

Federal dollars coming to York Region to address housing, transit



The Federal government will make an investment of nearly \$150 million in York Region over the next 10 years to address issues related to housing and transit.

The multifold announcement was made by Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities at the Region of York's Newmarket headquarters on February 7.

The money includes \$96 million in transit funding for York Region, along with a further \$22 million to support Canada's Homelessness Strategy within York Region, and \$22 million for the Region's encampment response plans.

“Housing provides stability and security and serves as the foundation for overall well-being. Everyone has a right to safe housing, regardless of their circumstances. Every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to live,” said the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities in a statement. The federal government also announced an agreement with The Regional Municipality of York for a combined investment of nearly \$22 million that will support York's encampment response plans, in alignment with York Region's 2024 to 2027 Homelessness Services System Plan. This is a federal investment of \$10.8 million, cost-matched by the Regional Municipality. Efforts include creating an Encampment Response Unit, increasing emergency and transitional housing options, and establishing flexible support funds to help individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness transition to more stable housing.

“Additionally, the federal government continues to support individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness through Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. Through Budget 2024, an additional \$22 million is being allocated to the region over four years, through 2027-28. This brings the total Reaching Home allocation to \$80 million over nine years, through 2027-28, through the Designated Communities stream, managed by United Way of Greater Toronto.”

The transit element includes \$96 million over 10 years from the Canada Public Transit Fund's Baseline Funding Stream. It will be allocated for upgrades, replacement and modernization of existing infrastructure and will “help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change.”

Joining the Minister at the announcement were Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy, York Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe, and Nation Chong, Vice President of Community Impact for United Way Greater Toronto.

“By investing in transit infrastructure, we're not just improving mobility “ we're building the foundation for vibrant, sustainable communities where Canadians can live, work, and thrive, all while reducing our environmental impact for future generations,” said

MP Taylor Roy in a statement.

Added Chair Jolliffe: "York Region welcomes the Government of Canada's investment in public transit and homelessness supports. These investments will help build a stronger, more inclusive and connected community by ensuring residents have access to safe, reliable transit and the critical supports needed to address homelessness. Strong partnerships across all levels of government are essential in meeting the needs of our growing communities, and we thank the federal government for recognizing and supporting York Region's priorities."

Minister Erskine-Smith noted his Ministry is "committed to building affordable, connected and sustainable communities across the country" and the money announced this month will "make a big difference."

"At United Way Greater Toronto, we've seen how even a single connection—a safe place to sleep, a trusted outreach worker—can be the first step towards stability," said Cheong. "This progress is possible because of strong federal partnerships that turn funding into real outcomes for our communities."

By Brock Weir