

On the street

David Fransky asked people at Loyalist College the following question:

Do you drink too much coffee?



Amanda Thompson, first-year registered nursing, "Depends on the week. Depends on if I am working a lot or stressed out then yes, but if not, then no. That is one of the things that I am trying to cut back on right now."



Taylor Leeder, third-year television and new media production, "I think at times I can but right now I am on a tea binge because I was super sick over the holidays and coffee kind of upsets my stomach."



Jasmine Papoutsis, third-year television and new media production, "I don't personally. I am not a big coffee drinker so I usually have like a couple of cups a week."



Kaitlyn Stethem, first-year pre-health, "Yeah, probably. I have it when I get up. I have it sometimes at school and I have it when I get home from school."



Paul Andrews, first-year fitness and health, "Not really. I only have it once in a while. I only have mediums and to me, that is enough."



Dave Lightowers, first-year architect technician, "Yes. I drink three pots a day. Bad habit."

Editorial

Everyone has a right to shelter

The idea of fellow human beings dying because of a lack of shelter during the Canadian winter is appalling. This defies the basic physiological necessity of every human being.

According to the Homeless Hub, 35,000 Canadians are homeless on any given night. In the plummeting low temperatures of Canada's winter, the bitter cold is no joke. Two homeless men were found dead in Toronto last week, within a span of 24 hours.

There should be places individuals can go to stay warm and sleep. Having warming centres that open only until the evening, just as the cold peaks, is not enough. Individuals have no place to go once the warming centres have closed. There is no place where they can sleep so that their safety and humanity is not threatened.

During the recent cold snap, local officials mentioned two warming centre options, the Belleville Public Library, which is only open Mondays to Saturdays and only until 8 p.m. or 5 p.m., and the Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre, which opens every day until midnight.

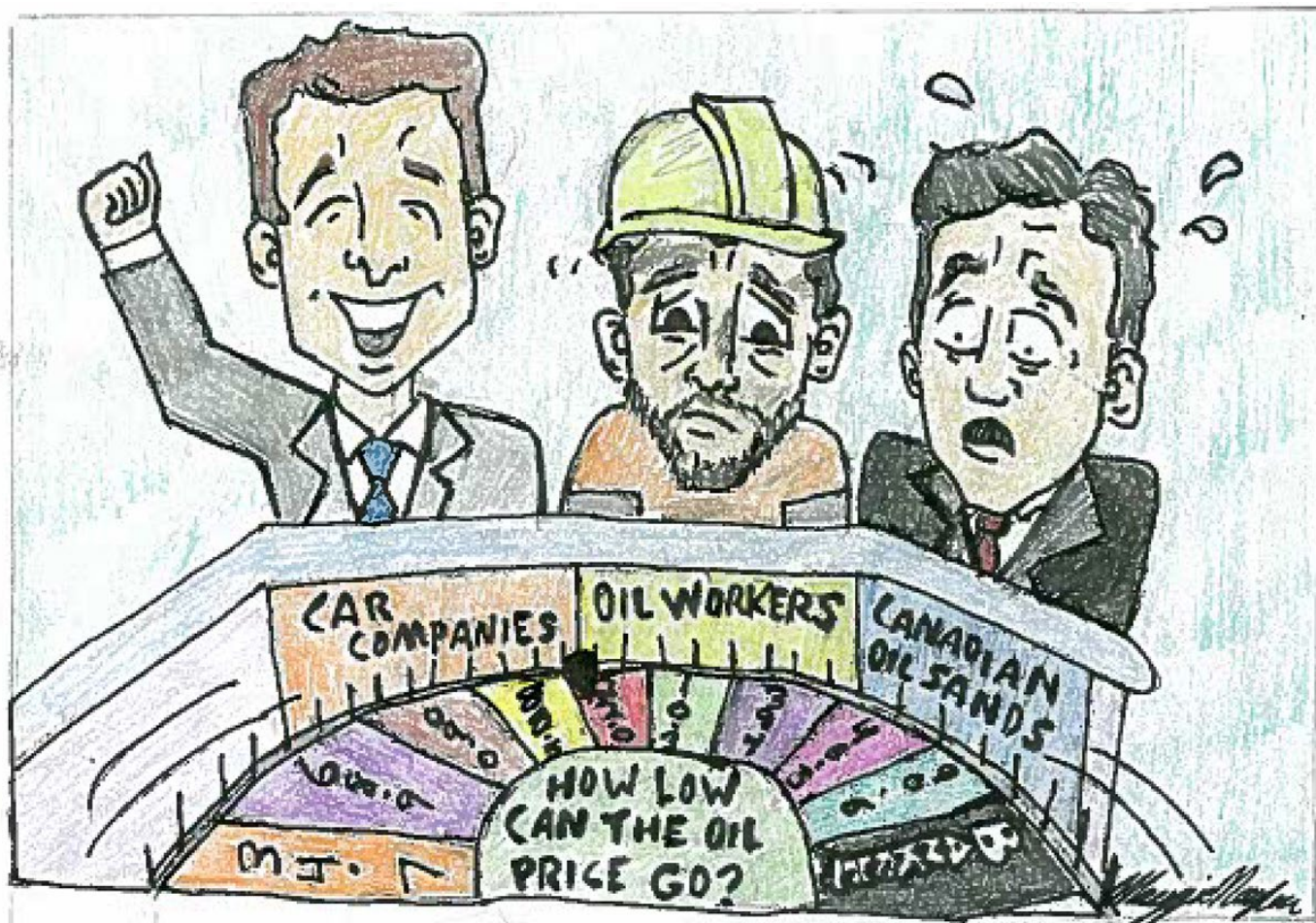
Belleville does not have shelters where individuals can go to shield themselves from the harsh cold overnight. There are services that may provide up to 72 hours emergency relief, but that's only three days out of Canada's long winter months.

If people are in need, they need to contact agencies, which may then send them to shelters in areas like Kingston or Peterborough.

When it's the middle of the night and past office hours, posting 'after hours' numbers around the city is not enough. Making a call can even be inaccessible to some individuals.

There needs to be a place available and easily accessed for the people who need it. There needs to be a place that has open doors where people can walk in any time of the night knowing they'll be kept warm throughout. It's time for action. We don't need more people to die before an overnight space is made.

Amanda Cheung



Opinion

Suicide brings out important reminder of the importance of society's acceptance

By Gabrielle Smith

Leelah Alcorn, a 17-year-old transgender teen from South Lebanon, Ohio, died by suicide at the end of December.

Her death has been an emotional and controversial topic in the LGBTQ community. In addition to mourning the loss of the teen, the community has used the information Alcorn disclosed in her suicide note to put the heat on conservative Christian parenting.

In her note, Alcorn paints a picture of her parents as closed-minded and abusive. When she came out to them as transgender, they pulled her out of school and extracurricular activities, restricted her Internet access, and enrolled her in Christian talk-

therapy in hopes that her gender identity could be prayed away.

Carla Alcorn, Leelah's mother, continues to use male pronouns and Leelah's given name, when speaking about her. "We don't support that religiously," she has said repeatedly.

Taking a more supportive approach, Deacon Ray Dever of Tampa, Florida has taken to the New Ways Ministry blog to speak about his family's journey to accepting his transgender daughter. He speaks about the "increasingly inaccurate vision of what a Catholic family looks like, in spite of the growing diversity of the families that comprise the people of God." He encourages Christians to take note of Pope Francis's recent "How am I to judge?" statement.

Personally, I can't speak on Christian-

ity or church communities, as I have only ever been an outside observer. However, my understanding is that those who believe in God believe he loves all of his children. I don't understand why LGBTQ people would be an exception to that.

I can understand that having a queer or transgender child could be a challenging adjustment to make as a parent, especially if gender issues were not something you had been previously educated on, or if your community is not necessarily one of tolerance or acceptance.

However, for parents in this position, I think it's important to educate yourself for the sake of your child. Consider the consequences and evaluate the damage an unsupportive home life can do. Is it worse to have a transgender child or no child at all?

Medical marijuana system changes not working

With the latest changes to the medicinal marijuana system in Canada, the government has simply made an unnecessary mess for its users.

The decision, put into effect in April 2014, was to have medicinal marijuana available only if prescribed by a doctor with the product coming from one of Health Canada's large, licenced growing facilities. Prior to this, patients eligible for medicinal marijuana were able to obtain a license to grow their own, many claiming that the effects of the drug having given them a better quality of life than they've had in years.

According to Health Canada, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the principal active ingredient in cannabis, targets cannabinoid receptors that are found throughout the body and are especially numerous in the brain and nervous system. These receptors are involved in the regulation of many bodily functions.

Sufferers with such illnesses as multiple sclerosis claim using marijuana eases their pains without the harsh side effects of stronger substances, such as morphine.

A federal court injunction issued in March helped the situation by exempting some of those who previously held licences. However, anyone new to the game must play by the new rules, and those with licences are being denied renewals.

Users who were growing their own for as little as 87 cents per gram will now have to spend anywhere from \$4 to \$12, a fee many simply can't afford.

However, the price of the drug is the least of their concerns, as many patients are worried that they will not be approved for a prescription from their doctors, the now sole gatekeepers to the life-altering medication.

Users are worried that the majority of doctors are reluctant to prescribe marijuana as they claim there is a lack of scientific evidence of its effects. According to CBC Canada, the College of Family Physicians of Canada's CEO Dr. Francine Lemire said the lack of research into cannabis has left many family doctors unsure about which patients could benefit from medical-grade weed and what dose should be prescribed.

"We have little scientific data to guide us," the college's Dr. Sharon Circone said. "We have extremely little guidance from Health Canada. This was sprung on us."

An understandable point, yet it is unfair to put suffering patients through an obstacle course when harmful and highly addictive substances, such as painkillers, are given out like candy.

The government argues the former system allows for corruption as growers could be selling their crops in a black market, which should be of minimal concern when compared to the problems caused by the new system.

With the amount of time, energy and money that goes into the fight against illegal growing and distribution of marijuana, it makes much more sense to put this towards the war on harder more harmful substances, such as crystal meth or heroin.

It all seems quite unnecessary, especially with our neighbours south of the border having now legalized marijuana in five states, legalization being a major issue surrounding Canadian politics for many years. Many believe it is bound to happen; it is just a matter of time.

Perhaps there is no better time than the present.

Carla Antonio

Humans overlooking profound knowledge of geese

Their trips to the south when the weather gets cold something we should emulate

By Dillan Cools

The recent arrival of true winter weather marks the sixth annual spike in my appreciation for the often-misunderstood Canada goose.

I find it hard to understand why so many people simply dismiss these majestic birds as pests, rather than learn from their noble ways.

Each year, I consider myself lucky (by human standards) to be given a few stress-free weeks to hang out back home with the most important people in my life.

This being said, as I found my way back to school in Belleville where I'll spend the long, cold and lonely winter, the geese down the street are preparing for the trip of a lifetime.

These geese have got it so figured out that each fall they get together as family, as friends and as a community, to take a ridiculously long vacation in a warm place of their choosing.

I give credit to the humans who have tried to emulate this grand idea but sadly their attempts can only fall short, as they don't have the numbers, time, money or skill to experience it in true form.

Humans have pushed walking to its maximum potential and now, because of their faux-active lifestyles, require the assistance of expensive vehicles when dealing with any terrain.

On the other hand, every goose possesses a wide range of mastered abilities such as flight and floatation, making these vacations a breeze.

When in the south, a vacationing human may spend all of their loonies to rent a boat, while the crafty goose will simply transform into a boat.

A great Canadian inventor and artist named Bill Lishman, well-known for his work with ultralight aircraft, found inspiration in the prowess of geese and their millennium-old history of vacation. His current ideas in the aviation world are ground-breaking, as he is designing an ultralight to deliver humanitarian aid.

The sometimes arrogant goose, fully aware of its superiority, can be found defecating along our waterfront and leaving feces on the decks of our exorbitant boats.

But even their worst traits can be seen as a gift to someone with an overactive metabolism who frequently finds himself searching for a washroom.

After all, here I am writing about geese when surely any goose would scoff at the idea of writing about me. And of course, without hands, a goose could not write anything anyway, but it is important to remember that geese do not need hands when they are looking down on you from a thousand feet up.

The Pioneer

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