue or initiate closure of operations

3. Background

The federal government introduced the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program on March 17, 2022, as part of federal supports to individuals displaced by the conflict in Ukraine

Through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the federal government sets immigration policies and funds agencies to deliver settlement services across the country.

The federal CUAET program provides Ukrainian nationals with temporary resident status, allowing them to stay in Canada for three years and apply for a work permit. As of February 21, 2023, the federal government had received nearly 900,000 CUAET visa applications, approved approximately 550,000 of them, and about 150,000 CUAET visa holders have arrived in Canada.

The federal government has also extended federally-funded settlement services—typically only available to permanent residents—to CUAET visa holders. These are delivered through more than 550 agencies across the country and include, for example, language training, employment supports and personalized needs assessment to enable referrals to other community services. CUAET visa holders are also eligible for one-time financial assistance of \$3,000 per adult and \$1,500 per child.

For those who need them, the federal government is providing hotel-based temporary accommodation for up to 14 days. There are currently 265 rooms available in the GTHA, often at or near capacity.

On April 6, 2022, the province of Ontario announced supports for Ukrainian families arriving under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program

Supports include access to Ontario Health Insurance Plan coverage and drug benefits, emergency financial assistance, eligibility for school registration, and subsidized child care.

The federal and provincial supports go a long way, however, there are important gaps which municipalities have needed to address

A key gap is the time limit on the temporary accommodation provided by the federal government. Based on data, it takes an average of about 1 ½ months to get settled and find more stable housing arrangements, while the federal program permits just 14 days. In addition, the number of hotel rooms available is limited. Without additional supports, individuals and families may need to access already strained municipal shelter systems.

Regional and single-tier municipalities in the GTHA started a collective effort last spring to coordinate response to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis. Municipal supports include providing temporary accommodations across six municipalities and on-site assistance including housing counselors. While capacity has fluctuated, there are about 200 rooms run by municipalities in the GTHA accommodating 400 individuals on any given day, with sites frequently at or near capacity.

4. Analysis

In [June 2022](#), Council approved the Commissioner of Community and Health Services to establish temporary accommodation and other supports for Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel visa holders who need assistance

In July 2022, the Region contracted COSTI Immigrant Services, an established settlement agency active in the Ukrainian response, to provide and operate temporary housing and wrap-around support services in York Region. Currently, COSTI Immigrant Services is operating a hotel-based site in southern York Region, with a capacity of 20 rooms. The site supports those who have exhausted other options, including accessing federal accommodation. As of February 21, 2023, 54 individuals are staying at the site in York Region, occupying all 20 rooms. A total of 160 individuals have been supported by the site and found other housing arrangements since operations began in August.

The Region has been providing transit assistance to CUAET visa holders who need this support. Presto passes for use in York Region, were provided through Welcome Centres in York Region as part of settlement supports. Approximately 2,200 passes were issued. Starting this year, Ukrainian arrivals temporarily residing in York Region under the CUAET program are now eligible for discounted rides under York Region's Transit Assistance Program.

The Region administers the provincial emergency financial assistance and subsidized child care supports available to CUAET visa holders in York Region. As of February 21, 2023, the

Region is supporting 60 children through the provincial Child Care Fee Subsidy program and 522 individuals/families through the provincial emergency financial assistance program.

More information about supports and services provided by the Region and other organizations can be found on [York.ca/SupportUkraine](https://york.ca/SupportUkraine), including the [York Region Newcomer Guide](#) which has been translated into Ukrainian.

Ukrainians continue to arrive and settle in Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area communities, and gaps continue to persist in supports that municipalities are helping to address

There continue to be a high number of arrivals from Ukraine. The Canadian Red Cross, which is providing airport arrival supports, reports 200 to 300 arrivals daily, with five percent of households requiring urgent, temporary accommodation supports. Municipal sites in the GTHA remain open to respond to continuing needs.

Municipal advocacy for funding continues, with no senior government commitment

Regional staff and elected officials continue to join peer municipalities in advocating for senior government funding to offset municipal costs. The Regional Chairman wrote a letter in August 2022 requesting dedicated and sustained provincial and federal funding to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Ukrainian humanitarian crisis has also been a frequent topic at discussions of GTHA Mayors and Chairs hosted by Toronto. To date, however, there is no firm commitment on funding from federal or provincial governments.

Staff will report back to Council before end of June 2023 on the status of federal and provincial funding and will seek direction at that time on next steps

Without firm and clear funding, municipalities may need to soon consider scaling back or ramping down intake at these sites, with the possibility of eventually closing operations.

Regional staff propose keeping the York Region site running until end of June, with plans to initiate closure unless Council approval to continue operations is received. The Region's agreement with the site operator and service manager requires a minimum of two weeks notice, but given the number of individuals staying on site and receiving support, it would likely take some time to fully decommission the site and conclude operations. Closure of the site will involve stopping intake of new arrivals and redirecting to other municipal sites, and providing continued supports to any existing occupants until they are able to find other housing arrangements.

5. Financial

So far York Region has incurred costs of approximately \$1.2 million to operate the temporary accommodation and wrap-around services during August 2022 to January 2023. The

monthly cost to operate the site in York Region is estimated at approximately \$250,000, but this will vary depending on capacity used.

A further approximate \$410,000 for transit assistance has been incurred between May 2022 and January 2023.

These supports are currently funded by the tax levy (accommodated within the Community and Health Services budget), as an interim funding measure until senior government funding/reimbursement is confirmed. Costs in 2022 have been absorbed against underspending in Community and Health Services. For 2023, no specific allocation has been identified for these supports in Community and Health Services' budget; costs are being tracked as they are incurred and will be managed within the department's existing total budget allocation, pending federal or provincial reimbursement.

Provincial emergency financial assistance and the Child Care Fee Subsidy program is funded by the Province.

6. Local Impact

The Region's response to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis leverages community partnerships, including connections to local municipalities through the Local Immigration Partnership and Emergency Social Services programs. Support from local municipalities in advocating for senior government funding has also been valuable.

7. Conclusion

GTHA municipalities are delivering emergency services to supplement federal and provincial supports to those displaced by the conflict in Ukraine. This collaboration has been valuable, but municipal supports remain unfunded by the federal and provincial government. With Council approval, the site in York Region will remain operational, but advocacy efforts will continue. Unless there is clear and sustained funding, continued operations of these municipal supports will be challenging.

For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Silva, Director, Strategies and Partnerships at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74182. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

February 23, 2023

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