



Trail-blazing Wynne

Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne makes history as Ontario's 25th premier; first woman to hold post

By DILLON HILES

The Observer

Ontario's new premier cited another trail-blazing East Yorker when she took her oath of office on Monday.

Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne invoked the memory of Agnes Macphail in her first speech as premier, following her swearing-in at Queen's Park and the introduction of her cabinet.

"She represented the accomplishments that are possible when the imposed social limitations of our times are ignored or challenged," Wynne said of Macphail.

The incoming premier — Ontario's first female premier and Canada's first openly gay one — was talking about the first woman elected to the federal House of Commons, and one of the first two women elected to the Ontario legislature.

Macphail went to Ottawa in 1921, representing the Owen Sound area. But after leaving federal politics and moving to a home on Millwood Road in East York, she was elected to the provincial legislature as the member from the riding then known as York East in 1943.

Wynne won her own historic victory at her party's leadership convention on Jan. 26, positioning herself to succeed the retiring Dalton McGuinty as leader of the governing provincial Liberals.

At a ceremony held in the legislature on Monday afternoon, she officially ascended to the role of premier when she took the oath of office.

After her swearing-in, she spoke for the first time as Ontario's 25th premier, gesturing to her new cabinet, and saying: "To me, this leadership is not about one person. It's about assembling the right team. (It's about) taking the best ideas, the noblest of ideas, and finding a practical course to put them in to action."

One of the highlights of the ceremony was a song performed by representatives of the Mohawk First Nations.

"The wolf, she is the leader," said Sylvia Maracle, the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, in explaining the song. "We work together. We cannot be alone, but the wolf is the one who creates new relationships, who makes the trails, who finds fresh water, and renews us that we might be magnificent."

Diversity was another thrust of Wynne's speech.

"Our individual dreams may be articulated in English or in French or in Mohawk or in Cree or in Urdu, but they speak to a collective vision that must be celebrated and pursued," she said. "We are not removed from one another. We are bound together for a desire for a bright future."



Dillon Hiles /// Observer

Scenes from the premier's swearing-in ceremony.

East Yorkers awarded Queen's Jubilee medals

Local recipients lauded for everything from art to community service

By VIDA KORHANI
The Observer

The East York Civic Centre was an epicenter of distinction on Sunday, as 31 local people were award-

ed Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medals.

The medals are awarded for the recipients' contributions to their communities — but many of the honourees said they think their medal also represents the collective support of family and friends.

The medal program was created as a way to honour community activists and the Queen on the oc-

casional of her 60th anniversary as monarch.

At the East York ceremony on Sunday, Beaches-East York MP Matthew Kellway distributed the medals to the recipient before an audience of relatives and friends.

"These folks have medals for all sort of different things... from music to art to their service in our community," Kellway said, "but the

one thing that was common to all of them was modesty."

One of them was Helen Pearce, the chair of the Royal Canadian Legion's youth education program, which involves young people through things like contests and public speaking.

"It's a very good feeling. It makes me feel like I'm carrying on," she said.

"You get discouraged at times, especially at times when there are issues like this with the teachers and the government," she added, referring to the suspension of public school extracurriculars. "But I still have kids coming out for the public speaking Sunday. So I've done something to help them out."

Victoria Nolan, another winner,

■ See QUEEN'S, page 9

POLICE BRIEFS

Suspect flees to Philippines

Police are preparing extradition paperwork in the hope that their suspect in the murder of an elderly Wynford Drive woman will be returned from the Philippines, where they believe he has fled. The victim was Manijeh Bostani-Khamsi, 78, who had hired Fernando De Castro to clean her apartment. She was found dead in the home on Nov. 17. Police have issued a warrant for first degree murder for De Castro, and they say they're working with Filipino police and Interpol to locate him.

Crime-fighting city councillor

Councillor Janet Davis of Ward 31/Beaches-East York is being praised after scaring off two burglars who were in the process of breaking into a Danforth Avenue toy store on Feb. 2. She said one of the burglars tried to distract her while the other was entering the store through a broken glass door. But she realized their intent, yelled at them and they fled.

Couple robbed

Police are seeking five men after a 30-year-old male and his girlfriend were swarmed and robbed on Feb. 10 at 2:30 a.m. in the Danforth Avenue-Dawes Road area. The male victim was punched in the face and robbed of a diamond ring and his girlfriend was robbed of her wallet.

~ Tamar Atik



Vida Korhani /// Observer

The Scott Mission foundation held a community meeting in its new East York family centre on Jan. 31. Its goal was to answer questions and ease the concerns of local residents.

Mission: Open new family centre

Scott Mission identifies need for services here

By VIDA KORHANI
The Observer

For 72 years, the Scott Mission foundation has helped people in need. Now, the foundation has launched a new mission to start the year with a family centre based in East York.

On Jan. 31, the foundation held a community meeting in its new centre. Located at 1550 O'Connor Dr., near the intersection of O'Connor and Amsterdam Avenue, the centre is a Christian organization providing food, clothing and childcare to people who cannot afford to meet their basic needs.

"We want to help people

that are in difficult situations," said Jeff Johnson, director of Family Ministries. "That's the first and foremost; the history of the Scott Mission. Those people that are hungry or don't have clothes — that's the primary demographic."

Around 50 people from the neighbourhood gathered in the former warehouse, now a newly renovated building. Some came to express their concerns and curiosity, while others were there to show their support.

One of the major concerns the foundation addressed was the issue of safety. Many people, after looking at the Scott Mission website, were nervous about drawing the homeless into their area. However, Johnson emphasized several times throughout the meeting that the family centre has a completely different priority than its downtown shelter.

"In the downtown location, our priority focus is on the homeless. Two hundred to 400 people from off the street enjoy a hot meal everyday. Forty-five men sleep on our floor every night. Downtown, we serve the masses," he said. "However, our family centre is on a different model. We'll have no overnight programs here. And we'll have no homeless at this centre."

In addition to the parking space, the open lawn and the ease of gaining permits, members of the Scott Mission team believe the most important factor they found in this location was the demand they saw within the area.

"We see the need here," said Peter Duraisami, CEO of Scott Mission. "We see a lot of people coming downtown all the way from here. So rather than have them come to us, let's go to their community."

Councillor Janet Davis of Ward 3 also attended the meeting to show her support for the centre.

"Almost 10 per cent of Torontonians are unemployed and more than nine per cent of families are under social assistance and struggling to get by each and every day," she said. "So support for food and household goods and other services will be helpful for many families."

The family centre is scheduled to open on March 11. In the beginning, it will only be open one day a week.

"I think it will help a lot of people in the community and others from other communities with clothing and food," said Neal Sandy, a member of the East York community. "There's a lot of needy people in the city and if this centre can help them, that's great."

Non-citizens push for voting privileges

By HAWWI GUDETA
The Observer

Some people who live in East York but aren't yet Canadian citizens still want to vote in municipal elections.

And they've found a high-profile advocate in the executive director of the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, Jihad Aliweiwi.

"If you pay property taxes, if your children attend school, I think you should have a say on how the services are managed," Aliweiwi says.

"These people contribute economically, so therefore they should be a part of the composition on how the city is funded."

Voting in Canadian elections requires Canadian citizenship, but on Jan. 31, a city com-

mittee endorsed a proposal to allow permanent residents to vote in civic elections — for city council and school board. A permanent resident in Canada is a person who is not a Canadian citizen but is granted permission to work and live in the country without a time limit on their stay.

The full city council will consider the proposal in the spring. Advocates would like the change in place in time for the next municipal elections, in 2014.

Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park have high concentrations on non-citizens. In an interview, Aliweiwi said that those residents want to be able to participate in the local decision-making that affects their families. One in three



■ Leonardo Zuniga

people in Thorncliffe Park is a child between the ages of five and 13.

"I'm a permanent resident myself: officially since Aug. 2010; living in Canada since 2004," said Leonardo Zuniga, a colleague of Aliweiwi's at the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office.

"I have been civically involved and active in my com-

munity all these years."

Canada has one of the world's highest immigration rates, and in 2006, Statistics Canada estimated that four in five Canadian immigrants become citizens — with that rate is increasing.

So when it comes to those newcomers, Zuniga said, "at the end of the day, we want immigrants to be successfully integrated into our society, at least at the municipal level."

"If we recognize that immigration is a fact of life in Canada, then we must reflect that, starting with the municipal franchise," Aliweiwi added. "We need to make sure the government doesn't send the wrong message by telling these people we're not going to approve this."

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Girls' Night Out to raise funds

On Saturday, Feb. 23, the Harmony Hall Centre for Seniors is holding a "Girls' Night Out" fundraiser to support seniors and adults with physical disabilities. It will take place at Celebrations Banquet Hall, 174 Bartley Dr. Tickets are \$50 and include a three-course buffet dinner. For tickets, contact Susan at 416-414-0320 or email cadams@call-a-service.com

Reading, math tutors needed

The East York Learning Experience is looking for volunteers to help adults with reading, writing and math. Only two hours a week is required and training is included. If interested, contact the Learning Experience at 416-425-2666. Training starts Thursday, Feb. 21.

Film noir-type thriller opens

The East Side Players present *Communicating Doors*, a remake of Alan Ayckbourn's time-travelling comedy thriller inspired by film noir movies. Shows start Thursday, Feb. 21 and run until Saturday, March 9 at the Papermill Theatre, 67 Pottery Rd. Show times are 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and Sunday at 2. Tickets are \$22 for adults, \$15 for students and can be purchased online at www.eastsideplayers.ca, or by phone at 416-425-0917.

~ Thomas Morrison

Labour dispute still on 'pause'

By RADINA VENCHEVA
The Observer

There are hopeful signs that relations may be improving between Ontario public school teachers and the provincial government of the new premier, Don Valley West's Kathleen Wynne.

But in the meantime, most teachers continue to hold their finger down on what some have called "the pause button" — the suspension of teacher leadership of extracurricular activities.

It's a response to the austere contract that the Liberal government under Wynne's predecessor — Dalton McGuinty — imposed on the teachers without the usual collective bargaining.

Since provincial Liberals elected her to succeed McGuinty, Wynne has said that she won't tear up that contract, but she has also publicly acknowledged "the pain" of recent months, and two weeks ago she told a Toronto meeting of Ontario school board officials that "the process going forward is going to change. It's going to be different. We are going to restore that respectful dialogue."

But in the meantime, the pause button remains pushed, and the alienation between government and teachers has affected both parents and their children.

"Right now, talks are going on between the premier... and the heads of the teachers' unions, and there are also some talks that lawyers are having at the labour relation board," said Gerri Gershon, school trustee for Ward 13/Don Valley West.

"And while those two things are taking place, I guess we're in a status quo position — which means in most

instances teachers are not doing voluntary activities."

For parent Pierre Stehlik and his four sons, it has been a struggle all along.

"My son, who was looking forward to his first swim team competition... It was just cancelled, and they've all been cancelled since," Stehlik said.

"It's a challenge too for people who are in Grade 12. They are looking for sports, scholarships and things like that. They are going into university and now they don't have a chance of getting it."

But what Stehlik and some other parents believe is most important is that kids now don't have the same opportunity for getting academic help after school.

"As a parent, it was kind of a little difficult, because we had to make other arrangements and find daycare or find somewhere else for our kids to go," Dimitra Cotelous said.

"I understand where the teachers are coming from, and that they need to fight, and I think it's not right for the government to try and take away all of their rights. But on the other hand, it's also hard for parents to have to make other arrangements last-minute."

Trustee Gershon said that most parents are like Cotelous — patient and tolerant with both sides in the job dispute.

"But they [parents] are very, very concerned that their children might miss out, because they won't have an opportunity to go on school trips or to take parts in sports teams or clubs," Gershon added.

But another parent, David Brooks, said he sides against the teachers' unions.

"I think that these are very difficult economic times, and the union should be more realistic," he said, "and the teachers are wonderful, but the unions are in the wrong here."



■Gershon



Hasan Zahid // Observer

Taslima Sultana and Mahbubul Aziz (centre) are flanked by their children, Muhiminul (left) and Lia. The East York-area family, originally from Bangladesh, are all taking college courses for Canadian careers.

Studying a family affair

Newcomers pursue college educations at same institution in search of better life

By HASAN ZAHID
The Observer

An East York-area couple are finding that the promised land of Canada has a few qualifiers attached.

But they're trying to overcome the professional hurdles put in front of them by making college a family affair.

Mahbubul Aziz and Taslima Sultana, who immigrated to Canada from Bangladesh in 2006 and now live in the area of Danforth and Victoria Park avenue, have both entered Centennial College as mature students so that they can qualify for suitable jobs.

Since their arrival in Canada, they haven't been getting work that matches their foreign education and experience.

Aziz, who was an engineer in Bangladesh, believes the east-end college may help open doors for them.

"I'm studying computer communication and network engineering and I'm in the final semester," he said. "After completion of my study, I'm confident that I will get a job in network engineering or in system engineering."

Both Aziz and his wife, who was a teacher in Bangladesh, are on OSAP, the Ontario Student Assistance Program of financial aid. Their two children, Muhiminul and Lia, are also pursuing studies at the same college — although the family members are spread across two of Centennial's Scarborough campuses.

"I want to work as an early childhood educator. I was a school teacher back home, so I chose ECE as my future career here in Toronto," said Sultana. "I didn't start studying immediately after my coming to Canada. I took time and then I decided to study ECE."

When asked what pressing problem or hostility they faced in their new situation, both said that language has been the major problem, especially in getting a job. But while the language is a drawback for the parents, the children have not faced

the same problem. Muhiminul had English schooling back home, and Lia was an infant when she came to Canada. So English has not been a barrier for either of them. Both Lia and Muhiminul say they're happy in an environment where the whole family is working toward a better life.

Their parents agree that it's not easy to succeed in higher education — with Aziz saying that it involves "efforts and determination... to prepare for the new situation and to better personally and professionally."

Nazma Khanam, another East York resident and Centennial ECE student, is a relative of the family.

"They're a hard-working couple, studious and firm in achieving their goal," Khanam said. "They're also taking care of their children and managing household things."

For her part, Khanam is optimistic about getting a job after completing her studies

"We do not belong to a homogeneous group," Aziz said. "We can be termed differently, and that's why there are lots more challenges ahead, but we hope to overcome the hurdles."

Local book publisher turns an 'e-mirror' on the industry



Melissa LoParco // Observer

By MELISSA LoPARCO
The Observer

Our knowledge of the world of publishing is usually based on images conjured from things we've seen on the Internet or in movies. But what does it actually entail?

Centennial College Press (CCP), a company that publishes college textbooks, has developed a new e-book series delving into the very industry that it's a part of.

"There's a huge divide between these really rigorous academic, statistically based studies of the industry and very anecdotal, personal sort of memoir experiences in the publishing business," said Jeremy Lucyk, an author working through CCP. "There wasn't really much in the way of middle ground and there really wasn't

anything directed toward people who are thinking of entering the industry."

The two e-books are *A Very Brief History of the Book Publishing Industry* and *The Editorial Department*. Lucyk and his colleagues' goal is to continue publishing e-books of this variety.

Mark Stanski, editor and publisher at CCP, thinks that the lowered costs of e-books will be beneficial.

"It would be really good to offer a cheap source of information that would, to some extent, evangelize the publishing industry to a bunch of qualified people," he said.

All information will be suited for the digital world, as CCP will be producing e-books and using a blog. Another author for the series, Britanie Wilson, says

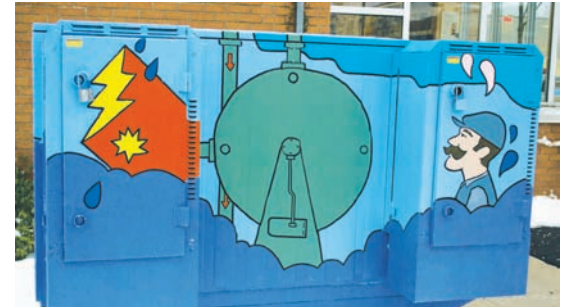
they hope to someday produce a textbook.

"Digital publishing fits this model well and allows us to release the material much more quickly and at a lower price point, so that it fits students' budgets," she said. "Our end goal is to publish one large textbook and trade publication about the industry that includes information on all of these subjects... but we haven't quite gotten that far yet."

In this new age of publishing, there have been challenges to the industry as the Internet eclipses traditional print, but Lucyk says it's not as bad as people think.

"We don't want to discourage people from publishing. We want to say, 'Yeah, there are major problems right now, but we see them as more opportunities,'" Lucyk said.

Mark Stanski of Centennial College Press hopes to give insight into the publishing world with a new e-series.



Kristin Eliason // Observer

The Danforth East Community Association recently asked eight local artists to spruce up Bell equipment boxes in the Danforth area to help beautify the community. The work on the left, located at 331 Wolverleigh Blvd., was created by Monica Wickeler. The box in the upper right photo was painted by Jennifer Rogers at East Lynn Park. Artist Greg Marshall is responsible for the box on the bottom right. It can be found at 1675 Danforth Ave.

Pop-ups popping up on Danforth

Landlords offering free space to new businesses in effort to revitalize area

By AARON NILES
The Observer

The Danforth East Community Association (DECA) is pleased with the results of its “pop-up shops” project so far, and it’s hoping that the initiative will continue to result in improvements to the Danforth strip east of Coxwell.

This month, three temporary enterprises have taken over what were empty storefronts: T-shirt printer Fa

Real Designz N Prints at 1898 Danforth Ave., Repetitions Fitness at 1803 Danforth and women’s clothier Krystle Lee at 1801.

The pop-up idea originated in Newcastle, Australia. In pop-up projects, landlords with empty storefronts hand over their space for a set period of time for free. Initially, DECA volunteers clean up the space before making it accessible for tenants. Natasha Granatstein, an executive board member of DECA, explained the process.

“We go in, paint it and clean it to make the space more viable,” she said. “In some cases, it is just scrubbing the floor and in others we have

really gone through and done serious cleanup. We have also facilitated repairs and gotten really good deals for the landlords in terms of getting repairs done. Although the landlords are giving up their space for free, they’re really getting a lot out of it.”

After the cleanup is done, DECA puts out a call for applications from potential tenants.

These tenants, ranging from artists and community non-profit enterprises to small businesses, are given the space free of charge for a small period of time.

The idea is to give the tenants an opportunity to see if it is a viable location while also attracting more foot

traffic to the commercial strip.

“Our goal is to get more activity into those empty storefronts,” Granatstein said.

“The idea is what happened in Newcastle. Within three years, all those empty storefronts became full and it had become this funky, artsy, fantastic place to visit.”

She said that, already, pop-up stores have begun to bring positive energy and change to the Danforth east of Monarch Park Avenue — which is DECA’s western limit. For instance, she said, the project’s trial run was a “roaring success”.

“The first store that we did is what the Plank Road market is now. We

transformed it. We gave it a new name, and got rid of a lot of things in the window. We completely re-organized how the store was set up and their business went up by 40 per cent,” Granatstein said.

With the success of the pop-ups, DECA plans to continue its efforts to improve the area, which has fallen into decay in places — especially compared to the trendy stretch of Danforth west of Coxwell.

“We’re planning a visioning study. We would like to do some consultation with the community in terms of what we envision for this neighbourhood, especially the Danforth commercial street,” she said.



Aaron Niles // Observer

All eyes on the ice

Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis watches as skaters pass by during her 10th annual skating party. Held on Sunday at the East York Memorial Arena, the event featured a figure skating demonstration, face-painting, prizes and cookies.

Listening to tales from the trees

By KENYA BRUCE
The Observer

Ever wondered about the life and times of that big old tree in your backyard? Pondering the histories of trees never crosses the minds of most, but just like us, each tree has a story to tell.

The East York Historical Society held its first meeting of the year on Jan. 29, with guest speaker Edith George focusing on heritage trees and community involvement.

“Trees can’t speak, so people who are embracing special trees in their areas speak for those trees,” she said.

George has travelled across Ontario speaking on the importance of heritage trees and how they can be protected. In her presentations, she touches on several requirements determining whether a tree is worthy of heritage designation.

A heritage tree is notable due to its size, form, shape, beauty, age, colour, rarity, genetic constitution or other distinctive features.

It could be a prominent community landmark or a tree associated with a historical event, person, place or period.

But most importantly, it is a tree that is identified by members of a community as deserving a heritage recognition. Heritage trees have been around for decades, or even centuries, and it is important for communities to have knowledge of them.

“I always tell a story of a tree in the

United States called the Birthing Tree,” said Jack Radecki, executive director of the Ontario Urban Forest Council.

“When the pioneers came across in the wagon trains through the open prairies and plains, there is very little shade. But there is one huge oak tree that has a big canopy full of branches. The train would stop there and the women would have their children and provide shade. It’s been there for 500 years.”

Radecki said to protect heritage trees, communities have to band together. If a tree is threatened by a certain development, the community can fight for the tree and its importance. With tool kits and presentations offered by the Ontario Urban Forest Council, the importance of trees and their stories can be highlighted.

“In Ontario we have an old sugar maple called the Comfort Maple and it dates back to the settlers of that area and the owners of the land,” he said.

To be certified, a panel of experts must evaluate potential heritage trees.

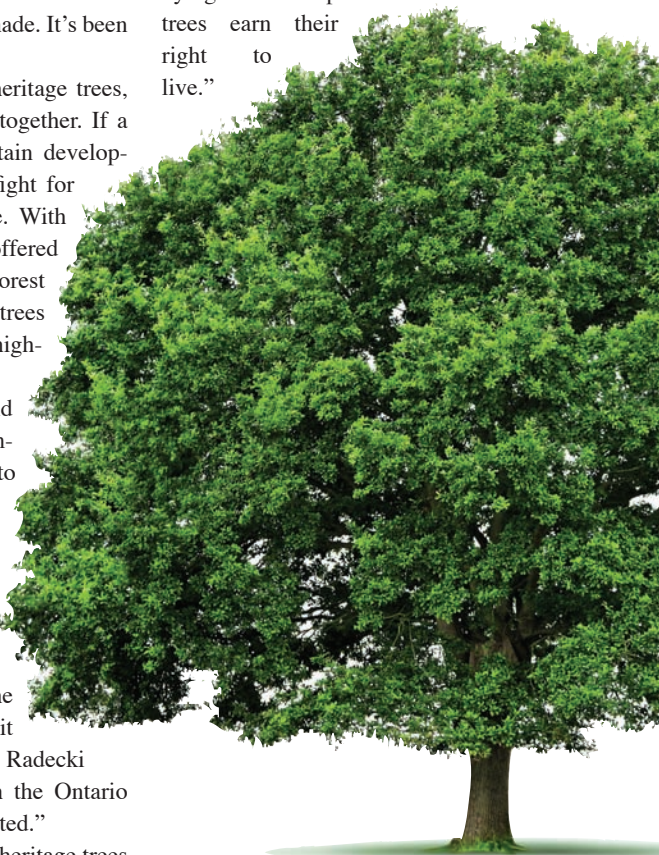
“You can’t just have the community put a plaque on it and say it’s a heritage tree,” Radecki said. “It has to go through the Ontario Heritage Act and be designated.”

For George and Radecki, heritage trees

are part of our community, life and world, representing history and providing benefits to us.

“These trees have survived the toxins in the air, water and soil. Climate change is here, that’s why we should protect them,” George said.

“They give us hope for a planet that’s dying and these special trees earn their right to live.”



THE ENVIRONMENT

Protesting Pipeline No. 9

Local activists meet to discuss plan for pipeline across Toronto

By **THERESA SPOHN**
The Observer

You may have heard of Western opposition to the proposed Keystone XL and the Northern Gateway pipelines, but it turns out Torontonians have their own pipeline to worry about.

On Feb. 7, over a dozen activists met at the Palace Restaurant on Pape Avenue to organize opposition to Pipeline No. 9. Activists are concerned about Enbridge Energy's plans to transport diluted bitumen from Alberta's oilsands across the top of the city.

The line was originally built in 1975 to move imported oil from Montreal to Sarnia for refinement. Enbridge has applied to the National Energy Board to reverse the flow in order to transport bitumen from the oilsands to Eastern Canada.

Bryan Dale, the meeting's leader, a graduate student in environmental studies at U of T and president of the local NDP riding association, said support for this fight will be broad since it impacts all Torontonians.

"If there's a spill and it got into any of the rivers it is just going to go down to Lake Ontario and affect all the people living across Toronto," he said.

The group discussed the environmental impact to Toronto's watershed if the line broke. Many referred to the 2010 Kalamazoo River spill in Michigan. The pipeline rupture of Canadian crude caused illness in the local population,



Theresa Spohn // Observer

A Pape Avenue restaurant hosted activists concerned about an Enbridge Energy plan for a pipeline across Toronto.

and the clean up is still ongoing.

Ingrid Sheriff, CEO of the Beaches-East York Green Party riding association, participated in the meeting and explained why she feels this fight is environmentally significant. "This affects the whole country and it's important to realize oil line 9 goes through areas near waterways, lake and rivers. It is an older pipeline and in the States there have been episodes with similar pipeline structures," she said.

Craig Scott, New Democrat MP for Toronto-Danforth, attended part of the meeting and spoke about how the pipeline will provide an opportunity for the city's downtown core and its suburban areas to work together.

"It is really important that the more traditional activists that tend to be located downtown are able to hook into local

communities elsewhere such as Scarborough, Rouge River and I am actually heartened that is underway," he said.

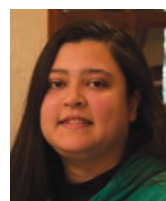
On the same evening down the 401 in Burlington, Ken Hall of Enbridge Energy gave a public presentation to approximately 40 people about the company's plans for Pipeline No. 9.

During a phone interview with the East York Observer the following day, Hall spoke of Enbridge's ongoing commitment to safety.

"We would never put any of our product in the pipeline if it was corrosive," he said.

Hall explained it is the water content and not the oil that weakens the pipeline structure.

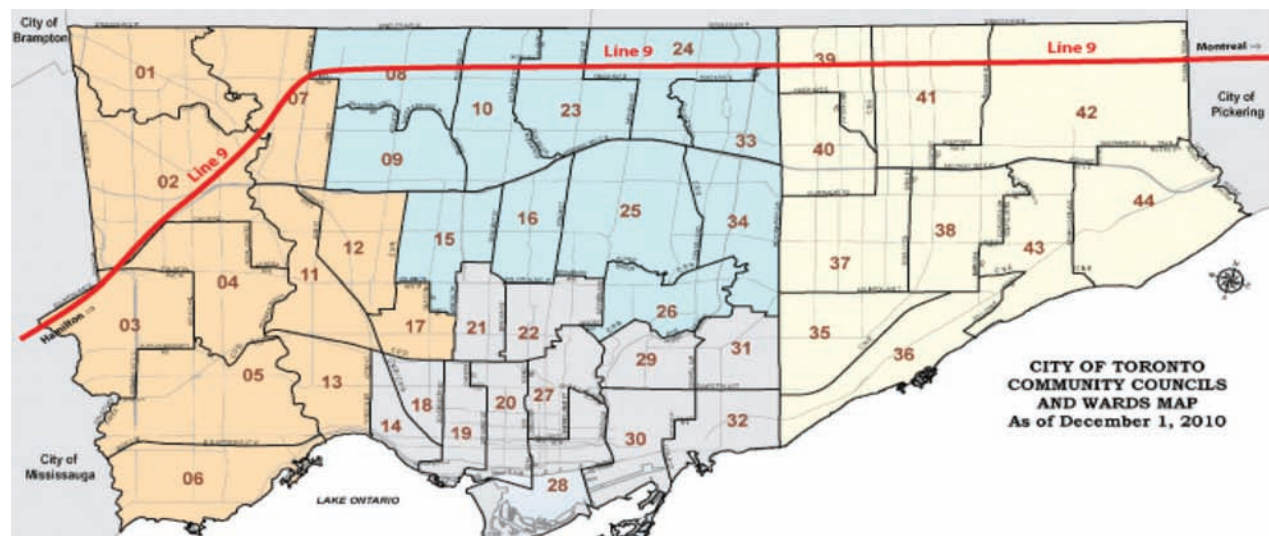
The company's standard is to limit water content to 0.5 per cent. If the water content is over that amount it has to be dewatered.



■ Sheriff



■ Scott



Courtesy of Stop Line 9: Toronto

This is a map of the route of Pipeline No. 9 through Toronto.



Vida Korhani // Observer

Some of the 31 people from the East York area displaying their new Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medals.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee recipients sparkle at ceremony

Continued from page 1

is a Canadian Paralympian. She said she would not have gotten far without her support group.

"I've been losing my sight since I was young, and so I turned to my sport to overcome the depression of losing my sight," Nolan said.

"It's been a journey from someone who's been afraid to leave the house to someone who's become a world champion and stood on the podium and had the national anthem played because of what I have accomplished."

Michael Chambers was another recipient, recognized for his work as the founder and chairperson of the 'Out of the Cold' program at St. Aiden's church, providing refuge and food to homeless people on cold winter nights.

He said his passion began when he was eight years old.

"At Christmas time, my family and I would go to the Scott Mission foundation and feed the homeless dinner. They hadn't washed or cleaned themselves so they had a peculiar unpleasant scent," Chambers said.

"My dad used to say to me, 'Michael, your mother and I don't give you what you want, we provide for you what you need. These people don't even have what they need....' And that was the beginning of my involvement — as a child."

The 31 people who were honoured with the medal came from different walks of life. But they seemed to have one thing in common, articulated by Chambers.

"The medal represents a comment made by a famous Canadian, who once said '[if it weren't] for all the volunteers in this country, the fibre of this country would fall apart.' The country is knit together by the volunteers."

Stay tuned for college's new program in music

By **RADINA VENCHEVA**
The Observer

A new live music performance series raising awareness of an upcoming music program at Centennial College's East York campus kicked off this month.

Students enjoyed listening to musician Jesse Feyen play piano the morning of Feb. 6 as they passed on their way to class.

Ramped Up For Music is an informal series taking place Wednesdays

at the Carlaw Avenue campus from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., featuring local artists and future students of the college's music program.

Feyen is the program co-ordinator. He plays the electric guitar in addition to the piano, and is currently completing his PhD in music at York University, where he works part time as a teaching assistant.

"People can stand around and listen or just walk by and have it as background music," Feyen said.

Launching this September, the pro-

gram will also include theatre and dance aspects.

"Hopefully that'll work. It's just an idea right now, but we have to see and we are excited," he said. "Centennial offers many different programs, but they've never really offered anything in the area of performing arts. And so the music program is sort of represented in the first step in that direction."

The program has been developed over the past year and a half, with final approval from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

still pending.

"We are hoping it'll get approved this month but, because we are waiting for approval, we can't start to really market the program," Feyen said.

Until then, he hopes lots of students and local artists sign up to perform as solo artists or duets.

George Makhniashvili, an art and design student at the centre, signed up to perform on Feb. 20.

"I am not taking that program," he said. "I'm going to play once but I'll try to play several times actually."

■ Feyen



Radina Vencheva // Observer

■ EDITORIALS

Ebenezer Hudak?

PC leader proposes major changes to welfare system

As East York's Kathleen Wynne, in her new capacity as premier, puts the provincial legislature back to work next week, perhaps now is a good time to revisit her opponent Tim Hudak's plan for the social assistance program in our province.

On Jan. 17, the leader of the opposition at Queen's Park outlined his plan, called: "Path To Prosperity: Welfare To Work." He says this new proposal is about helping welfare recipients find work.

"We want to reinforce in Ontario the dignity of a job," Hudak said. "To make sure that at all times, if you can work or you want to work, you have that opportunity." But this plan could lead to dramatic cuts in social assistance, similar to the 22-per-cent welfare cuts made by former Premier Mike Harris more than a decade ago.

Even Hudak's own proposal concedes that there are 230,000 children in Ontario whose families rely on social assistance. Is he considering the consequences of cuts on these children?

It's clearly not easy to find jobs in these tough economic times. Hudak acknowledges that only one third of Ontario welfare applicants have completed high school — a major obstacle to finding well-paying jobs. He also proposes a "welfare smart card," created strictly for food purchases — to ensure that the recipients of social assistance won't spend their welfare cheques on alcohol and cigarettes.

But many of these people who are on assistance are single parents who need to buy other necessities like diapers and clothing for their children. And even if his proposal does intend to divert people from assistance programs into gainful employment, just how does he intend to create those jobs and match people to them?

The Liberals' outgoing community and social services minister John Milloy may have had it right when, commenting on the Conservative proposal, he stated that going to Tim Hudak for welfare advice is like going to Kim Kardashian for tips on marriage.

As stated in the Hudak proposal, the number of people living in poverty in Ontario has increased by 300,000 over the past decade. But these new changes to the social assistance program won't turn that tide. On the contrary, under a Hudak regime, the numbers are likely to skyrocket. Overall, Hudak's welfare proposal does not take into consideration those whose limited budgets will not survive further cuts when they are already finding it difficult to support their families.

~ Bernard Toney

Fashion faux-pas

Why are media asking Wynne about wearing skirts?

In today's world, image is everything and for female politicians it can be crucial. The scrutiny of their appearance can be unrelenting. Clothes, hair and makeup become factors affecting how some people vote; it's not just positions on the issues.

On Monday, Kathleen Wynne was sworn in as Ontario's premier. Headlines remind us that this is the first time a woman has served in this capacity. Fair enough. But look past the headlines and some of the media coverage takes on a sexist undertone.

During Wynne's first press conference as premier, radio host Damn it Maurie of Toronto radio station KISS 92.5 asked Wynne about her clothes.

Many media replayed his question:

"This is the first time we could ever talk fashion with a premier," he said, "and you're an absolute lover of the pantsuit. How will you win us over, 'Wynne' us over in the fashion department? Will you mix things up a bit or are pantsuits your thing?"

Maurie's question implies that being a female politician requires a certain look. Of course, it is important to appear put-together and be presented as a professional, but that's not the issue. The issue — or issues — are these: First, why is this the first time fashion is being discussed? And why does the premier have to win Ontarians over in the fashion department?

Wynne responded to Maurie by saying she has skirts.

"Prove it," he said.

The only thing Wynne needs to prove is that she can fulfil her duties as premier. Wearing a skirt should not be a requirement.

Many challenged Maurie afterward with a simple observation along the lines of, 'You wouldn't have asked that of a male politician.' And it's true. Nobody ever asked McGuinty why he always wore a red tie, or why he might wear a particular suit.

It seems there are still some people who care more about what women wear than what they accomplish. It's either 'that outfit is too provocative' or 'that doesn't look feminine enough.' Both extremes belittle the efforts and intelligence of female professionals.

~ Nicolette Mendoza

■ COLUMNS

Queen's Park rumble

The gloves will be coming off soon, as a new season of the Ontario legislature is set to open this coming Tuesday. The new premier, Don Valley West's Kathleen Wynne, will need to do everything in her power to keep her slim Liberal minority government in power. She will need to act quickly to establish herself as a fresh Liberal premier and not a Dalton McGuinty clone.

And one thing that she can do right away to establish that is open a legislative inquiry to investigate the cancelled power plants in Liberal ridings.

The estimated costs of the cancellations in Oakville and Mississauga range from \$200 million to almost a billion dollars. Energy Minister Chris Bentley was charged with contempt for allegedly withholding documentation around the cancellations — and his successor, Bob Chiarelli, will still have to deal with the allegations.

To many, including me, it seemed that these allegations were at least partly behind the premier's decision to prorogue the legislature.

In fact, I think that McGuinty's proroguing of

Queen's Park was less about his passing the torch in hopes of creating a revitalized party and more about jumping from a sinking ship that was his Liberal government.

The two opposition parties have already demanded a public inquiry into the power plant fiasco — and they rightly want to know why the government was reluctant to hand over documents relating to the plants and the stop-work orders. And then there are the issues of the air ambulance service, Ornge.

**Thomas Morrison**

Taxpayers would like to know why they were footing the bill on lavish compensation packages and perks for Chris Mazza and other Ornge executives.

And let us not forget the continuing discontent among public school teachers over Bill 115 — the legislation imposing an austere contract on them without collective bargaining.

As the former Education Minister, Wynne may be well-suited to deal with this labour unrest. On the other hand, she has publicly stated that she's not going to overturn the legislation.

Little wonder that the Liberals find themselves in a precarious position. To save their government and avoid an election, they'll have to walk gingerly through this political minefield.

It's a tough spot to be in. Premier Wynne is an unknown to many Ontarians outside Toronto, and to stay in power, she will have to gain public trust and at least some co-operation from the opposition parties to stay in power.

Good luck, Madam Premier. Let's get ready to rumble.

A copper coin farewell

The penny has been around since 1858, and that makes it even older than our very Confederation.

Yet here we are, in 2013, and a beloved staple of Canadian pocket change and rainy-day funds is vanishing from circulation.

As a young person, I find myself asking: What's next? Do we nix the nickel, drop the dime, kick the quarter, lose the loonie and toss the toonie?

I could write euphemisms about our change all day, but seriously, the penny has been an integral part of Canadian heritage.

It's been around since we started envisioning this land as a nation unto itself.

And I worry about the goldfish in wishing wells or fountains that will now have to dodge our heavier currency when we hope for good luck.

We were able to switch

the \$20 bill over to a synthetic polymer, but we never talked about keeping the penny alive. This move pretty much runs the people who make the little plastic trays that say "Take a penny, Leave a penny" right out of business. Perhaps this is a testament to the shifting times we live in; one day

**Christian Boyer**

our descendants may look at our coins in museum display cases and wonder how people got by without digital commerce.

For now, I think that we should commemorate the passing of our copper-plated friend.

How about this: We could have a seven-foot-tall giant penny made out of pennies unveiled for Canada Day.

And in the meantime, we should donate as many as we can to charity — and we should keep a couple tucked away as hidden relics.

Perhaps in some far-off time, the penny will be sought after like lost gold, sunken at the bottom of Lake Ontario.

One thing I do know... Change jars and rainy-day funds will never be the same without our little copper-plated maple leaf mixed in.

Leaside street may become heritage district

By TICHAN TAPAMBWA
The Observer

North York Community Council is considering recognizing Leaside's Parkhurst Boulevard, from Bayview Avenue to Rumsey Road, as a heritage district.

Council adopted the motion, proposed by the Toronto Preservation Board and the North York Community Preservation Panel, on Jan. 22.

"We are pleased with the results, but with all the time between the decisions, there is an opportunity for people to oppose it," said Geoff Kettel, chair of the panel.

It all started with 68 Parkhurst Blvd.

It and other area homes built in the 1940s are threatened by significant alteration or outright demolition as owners redevelop their properties. Neighbours heard of the plans and halted construction. According to documents submitted to the North York Community Council, the renovated home would have additional storeys, changing the streetscape.

"In North Toronto there is a huge demand for bigger homes... The land value is increasing, and there's lots of money in the business," Kettel said. "But in the last 10 years, they don't add on. They want to demolish."

A home must have historical significance to be considered for heritage designation, preventing its demolition.

"For the meantime, the owner talked to the neighbours and would revise his plans," Kettel said. "Eventually they accepted."

During the same meeting, the North York council considered two other East York homes for heritage designation.

"Everything changes around us and we are supposed to accept that, but when these houses are demolished the neighbourhood never looks the same," said Lynn Dunphy, an East York resident.

Kettel agrees, and is concerned that extravagant renovations are permanently altering the character of neighbourhoods.

"When it's gone, it's gone," he said.

The motion goes before Toronto City Council on Feb. 23.



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Theresa Spohn // Observer

(L-R) Paul French of No Casino Toronto, Ward 30 councillor Paula Fletcher, Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth councillor Mary Fragedakis, Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns, economist Henry Lotin and Dr. Nigel Turner of CAMH spoke at an East York meeting on the proposed Toronto casino.

Casino would 'cannibalize' city businesses, MPP warns

By THERESA SPOHN
The Observer

Speakers at a recent casino information night warned the audience that gambling is bad business for Toronto.

Ward 29 Councillor Mary Fragedakis and Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns hosted the meeting on Feb. 7 at Don Mills United Church on O'Connor Drive.

Many details still need settling before city council holds its casino vote on April 3 and 4. There is no guarantee what the hosting fee will be if Toronto agrees to a casino, said Fragedakis, noting the amount could range from \$18 to \$100 million.

"I don't know about you, but I like to know what the price tag is," she said.

Economist Henry Lotin said the commercial casino plan is failing across North America, something casino interests lobbying Toronto are well aware of. In part, the decline results from visitors having lots of gambling options but fewer dollars to spend.

"People have ample opportunities to

gamble and less money to risk. They have reduced their casino spending over the last five years," he said.

Paul French of No Casino Toronto noted other municipalities have already said no, include Pickering, Markham, Mississauga, Cambridge, Burlington, Oakville, Barrie and Collingwood. He talked about provincial pressure on the city to have a casino built at the Toronto Convention Centre.

"OLG (Ontario Lottery and Gaming) should be changed to OMG (Oh my God). What are they thinking? Everything is just so wrong," he said.

Tabuns explained that the provincial government is pushing for a Toronto casino to shore up its falling revenues.

But American tourists are no longer coming to visit. Windsor has seen a 75-per-cent drop in cross-border tourism, and there's been a 70-per-cent drop for the province as a whole.

Tabuns said OLG's current focus is to attract an Ontario-based market of younger, urban gamblers.

He told the audience this approach

could take \$4 million out of the city's economy and would be devastating to local businesses.

"It would not build our economy. It will cannibalize the local businesses," he said. "For the Danforth, the Pape Village, Leslieville and for the downtown, this is very bad news."

Founders of No Casino Toronto, sisters Maureen and Sheila Lynnet and cousin Peggy Calvert, met with Mayor Rob Ford on Feb. 8. The trio brought their petition and letters from various resident associations with them to city hall.

The East York Observer spoke with Maureen Lynnet the day after the meeting. She felt the mayor recognized the "legitimacy of the concerns" and that "residents are speaking up."

The discussion focused on issues of city branding, possible social problems, infrastructure, parking and impacts on local business.

"The meeting was much more productive than we ever imagined," Lynnet said. "We were all Torontonians in that room."

Keeping kids out of harm's way in flu season

By JOSHUA GENEREUX
The Observer

Many people worry about the flu at this time of year and protecting their children from the virus is a top priority for parents.

Influenza is one of the most common viruses — and is, unfortunately, very easy to catch. This is especially the case among young children, who may contract the flu from other kids at daycare or in school.

For Kimberly Tamar, daycare supervisor at Childspace Daycare — which has three locations along East York's southern border — dealing with children who have the flu is a serious matter, handled on a strictly regulated basis.

"We look for symptoms of illness in the child, common traits of the flu such as fever, flushness, sweating and look at the child's temperament to see if they are acting themselves," she said.

And if flu is suspected?

"We call the parents; the parents have one hour to pick up their child. The child is then put into a separate office with a staff member and waits to be picked up by their parents," Tamar said.

"Then, at an appropriate time we would separate all the children from the toys and use a disinfectant and clean them before the children can play with them again."

Tamar also has words of advice for parents of young children during flu season.

"Treat your kids like you would yourself," she said. "If you feel sick and you want to stay at home, keep your kids at home when they are sick too. Keeping your child at home when your child is sick prevents the spread of germs and illnesses to other children."

Many Torontonians opt for a flu vaccine shot to avoid catching the virus.

"The flu vaccine is between 45- to 65-per-cent effective, but the effectiveness of the vaccine varies from person to person regarding the individual's immune system and their response to the vaccine," said Laona Houle, a nurse manager at the Albany Medical Clinic on Broadview Avenue, at East York's southwest corner. "Everyone is different."



Joshua Genereux // Observer

Pat Costello, director of Childspace DayCare (left) and supervisor Kimberly Tamar say they're ready to tackle the flu.

■ FAMILY DAY



Tarah Bleier // Observer

The Weston Family Innovation Centre, located in the Ontario Science Centre, is the venue for a number of activities to celebrate Family Day in East York.

Family Day means fun in East York

JUST THE FACTS

■ Family Day was initiated by the government of then-premier Dalton McGuinty in 2008

■ It was intended to provide a respite for winter-weary parents and children

■ Provinces celebrating the event include Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia

■ In Ontario, Family Day is celebrated on the third Monday in February

What's on the local menu? Everything from dissecting owl pellets to stilt-walking

By **TARAH BLEIER**
The Observer

Looking for something fun to do with your loved ones this Family Day long weekend? East York has a number of activities for you to choose from, and there's no better place to start than the Ontario Science Centre.

This year, the centre is offering several ongoing, family-friendly, interactive events.

Fizzical Fizzicks is an exploration of the science behind juggling, stilt-walking and unicycling.

Tricks with yo-yos, hula hoops and pogo sticks will also be revealed.

Cosmic Journeys takes visitors on a trip through the Milky Way and is perfect

for the enthusiastic space fan.

Jungle Tim, a live animal showcase, introduces reptiles from across Ontario and the world to amateur zoologists.

The science centre is also offering events specifically for the Family Day weekend.

These include Project FeederWatch on Saturday, Feb. 16 at 11:30 a.m., where participants can follow winter-long bird surveys across North America.

A host will lead guests in identifying and tallying which birds have visited the centre's feeders.

Participants will also learn about bird populations and their migration patterns.

Creative Science Sunday: Music and Technology FunLabs take place on Sunday, Feb. 17.

Visitors will have an opportunity to see the science behind musical technology both old and new, learn the basics of DJ scratching and create their own electronic musical collaborations.

This event runs from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

and 3 to 4 p.m.

"The main goal is to have families have fun together. This is not a place just for kids," said Christine Crosbie, media relations officer for the centre.

"Everyone is going to find something they enjoy doing."

The centre is located at 770 Don Mills Rd.

Meanwhile, at the Todmorden Mills Heritage Site, Family Day is all about owls this year.

Participants will explore the habits of these nocturnal raptors, examining what they eat by dissecting an owl pellet. They'll also make owl-themed crafts.

Also open for perusal are the Mills' 19th-century historic homes, where guests will have a chance to sample tasty treats cooked on an open hearth.

Events run from noon to 4 p.m. The cost is \$5.31 for adults and \$3 for students, seniors and children.

Todmorden Mills is located at 67 Pottery Rd.

Limiting terms for councillors gets cool reception

That's what elections are for, Fragedakis says

By **THOMAS MORRISON**
The Observer

A proposal of term limits for municipal councillors is getting mixed reviews among the East York delegates to city hall.

The idea, being floated by Ward 32 councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon, would prevent city councillors from serving more than three terms — 12 years — in office.

It's expected to go before council at a meeting next week.

But Mary Fragedakis, representing Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth, thinks there is already an effective



■ **Fragedakis**

term limit mechanism in place: elections.

"Things have to be left up to the voters," she said.

"You effectively have term limits because you have to be re-elected every four years."

She added that council tenure is not an issue being actively brought up in her constituency.

She said that there are more important issues in front of council.

John Parker, representing Ward 26/Don Valley West, added that limits on terms would also amount to limits on experience.

"It takes some time to learn everything that goes on at city hall," he said. "It would be a shame to take someone who just learns about what happens, then take them out through a term limit."

Parker added that he personally benefited from having experienced councillors around him early in his career. And he agrees with Fragedakis that the measure would be "taking away from voters the right to decide who they want representing them."

But Parker said he would be open to discussing term limits for the mayor, because of the significant power and influence that position holds.

Challenging our beliefs about homelessness

Film-makers want to 'take the blame' off people's shoulders

By **DILLON HILES**
The Observer

Laura Sky and Cathy Crowe visited the Danforth-Coxwell library branch on Jan. 23 to shatter some stereotypes around homelessness and promote discussion on the issue.

The pair presented their documentary, Home Safe Toronto, and discussed its message with the audience.

The documentary highlighted some of the misconceptions about homeless families and family shelters.

"There is a stereotype out there," said Scott Taylor, the father of one family portrayed in the film, "and the thing about it is you can't change it. It's like a stigma, and that is something I'm going to take a long time to get over."

Sky and Crowe worked on the video — part of a



Dillon Hiles // Observer

Laura Sky and Cathy Crowe are the creators of Home Safe Toronto.

three-city series — hoping to change that misperception.

"I certainly wanted us to be able to do something to take the blame off of some people's shoulders, and to challenge the stereotypes," said Sky, "and hopefully connect (those) watching the film with the needs of the people."

Sky said she thinks the federal government

could do more to assist with the issues that her documentary raises.

"I'm prepared to pay extra taxes so people can have housing, so people can have health care, so they can have daycare, absolutely," she said. "It's part of my responsibility."

During the discussion, a woman in the audience said that she was particularly surprised to see that every family in the video had a job, and that they needed only a small amount of help to get back on their feet.

This is another stereotype that Taylor and his wife touched upon in the documentary. The couple said finding a place to live is difficult because many landlords assume that because the family is currently homeless, they have no money to pay their rent.

There are three films in the Home Safe documentary series: Home Safe Calgary, Home Safe Toronto and Home Safe Hamilton.

The NDP MP for Beaches-East York, Matthew Kellway, also attended. "It is a very interesting film," he said, "and I thank you for doing it."