

Hiding in plain sight

by BRIAN LOCKHART

If you were hosting a party in your home, and the doorbell rang to reveal two people you didn't know who looked like they were of questionable character and said they were there for the party, would you invite them in?

Would you have two strangers in your house without knowing who they were, what they really wanted, and not knowing anything about them? What if you knew they were both local career criminals who were wanted by the police?

I'll bet you would politely tell them it was a private party, close the door, and hope they go away.

Our national party seems to be getting crashed.

The Globe and Mail has uncovered reports that federal authorities in Canada have issued arrest warrants for three hundred foreign criminals deemed to be a danger to the public. These people include sex offenders and people convicted of violent crimes, according to the Canada Border Services.

They are also trying to track down more than 37,000 foreigners who may pose a flight risk, may not voluntarily agree to be questioned or attend an immigration hearing, or may pose a danger to the public. That number is the size of a small city, and those people are out there.

The figures provided come three years after the auditor-general raised serious concerns that the border agency had already lost track of a large number of foreign nationals facing deportation, including dangerous criminals.

The reports say that as of last month, there were 37,326 active immigration arrest warrants, of which 33,032 were to remove people from the country, including 306 people who are a danger to the public.

The report quotes the border service as saying it is "strongly committed to ensuring the safety and security of Canadians," and that tracking down and deporting people guilty of criminal offences is a priority.

Well, apparently, it isn't a priority because if it were, there wouldn't be so many criminals walking free on our streets. There are thousands of these criminals on our streets, and the government has no idea where they are.

How is this even possible?

If a Canadian decides to drive to Florida for a winter vacation and is stopped for a check at the border and it is realized they have a DUI arrest from years earlier, that alone will stop you from visiting Disney World. If you have a valid passport, a driver's license or some other type of identification, you're on record somewhere.

How is it that the police can find out you have a warrant just by going on their in-car computer, but a serious criminal continues to evade authorities by not leaving a trail?

These criminals aren't just hiding and going unnoticed. They are staying somewhere and being helped by other people.

The federal government's policies on immigration have become a joke. The ridiculous scenario of people walking across the border into Quebec over a period of a couple of years while RCMP officers carried their luggage for them sent out a signal that getting into Canada is easy and no one cares about your past.

People were arriving with no documents, unvetted, no sponsorship, no ties to this country at all, and were simply disappearing.

These criminals who are missing must have some means of support. Even the friends who are sheltering them aren't going to do it for free and pay their expenses.

If they are working, they are on the radar somewhere. If they are working under the table for cash, their employer knows something is wrong. If they are on some kind of social assistance, they receive money somewhere.

People who commit crimes of violence do so because they are violent. I had a neighbour who just had that tendency. He's had several driving while impaired charges, has been in jail several times for assault, including the last time for aggravated assault, where he stabbed a man in the throat and spent two years locked up. You would think that would cure him.

Nope, he's currently in jail awaiting trial on a new charge of attempted murder. Some people don't learn and can't change.

What's scary is these known criminals are on the streets, and no one seems to know where they are.

The real tragedy here will be the next victim of a crime by a person who is not supposed to even be in the country.