

# Marit Stiles

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LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION  
CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION OFFICIELLE  
MPP/DÉPUTÉE DAVENPORT

Premier Doug Ford  
Office of the Premier  
Legislative Assembly of Ontario

July 14, 2023

Dear Premier Ford,

There is a crisis escalating in downtown Toronto where a growing group of asylum seekers are camped outside of the Streets to Homes referral centre on Peter St. There is no space for them in the federally funded shelters for refugees and asylum seekers, and they have been turned away from city shelters that do not receive the funding necessary to accommodate the growing demand for housing.

As you know, this emergency is not limited to Toronto—many communities across the province are experiencing similar challenges.

While we await action from the Federal government, the Official Opposition calls on your government to provide **immediate emergency funding to municipalities to shelter and house refugee and asylum claimants**. The government must simultaneously provide additional Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) funding across Ontario, particularly for agencies funded in the City of Toronto and along the Canada-US border to help people find long-term housing and culturally appropriate services.

Temporary federal and provincial programs to support newcomers were vital in setting people up for success in Canada. The discontinuation of these programs downloaded the costs onto municipalities, who simply cannot keep up with growing demand. The discontinuation, in March, of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), and insufficient funding for Newcomer Settlement Programs has reduced the capacity for community-based organizations to respond effectively to the needs of new arrivals. Adding insult to injury, your government has cancelled funding for urgent health care services for uninsured people.

Newcomers need barrier-free access to services so they can settle safely and comfortably in our province and start to find community. Homeless shelters are not equipped to provide the unique services and supports refugee

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claimants need and deserve. Newcomers need experienced and empathetic settlement workers to provide appropriate referrals. The provincial government must work with municipalities in the GTA, and Canada-US border communities, to ensure resources are available for newcomers and immediately distribute emergency funds to community-based organizations that provide housing and newcomer support services.

**The Ontario NDP caucus is calling on the provincial government to take these immediate actions:**

- Reinstatement of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit for refugee and asylum claimants and healthcare funding for uninsured services.
- Increase Newcomer Settlement Program funding across Ontario, and particularly for agencies funded in the City of Toronto and along the Canada-US border.
- Distribute emergency funds to community mental health organizations, local public health agencies, and community health centres to offer timely and culturally appropriate care to newcomers.

**And we call on the provincial government to implement these longer-term solutions:**

- Invest to create for a reception centre for newcomers, and additional shelter spaces for refugee and asylum claimants, with access to support such as legal support and health services.
- Commit to building new affordable housing, and to converting existing units to rent-geared-to-income and purpose-built housing.

Refugees and asylum seekers have fled war and persecution for safety here in Ontario, only to end up languishing on the streets and falling through the jurisdictional gaps. While we need every level of government to urgently step up, I am asking you to show leadership and compassion and immediately provide the support people desperately need.

We stand by ready to help.

Sincerely,



Marit Stiles, MPP  
Leader of Ontario's Official Opposition  
Ontario NDP