

December 16, 2024

Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Dear Councillors;

Re: Toronto Ombudsperson Investigation on Shelter Beds for Refugee Claimants

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL) strongly urge all City of Toronto Councillors to adopt the recommendations of the Toronto Ombudsperson Report tabled on December 12, 2024 – “An Investigation into the City’s Decision to Stop Allowing Refugee Claimants into Base Shelter System Beds.”

CCLA is an independent, national, nongovernmental organization that was founded in 1964 with a mandate to defend and foster the civil liberties, human rights, and democratic freedoms of all people across Canada. CARL serves as an informed national voice on refugee law and the human rights of refugees and forced migrants, and promotes just and consistent practices in the treatment of refugees in Canada.

The Toronto Ombudsperson’s investigation was initiated after the decision to stop allowing refugee claimants access to its base shelter system beds was made public in May 2023. This investigation uncovered several concerns with the decision-making process, including inconsistencies with the City’s own policies on universal access to services, harmful impacts on vulnerable members of the community, and systemic discrimination on the basis of citizenship and race – specifically anti-Black racism.

The adoption and implementation of the recommendations of the Ombudsperson are necessary to improve fairness and transparency in future processes on eligibility decisions affecting refugee claimants. CCLA, CARL, and BLAC are calling on the City of Toronto to adopt all 14 of the recommendations from the Ombudsperson’s Report.

Sincerely,



Harini Sivalingam
Director, Equality Program
Canadian Civil Liberties Association



Aisling Bondy
President
Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers