

WORDS FROM THE STREET

Sunday June 26, 2016

Lisa McAllister

One Paycheck

One paycheck from being homeless

I owe thirty thousand to the government for an education

My job, ironically, the same (We will invest a loan to give you a future!) government, gives me twenty-two thousand a year. Do they know the math of inflation?

Yes, I know how to subtract, one paycheck from being homeless

I pay my rent with a little left for food

Hmm...I pay taxes like a good Torontonians too

Every year CRA takes the two thousand tax refund from this 45 year old single mother to pay the (We invest money to people under the age of thirty to have a decent paying job!) government

Yes, I know how to budget, one paycheck from being homeless

No one says anything at work when I wear my ten dollar jeans everyday

Should I tell staff I can only afford to eat one meal a day?

The power of heartless bosses, to throw staff onto the streets, because you asked for a raise, vacation time, help pay for your kid to play in her soccer league, is because the priority is money, not people

Yes, I know how to read a termination notice in an email; I'm one paycheck from being homeless

My job is to help adults learn Math and English to get employment, go to post-secondary, or gain independence...the person with an interrupted education

Yes, I know how to write about this interrupted time in my life

The voices from the homeless educated me, more than any university, employer or government system, how to survive when my final paycheck, sends me to the streets.