

STOPPING TRAFFIC

Beloved crossing guard retires his stop sign. **Page 4**



Lucy Yi Qi /// Observer

Head over heels

Sanah Currie, 5, is a member of the East York Gymnastics Club. She loves to do back bridges and can do three cartwheels in a row. Currie has been a member for four years. For a story and more photos, see page 5.

Potential strike smells like E.Y. past

City, workers have until Sunday to reach a deal

By **MICHAEL BAGHEL**
The Observer

East York residents could face another disruption in public services akin to the “great garbage strike” of less than three years ago if the city and the union representing over 6,000 outside workers do not reach an agreement soon.

The two parties have until this Sunday to reach a deal, at which time a legal strike or lockout could take place. While both sides are saying they want to avoid a labour disruption, they’re also both preparing for the possibility.

Don Valley West councillor John Parker said he believes the majority of East Yorkers will not even notice the effects of work stoppage beyond the interruption in garbage collection.



■ **John Parker**

“For most people, 2009 was a garbage strike,” Parker said. “The challenge of a garbage strike in the summer weather is that the garbage piles up and bakes in the hot sun; we don’t have that problem in the cold weather.”

Others say that Toronto would have trouble coping with reductions in emergency medical help and snow-clearing. The city says paramedic services would be staffed at an 85 per cent level, and snow clearing at 75 per cent.

On Jan. 24, dozens of EMS workers and other supporters descended on Toronto City Hall demanding that EMS be recognized as an essential service.

Among them was Roberta Scott, a paramedic for over 20 years.

“Tragedies will occur if any service levels are cut,” Scott said.

She added that EMS service times are already strained during snowstorms and reductions in the service levels of both snow-clearing and emergency services could spell disaster.

The executive committee elected to defer the decision until there could be a report on the pros and cons of making EMS an essential service.

Parker said the 15 per cent of paramedics who would be off the job in a labour disruption are not needed for actual emergencies, but instead allow EMS to provide auxiliary services.

Union spokesmen have also announced their intent to set up information pickets at ice rinks, and will picket more aggressively if the city uses replacement workers.

Penny-pinching city

BUDGET FALLOUT

SERVICE SAVES

- \$5 million in TTC funding
- Indoor and outdoor school and wading pools
- Mechanical leaf collection
- \$3.5 million for library services
- Funding for daycares and shelters

SERVICE LOSSES

- Deferring hiring 68 firefighters, 36 paramedics, 236 police officers and 117 civilian staff members
- Over 1,000 city workers will lose their jobs
- Road sweeping on local streets will be cut in half, from bi-monthly to monthly
- Residents must purchase garbage tags for overflow garbage at \$3.10 each

Most East Yorkers won't notice changes: Parker

By **NICHOLAS PROSPERO**
The Observer

With the Toronto 2012 budget now finalized, East Yorkers seem to see the glass as half-empty... or half-full.

Council voted in favour of the budget proposed by Mayor Rob Ford, but tacked on an amendment to use a fraction of the \$154-million budget surplus to prevent the loss of some services.

John Parker, councillor for Ward 26/Don Valley West, was a member of the budget committee and said its hard work was what saved money in this year’s budget.

“Some of the things the city does will continue to be done, but it will cost us less to do them,” he said.

“For that reason, we were able to come up with a budget that this year will actually spend less money than last year’s budget. That’s something that never happens in government.”

While he said some cuts and service reductions were unavoidable, Parker added they

won’t be that noticeable in East York.

“In our area I think we’ll see that the services that are important to us will be maintained,” he said.

“It’s also safe to say that some difficult decisions were made about reductions in service levels. I would expect that most people in East York will not notice those changes.”

But a change that Parker knows will register with some residents is reduced bus frequency on some East York routes during off-peak hours.

“The peak-hour service will be maintained, and the areas where there will be a reduction in off-peak service are relatively few,” Parker said.

“Some people in off-peak hours may have to wait a little bit longer for a bus, or find that their bus has a few more people on it, but there will still be a bus.”

Another win for East York came days before the budget was finalized, when an additional \$3 million in funding for a second rink at Leaside Memorial Gardens was announced.

The initiative had previously received about \$9 million from the city and Infrastructure Ontario to build the second ice pad, but after costs rose to an estimated \$12.5 million, the city dug deeper to help.

POLICE BRIEFS

Man missing

Toronto police are seeking the public's help in locating a missing man. He has not been seen since



Jan. 17 at approximately 5:30 p.m. in the area of Victoria Park Avenue and St. Clair Avenue East. Frank Miklc, 40, is described as white with two moles on the left side of his chin, 6'2", 180 pounds, with short blond hair.

Plants seized

A man is facing charges after police seized hundreds of marijuana plants from a home in the area of O'Connor Drive and Bermondsey Road. Police say that drug squad officers executed a search warrant on Jan. 26 at the premises, and that 800 plants were seized. Lawrence Johnson, 46, has been charged with producing and possessing marijuana for the purpose of trafficking.

Barber robbed at gunpoint

Police are looking for two suspects after a robbery was reported at Castries Barber Salon on Jan. 13. Two men entered the business, at 852 Pape Ave., and while one held the employee on duty at gunpoint, the other stole the victim's wallet, phone and diamond ring. The robbers then fled the scene. The first is described as a black male with a light complexion, between 21 and 23 years old, and 5'6". The second is described as a black male, between 23 and 24 years old, and 6'2".

Two break-ins

Within a two-day period, there were two break-and-enters in the East York area. It was reported that entry was gained to both premises by forcing a door. Police say a quantity of jewelry was stolen. No suspects have been identified.

—Tatiana Herman



E.Y. resident Lynn Lewis browses a fruit stand on the Danforth on a mild winter day.

Leigh Cavanaugh // Observer

Pottery Road facelift earns mixed reviews

By ELITA TSILO
The Observer

Residents and businesspeople around Pottery Road say area activity is reviving since the street reopened before Christmas — after nearly six months of construction. The disruption cost the city \$4.6 million, and lost revenue for area businesses.

"This street is a main artery for this part of the city," said Steve Frantzis, manager of Dairy Queen at the corner of Pottery Road and Broadview Avenue. "You don't really

realize how many people use the road until you can't use it. From the grocery store to the nail salon across the street, the tanning salon, I think everybody felt the pinch."

The manager of Sobey's on Broadview Avenue, Albertini Wen, agreed. "The sales had a dramatic drop since Pottery Road closed," he said.

Besides lost revenue, there were other nuisances.

"It was very noisy and there was a lot of dirt," said Brenda Le of Bella Nails.

Pottery Road was closed from May 24 until Nov. 30. Modifications beyond road re-

construction include retaining walls, curbs and a new sidewalk. The originally scheduled Sept. 5 reopening was pushed back due to delays with "additional work on the retaining wall, a storm outfall and some final paving," according to the city's website.

Since the street reopened, business has been returning.

"We're picking up slowly, very slowly," Wen said. "We started seeing customers who used to shop here before."

Le also noted that former clients have begun to come around again. However, not everyone is happy with how

the construction turned out.

"The job they did on the road was not done properly. It was a waste of tax money," said Gus Papazoglou, who works at Whistler's Grille on Broadview Avenue. "They actually made the road thinner than before."

Others think it's a job well done, and worth the money.

"The guys working on it did an excellent job," said Frantzis. "It looks good, and everybody thinks the road is nice and clean and safe. And through the winter that's the most important because when it (gets icy), it's bad."

Ophthalmologist sees the future

Amnion donations at TEGH help damaged eyes

By JODEE BROWN
The Observer

A new program offered by Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH) seeks to act as a metaphoric visionary for people in need of urgent eye treatments.

The hospital recently started an amnion donation program aimed at using donated placentas to reconstruct eyes damaged as a result of serious problems ranging from thermal burns to cancer.

Only healthy patients over

40 who have elective caesareans are eligible donors. Two placenta donations have been made since last November at TEGH, which is the third hospital in Canada to offer such a program.

It's also available in Winnipeg and Edmonton.

Dr. Charlotte Wedge, chief of ophthalmology at TEGH, explains that with the use of the amniotic membrane — the innermost part of the placenta — patients will experience an immediate soothing effect.

"If you have a defect on the side of the eye that won't heal, you put the amniotic membrane on and it calms down the inflammation," she said. "It creates an environment where the person's own cells

can grow and do the healing."

Compared to past treatments, where surgeons would use ointments and lubrication to dissuade scar residue from any burns or growths, the amniotic membrane presents a faster healing alternative for persons in need of it, despite its rare usage.

"It depends on the disease, but most of the amnion, once it heals underneath, just disappears," Wedge said. It "usually takes a couple of weeks."

All amniotic tissue goes to the Eye Bank of Canada, where it is treated with antibiotics before being cut into two-by-two as well as four-by-four centimetre pieces.

Those pieces are put in a special fluid before being

placed in a freezer at -70 C.

For Wedge, this procedure, while unorthodox, can be "truly life-saving."

"It's not used often," she said, "but when it is used, it's necessary."



■ Charlotte Wedge

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Remembering Agnes Macphail

The East York Agnes Macphail Recognition Committee is holding its annual public speaking contest for students on Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. at the East York Civic Centre, 850 Coxwell Ave.

Agnes Macphail was East York's most illustrious politician, having been elected to the House of Commons in 1921 and later becoming the first woman elected to the Ontario legislature. She continued to champion social causes even after her retirement from elective politics, and died in 1954.

The public is invited to the first of this year's series of public commemorations of her life and work, when the final round of speeches written by East York-area students will be delivered in the council chambers of the civic centre.

There will be free parking in the staff parking lot located off of Mortimer Avenue.

The Macphail committee also reminds East Yorkers that the East York Historical Society is asking for donations to install a plaque on the Macphail home at 2 Donegall Dr. Cheques should be made payable to the East York Foundation and mailed to EYHS, 10 McKayfield Rd., East York, ON, M4J 4P7.

Finally, the Macphail committee will host the annual Agnes Macphail Award ceremony at the civic centre on March 24 at 7 p.m. The award recognizes an East Yorker for outstanding volunteer work.

For more information, contact committee chair Lorna Krawchuk at 416-425-4431.

—Jessica Vella



● For more info about Agnes Macphail observances, e-mail ltkrawchuk8@aol.com

Lodge raising money for call system

Care facility aims at \$125,000 target for required improvements and upgrades

By **CORTNEY COOK**
The Observer

Long-term care residents of Nisbet Lodge on Pape Avenue will have a new aid system to look forward to, thanks to the lodge's annual fundraising campaign.

"Our biggest concerns here are when family members visit and they feel the personal support workers (PSWs) are not answering their call buttons on time," said Ama Amoa-Williams, who has been the director of care at Nisbet for over four years.

The lodge, which is located at 740 Pape Ave. just north of Danforth Avenue, is raising money for improvements, including a new "nurse call system," which will include pagers for PSWs and computer tracking of staff response times.

The fundraiser, which began last fall, has raised \$20,000 so far. "We hope to reach our goal of \$125,000 within the year," said chief executive officer Glen Moorhouse. "But it will be a few years before things really get going.... Part of the money from this campaign will also go towards planning for development."

Nisbet currently has 130 full- and part-time staff looking after 103 residents. Still, it's hoped that the nurse call system will create more efficiency.

Amoa-Williams explains that once a resident's call button is activated, there's no way to deactivate it until a staffer checks the room. "With this new system, the employee has to physically go in the resident's room and cancel the call — so that it is recorded that they have still been tended to," she said.

While improved technology helps, Moorhouse said there's still no replacement for the human element. Ultimately, he said, he'd like to have more staff.



Cortney Cook /// Observer

Ama Amoa-Williams (right), director of care for Nisbet Lodge, a long-term care home, places her arm around long-term care resident Ragwantee Nancoo (left). The lodge will use the money recently raised through an annual fundraising campaign for advancements at the home.

Bi-polar winter weather

■ E. Y. RESIDENTS STRUGGLE WITH THE EVER-CHANGING CONDITIONS



LEFT: East York residents Tony and Sophie Bouquillon shovel after the first snowfall of the new year.

BELOW: A woman pushes a stroller along the Danforth sheltering the baby from another of East York's rainy January days.

Leigh Cavanaugh /// Observer



Jessica Vella /// Observer



Leslie Marciniak /// Observer

The LCBO plans to take over the former Albany Medical Clinic site some time this year. The clinic moved to a new location over a year ago.

New LCBO could bring more shoppers

By **LESLIE MARCINIAK**
The Observer

Businesses around East York's southwest corner are looking forward to a shot in the arm from a big new LCBO that neighbourhood merchants think will draw more shoppers to the area.

The current liquor store, on Danforth Avenue near Ellerbeck Street, is moving around the corner to Broadway Avenue and the site of the former Albany Medical Clinic building, which has sat empty for more than a year.

According to Chris Layton, media relations co-ordinator for the LCBO, the new

store will be significantly larger than the current one and resemble other larger-scale LCBO locations.

Once the old clinic building is torn down, he said, "the plans are for a 13,100-square-foot building in total with a 6,600-square-foot shopping area. It will offer a large product selection and range of services. It will likely also offer a Vintages fine wine and premium spirits section, a walk-in cold room for beer and ready-to-drink cocktails and coolers, gift section and a portable tasting bar."

Patrick Connor, public relations co-ordinator for The Big Carrot health food store,

sits on the Danforth Business Improvement Area's board of directors, and said the Danforth BIA is all for the new and improved LCBO.

"The existing store brings many shoppers to our area that otherwise might not stop and shop. To have a new Vintages or flagship LCBO will bring even more business to our area," he said.

Layton said the LCBO plans to take possession of the property this summer, with construction to follow. No firm dates have been set as of now.

"The opening will likely take place sometime later in the year," Layton said, "but certainly before Christmas."

Aldred retires with a high light



Sunnie Huang // Observer

Jack Aldred, 88, in his East York apartment. He retired from his post as a crossing guard soon after his campaign for a crosswalk was approved.

Guard instrumental in getting pedestrian crossover installed

By SUNNIE HUANG
The Observer

After 24 years of braving the traffic at the corner of Carlaw and Mortimer avenues, veteran crossing guard Jack Aldred retired with four five-year service pins, dozens of thank-you cards and a new pedestrian crossover for the intersection.

The overhead lights were activated at the same time elementary schools resumed classes.

Aldred, who spearheaded the petition for the crossover, left his post on Friday of the same week, after a sudden bout of pneumonia.

"I'm proud that I could do something for the neighbourhood. They say I was performing a necessary job of saving the kids," Aldred said from his East York apartment, which is decorated with memorabilia from the Second World War, family photos and certificates of community services. He joined the Royal Canadian Navy at 17 and served in Europe during the war.

"It doesn't seem like 24 years, and I don't feel 88," he added.

Although Aldred's petition is welcomed in the neighbourhood, the process to move it through the bureaucratic process has been an

uphill battle.

Last February, the city's transportation services department issued a report recommending against the installation of the crossover, saying the intersection was already meeting pedestrian needs with the existing signs, speed limits and a crossing guard.

The report also noted the device would cost about \$17,000, in addition to an operating cost of \$2,500 per year, which would come from the department's operating budget.

"It's in fact one of the cheapest pedestrian crossovers in the entire city," said councillor Mary Fragedakis (Ward 29 Toronto-Danforth), who brought Aldred's petition to City Hall, adding that the device is relatively simple and small because of the narrow street.

Her motion was adopted by city council last April, after passing through Toronto and East York Community Council unanimously a month earlier.

Aldred is delighted that his year-long campaign finally paid off.

"I was very impatient, and that's not to do with my age," he said. "I think it takes too long, but I'm certainly pleased and surprised."

His post has been taken over by Joe Sydow, who quickly became known for playing his hand-held stop sign like a banjo.

Fragedakis said crossing guards are still needed at the intersection, in spite of the new crossover.

"Some people may require more assistance," she said. "Even when there are pedestrian crossovers, not everyone stops. It's sad, but true."

East York choir is loca for Voca

By JANE IGHARO
The Observer

Multiculturalism has led the East York Choir to sing a new tune.

After 26 years of performing classical and contemporary music for the East York community, the East York Choir ensemble has decided to shake things up and revamp its name.

The eclectic choir is now known as the Voca Chorus of Toronto.

Artistic director Jenny Crober decided on the name "Voca" while having coffee with a friend. She felt the name could easily be associated with idea of singing and decided to add Toronto to the title because she wanted to relate to a wider community.

The choir became increasingly more multicultural in 2006, when Crober relocated the group's rehearsal space to Eastminster United Church on the Danforth. The relocation led to a boom in members: from 38 to over 100.

"The original rehearsal spaces in East York made it difficult for people to come unless they had a car," Crober said in an interview.

"The fact that the new rehearsal space was on the subway line made a huge difference. It brought new choir members and new audience members who could get there by subway."

Crober announced the name change

at the choir's Dec. 3 show. The founder of the choir, Stephanie Piercey Beames, believes the change was a great idea and gave it her blessing.

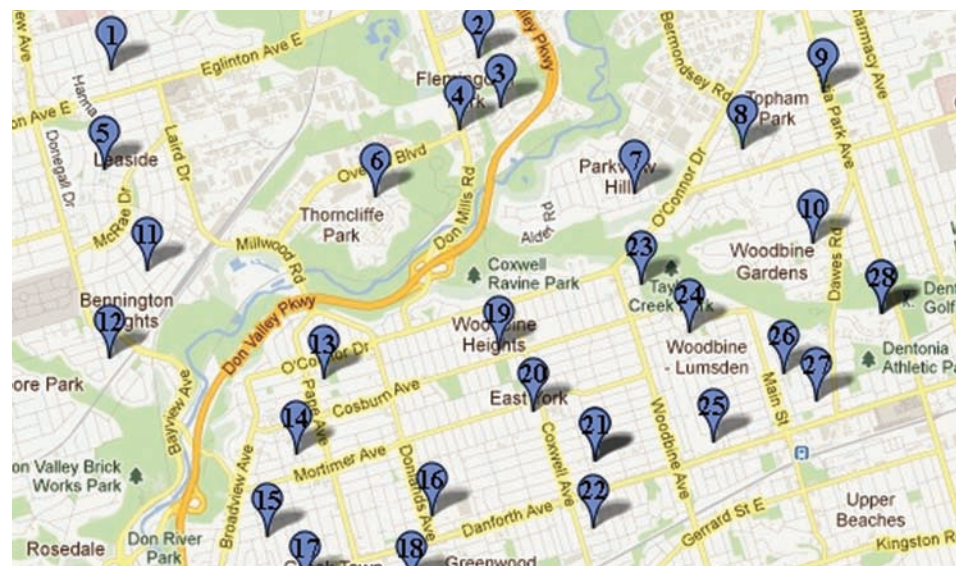
The artistic director had contemplated making a change to the name between 2006 and 2007 when choristers, musical guest, and a choir board member agreed the name no longer suited the choir, which had developed into a diverse group of Torontonians.

Crober, who has been involved with the choir since the late 1980s, admitted that the name change was a big deal for her and she feared that some members might not take it well.

"I can tell you about one woman I was very worried about because she has lived in the East York community for years and I thought she was going to be upset and she came over and she hugged me and she said, 'Oh Jenny, it's a wonderful name, it has panache.' She was thrilled," she said.

Regardless of the choir's name change, it is still a part of the East York community. It rehearses every Monday at Eastminster United Church and continues to perform throughout the community.

The choir's annual cabaret fundraiser will be held on Saturday, Feb. 25 at the Estonian House at 958 Broadview Ave. It will include classical music, musical theatre, dancing, silent occasions concerts and appetizers. Proceeds will go to the maintenance of the choir.



Locations of East York-area schools to have full-day kindergarten by 2014.

All-day kindergarten on its way

By TEONA BAETU
The Observer

Kindergarten will be an all-day learning program in Ontario starting in 2014.

Four schools in East York and vicinity have already implemented the full-day kindergarten program and 11 more are expected to have full-day kindergarten by 2013.

Local MPP Peter Tabuns hosted a childcare meeting Monday at Roden Public School to address concerns regarding full-day kindergarten. Also in attendance were councillors Mary Fragedakis and Paula Fletcher, and TDSB trustees Cathy Dandy and Sheila Cary-Meagher.



● For more on this story, please visit us online at torontoobserver.ca

Dandy said although the all-day kindergarten program is a "real win" for some parents, others might find it disruptive. "Most people in my neighbourhood are really, really excited about full-day kindergarten and the seamless day," said Becky McFarlae, an East York resident and parent. She thinks the provincial government "dropped the ball" on the full-day kindergarten initiative.

"This is a clear example of an utter lack of leadership on the part of the government to

actually articulate a vision in which one can buy into or not buy into or push against or offer something else," McFarlae said.

The full-day kindergarten program will provide free education and supervision to four- and five-year-olds during regular 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. school hours.

Some schools will also provide optional before and after school programs for a fee. These programs will run from 7 to 9 a.m., and 3:30 to 6 p.m.

Gymnastics a boost for morale

By LUCY YI QI
The Observer

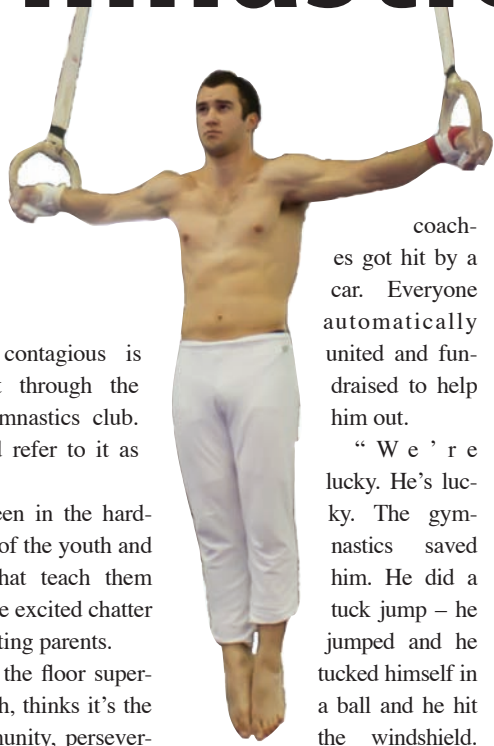
Something contagious is spreading fast through the East York Gymnastics club. Those infected refer to it as “the spirit.”

It can be seen in the hard-working faces of the youth and the coaches that teach them and heard in the excited chatter among the waiting parents.

Jill Bulmer, the floor supervisor and coach, thinks it’s the spirit of community, perseverance and respect that people are attracted to. It helped take the club from a humble start in a backyard in 1952 to its current status as the largest gymnastics club in Canada. What ran with a mere 42 members in 1984, now boasts a whopping 4,000 members.

Located behind a Harvey’s on the corner of O’Connor Drive and Dohme Avenue, its facility covers more than 33,000 square feet.

Bulmer said that she didn’t realize just how much spirit there was in the club until a couple of months ago when one of the



■ Simon Barbosa

coaches got hit by a car. Everyone automatically united and fundraised to help him out.

“We’re lucky. He’s lucky. The gymnastics saved him. He did a tuck jump – he jumped and he tucked himself in a ball and he hit the windshield. He did hit his head, but he’s fine now,” Bulmer said.

Sandra Yip-Janniere has been a coach at the club for 11 years and has a six-year-old daughter enrolled in classes.

“I put her in because I love the foundations, the basics and the fundamentals, but she just fell in love with it too,” said Yip-Janniere.

“It also keeps you healthy and strong, so why not?”

The spirit is taught early on in the community, and coaches, students, even parents, end up



Lucy Yi Qi // Observer

Jada Janniere, 6, shows off her moves at the East York Gymnastics Club.

building a strong, respectful relationship over the years.

Trinity Johnson, 8, has been a member for six years and has built a solid relationship with her coach, Meghan.

“I love her,” she smiled.

“She’s like my mom on Tuesdays.”

Johnson wants to become a famous gymnast when she grows up, knowing she’s going to face many obstacles along the way.

“I’ll never quit,” Johnson said, adding that she’s going to “stay held together and listen to the teacher and do my best.”



For more photos, go to torontoobserver.ca

Winterlicious a challenge, opportunity for restaurants

By JIYOON ELLIE KIM
The Observer

The annual Winterlicious stampede of value-minded restaurant diners is on for another week. For restaurateurs along the Danforth, the promotion is a mixed blessing.

Winterlicious invites people out for limited, fixed price menus at select restaurants that charge between \$15 for lunch and \$45 for dinner.

The promotion is marking its 10th anniversary, having started a week ago — and concluding this coming Thursday.

“It is a beautiful program in the worst time of the year for restaurant owners, January and February,” Chris Christodoulou said.

Christodoulou initially participat-

ed to expose his then-new restaurant, Pan, on the Danforth.

He said participation brought results, with people turning into loyal customers after the promotion, even referring families and friends.

But Christodoulou admitted that balancing his costs with the limited Winterlicious prices he can charge has been a challenge.

He has also cut his hours of operation in order to keep live performances.

He said some restaurants have difficulty performing this balancing act, and the promotion winds up doing them more harm than good.

But for Christodoulou, the advantages of increased business and visibility outweigh the disadvantages.

“What I’d like to do is to show the best I can do, not cutting corners,” he said. “It’s the best way to

make the Pan on top

of their list.”

Sam Scanga agrees. The owner of Lolita’s Lust said the rules would have allowed him to charge \$35 for dinner, but he opted for a lower price just to introduce his meals to more people.

He stressed the festival’s value as a great marketing strategy and said that he even sees an increase among diners from outside the GTA — including celebrities like Nicholas Cage and other members of Francis Ford Coppola’s family.

For George Markakos, proprietor of Factory Girl, Winterlicious is an opportunity to raise awareness of his establishment as more than a nighttime pub, but also as a lunchtime restaurant.

Like his fellow restaurateurs, Markakos said there are some issues with Winterlicious and its warmer-weather counterpart, Summerlicious — like the rules around price limits and stiffer competition from the increasing number of restaurants allowed to participate.

But they added that the city has been responsive to feedback, and Christodoulou praised the promotion’s contribution to keeping Greektown and the Danforth lively.

He said it has been beneficial for employees and local restaurant suppliers as well, because owners tend to hire more people and buy more provisions during the two weeks.



Seniors enjoy Chinese New Year celebrations

By EVAN DE SOUZA
The Observer

The Chinese New Year began on Jan. 23, but that didn’t stop a roomful of Chinese-Canadian senior citizens from getting a two-day head start on celebrations at the Flemingdon Park branch of the public library.

“Chinese New Year means new beginnings. It means best wishes for the whole year: best wishes for happiness, health, and prosperity,” said 66-year-old John Cheung, who immigrated to Canada 30 years ago.

The Saturday afternoon was filled with performances — as well as a traditional “erhu” performance, using an instrument known as the Chinese violin.

The event, which was sponsored by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and the Toronto Public Library, was largely organized by Tom Han.

“It’s a way to make them (Chinese immigrants) feel welcome,” Han said. “Canada is a multicultural country. Everybody from other countries present themselves in Canada. It is a part of our society.”

East York, he added, is comprised of “all different kinds of groups getting together, getting along very well, and enjoying (and) respecting each other.”

Members of the Flemingdon Park community seemed to enjoy the chance for people to gather, eat dumplings, chat, and celebrate their culture. With around 80 people in attendance, including a couple from Brampton, there was a swell of chatter and laughter as old friends reunited, and new friendships formed.

For his part, Cheung praised East York as “quite unique,” and said Canada is generally a tolerant and accepting place.

“We are lucky to be in Toronto to have all these multicultural celebrations,” he said.

EDITORIALS

Keep fighting

Toronto city councillors won a lukewarm victory when they forced the mayor's executive council to accept a 5.9-per-cent reduction to the Toronto Public Library's budget, less than the 10-per-cent cut originally demanded. This exemption saves the library from having to reduce its hours of operation, which is certainly a success, but it does not do justice to the value that Torontonians — and East Yorkers specifically — put on the library system.

With the arrival of Mayor Rob Ford, the library system, like all city services, was tasked with uncovering efficiencies which would reduce its budget by 10 per cent. The library board, however, refused to cut more than 5.9 per cent, saying that more would impact library service in too draconian a way. This compromise was ultimately accepted by the city council executive at their budget meeting on Jan. 17.

But what the compromised budget does not take into account is the diversity in areas such as East York. There are seven public library branches in East York and five more just outside its borders — which 5,000 residents visit daily. These branches serve the communities which they reside in with programs targeted for the specific needs of the area. For example, many branches in East York have large collections of books in Greek, Chinese, Hindi, Urdu and Italian. Unfortunately, cuts will be made to the collections budget of the library system-wide, and it is likely that these non-English collections will face the brunt of the impact simply because they are not as popular across the city.

Two areas in East York are designated by the city and the United Way as "priority areas" for the improvement of public services: Crescent Town and Flemingdon Park-Victoria Village — both of which are overwhelmingly populated by recent immigrants. To the residents in these areas, the libraries are likely even more vital than in the rest of East York because they provide programs such as adult literacy and free access to the Internet that assist newcomers with their integration into Canadian society. These could also face cuts, thanks to a reduction of staff.

The residents of East York should be satisfied that the library has not been forced to reduce its hours of operation, but the community should still be concerned over whether the cuts in other areas adequately take into account the needs of a community as diverse as this one.

~ Aldis Brennan

Older students left out

Last month, the provincial Liberal government launched a tuition rebate program for post-secondary students. The rebate offers a reduction on tuition costs for a select group of students (and pays for that largesse by eliminating or reducing a variety of grants and scholarships). Unfortunately, the program excludes a significant proportion of the student body at the one public post-secondary institution in East York: the Carlaw Avenue campus of Centennial College.

The tuition rebate plan was a major piece in the Liberal party's platform during the 2011 election campaign. Dalton McGuinty, the self-proclaimed "education premier," promised last fall to cut costs for post-secondary students. The current program fails to achieve this goal.

The tuition rebate program offers a 30-per-cent reduction on tuition for students within four years of high school graduation, when their families' gross income is less than \$160,000 annually. While the income restriction seems like a reasonable measure to ensure need, the age condition excludes a substantial number of students.

Centennial's East York campus is home to many post-graduate and mature students who have been out of high school for more than four years. These students will not only miss out on the tuition rebate, but will also face fewer opportunities for financial support as a result of cuts made in other areas in order to pay for the new program.

Centennial College registrar John Curtis said that with the new rebate, the provincial government will be eliminating several scholarships and grants, including the textbook and technology grant, the Queen Elizabeth II scholarship and the Ontario trust for student support. The former has been dropped completely, while the latter two will not be accepting new applicants.

Premier McGuinty claims that his tuition rebate program is designed to help young students make the transition from high school to post-secondary education and that the government simply doesn't have enough money to extend the rebate to all students.

This is not good enough for students and their families in East York. Instead, solutions that address the needs of all middle to low-income families are necessary.

"During the election, we (the NDP) proposed a province-wide freeze on tuition fees, and to eliminate interest on the provincial portion of student loans," Peter Tabuns said.

These proposals would do a better job at increasing the accessibility and affordability of college and university. East Yorkers should let their members of provincial parliament know that the Liberal government's plan is unacceptable, because it excludes too many students and families.

~ Scott Barber

COLUMN

'Kids say the darndest..'

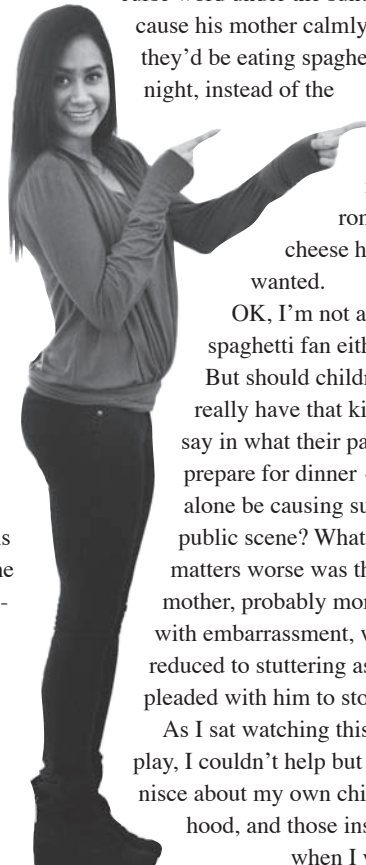
If my recent experience on the TTC is any indication, it has become the norm for children to behave exceptionally rude toward their elders. Once upon a time, in my teenage years, it amused me to see young kids behave in such a manner. But now, with a few additional years and some more maturity behind me — and after having endured the pain of babysitting — I no longer join in laughter with onlookers who find it strangely adorable to watch a child swear a blue streak.

And I predict the etiquette of future generations will recede drastically if the children of today aren't appropriately disciplined for their actions now.

The other day was the last straw. I was on the TTC with a boy who looked to be no older than six. He was bundled up in his winter coat. And whether he was overheated or a hellion by

nature, the child proceeded to throw a wild tantrum, with a side order of profanity.

He was using just about every curse word under the sun... because his mother calmly said they'd be eating spaghetti that night, instead of the



Sarah Dayal

macaroni and cheese he wanted.

OK, I'm not a big spaghetti fan either.

But should children really have that kind of say in what their parents prepare for dinner — let alone be causing such a public scene? What made matters worse was that the mother, probably mortified with embarrassment, was reduced to stuttering as she pleaded with him to stop.

As I sat watching this display, I couldn't help but reminisce about my own childhood, and those instances

when I would be punished for unruly behaviour.

Yes, my parents would sometimes smack my bottom when I got lippy and take away whatever prized possession I idolized at the time. But I learned and I learned fast. My swearing, devious questioning and smart-aleck remarks began to decline dramatically.

Ah, for the good old days, at least in the case of this tiny TTC terror.

To be disciplined while still young and impressionable can shape one's outlook in a positive way. It teaches young children to be respectful, kind and appreciative, among other wholesome characteristics.

Of course, I'm not saying that when a young child swears at you it's appropriate for a parent to fly off the handle in return, but surely a stern look and talking-to is in order.

It seems to me that we've lost some control over the behaviour of children today.

Discipline may vary, but responsible parenting demands appropriate measures when children misbehave.

If only that young boy on the TTC had gotten a glimpse into my childhood, he would have thought twice before acting up.

LRT may cause drivers problems

For drivers like myself, Eglinton Avenue is a great way to get across the middle of the city when it isn't feasible to go north or south to get to a highway. Personally, I use it to get in and out of East York quite often.

But I'm worried that I won't be able to count on my preferred route once construction begins on the TTC's Eglinton Crosstown LRT line.

The planned "light rail transit" line is supposed to go underground, and that's going to mean a lot of digging and road work. The original designs had the line sitting above ground, but after initially being scrapped and then revived, the plans for the line now have it buried.

But being underground will not only make the whole project more expensive, but require more intensive construction. Construction of that magnitude will in turn mean lane reductions and road closures... and more delays for already oppressed Toronto drivers.

The city website states that throughout the construction, it will maintain at least one lane of traffic

going both east and west by placing what it calls "decking" above the holes that will be dug to build the new line. Not exactly reassuring. I can imagine that, over the estimated five years of construction, there'll be as much upheaval above ground for motorists as below ground for construction workers.

It makes me wonder: What if the plans for the LRT had remained above ground? That would surely have required much less digging and less intensive construction generally. As a driver along Eglinton, I can only sigh and wistfully imagine what might have been.

Don't get me wrong; I love the idea of having a reliable new arm of the transit system running through the centre of the city. Once it's done, the TTC may well count me among its passengers.

But I know that if I want to get to the centre of East York from my neighbourhood, Eglinton is the only logical way to do it.

Unfortunately, it appears that for the next five years, I'll be

making friends with my GPS and waiting for the construction to finish.

Nicholas Prospero



Coxwell pipes clearing

By **BRAYDON KEDDIE**
The Observer

The end to frustration may be in sight for residents and business owners around the intersection of Coxwell Avenue and O'Connor Drive who have been dealing with the disruption of major construction for three years.

Despite repeated extensions in repairs to the massive Coxwell Sanitary Trunk Sewer, Toronto Water now says that the project will be completed within the next few months.

Construction workers originally planned to finish it last January. However glitches in the reconstruction have been putting the project's completion just out of arm's reach.

Although the delays have meant ongoing inconvenience, taking the time to fix the problem properly may determine the difference between a well-functioning sewer and a dangerous backwash.

"Remember, the reason we're doing all this work is we do know there is a damaged section several meters north of where we are," said Lou Di Gironimo, the general manager of Toronto Water. "If we went too quickly and disturbed the sewer, there's potential to cause further damage in the damaged section of the sewer already."

Gironimo blamed excess concrete, equipment problems, and most recently, ground water-infiltration, as the sources of the problems for the workers. According to business owners near the construction site, there has been some flooding over the past few months.

The owner of the neighbouring Benjamin Moore home-decorating store, Peter Scaiff, said leaking water has damaged his inventory recently, and wonders if that's connected to the reconstruction.

"I'm not ruling it out, because for 25 years there's been a considerable number of rainstorms in the past and we've had no issue," Scaiff said. "I don't know what they're doing down there, so I can't say that they're really the cause for it."

Gironimo said there are details to take care of before the work is truly finished.

"At this point, if we look at completion, we're probably about 85-90 per cent complete," he said. "We've got a lot of the work done, but we're in the tricky stages now."

Gironimo says the final connections for the sewer bypass should be completed around April.

Pitfield to lead historical society



Dennis Wu // Observer

Former councillor Jane Pitfield is the new president of the East York Historical Society.

New president plans to catalogue heritage buildings in East York

By **DENNIS WU**
The Observer

Life for historian and former municipal politician Jane Pitfield is usually busy. Now, with her appointment as president of the East York Historical Society (EYHS), she's become even busier.

The now-retired president, Margaret McRae, asked Pitfield to work with her as vice-president starting in 2010.

"It was the understanding that she was president-in-training," McRae said.

Under McRae's leadership for two years, the historical society has increased its membership from 93 to 118 and its board members from three to nine. It also added five daytime meetings a year, double its previous schedule.

While most of their meet-

ings are of a 'show and tell' nature, society members have also become more involved with the community.

Last year, they lent a hand to Gordon A. Brown Middle School with their Topham Park history project. On June 11, 2011, they collaborated with Ward 29 Bikes to establish a historical bicycle tour.

Membership and activities may have increased, but the job of local, historical fact gathering is still sometimes difficult, McRae said.

"When I moved here 30 years ago, I had neighbours who were in their 90s who knew everything about the history — but they've all died off now," McRae said.

"We're younger people that don't have the same memories. Somebody has to resurrect it so they can pass it on to the younger generation, so they know what their community's origins were."

McRae also expressed her interest in creating some sort of central depository to store all of the information that the society has gathered.

"One of the things I would like to have is an East York archives," she said. "We have an abundance of maps, pictures, letters and memorabilia but we lack the funding to house all of it."

For Pitfield, she said she hopes to continue the momentum that McRae has established, but she also has some ideas of her own.

"We haven't done an inventory of East York to determine how many historical buildings we have that would be considered worthy of plaques, so we need to make a list," Pitfield said. "I think it would be of great interest if we're able to say that a certain place was of historical significance."

Pitfield said she is fascinated by the East York community's sense of pride, even more than a decade after amalgamation.

"I feel very fortunate to have the chance to be involved," she said of her assumption of the presidency.

"I consider any historical work time well-spent."

Historical home of Agnes Macphail not historical enough for councillors

Fans of celebrated politician wait for historical society plaque

By **SHAUN THOMPSON**
The Observer

Some residents of Leaside and members of the Agnes Macphail Recognition Committee say they're frustrated that the city isn't moving faster to designate the Macphail home on Donnegal Drive as a heritage site.

At the North York Community Council meeting on Jan. 10, councillors agreed to put the home on Toronto's list of potential heritage properties.

However, they declined to

specifically endorse a heritage designation for the house.

The house is at 2 Donnegal Dr., located at the corner of Millwood Road, in the Bayview-Eglinton area.

Besides being a good example of modern architecture, it was home to East York's most storied provincial and federal politician.

Agnes Macphail was a leader and pioneer on the forefront of women's issues. She helped lead the way in the fight for old-age pensions, farmer's co-operatives and prison reform.

The struggle for recognition of her home has been ongoing for more than a decade, since East York politician and historian Jane

Pitfield proposed a plaque for the home.

Despite an initial agreement with the homeowners at the time, the plaque never came to be.

Pitfield is now president of the East York Historical Society, and the plaque project has been reinvigorated.

The homeowners have contributed \$500 of the projected \$1,500 cost, and Pitfield says she's hoping for installation in this coming spring.

Regardless, the heritage designation remains an issue. Backers hope that city council will decide in their favour — perhaps as soon as this coming Monday's council meeting.

However, without an endorsement from local councillors, they say the likelihood of an approval for designation remains questionable.

And there's some question about the homeowners' acceptance of municipal heritage designation.

"Even if it is decided at city council that the house will be designated,

the owners can still appeal," Lorna Krawchuk, chairperson of the Agnes Macphail Recognition Committee said. "There is a conservation board that they can appeal to."

As far as Krawchuk is concerned, the choice is clear when it comes to Macphail and her house. "The only home she ever owned as an adult, is this house. When she was an MP she

ended up giving her money to people who she thought needed it more than she did so she never could afford to buy a house," Krawchuk said.

HISTORICAL FACTS

- Agnes Macphail was the first woman to be elected to Parliament in 1921
- She was the first female Canadian delegate sent to the League of Nations in 1929
- She was East York MPP from 1948-1951
- She was responsible for Ontario's first equal-pay legislation

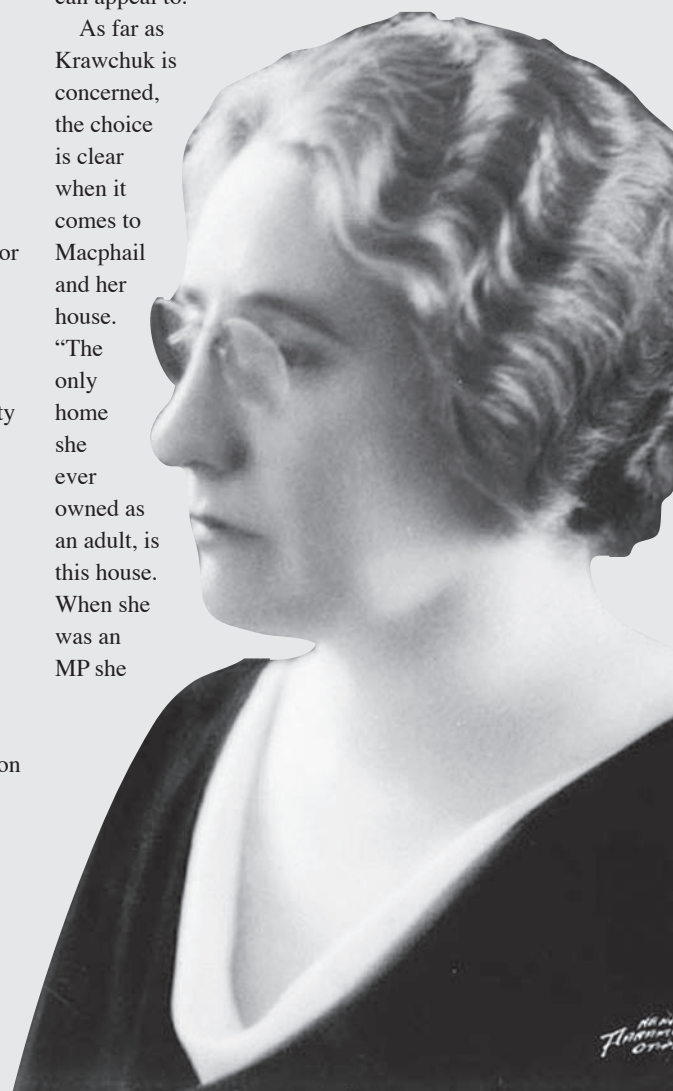




Photo courtesy of Fotolia

Is your child ready to be HOME ALONE?

By **CORIANDE LAWRENCE**
The Observer

In the 1990 film *Home Alone*, Macaulay Culkin portrayed an eight-year-old boy named Kevin who is mistakenly left on his own during his family's Christmas vacation. The film is one of the highest-grossing comedies ever, but for Toronto Public Health, children being left alone at home is no laughing matter.

So the department, in collaboration with the Leaside branch of the Toronto Public Library, held a two-hour "At Home Alone" workshop on Jan. 9 at the library. It was attended by local

parents and their children.

The theme of the workshop was "five easy steps to independence." These steps were explained using the acronym ALONE: a) Assess if you are ready; b) Learn about safety; c) Organize your home; d) Negotiate terms and e) Evaluate.

Shaila Krishna, manager of the Injury Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention program at Toronto Public Health, believes parents and families are very concerned about the safety of their children as they become more independent. The program helps to develop a personal safety and injury prevention plan that meets the unique

needs of families.

"This program helps facilitate a dialogue between parents and children so that parents and children start to feel more comfortable about being home alone," she said. "Encouraging families to discuss (a plan) eases the anxiety for parents and helps to build confidence for the children."

So when can you reasonably leave your child at home alone? This is a question that must be talked over by all family members.

A starting point for the discussion could be the accompanying checklists, which were provided by Toronto Public Health.

PARENT CHECKLIST ✓

- My child knows how to contact me at my workplace.
- Arrangements have been made with a relative/neighbour for my child to contact them if needed.
- My child knows when to call 911 or the emergency number.
- My child knows what to do if someone comes to the door or calls on the phone.
- We have discussed the rules about friends visiting, watching TV and location of physical activity.

CHILD/TEEN CHECKLIST ✓

- I know how to contact my parent/guardian at work.
- I know how to contact a relative or neighbour if I need them.
- I know when to call 911 or the emergency number.
- I know what to do if someone comes to the door or calls on the phone.
- I have discussed the rules about friends visiting and watching TV.



● For more information and to see the complete questionnaire, please visit www.toronto.ca/health

NDP candidate 'honoured' to be running in Layton's riding

Greens meet this weekend, Liberals and Tories ponder byelection contenders

By **JOSHUA SPENCE**
The Observer

Craig Scott admits that he has a big challenge ahead in vying to succeed Jack Layton as MP for Toronto-Danforth.

Scott is the NDP's candidate in the forthcoming byelection in Toronto-Danforth, which covers the southwest portion of East York.

The riding's seat in the House of Commons has been vacant since Aug. 22, when MP Jack Layton — also the party's federal leader — died of cancer.

Louise Wilneff, media relations officer for Elections Canada, says a byelection call is due in the next three weeks.

"Technically, the prime minister has until Feb. 26 to call the byelection," Wilneff said, adding, "They don't usually leave it until the last month to make the call."

Reacting to his victory in the local riding association's runoff to carry the New Democrats' orange banner in the coming election campaign, Scott said he was both surprised and honoured.

"We had a short campaign which happened over the holidays and I don't think any candidate had any idea of how each was doing," he said.

Now he's turning his attention to positioning himself for the campaign to come.

But so far, it's unclear who his main rival will be. The Liberals, who held Toronto-Danforth from 1998 until 2004, haven't announced a candidate to compete with Scott. Published reports say that the party offered its Toronto-Danforth candidacy this time to George Smitherman, the former provincial Liberal cabinet minister and Toronto mayoral candidate. But Smitherman declined.

The Conservatives haven't announced a candidate either. They traditionally poll poorly in the riding. The Green Party is holding its nomination meeting this Sunday, Feb. 5, at the Riverdale library branch. There are three candidates vying to carry the Green banner into the byelection campaign: Emma Richardson, Ann Peel and Adriana Mugnatto-Hamu.

As for New Democrat Scott, a law professor at the Osgoode Hall Law School of York University, "I have a big responsibility in replacing Jack Layton, but I am up to the challenge," he said.

"People in this riding have given their trust to Jack for several years and now I am going to have to try and work to gain their trust in me so they will in turn vote."

Gaining trust is something that Scott says he's already begun working on in various ways around the community.

"It has already started. I have been to a variety of meetings and visiting people door-to-door," he said.

"Toronto-Danforth is a strong riding for the NDP. We take seriously people's desires to know each candidate through organized meetings."

If elected MP, Scott hopes that he will be able to assist the NDP in overtaking the Tories nationally.

— With files from **Beth Ford**

■ **Craig Scott**

