

## Closing loopholes

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There's a knock on the door one afternoon, and upon answering, you find a couple of guys standing on your porch.

"We don't have a place to stay, and we know you have an extra room, so we're going to use it until we get back on our feet," they tell you.

Before you know it, they have walked into your house, up to the second floor and are unpacking their bags. They make their way to the kitchen, open the fridge, and start making themselves dinner from the food you bought.

Do you stand idly by, watch this happen and allow strangers into your house?

Not likely.

Even if you think helping people in need is an honourable thing to do, you don't know these guys. You don't know who they are, where they are from, or what they are capable of.

Most likely, any guests you have in your home are people you know very well, and you are sure you won't find your valuables missing in the morning.

Asylum seekers arriving at the Roxham Road crossing in Quebec suddenly found they were not longer able to freely walk across the border and be entitled to free housing, food, and whatever else they need.

The U.S. and Canada renegotiated the Safe Third Country Agreement, and the border was suddenly closed as many people found themselves unable to cross at will.

In Quebec, they are celebrating the closure because they were footing the majority of the bill to house people, and their resources were stretched to the limit.

While some advocates say it is inhumane to close the border, they aren't looking at the bigger picture.

Human trafficking is illegal. Yet busloads of people have been arriving in Plattsburgh, New York, the town on the other side of the border where the asylum seekers arrive to make the walk across the border. Over 50,000 people have crossed that border entry over the past year.

That's busloads of people who are being driven to Plattsburgh. Who is driving the bus, organizing all these people, and getting paid to bring them there?

These aren't convoys of people volunteering to pay for the driver and the fuel to transport people across the country. These are obviously organized groups who are being paid to transport people to this destination for a profit.

If someone asked me for a ride to a border crossing where you can just walk across without passing through customs, I would have no idea where to go, and I'm sure most other Canadians wouldn't either. But criminal elements do know where to go and are making a profit from this, and government agencies are doing nothing to stop it.

Some people have been arriving with very young children. This is never a good situation, especially when you are already in what is considered a safe country.

A five-year-old child should not be 'on the road' and travelling to an uncertain future, especially when they already have a place to stay.

Children are vulnerable. This type of situation can lead to separation, abuse, or worse.

We have an immigration and refugee system for a reason. It stops undesirable people from entering the country.

What many people find frustrating is the huge amount of money being spent to house asylum seekers while in their own backyard, people are camping out in tents because they are homeless. The list goes on from there.

While someone can cross the border, undocumented, and receive housing, clothing, and food at the public expense, Canadian citizens who were born here and paid taxes, are still being denied many basic fundamental things needed to survive.

There are many groups across the country who are frustrated by lack of government support while complaining tax dollars are spent elsewhere, and they have a valid argument.

Meanwhile, officials in Plattsburgh, New York, are now saying all the refugees who have arrived but denied entry, are suddenly town putting a strain on their resources, and now they are looking for help to deal with that situation.

That could have been avoided if authorities had already stepped up and put a stop to the human trafficking that ended the route at that town.

The fact that refugees were claiming asylum after 'escaping' from the United States, a safe country, was absurd in the first place.

These asylum seekers aren't fleeing a war in upstate New York and need immediate assistance ? that would be an entirely different story.

Just like you wouldn't allow a stranger to occupy your house uninvited, allowing people to simply walk into the country and take residence, unvetted, is never a good idea.