

Caledon hosting winter clothing drive for asylum claimants

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The Region of Peel has seen a surge in asylum claimants fleeing persecution in their home countries.

This has led to Peel's shelter system being pushed to its limit, and many asylum claimants living rough outside of shelters.

With winter approaching, Town of Caledon staff have decided to start a winter clothing drive for these asylum claimants. From now until November 7, residents are encouraged to drop off gently-used winter clothing items at the Caledon East Community Complex and Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness.

Items for individuals of all ages are appreciated, but adult clothing is most in need at this time.

Sandra Sharpe, Community Development Liaison for the Town of Caledon, said Peel's shelter system is currently at over 270 per cent capacity. She said just a week ago, there were over 100 people living rough outside of shelters while waiting to be processed.

Sharpe said the Region of Peel is looking to receive support from the Provincial and Federal government for the crisis.

'It's an enormous problem,' she said. 'We're looking at how we can prepare these asylum seekers for the coming winter' and one of the things we thought could help is providing winter clothing.'

The Town of Caledon is looking for all kinds of outerwear including scarves, hats, mittens, and winter coats.

Sharpe said as of two weeks ago, there were 953 asylum claimants in Peel's emergency shelters and overflow sites.

At a September 14 Region of Peel Council meeting, a report on asylum claimants in Peel was brought forward. It detailed the scope of the issue, at the time reporting that shelters were at 247 per cent capacity.

The report noted that Peel is preparing a claim for funding from the Federal Government's Interim Housing Assistance Program.

Caledon Mayor Annette Groves sent a letter about Peel's asylum claimant response that was received at the September 14 meeting.

In it, she said Peel is not getting its fair share of federal funding to help with its shelter system.

Groves said she supports Peel's request for funding from the Federal Government.