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NEWS

DISPLACED UKRAINIANS TO BENEFIT FROM HOUSING PROGRAM

DAVID LEA
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Halton Regional Council will invest up to \$1 million in transitional housing to help displaced Ukrainians begin new lives here.

Council voted unanimously during their Wednesday, June 15 meeting to approve the funding, which staff expect will provide about 50 Ukrainian households with much-needed housing for up to 12 months, or until the program's end date on Aug. 31, 2023.

Regional staff said the Halton Multicultural Council (HMC) has been selected to administer the program.

Besides being the only Halton-based settlement agency that has an active transitional housing program, HMC also has experience administering a regional housing program that was established for Syrian refugees.

"The overwhelming majority of individuals arriving come with a plan. Either they have means of their own, they have connections to family, friends, networks in Canada or they have a new arrangement with a faith group or host family," said Alex Sarchuk, Halton Region commissioner for social and community services.

"A program like ours in Halton will be targeted to those most in need. Those arriving with no means of their own, no connection. Hopefully, this program will allow us to divert them from our emergency shelter system, which is already well utilized, and it will give them a leg up and head start for their journey in Canada," he said.

Sarchuk noted in a report to council that like other Halton-based housing subsidy programs, subsidies of up to 70 per cent of



Graham Paine/Metroland

Halton Region is investing \$1 million in a transitional housing program for displaced Ukrainians.

monthly rents will be made available initially with approved program participants required to pay a minimum 30 per cent of monthly rents on their own.

He noted this would be adjusted as the program participant's income grows.

Regional staff said the program would also require formal leases to be signed between Ukrainians and Halton landlords to build Ontario rental history.

It also requires that all housing units involved be legal, self-contained units (with their own bathroom, and kitchen), be size appropriate for individual family composition and tenancy suitable.

Once accepted into the program, HMC will require participating households to:

- be in school, employment and/or language classes at least 20 hours a week (applies to adults 18 and over);

- participate in settlement services, employment counselling, skills development, financial literacy, English as a Second Language, orientation to Ontario and any other programs/services deemed

necessary by HMC to achieving long-term independence;

- work with HMC to develop a detailed settlement plan;

- agree to and participate in ongoing monthly income verification and full financial position disclosures;

- meet with HMC settlement case workers regularly to discuss their progress with a minimum weekly contact by phone, email or virtually.

"I want to thank staff for developing this program so quickly...This truly is a really wonderful program that I think is going to go a long way toward helping these folks that need help and are continuing to arrive in our community," said Oakville Coun. Jeff Knoll.

The \$1 million for the program comes from the region's allocation of the provincial Social Services Relief Fund, which is intended to help vulnerable populations with emergency shelter and supportive housing.

Sarchuk said interested individuals can visit hmconnections.com to learn more about the program or contact Halton Region by calling 311.