

Homelessness in Ontario rises to more than 85,000

QUEEN'S PARK – As new data shows, more than 85,000 people in the province, including over 20,000 children and youth, are without a home. Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles, and Ontario NDP Shadow Minister for Housing Catherine McKenney say the Ford government has no real plan to stop the crisis from getting worse.

Stiles said the scale and speed of this increase should seriously alarm every Ontarian.

"Homelessness in Ontario has increased by nearly eight percent in just one singular year and by almost 50 percent since the pandemic under the Ford government," said Stiles. "This crisis didn't happen overnight. This issue has been allowed to spiral out of control while housing waitlists grow longer, and more people are pushed into encampments."

McKenney said the province's lack of response is failing those in desperate need.

"People are falling into homelessness faster than they can be housed," said McKenney. "We all know that breaking up and clearing encampments doesn't solve anything — it just moves people from place to place. Municipalities are begging for help, experts have laid out the solutions, and the government is still refusing to act at the scale required."

Both Stiles and McKenney pointed to the report's warning that homelessness could more than double in the next decade without urgent and immediate action.

"Ontario needs serious investment in supportive housing, rent-gearied-to-income homes, and prevention, not more delay, denial, or political talking points," said McKenney.

"Homelessness is a policy failure," concluded Stiles. "And it is one this government must finally be held accountable for fixing."

Homelessness is growing across Durham Region. According to data from the Region's By-Name List, 359 individuals are experiencing homelessness as of August 2023, compared to 134 people in 2017. And the number of those who moved to Durham in 2017 was 13,466 (21,616 individuals). The number of households coming to Durham per day, while varying each year, has ranged from 31.2 to 46.7.

To date it is estimated that there is about 2,000 people living without a home. These numbers are alarming.

In Ajax, Homelessness has gone from existing in the background of the town to becoming blatantly obvious to everyone who visits the plaza in downtown Ajax, or drives along Harwood

Avenue near Ajax Town Hall.

Nearby residents such as Colleen O'Hara have spoken up about the issue, citing encampments, litter, damage to businesses, drug use and safety as major concerns. She has a large collection of photographs, some of which she's shared with the News Advertiser.

The Region of Durham is working hard to address the issue. Staff want to find a permanent solution, as opposed to a Band-Aid fix. The Town of Ajax has held public meetings on the issue and makes shelter usage numbers public each month.

But the complex issue is not an easy one for both levels of government to address, one that sees a large number of people in need of help, and longtime residents who want to live the same lifestyle they have for decades.

Local downtown business owner Tony Nave of Tony Nave Enterprises is breaking the silence.

He along with a slew of other downtown business owners have had enough of going through the proper channels only to be either ignored or empty promises made.

Mr. Nave, explains, "I have various units in the building I worked so hard to own.

I pay my hefty property taxes for it to go to better our downtown. It appears that my taxes are being wasted as the conditions are slowly deteriorating.

Before the homeless and drug addicts came to Oshawa.

I had 90% of my units rented.

Today, I only have a few units and can't afford to pay my taxes.

I approached the City on numerous occasions. All kind of empty promises were made.

Nothing happened, if anything things got worst.

I feel let down by the Mayor of Oshawa. By the area council members Rick Kerr and Derek Giberson.

One thing for sure. My taxes keep going up. The quality of life down... One thing for sure.

I keep paying and taking a loss."

Rick Kerr is the regional downtown councillor responsible making sure tax dollars go to services and programs that are supposed to better the downtown. Instead, Kerr appears to be more interested in hosting artsy fartsy type of entertainment programs that benefit no one.

Derek Giberson, the local downtown candidate has been called a failure by many downtown merchants as they feel left out.

Many downtown merchants on a regular basis are forced to come to work. Faced with the ritual of cleaning human feces off their front door of their business.

Where is Giberson? A third

rate musician... now a council person.

He is best known for attacking, fellow ward candidates through elaborate rubbish election committee complaints.

Or going after downtown business owners with wrongful accusations of bureaucratic deficiencies before tax paid costly Compliance Audit Committees.

Tony Nave along with others have had enough.

Little or 'NO' parking. No real promotion for the downtown.

Derek Giberson, was the past president of a downtown organization responsible for the Oshawa safe injection site. A disastrous initiative that is responsible for the biohazard Oshawa downtown has become due to all the used discarded needles.

This creating a huge problem in the downtown. People are openly shooting up all kinds of drugs and passing out on City sidewalks.

Where is Giberson?

In the City of Oshawa, kangaroo type courts such as 'Elections Compliance Audit' and the like.

Some local business owners have called for both Giberson and Kerr to resign. Local downtown business owner Joe Ingino, has called on the resignation Giberson and Kerr on numerous instances.

Mr. Ingino said, "Downtown merchants have been suffering for the past 9 years at the hands of these two downtown councillors, including the Mayor. Yet, people keep voting them in. Taxes keep going up and the City has no immediate plan in place to deal with the drugs, crime and homeless. The influx of drug addicts to our core compounded with the homeless out of control in Oshawa.

Councillor Rick Kerr and Derek Giberson are both two term councillor and have done nothing to resolve the issue.

I personally send a message to both councillors that if they care about Oshawa. They should both resign and have their salary go directly to subsidize downtown business owners taxes. This would be a true sign of leadership.

But this is Oshawa. Kerr a retired teacher, actor... Giberson a rumored dead beat dad, third rate musician.

What do you expect. I just can't believe how the people of Oshawa voted them in for another term.

Both do not have the expertise or experience to even begin to tackle the real serious issues of the downtown. They never owned a downtown business or property. They do not understand the hardships of those front line downtown business owners.

The downtown is infested with cannabis shops. Clinics dispensing narcotics to addicts.

The two councillor in questions ignore the 'white ele-

phant' sitting on their shoulders and instead rather look for ways to spend your hard earned tax dollar on artsy, fartsy waste of tax payers dollar events.

I hear that on the table there is a proposal to wipe out existing murals that were supposed to be the pride of the community in attracting visitors. A total failure.

Councillors want to support through a very expensive agency the erection of more left win socially inclined murals.

First question. If the other murals did not bring any tourists... Why would wasting almost half a million of your tax dollars on new murals make a difference? As an experienced downtown business owner. From a business perspective. Take that half a million they want to waste on a pipe dream of new murals and instead create a program that would subsidize downtown business taxes, to help them out."

Tony Nave, adds. "We had a meeting here in my office not to long ago. They all shook my hand looked me in the eyes and told me not to worry.

That they will get right on it. The Mayor, Kerr and Giberson did nothing."

The problem is so bad downtown that even the local Masons Hall have approached the city for their lack of attention to the

homeless and drug situation downtown Oshawa. As the Mason Hall has been experienced vandalism and people using their front steps as a public bathroom.

One of Oshawa oldest downtown retail stores. Singer on Simcoe St South. Mike Gray said, "I been around since 1964. Taxes keep going up. Quality of life keeps going down.

At one point it got so bad with the taxes that we once sued the City back 2000. Won the case.

Spearheaded by Louise Parkes.... We got a tax break. We had to hire a lawyer from Toronto. In my time since 1964. What changed the worst was when they changed the one way streets.

People fly up and down our streets and do not appreciate what we have to offer.

At one time there were four banks now down to one.

People do not want to come downtown. The street people are driving the seniors out of the area.

It is sickening to see people sleeping on my front doors. They even stole my rubber matt off my front door.

I approached the city and they keep giving empty promises."

When Mike was asked if he felt he was getting his tax worth. He said, "You never are getting your tax dollars worth... when i complained

they told me that I was in a prime location in Durham region.

Due to their negligence and neglect. My insurance premiums are going through the sky. Do they care? NO."

A local restaurant across from the park that did not want to be mentioned has said in the past. "People come in my restaurant and ask to use my bathroom. They leave it a mess. Some, stay there and don't leave."

A local convenience store in the past has complained that business is dead due to the many that come in don't buy but shoplift. It has become very dangerous. Businesses are emptying out and those that are coming in soon enough find that they can't sustain a profitable business due to the environment and quickly close down.

The downtown needs true and real representation with vision and resolve.

The homeless problem is very real. We need to put our resource to solve this. Our people first should be our motto. Joe Ingino, said. "Next election. Our focus should be change. Put our taxes in our people. Our future. Vote competence not careered politicians and or pension stuffers. That is not experience. Look at our downtown... what it has got us. We deserve better."



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