WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, CHOOSE COMPASSION

By Margaret Eskins
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Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support

A situation many of us encounter more and more across Durham Region is a person sitting outside a store, sleeping in a doorway, carrying their belongings in bags, or asking for help at an intersection. I often get asked by community members, How Can I Help??

The best place to begin is simple. I always suggest leading with an acknowledgement. The nicest thing you can do is treat any individual with dignity. A smile, eye contact, or a quiet “Hello, how are you doing?” may seem like a small gesture, but it can be meaningful to someone who is regularly ignored. People experiencing homelessness often describe feeling invisible. Being recognized as a fellow human being can make a huge difference.

If you would like to offer assistance, ask the person what they need rather than assuming. Asking if there is anything you can do that would be helpful is a great place to start. Their answer may be something as basic as water, a meal, warm socks, hygiene products, transit fare, or a cup of coffee. Sometimes, they may simply want someone to listen.

Offering money is a personal decision. If you are uncomfortable giving cash, consider providing a gift card to a nearby restaurant, grocery store, pharmacy, or coffee shop. During the winter, gloves, hats, hand warmers, and dry socks can be especially helpful. In hot weather, bottled water, sunscreen or SPF lip balm are items that are always appreciated. Whatever you decide to offer, please give it without conditions or judgment.

Homelessness is rarely the result of one decision or circumstance. It can follow job loss, rising rents, family breakdown, domestic violence, mental-health challenges, illness, disability, trauma, or the lack of affordable and supportive housing. Some people experiencing homelessness are also working or receiving income support, but still cannot find a place they can afford. Keep that in mind when chatting. I’ve had lawyers, teachers, landscapers and business people walk through our doors at DARS. The first time I was shocked. Now, sadly it doesn’t faze me.

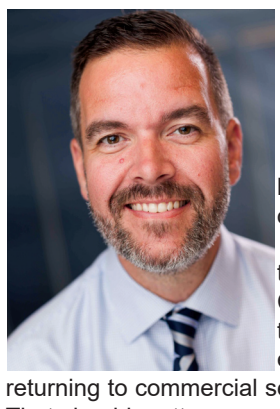
If someone appears seriously ill, injured, unconscious, inadequately dressed for dangerous weather, or at immediate risk of harming themselves or others, call 911. Clearly explain that you are concerned about the person’s health and safety and request a compassionate response. If the situation is not an emergency, call Durham Region’s Street Outreach Team at 311 extension 5510. They can help connect someone with local shelters, outreach, food, mental-health, and housing services. When appropriate, asking whether the person experiencing homelessness wants assistance and involving them in decisions that affect them is always a best practice. People experiencing homelessness still have the right to make choices about their own lives, even if it’s not a choice we would make for ourselves.

Community organizations such as DARS and outreach teams can provide essential support, but homelessness cannot be solved through these services alone. Communities also need affordable housing, supportive housing, accessible health care, income security, and long-term services that help. Write your local politicians; all levels. Let them know you are concerned.

If you are comfortable speaking directly to the person whenever it is safe to do so. It can mean the difference from a person feeling ignored or invisible. When you see someone experiencing homelessness, you do not need to solve every problem. You do not need to have the perfect words or a large amount of money. You can simply choose not to look away.

Homelessness is a circumstance—it is not a person’s identity. Behind every visible sign of homelessness is an individual with a name, a history, relationships, hopes, and the same basic need for dignity that all of us share.

Sometimes the most important thing we can offer is recognition: “I see you. You matter. How can I help?”



Pickering Nuclear Is an Opportunity and a Responsibility

By John Meloche

For decades, the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station has been part of the identity of our city. Today, we are approaching one of the most consequential chapters in its history.

Ontario Power Generation is preparing to refurbish Units 5 through 8, subject to final regulatory approval from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. OPG currently expects those units to come offline in September, with refurbishment execution beginning in 2027 and the refurbished reactors returning to commercial service in the mid-2030s.

That should matter enormously to Pickering residents.

OPG estimates the refurbishment will sustain approximately 28,000 direct and indirect jobs per year throughout the project, secure roughly 2,100 megawatts of generating capacity for more than 30 additional years, and see approximately 90 per cent of project spending remain in Canada.

My question is simple: how much of that opportunity will land here?

Pickering should not simply be the community that hosts the nuclear station. We should be positioning ourselves to become one of the principal economic beneficiaries of its renewal.

That means attracting engineering companies, skilled trades, suppliers, technology companies, professional services, training organizations and other businesses that will participate in this massive project.

It means working with colleges, universities, unions and employers to create pathways for local young people into the careers being created.

And it means protecting the employment lands necessary to accommodate those businesses.

This is exactly what I mean when I say Pickering cannot build its future on bedrooms alone. We need jobs growing alongside housing.

Nuclear also comes with responsibility.

The Pickering station is heavily regulated, and nuclear emergency planning involves multiple levels of government. Ontario maintains a Detailed Planning Zone extending approximately 10 kilometers from the station and a Contingency Planning Zone extending from 10 to 20 kilometers.

Homes and businesses within 10 kilometers are also receiving replacement potassium iodide tablets in 2026 as part of the regular emergency preparedness program.

None of this should be interpreted as a reason to fear nuclear energy.

Preparedness is what responsible communities do.

As Pickering grows, however, our emergency planning must grow with it. Thousands of additional residents, increasing traffic congestion and changing transportation patterns mean we should continuously examine whether our roads, communications systems, emergency services and public education are keeping pace.

Residents should know what they are expected to do during an emergency. They should know where reliable information will come from. Municipal leaders should understand the plans themselves and be prepared to explain them clearly.

Those are reasonable expectations for any community hosting critical infrastructure.

There is also an important regulatory process underway. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission held the first part of its public hearing regarding Pickering's licence renewal and refurbishment in June. The second part is scheduled for the week of October 5. OPG is seeking a 10-year licence renewal as part of the process.

This is precisely when municipal leadership should be paying attention.

I support nuclear energy and I recognize the tremendous role the Pickering station has played in powering Ontario. In the first quarter of 2026 alone, Pickering produced 4.1 terawatt-hours of electricity — approximately 8.9 per cent of Ontario's electricity production.

But support should never mean complacency.

The refurbishment presents Pickering with two responsibilities: protect the community hosting this infrastructure, and make sure our residents genuinely benefit from the extraordinary economic activity happening in our own backyard.