

Compassion needed for unhoused and those on the edge of homelessness

To the Editor,

What is this perversion we have for having other people suffer?

?Oh no, not I,? you say. ?I would never!?

If not each of us, why do we allow for our collective acceptance of suffering?

Why did we just re-elect our provincial government when Premier Doug Ford proclaimed to the media that the homeless just need to stop being lazy and get a job?

Does this attitude also apply to the poor?

If not, then why do we, here in North Hastings, still live in what Statistics Canada describes as the sixth poorest region in Ontario?

Is it because we are just lazy?

The majority of us in North Hastings live on incomes of \$20 or less an hour. Is it, by this logic, our fault that we have not demanded better wages (by force, if necessary, I assume)?

How far do we go with this logic before we realize it is a lie?

Our overnight warming centre (where providing a hot meal is legally prohibited) is the absolute minimal response the government can provide. A warming centre substitutes the idea of gracious charity for the reality of massive economic and mental health-care injustices.

So what if they must leave at 8 a.m., the coldest time of the day (or night).

Not seeing this perversion-for-suffering takes a bit of mental effort. But with a little practice the unhoused are easy to ignore, almost invisible in fact (unless they ?act up;? but then that is a simple policing matter).

We can so easily drive by that bedraggled guy muttering to himself as he walks up the hill on Station Street.

I have often driven past people walking out past the Tim Horton's on [Hwy.] 62N, who are going to or coming from the ?encampment? at the base of the Eagle's Nest.

For a moment I think ?they could just be three people out walking along the river,? until I see that they look like they are carrying the weight of the world on their ragged shoulders. Their eyes hollowed out, torn and dazed, looking off into the middle distance.

?Official? estimates at the number of unhoused people in Ontario now exceeds 80,000. The reality of the situation is probably three times this number. And as anyone who volunteers with the local Woodshare Program will tell you, there are 10 times that number precariously close to being homeless.

Sixty per cent of Canadians do not have \$400 for an emergency. Forty per cent of Canadians are two paychecks away from being homeless.

Seniors and children are the two fastest growing groups of people living with poverty in Canada.

That's a lot of laziness.

Perhaps, like many U.S. states are moving to do, we should bring back the workhouses, and both lower and raise the age limits for employment.

Sherwood Hines,

Bancroft