

Speed Bumps in a Caring City

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We're busy—absorbed
in our own problems
without answers. No time
to look up and discover
others suffer the same.

Privilege provides us
the luxury to complain.
A zero-sum use of time,
ranting and raving about
simple circular traffic patterns,
spewing vitriol over public art
installations added to enrich
the drudgery of the day-to-day
capitalist zombie commute.

Heads down, we try to maintain
liveable wages in step
with a rapacious inflation rate.
We earn the pay of our fathers,
yet provide less,
ask a stay-at-home-parent-by-choice
if you can find one.

Heads down, we dismiss
well-rounded education as superfluous,
believe learning is no more
than readin', writin', and 'rithmetic.
Passively, we permit and defend future-leader
sons and daughters to parade
in poverty clothes of other cultures
for school photo posterity,
the rich cultural tapestry ripping
apart at patchwork seams.

Heads down, we invite
refugees to begin again,
to diversify our city and economy,
yet offer them decrepit shelter
no better than camps fled
at supply-and-demand prices
greater than subsidies given,
cries for help in different tongues
fall on deaf resettlement ears,
leave them looking further west.

Wrapped in our choice
to ignore social responsibility,

we flout government and medical
requests to come together,
prevent unnecessary harm to all.
They infringe on the fashionable
decision to be coddled with misinformation.
The every-man-for-himself mantra is sexy
while you're on top, but
captains of corporations whistle
a different tune when tides turn
and they swim in panic
toward the social safety net.

Without fear of awkward
moments of misunderstanding,
we'd discover pain diminishes,
power multiplies in numbers
among the collective concerned.
It is possible to reach out,
burst secular bubbles to care
when neighbours are forced
to choose between a roof and food.

We can't just be in this
together when convenient.
It will feel weird

at first—to care.

Should we prefer

to remain comfortable,

remember what

our fathers said,

Don't come crying

when **you** get hurt.