
REPORT TITLE: **Ukrainian Humanitarian Response in Peel**

FROM: Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the provision of temporary accommodations and other basic needs to Ukrainians fleeing conflict, with an estimated cost of \$1.1 million per month funded from the Tax Supported Rate Stabilization reserve be approved; and,**
- 2. That the Commissioner of Human Services and the Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services be authorized to negotiate and enter into agreements with the Federal and Provincial governments to secure reimbursement for any expenses incurred in the preparation and delivery of the humanitarian response on business terms satisfactory to the Commissioner of Human Services, the Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services, and on legal terms satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor; and,**
- 3. That the Affordable Transit Program eligibility requirements be amended to allow Canada Ukraine Authorized Emergency Travel Visa holders access to the program for one year.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- 300-400 Ukrainians with Canada Ukraine Authorized Emergency Travel (CUAET) Visas are anticipated to arrive at Pearson International Airport daily. Ten to sixteen of these individuals will have no prior arrangements or resources to settle independently and require temporary housing and basic needs support.
 - Canadian Red Cross has indicated that their capacity to temporarily house Ukrainian arrivals has been exceeded and require additional support.
 - The Region of Peel activated a hotel site on Monday, June 6, 2022, to provide temporary accommodation and basic needs support while Ukrainians are placed in Host Homes in the community.
 - Staff are seeking changes to the eligibility requirements for Peel's Affordable Transit Program to assist Ukrainian CUAET Visa holders to be able to access this program on a one-time basis.
 - Negotiations are ongoing with the Federal and Provincial governments to provide financial support for the response.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

Over the course of April and May approximately 200 Canada Ukraine Authorized Emergency Travel (CUAET) Visa holders arrived daily at Pearson International Airport. These individuals typically have contacts in Canada and are being supported by them. As of June 1, 2022, an additional direct daily flight from Poland was added to the schedule which could mean volume increases to 300-400 Ukrainians arriving at Pearson per day. Canadian Red Cross has kiosks setup at Pearson to greet Ukrainians upon their arrival, provide information and temporary accommodation if needed. They have noted that 5-8 individuals per flight arrive with no contacts or resources and require support with temporary accommodation and other basic needs. At this point Red Cross capacity to support the volume of arrivals requiring support has been exceeded and they are requesting support from Greater Toronto & Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipal partners. Red Cross does make referrals to a Host Home Program run by COSTI Immigrant Services on behalf of the Federal Government, but placements are taking 5-10 days to establish, and capacity is limited. The municipal emergency shelter system is the only other referral path available.

35,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada this year. 120,000 Ukrainians have been approved for the CUAET Visa. Another 138,000 applications are pending. CUAET Visa holders are temporary visitors to Canada (up to 2 years) and not classified as refugees by the Federal Government. This means that they do not qualify for the full range of settlement supports offered to Government Assisted Refugees (i.e. one-year of financial support). The Federal Government has recently introduced the Canada-Ukraine Transitional Assistance Initiative which provides one-time assistance of \$3000 per adult and \$1500 per child. The Provincial government has also amended program guidelines to make CUAET Visa holders eligible for several programs including Emergency Ontario Works assistance, Child Care Fee Subsidy, school registration and the Ontario Health Insurance Program.

Approximately 35 per cent of CUAET Visa applicants have indicated an interest in coming to the GTHA. While many of the applicants are currently in Poland, it is unclear how many will utilize the CUAET Visa to travel to Canada as this is largely dependent on the conditions inside Ukraine and neighbouring countries. We must prepare for a large influx of refugees to continue arriving in the GTHA in the coming weeks and months. The demographic makeup is single mothers and their children, seniors, and unaccompanied males under the age of 18. Language skills vary with the majority having some level of English comprehension.

2. Temporary Accommodation and Basic Needs Support

Peel activated a hotel site to provide temporary accommodation and basic needs support on Monday, June 6, 2022, based on Red Cross capacity being exceeded and the anticipated volume of arrivals requiring support from 2 daily commercial flights. The hotel site will be operated by Elizabeth Fry Society and Our Place Peel through a contract with the Region and can accommodate up to 300 individuals at full capacity. Supports are culturally appropriate, tailored to the demographic and intended to get Ukrainians placed in Host Homes or established independently. At present, the costs for operating this site will be funded by the Region while we continue to seek an agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Peel's response is part of a GTHA Regional Response which has been submitted to IRCC for funding consideration. Municipalities include Toronto, Peel, Durham, York, Halton, and

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Hamilton. The GTHA Regional Response includes a proposal for the delivery of temporary accommodation, transportation and other basic needs supports. The group is also working on plans to coordinate the distribution of refugees across the participating GTHA municipalities. Peel is the first to activate our site with the expectation that Toronto will follow in short order as they are already seeing Ukrainian visitors in their emergency shelter system.

Peel's Refugee Settlement Planning Table has been meeting to focus on coordination of supports related to government assisted refugees, including Afghans, as well as displaced persons arriving on temporary permits, such as Ukrainians. The working group is co-chaired by the Region of Peel and Peel Newcomer Strategy Group. This community table includes Peel settlement services providers, IRCC, community agencies, and most recently the Canadian Ukrainian Congress, and others that respond to Ukrainian newcomers. This group is meeting regularly to plan additional supports and has been instrumental in informing a culturally sensitive response. The Region has launched a webpage listing available resources and is working with our community partners on additional communications to help connect CUAET Visa holders to the range of services and supports that exist in our community. Currently employment support and English Second Language training are the top requests.

3. Provision of Affordable Transit

Access to affordable transit is another resource being requested by Ukrainians that have recently arrived in Canada. Transit access makes it easier to seek employment, find housing and access other settlement services. Municipalities including Halton Region and the City of Ottawa have modified their affordable transit programs to make CUAET Visa holders eligible.

Through some modification to Peel's Affordable Transit Program (ATP) we could provide the same eligibility. Applicants would need to provide proof that they are valid CUAET Visa holders. In addition, income verification would be waived on a one-time basis for the initial year of eligibility to the program. Consistent with all other program participants, the Affordable Transit Program would provide a 50 per cent subsidy for a monthly bus pass for travel within Peel.

As a result of COVID related closures, the Affordable Transit Program currently has a budget surplus. Average cost for this program is \$65.50 per participant per month. It is expected that CUAET Visa holders could be accommodated in the program within existing budget. If demand for the program begins to exceed available budget, staff would return to Council for further direction.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

By proactively standing up our hotel site to provide temporary accommodation and other supports to Ukrainian arrivals, the Region is taking on a financial liability in the absence of a funding agreement with the Federal Government. While Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada staff have been receptive to our proposal, they still have been unable to provide a commitment and negotiations are ongoing.

Not proceeding with an active response could result in Ukrainian arrivals accessing Peel's emergency shelter system and other emergency supports. The capacity of our shelter system is

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already stretched from the domestic population. A situation where Ukrainians must access support from this system is undesirable from both a system capacity perspective as well as generating subpar outcomes for Ukrainians trying to get settled in Canada.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At full capacity the costs of operating the hotel site with a full range of supports including food, child minding, interpretation, system navigation and other basic needs supports, is \$1,089,000 per month. Costs are both fixed and variable so the total will fluctuate based on usage and ability to get Ukrainian arrivals placed with Host Homes in the community in a timely manner. Other GTHA municipalities are also expected to provide the same type of assistance at their sites as the volume of arrivals increases. The expenditures will be temporarily funded from the Tax Supported Rate Stabilization Reserve as cost recovery is being sought from other orders of government.

Altering the Affordable Transit Program to make CUAET Visa holders eligible is expected to be accommodated within the existing annual program budget.

Authored By: Jason Hastings, Director, Strategic Initiatives, Human Services



Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services