



Leah Dyck

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Marketplace

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This morning I read another recipient's story and I'm absolutely furious. I'm so enraged that the Barrie Municipal Non Profit Housing Corporation (BMNPHC) and Ontario Works (OW; a.k.a welfare) are so indifferent to victims of crimes against humanity.

The reason I'm talking about this is because no one else will and the public needs to know what's really going on. This is the story of one of the recipients of our meal box delivery program - who will absolutely be receiving a meal box each month. Interestingly, it was her sister who lives in Ottawa, who reached out to me after Googling resources in Barrie for people who are starving. Of course, I put her on the [Fresh Food Weekly](#) program immediately.

This is her story...

"Hi there, I don't even know where to begin. In the last couple years, I've been through ALOT. I'm a human trafficking survivor, I've been assaulted, sexually assaulted, lived in a shelter, and slept outside when sometimes that was the safest option for me. I reported these things that happened to me, was then put on the priority list for housing, where I got my apartment, and what I thought would be a fresh start. In the year since I've been here, someone who has sexually assaulted me keeps coming to my building, so I've seen him quite a few times.

I've asked BMNPHC, OW, and the county if they could transfer me for safety reasons but they all said no. So this makes me feel like I'm not a person but just a number. I have panic attacks constantly because there's people who knew my trafficker who also know I live here and this effects my safety, and my life. Yet still, I'm stuck in this building.

I have been diagnosed with extreme PTSD because of the things I've been through. Because of this, I can't work...I have anxiety that leads to panic attacks on a daily basis just thinking of going out my apartment door. I was given a puppy (an emotional support dog). He's now 10-months-old and I don't know what I'd do without him, but sometimes it's either he eats or I do, and I always choose him.

I'm going through the process of getting ODSP..."

\*\*\* the wait time to have your ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) application approved is upwards of three years by the way\*\*\*

"...but right now I'm getting OW. As far as the amount I get, my trafficker had used my SIN number for a while, so I couldn't get anything, not one cent. Now, OW takes an overpayment off each cheque from me, pays my rent directly to the building and I'm left with less than \$300 a month.

Food is definitely a daily struggle. I use the food bank whenever possible but it's not enough

food for the month and it's difficult going there, being treated like another number and not a human being. Sometimes I go days without eating, even though I try to stretch out what I have. It's a struggle right now, not just for myself but for thousands of people who are put in the position to beg and borrow just to eat.

I honestly could write a book on my life over the past few years and it would be a good horror movie."

Firstly, I want you all to know that for this woman to write this to me would have been re-traumatizing for her. I want to thank her for her bravery and strength in telling her story. She did it so that you will all know what is really going on. Our government acknowledges that she was trafficked, has given her an emotional support dog for her PTSD and still makes her pay back the money her trafficker stole while using her SIN number. They know her trafficker comes to her building, yet refuse to move her because it saves them money by keeping her there. This is what our government is doing to victims of human trafficking, right here in Barrie. And Barrie housing has no problem at all charging her rent still. All of their staff take two week, fully paid vacations each summer while their tenants literally starve.

I'm beyond outraged and I can't believe this is happening. But I do believe it because these are the stories I hear every day. Injustice after injustice and the people who are supposed to be helping are doing nothing but allowing the abuse to continue.

The [United Nations](#) has defined 'Crime Against Humanity' as follows:

"For the purpose of this Statute, 'crime against humanity' means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack:

c. Enslavement;

e. Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;

g. Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;

h. Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;"

\*\*\* This woman is being discriminated against due to her low social and economic status\*\*\*

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This woman is a victim of crimes against humanity and if something doesn't change, she will live in poverty for the rest of her life, and starve daily. After everything she's already been through, this is the fate she has to look forward to in Canada.

If you're reading this and you feel compelled to help, you can sponsor her, and others struggling like her here in Barrie, with a meal box for only \$45. I can also provide you with a charitable tax receipt as well for your donation. The September meal box is valued at \$120 and you can check out it's full list of contents here: <https://www.freshfoodweekly.com/.../the-super-september...>

If you would like to sponsor a low-income family living in Barrie, please send me a PM.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this woman's story, and for becoming aware of what is really happening in our own backyards.

Leah

