



East York councillors at odds over adoption of city's \$8.7B budget

By VICTORIA WELLS

East York's councillors sat at opposite ends of the voting spectrum when city council passed Toronto's 2009 operating budget last week.

While Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis voted in support of the \$8.7-billion budget, Toronto-Danforth councillor Case Ootes and Don Valley West councillor John Parker voted against the plan, which increased homeowner property taxes by four per cent.

According to Mayor David Miller, the increase adds up to an extra 25 cents a day coming out of homeowners' pockets.

Councillors Ootes and Parker said even that is too much to ask of taxpayers with a recession gripping the country, and both maintain the city is spending irresponsibly.

"Any tax increase at this point is too much, given that spending is out of control," Ootes said, "especially in this difficult economic climate, when the last thing you want to do is impose more taxes on people."

Parker agrees with Ootes's position.

"The mayor and the councillors who support him are sleepwalking into disaster," Parker said.

Davis, who sits on Miller's executive committee, said she understands her constituents are worried about the additional tax bill, but she believes it is necessary.

"I recognize any increase in taxes will be a challenge," she said. "But we need to ensure the services the community needs and wants are available."

Those services include new programs for at-risk youth, seniors and the

disabled, new programs at recreation centres and extended public library hours.

Davis said the tax increase actually works out to only 2.5 per cent, after breaks for tenants and small businesses are taken into consideration. She said the budget shifts the tax burden away from the city's apartment-dwelling residents, providing relief during the recession.

Still, the new spending plan does not sit well with Parker. He said the city should not add new programs when it cannot afford to balance the budget in the first place.

"The way I see it, the City of Toronto is a ship that's hit ice and taking on water," he said. "We can't continue to ignore reality. We're spending too much money."

Parker and Ootes voted together as part of the "Responsible Government Group," made up of 10 city councillors who classify themselves as fiscally conservative. They proposed an alternative budget that would raise homeowner taxes by only two per cent by cutting from other areas of spending. Those areas included freezing employees' and councillors' salaries and slashing their office budgets by 20 per cent.

All three East York councillors have already volunteered to freeze their own salaries.

Davis called the alternative budget a "fantasy," saying the group's proposal to freeze union staff wages in the midst of contract negotiations was inappropriate.

See BUDGET, page 8



Observer, Elana Saimovici

SCHOOL SPIRIT: Lisa Wight from East York's St. Anselm school cheers on classmates at the March 26 TCDSB Swim Invitational. (Another photo: page 4)

School board cuts leave a void for special needs

By MALLORY HENDRY

Kerry Maloney is concerned about the future. Not just her own, but East York children's as well.

Toronto's public school board voted 10-9 last month to cut funding for 150 educational assistants (EAs). Maloney is an EA at George Webster Public School on Cedarcrest Boulevard.

"I understand that with the economy changes should be made," Maloney said. "But there should be a freeze on hiring, not a cut."

Most agree that EAs provide vital services for schools. Sheila Cary-

Meagher is the trustee for Ward 16/Beaches-East York, and says that having an EA in the classroom provides an additional safeguard for students.

"When you have some problems with a shortage of teachers or a kid who's got particular learning or behavioural problems, you have this cushion of a person who can help out," Cary-Meagher said.

Cary-Meagher voted against the cut. But her colleague, Gerri Gershon, trustee



CARY-MEAGHER



GERSHON

for Ward 13/Don Valley West, reluctantly voted in favour, saying the board is just complying with government mandates.

"If there was another way, I would have supported the other way," Gershon said.

The board currently employs 700 EAs.

Until this year, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) had differentiated between 150 inner-city schools and other schools, deeming the 150 as having

special needs. More funds are poured into the higher-need schools and there are a greater number of initiatives in place aimed at helping the students.

George Webster is ranked as one of the top 75 inner-city schools by the TDSB. This means it is a "model school" for inner-city initiatives, programs that will be affected by the loss of EAs in the classroom. Maloney, who has been an EA for five years, says it's hard to see schools such as George Webster lose that crucial extra help.

"The kids have started to
See BOARD, page 8

Stefanie Rengel's other murderer pleads guilty

The man who stabbed Stefanie Rengel to death just steps from her East York home on New Year's Day 2008 entered a surprise guilty plea as the Observer went to press on Thursday.

The 19-year-old can only be identified as D.B., because he was a youth at the time of the murder. His lawyer was quoted as saying that D.B. wanted to save the Rengel family from the anguish of the trial that was scheduled for October.

Reports from the University Avenue courthouse described D.B. as sobbing in

the prisoner's box after pleading guilty to first-degree murder. The Crown says that it will seek an adult sentence.

On March 20, D.B.'s girlfriend at the time of the killing was convicted of first-degree murder for continually urging D.B. to kill the 14-year-old Stefanie, a perceived romantic rival — who lived near Denvale Road and Northdale Boulevard. The Crown also wants an adult sentence for the girlfriend, the 17-year-old "M.T." Her sentencing is scheduled for May 13.

—Observer staff

Activist speaks out against 'injustice' faced by detainee

By MONIQUE PLESSAS

An East Yorker near the middle of a legal drama involving allegations of terrorist ties and human rights violations is speaking out.

Murray Lumley, a veteran social activist, says he is concerned about stringent release conditions that he says have effectively forced a Toronto father of three back into jail.

Lumley, a seasoned advocate of social causes, says the conditions that Mohammad Mahjoub had to live under were just too difficult.

"Mohammad had to wear an ankle bracelet, he had a GPS thing that was docked at the house but he carried with him outside, he was watched by agents when he went out that followed him," Lumley said, recalling some of the conditions that Mahjoub had to abide by.

"He was not allowed to use a cellphone and could not use the computer if it was connected to the Internet."

Constant surveillance by the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA)
See STRICT, page 8

Police beat

5 suspects in home invasion

Three residents reported that at about 1:15 a.m. on Saturday, April 4, five men robbed them in their home in the area of Crescent Town Road and Victoria Park Avenue.

The victims say that the robbers, who were wearing disguises, forced their way inside, where one of them produced a handgun and ordered the victims to lie face-down. The suspects demanded cash but the victims did not co-operate. The suspects took money, hats and shoes from the premises and then fled the scene. The victims were not injured.

Police describe the first suspect as a white male. They describe the second suspect as a black male. They do not have descriptions for the other three suspects.

Armed thief strikes twice

The owner of the Goodwood Tuck Shop, located at 104 Goodwood Park Court, says his store was robbed on March 23 at about 6:30 p.m. — and again on Saturday, April 4 at about 8:30 p.m.

The victim reports that a man wearing a disguise entered the store, produced a knife and demanded cash. On one occasion, the victim gave the robber money; on the other, the robber fled empty-handed. The victim sustained no injuries.

Police describe the robber as a white male, 19-20 years old, with a thin build. If you have any information regarding these incidents, police ask that you contact 54 Division.

Disguised duo hold up shop

Police are looking for two suspects in the robbery of the Super JC Variety at 2 Secord Ave., at about 8:50 p.m. on April 2.

An employee of the store reported that two men wearing disguises entered the store and walked up to the counter. One suspect allegedly produced a handgun and demanded cash, while the second suspect went behind the counter and took cash, lottery tickets and cigarettes. The suspects fled the scene and the employee was left unharmed.

Police describe the first suspect as a black male, 20-22 years old, 5'11"-6'1", 165-174 pounds and thin. The second suspect is described as a black male, 20-22 years old, 5'8"-5'10", 150-161 pounds and thin.

—Jill Klausen

What's on

Danforth benefit concert

Experience the Great Canadian Mash Up, a musical showcase hosted by public relations students from the East York campus of Centennial College, on Wednesday, April 15, 7-10 p.m. Artists like Carmela Antonio, Jahmal Tonge from the Scarborough band The Carps, and Obie, a former Canadian Idol competitor, will perform music from various genres at Myth Restaurant and Lounge, 417 Danforth Ave. Tickets are \$10 at the door, or you can buy them in advance by e-mailing gemu.april15@gmail.com. All proceeds from the event go to The Remix Project, a youth mentorship program focusing on the recording arts, creative arts and the art of business.

Street sale extravaganza

The Topham Park Homeowners' Association is holding its 10th annual "10 Streets Street Sale" on Saturday, April 25 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Over 100 houses will participate in the event, selling furniture, clothing, electronics and more. The sale, incorporating the Westview Presbyterian Church Spring Sale, takes place on Westview Boulevard, one block east of O'Connor Drive and one block north of St. Clair Avenue. In case of rain, the sale will take place on May 2.

Mental illness awareness

Toronto East General Hospital will be hosting an information video called "Unmasking Mental Illness" on Tuesday, April 14, at 7:30 p.m. in the lecture theatre. The video, presented by the East York chapter of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, concerns schizophrenia, a chronic, treatable brain disease.

Admission is free and refreshments will be served at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Bjorn Harper at 416-481-8975 or bjorn.harper@sympatico.ca.

A perennial concern

With spring upon us, the East York Garden Club is presenting a meeting on perennials.

The organization's next meeting takes place on Thursday, April 16 at 7 p.m., and features the theme "Perennials both new and old, for sun and shade." Special guest Belinda Gallagher is the acting head of horticulture at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, and will host the event at the Stan Wadlow Community Centre, 373 Cedarvale Ave. New members are welcome. For more information, visit www.eygc.ca.

—Laura Godfrey



Meri Perra, Observer

GREAT LAKE LEASIDE: Murky green water fills a large hole in a vacant lot at the corner of Millwood and Rumsey roads in South Leaside. Neighbours are looking for a solution to their water-filled problem neighbour. The developer still hopes to sell five townhouses on the site.

'Nasty' pond worries locals

By MERI PERRA

It seems the only thing being built at the corner of Millwood and Rumsey roads right now is a whole lot of frustration.

For over a year, South Leasiders at this intersection have been living with a vacant, water-filled lot as their neighbour.

Residents say the site has been drained several times by the developer and the city, only to refill after each rainfall. The result is what resembles a small pond filled with nasty, dirty, green water and visible soil erosion. Neighbours are worried about possible damage to nearby properties and the hazardous effects the stagnant water could have on their health.

"I'm concerned about the damage to my (house's) foundation, and further erosion," said Andy Poley, who lives next to the lot.

Poley said his lawyer has sent a letter to the developer. Poley

has also communicated with the city several times about the issue. At this point, he is realistic about the best possible outcome to the problem next door.

"I think it's up to the city at this point to correct the violations," Poley said. "It'd be nice if (the lot) was all paved in, but I'm not sure if that's going to happen."

For now, Poley's prediction about paving the site seems right.

Marty Schmertz, the owner of Residential Millwood, the site's developer, said his company has drained the lot more than 25 times already. Schmertz said his company would drain the lot after the rainfall on April 5 and 6. But by late afternoon on April 8, the lot had not been drained.

Schmertz doesn't believe that paving the property is a viable option. He said the better solution is to have the property sloped, as it is, which prevents people from backing onto the

property and dumping.

"What I find is that if the site is paved, people will dump their garbage there," Schmertz said. "And then there will be mice and rats."

When asked if the city could step in and pave the lot, Michael Carey, North York's supervisor of municipal licensing and standards, was non-committal.

"I'm not saying yes or no. The situation doesn't warrant it right now," Carey said. "Ultimately the owner is responsible."

The good news for Poley is that Schmertz said his company would compensate for any potential damage to neighbouring properties.

"I don't think (Poley's) going to have any foundation damage," Schmertz said. "But any damage that could happen to his property would be repaired by us, once the basement is in."

Schmertz said the recession delayed last year's planned construction start.

All in the family at butcher shop

By CIARAN THOMPSON

Pape Village Meat and Deli shop owner Pavlo Tzompras remembers a time when his father would take him to work.

"I was always there, was always watching," Tzompras said. "It is always a privilege for when you are a young kid for your father to take you to work."

Having left the Danforth area, where he worked in restaurants for the past three years, 21-year-old Tzompras has carried on the family tradition and become a butcher.

"My godfather is a butcher, a lot of family, uncles are all butchers," he said.

Tzompras's first work experience took place in his uncle's butcher shop and like any other first job, he didn't know what to expect.

"I was a little nervous, because you don't know how it's going to go," he said. "But at the same time you think it's going to be easier because you're family or something like that, but it's not really true."

Despite the tough treatment from his boss, Tzompras grew fond of the job and knew this wouldn't be the last time he would be involved in the business.

"I saw myself working in



PAVLO TZOMPRAS
Carrying on family tradition

the industry.... When you are growing up, your parents always want what is best for you," he said. "My father always told me to go work with your uncle. From the first day I ever did the job I always enjoyed it."

Born and raised in East York, Tzompras followed his instincts and decided to reopen the business that his father once owned.

"When I saw the place, I said to myself, 'Here's my chance to get something going for myself,'" he said.

But worrying about what the competitors are doing is not something that troubles Tzompras too much.

"I try to just stay focused on my store. I want to try and make sure that I always have product; just concentrate on my business and get everything going," he said.

Getting the store on its feet was a bit of challenge, but members of Tzompras's family were willing to give their support.

"I've gotten a lot of help from my uncles and aunts. A couple of my uncles are in construction, helping me fix it up and stuff so I've been working really hard on that," he said.

In starting a business like this, Tzompras realizes that some people from the area might be wary of a young shopkeeper.

"A lot of the older people in the area, they see such a young guy in business, they are kind of nervous I guess," he said. "At the same time, my father was in the industry for so many years. People know me from the area here where I grew up."

His father is still offering his guidance today.

"I have gotten a lot of support from my dad," he said. "He taught me a lot and I'm thankful for that. I kind of feel that I have to live up to his potential, but at the same time we all decide our own. As long as I work hard I think he'll be happy."

Healthy living is key to youthful vibrance

By CAROLINE GEORGE

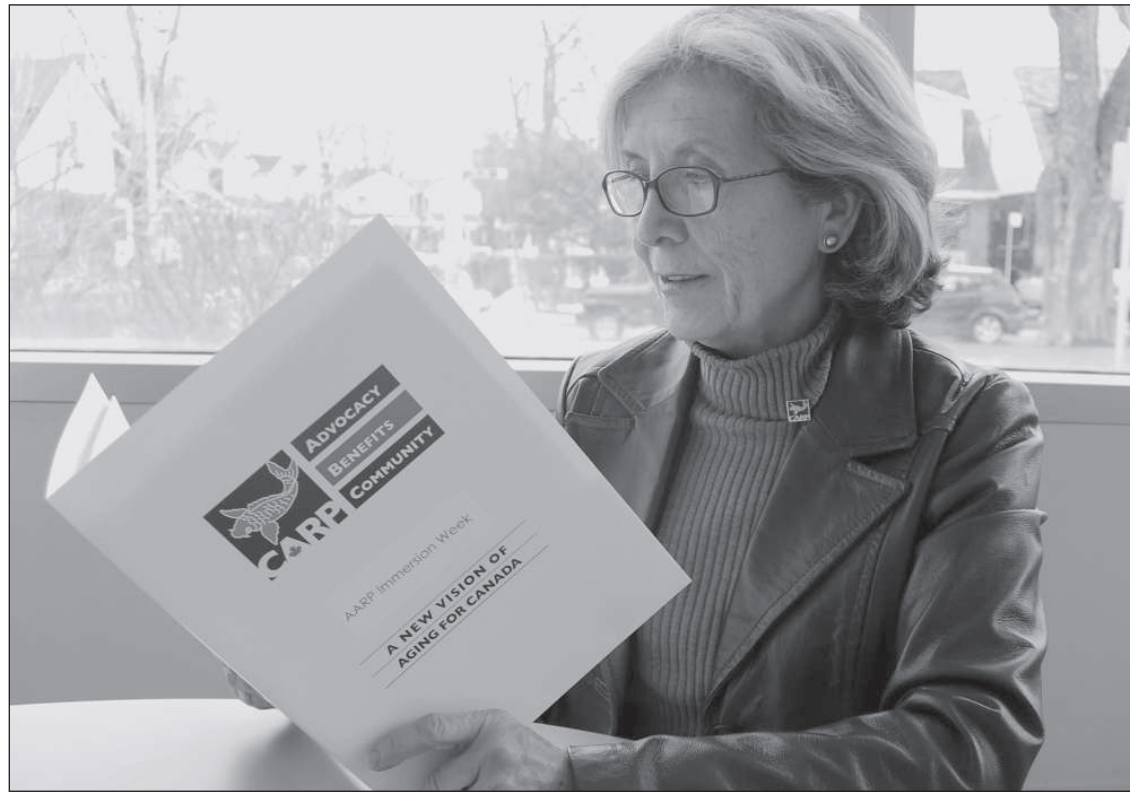
Growing old is inevitable, but accepting it can be tough.

Judy Batay, a local journalist and member of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP, now promoting itself as "Canada's Association for the 50-Plus") wants people to understand that age is a number, not a lifestyle — and hopes to convey that message through the new Toronto-Leaside chapter.

Batay, chairperson of the Leaside chapter, said people need motivation to understand the issues around aging. In particular, she hopes the introduction of the chapter will ignite others' interest in healthy living, something she has been passionate about for more than 30 years.

"You become older, but you don't have to look or feel old. You can be vibrant and active," she said.

A former cancer researcher as well, Batay became interested in CARP after her work on documentaries, interviewing researchers in health innovation about stem cell technology and rehabilitation. This prompted her to seek a platform that would help her to advocate



Observer, Caroline George

AGING REDEFINED: Judy Batay, founder and chair of the Toronto-Leaside chapter of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, reads up on the latest in aging and healthy living.

measures in preventive health care. She wanted to inform others about what it means to age

without resorting to the traditional manufactured supplements and dietary aides.

"This healthy lifestyle that doctors tell you to have is now provided by the diet industry and

food industry," she said. "This is what we need to change."

Ross Mayot, CARP's vice-president of community development, said the organization hopes to promote a new vision of aging through awareness of the health and rights of individuals as they mature.

"We have to make sure to break some of the stereotypes about aging — about decline, stepping aside and disengagement," he said. "That's the old image of people who retire."

To create engagement and understanding of the issue, Mayot said we need to understand aging as a whole, due to the rising life expectancy of Canadians.

"We have to adjust what's going on in society in terms of new laws, regulations, policies and attitudes to reflect the fact our planet is aging," he said.

Batay said that CARP helps its members learn that growing older doesn't mean the end of healthy living.

"You are getting older, but you don't necessarily have to succumb to it," she said.

For more information about CARP and its chapters, visit www.carp.ca

Cupboards aren't quite bare at E.Y. food banks

By ELANA SAIMOVICI

The people who run East York's food banks say they're starting to see the effects of the recession, and they expect those effects to become more pronounced.

The Agnes Macphail Food Bank and the Flemingdon Park Ministry both serve hundreds of clients per month — a number that both food banks expect to grow during the rest of the year.

According to co-ordinator Robert Meadows, the Agnes Macphail food bank, located near Main Street and Lumsden Avenue, serves 1,200-1,400 patrons a month, including people who return.

"Our numbers jumped about 10 to 15 per cent in October for 2008," Meadows said. "In December our numbers were way up, near 18 per cent."

And Meadows has noticed another interesting trend that he thinks is a direct result of the recession and job-loss.

"We were seeing a lot of people who have never used food banks before coming in — many who were just laid off, skilled tradespeople and even a couple of auto workers."

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) has reported that last year, one in five food banks did not have enough food to meet the needs of those they serve.

But that's not the case with the Flemingdon Park Ministry.

Rev. Helena Houldcroft, who runs the ministry, hasn't noticed a shortfall in food bank donations yet.

"People are very responsive," Houldcroft said. "They know this is a high-need area and they tend to still be fairly responsive because they know the need is so great."

When she first came to work at the ministry over a year ago, the food bank was serving 120-150 people per week on average; those numbers have since grown to more than 200 families a week.

Houldcroft said that the bulk of the ministry's donations

come around "special times" of the year, such as Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"This last Christmas we actually did very well," she said. "I'm assuming that I might see a decline; but so far no."

Meadows is also not worried for the time-being, but like Houldcroft, he expects to see a change within the year.

"I'm sure we're going to feel the effects of what's happening in the economy," Meadows said.

"But we've already seen changes in terms of more people who have never used the food bank before coming to the food bank, so there's more food insecurities.... I think that's going to continue"

East York food banks

Flemingdon Park Ministry

747 Don Mills Rd.
416-425-1841

Woodbine Heights Baptist Church

1171 Woodbine Ave.
416-467-1462

Agnes Macphail Food Bank

777 Lumsden Ave.
416-320-2193

For other locations, call 416-203-0050

Children star-struck by storyteller during Earth Hour

By MICHELLE NASH

With many of the lights out in the city for Earth Hour, the ability to see stars would have been impressive for this year's free Star Party at the Ontario Science Centre. Unfortunately, clouds hampered the party's stargazing — but they didn't cancel the fun.

With many attractions scheduled for the party, it was the stories of a First Nations storyteller who brought together nature and science for more than just the given hour of darkness on March 28.

The Star Party started at 8 p.m., with the lights to be turned out across the city at 8:30 p.m. Families began to arrive even earlier, and even though the main event had to be cancelled because it was overcast, that did not deter anyone from coming out to support a greener, more environmentally friendly future.

Aaron Bell, an Ojibway storyteller, started off the evening with an engaging story about the stars and nature. Bell said he was happy to see so many people turn out to the event.

"It warms my heart to see such a turnout. It gives me hope



Observer, Michelle Nash

PAINT ME STARS: Juliana Xu puts the finishing touches on a giant Earth at the Ontario Science Centre during Earth Hour. The children had a great time exploring the various outdoor exhibits.

that our teachings will help give more understanding today, for less misunderstanding in the future about what is happening to this Earth," Bell said.

As Bell told the audience his story, he used grand hand gestures and got all of the children to follow along. As the children made the hand gestures for bea-

ver and woman, they listened intently to his story.

"I tell my stories with motions and interaction as a way to slip in teachings to the children.

They don't even realize they are learning, and the stories and their meanings stick with them longer," Bell explained.

Sara Poirier, the OSC's astronomy researcher, helped organize the Star Party.

Poirier was disappointed about the cancellation of the stargazing, but added that it didn't make the event any less important.

"We planned the event, cloud or no cloud. I still think that it is going to be amazing. The kids still get to get out; they get to play and learn," Poirier said.

When asked about the science centre's choice to invite Bell for the second year in a row, she expressed pleasure in having a storyteller and science meet in the middle to show the importance of Earth Hour.

Bell's most important message from his Ojibway teachings was that what you do affects your future generations.

"Everything that I do is with my seventh generation in mind, my children's children, (and so on)," Bell said. "That is very much what we are doing here tonight, thinking about our children's children. And that gives me inspiration."



Observer, Elana Saimovich

BREAK TIME: Students of St. Anselm Catholic School take a breather between races at the Toronto Catholic schools' swim competition, held in Etobicoke on March 26: (l-r) Charlotte Biricz, Anna McGillen, Delaney Smith, Camille Tigbayan and Ashley Stewart (back to camera).

Indie band rocks out a deal

By LUKE CHAMPION

East York may not have the same indie-rock cache as Parkdale or College and Bathurst, but thanks to one band, it's getting a whole lot noisier.

Still Life Still has been making music in the Danforth and Main area for over 10 years, but 2009 is shaping up to be a year unlike others. Synth player/percussionist Josh Romaniuk and bassist Derek Paulin sat down at The Only Café at Danforth and Donlands recently to talk about their upcoming album, their signing to the Arts & Crafts label, and the year ahead.

While East York is a quick subway ride from the downtown core, their location makes them unique among their peers.

"We're a little bit isolated from

the downtown scene," Paulin said. "I think that comes out in our sound a bit."

That sound has changed over the years as line-ups shifted and tastes matured. Romaniuk, older brother of founding member and drummer Aaron Romaniuk, joined the band five years ago.

"They were poppier back then. I just made things a little noisier," he said.

The goal, creatively, is less focused on fitting into any specific category, but instead on exploring sounds that are unique.

Their sound caught the ear of indie juggernaut Kevin Drew of Broken Social Scene and the Arts & Crafts label. He signed them and co-produced their debut album.

"It's been a dream of ours for the past few years to be on Arts

& Crafts. It's an amazing label," Paulin said.

Their album — *Girls Come Too*, due out in August with an EP slated for release in June — was recorded over five days with Drew and co-producer Martin Davis Kinack.

Things are looking up for Still Life Still; success seems just around the corner. For some, the pressure could start to build, but Paulin and Romaniuk remain focused and at ease.

"Yeah, we're all really proud of the songs we have," Romaniuk added.

"I felt more pressure before, but now that we're signed and the record is done, it's just fun."

Looking ahead, the musicians are most excited about touring this summer and being able to concentrate full-time on the band.

Music gives kids a chance for change, one beat at a time

By MARIEL GOMEZ

At the end of the day, Mario Murray says changing your life for the better comes down to personal choices.

"Your own self-determination and individuality is the strongest ally you have in life," he said.

These are the qualities that Beatz to da Streetz (B2DS), a youth-driven non-profit organization, aims to foster. The program, which focuses on urban arts, started at Touchstone Youth Centre, an East York emergency shelter for homeless youth.

Since its creation in January 2005, B2DS has been helping to create change in young people's lives. And Murray, whose stage name is The Voyce, should know.

Before he became the operations co-ordinator, a position he's held for the last two years, Murray was working minimum-wage jobs and trying to transition out of what he calls "a rough situation."

B2DS has a mandate of working predominantly with past and present participants of the shelter system, other street-involved youth and those interested in hip hop music.

Murray's good friend, Joseph Samai, was attending the 15-week program and told him about it. The first class Murray attended left a lasting impression on him.

"It was amazing," he said. "I came there and just saw a room full of people like, these are all artists."

Murray says since participating in the program, he's grown leaps and bounds as a person. When B2DS founder Gwyn Wansbrough had to leave to go to Europe, a co-ordinator position came up and she suggested he apply.

He got the job and now organizes everything from doing outreach in the community to planning out the 15-week program, which covers topics like music history, team-building, music business and lessons to improve their crafts — rapping, singing,

spoken word and music production.

The end result is a showcase where he or she can perform to the public, as well as friends and family.

A new B2DS intake begins mid-to-late April. Murray and his team are now doing outreach in community shelters as well as some alternative schools. The program relies heavily on outreach and word-of-mouth to bring people in.

Murray would like to see B2DS create partnerships with the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation to increase public awareness about their organization.

As B2DS has grown, the classes have moved from being taught in the basement at Touchstone Youth Centre to Centennial College's Centre for Creative Communications in East York.

Murray says Wansbrough refers to B2DS as a springboard for "whatever else you want to do in life." He believes that vision still remains.

Murray says the common thread between the youth is they all want to get somewhere in life.

"They've gone through really tough times and been able to start to see the light," he said. "It's sort of like they were sinking and were like, 'I gotta do something.'"

And why hip hop?

"It was chosen specifically because it has the widest reach amongst young people," Murray said. "That's just the culture they identify with."

Working with people on such a personal level and knowing their struggles, Murray feels like he's always in crisis, and not every situation turns out the way he'd like it to. But he sees the joy the B2DS program brings to their lives.

"The whole reason we're doing this is for you to be comfortable in your own skin. And you being comfortable in your own skin is powerful, more than anything else."

Garden fresh herbs add flavour to life and food

By SABA TAYE

This spring don't throw rosemary, sage and thyme stems away.

Yvonne Tremblay, owner of Quisine-Food, Marketing and Nutrition, a recipe developer for major food companies and marketing groups, suggests putting them on hot charcoals while barbecuing for more flavourful meats.

"It's delicious and the smell drives the neighbours crazy," Tremblay said at a March workshop of the Leaside Garden Society.

The event, Cooking and Tasting with Herbs, was held at the Leaside library branch.

She taught gardeners how to grow, store and handle herbs. The two-hour workshop paused for a 20-minute intermission and tasting of different recipes flavoured with herbs.

The samples consisted of a couscous with dill and chickpea salad, bruschetta mini pastry

cups flavoured with oregano, basil and parsley, and a parsley sour cream dip served with a side of celery and carrots.

Tremblay says all woody herbs

'It's delicious and the smell drives the neighbours crazy'

—Yvonne Tremblay, owner, Quisine-Food

such as rosemary, sage and thyme should be harvested with their roots and properly stored.

"Grocery stores sell fresh herbs in these huge bundles and you always end up having to throw most of it away," she said.

"You can keep them alive a little longer. Just put them in a glass with a little water. Cover the herbs with a bag to create an

eco environment and just put it in the fridge."

Linda Wickland, a member of the Leaside Garden Society, asked Tremblay to teach the workshop after reading her latest book, *Thyme in the Kitchen: Cooking with Fresh Herbs*.

"I've grown sage and rosemary but I wanted to know how to grow different kinds of herbs and I wanted to know how to keep them year round," Wickland said.

"I'm going to try what she suggested and move them closer to my house, for protection," she said.

Garry Owen, an East York resident and visitor at the event, said the workshop made him interested in growing herbs.

"The food samples were different from what I'm used to but it was very good," Owen said.

"I'm thinking about growing some herbs. They're low-maintenance."



Observer, Saba Taye

COOKING THYME: Leaside Garden Society members put theory into practice at their workshop on herbs.



Observer, Brad Pritchard

CLEAN SWEEP: John McCaughey (left) and Tony Leung furiously polish the ice at the East York Curling Club. The Golden Age Men's League plays at the Cosburn Avenue rink on Tuesdays.

Failed Big Box proposal gets mixed reaction from East York merchants

By MICHELLE NASH

East York retailers remain divided over the March decision to block construction of a SmartCentre in Leslieville.

The Ontario Municipal Board denied the developer's application to build a set of big box stores on Eastern Avenue. Although no retail stores were named, one of the main staples for SmartCentre is Wal-Mart.

Some members of the Leslieville community had been protesting the developer's plans for months.

But merchants just to the north of Leslieville — on East York's southern border — have mixed reactions to the OMB decision.

Colin Williams, an employee of Mike's Music at Broadview and Danforth avenues, is familiar with the neighbourhood where SmartCentre wanted to build.

He said he felt that it would help clean up the area and offer better opportunities for kids.

"Growing up in that neighbourhood, I know how easy it is to fall into a bad crowd," Williams said. "A big super centre would bring jobs to the kids. That is not necessarily a bad idea."

Williams also said that any store SmartCentre offered would not necessarily take away from other businesses.

"I don't think that it would affect this store too much or other stores in that area," he said.

"All that's there are antiques shops and they are not competition for a Wal-Mart or a Future Shop that could be built in the centre."

But other retailers have different views. Marcus Campbell works for the Global

Pet Shop on the Danforth and also at the one located in the Beaches. Campbell said his store could not compete with Wal-Mart's prices for dog or cat food.

"It's not a good thing for small retail stores like this one because whatever you are selling, Wal-Mart, for example, can always be cheaper," Campbell said.

Campbell signed the petition protesting the SmartCentre proposal.

As for SmartCentre, its spokesperson, Sandra Kaiser, released a statement: "All the voices have been heard, and we lost. While disappointed, we respect the process and the board's decision."

Following the decision, SmartCentre said it has no plans at this time to pursue the development any further.

Flemingdon radio station vies for its own spot on dial

By MATTHEW COHEN

Four years after its launch, Flemo City Media continues to provide youth with skills that create opportunities for future success. At the same time, its working on its own advancement — lobbying for a space on the FM dial.

The radio station is the brainchild of Hooley McLaughlin and Alex McDonald of the Ontario Science Centre. They wanted to build a low-power transmitter capable of broadcasting throughout the Flemingdon Park community, near the science centre.

As the idea gained support from the centre, the Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) and private sponsors, the project took form as the Dennis R. Timbrell Resource Centre, formerly known as the Flemingdon Resource Centre.

The Government of Ontario put the YCF in motion in 2006 and asked Michael "Pinball" Clemons, CEO of the Toronto Argonauts, to chair it.

The YCF invests in programs that provide opportunities for youth in the 13 "priority neighbourhoods" that the city and the United Way have identified as lacking community services.

Now Flemo City Media is a reality, making it possible for youth to be trained in music production, studio engineering and web design.

Making music has been 20-year-old Michael Lee's goal since an early age. It's an aspiration shared by many talented youth in Flemingdon Park. He's been an active volunteer at Flemo City Media since the production studio's inception in November, 2005. His dedication and leadership qualities have made him the unofficial spokesperson for Flemo City Media, encouraging neighbourhood kids to make use of the opportunities available.

"If the youth come here and want to work on positive songs, then we're going to make them our priority," Lee said.

Lee utilizes skills he's gained at Flemo City Media by producing music tracks and planning production sessions for himself and other local artists.

Wardah Sardar, 15, and Abdullah Ayaz, 17, hosts of radio talk show "Flemo City Entertainment" bring their unique brand of back-and-forth banter to Flemo City Media. The duo said the organization allows them to express themselves about issues happening in their community and the world.

"Since I've started here I've gained confidence and been motivated to improve my skills," Sadar said.

Lee recognizes that Flemo City Media still faces obstacles.

"It's important to me because it started off as a dream and now it has made my dreams come true. But we need a bigger antenna and more funding. We have people with shows in mind; the only problem is we can't get it (the signal) out."

But the transmitter's power only allows the broadcasts to be heard over about 100 square feet. And that power is, in turn, regulated by Canada's broadcast authority, the CRTC.

Despite multiple attempts to turn up the signal, the organization has so far received only rejections letters.

"The other two spaces on either side of that dial have the right to deny or approve your application. This is before you get to go to the CRTC," said Flemo City Media board member Ayesha Rowe.

"Unfortunately you also have to hire a go-between (administrator) to fill out the application... which can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$7,000 each time, and for a non-profit organization, we can't keep spending that money."

East York art students show off their accomplishments

By JENNA CONTER

Fine arts students at Centennial College's East York campus can breathe a sigh of relief.

After months of hard work, their exhibition at the Hang Man Gallery opened on Thursday, April 2 to a warm reception. The 17 artists who make up the second-year class revealed their work to friends, family and curious passersby in the exhibit *Sui Generis*.

David McClyment, acting co-ordinator of the fine arts program, is proud of his students.

"I take no responsibility for this show; this is all about the fabulous students that are in the second year," McClyment said in his opening remarks.

This is the first time the class has displayed its work in a professional gallery. Ethel Augusto, one of the students displaying her pieces in her first professional gallery exhibit, didn't have to look far for her inspiration.

"I decided to do two friends (and classmates) of mine that have supported me," Augusto



Observer, Jenna Conter

FINE ART(IST): Nedal Pradhan shows her work at The Hang Man gallery on Queen Street East — the first professional exhibit for fine arts students from Centennial College's East York campus.

said. "I wanted to bring out who they are and how I perceive them to be."

Augusto, along with several other students, displayed pieces to be included in their

theses. Having gone through a difficult past year personally, Augusto utilized her talent as a gifted painter to create personal portraits of her pillars of strength.

Nehal Pradhan also stands proudly among her peers. For Pradhan, this exhibit is a chance to not only display her art, but also to tell a story. Her inspiration came from a poem

she composed, called "Sleepless Dream."

"I have always been able to write poems, but painting is another way of taking those words and making them into images," Pradhan said. "So people who can't interpret what you're writing, can when you paint it."

Pradhan remembers the effort put into this all-encompassing piece and the feeling of accomplishment that comes from displaying at a gallery.

"I went all out — in the studios, at home," Pradhan said. "This is me, so it means twice as much."

The students were not only responsible for providing artwork, but also for promoting the exhibit as part of the career development skills they are required to learn.

"One of the things that the program emphasizes is what would be called career management," McClyment said. "They need to experience promotional strategies."

Students of the program also receive training on the business side of being an artist.

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More pool closures leave school swim teams in their wake

When the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) closed many of its schools' pools last year, there was talk of shutting down more in the following year. Now that time has arrived, and how many pools or which ones will be closed remains uncertain.

But there's one thing for sure: the closure fears are hitting close to home for East Yorkers. The TDSB-led "Aquatic Working Group" recently named 24 pools that are "relatively easy to maintain" and eight pools that "could be salvaged." Then another seven pools were named as "recommended to be closed" — one of which is in East York.

The unlucky recipient of this nomination is the pool at Danforth Collegiate and Technical Institute (DCTI).

If this pool closes, the curriculum for physical education classes will have to change and the swim team will have to relocate. This will cause difficulties for scheduling practices and some programs for physically disabled kids, who will have to relocate as well.

The plan is to bus the kids to Monarch Park to use the pool there. Though it's not a long commute, this incurs extra costs. Someone — either DCTI or the school board — would have to pay for a bus, the driver and the gas.

DCTI's website lists its pool as one of the "extensive facilities" it has to offer. In fact, it's second on the list of 20. This is just the beginning of the problems the possible closure will cause.

Though the board cites cost as the main cause for having to close pools, it hardly seems worth the effect.

Extra-curricular activities will be hindered and physical education classes will be held back. On top of that, kids with physical disabilities will be forced to make the trek to a new location to be able to take part in a program they can already do at their own school.

While no one really knows for sure if the pool will be closed down, it raises questions as to the necessity of the closure. It's fair to say the pool at DCTI is not Olympic-sized, nor is it a brand-new facility — but even a modest pool is better than no pool at all.

—Shawn Star

A tale of two Easters

It was the holiest of times, it was the hardest of times.

Easter is a holy time for many, and for some, it includes 40 days of fasting or giving up something they love.

When I was growing up, kids often asked me about my "other Easter," and why I was absent on a Friday besides the "regular" Good one. I answered: because I am Greek Orthodox. It satisfied their curiosity — but they never followed up to ask what that meant and why there were different dates for the same holiday.

So here's the secret: the two Easters more often than not fall on different days because of different calendars.

This month, Easter, the movable holiday, will be this Sunday, April 12 — but for us "others," including many East York residents, it will fall on April 19.

The formula for the day Christians mark as the anniversary of the resurrection of Christ, in both cases, falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon that is on or after the vernal equinox. Sound confusing?

Well, it is. It also involves calculating the ecclesiastical versus paschal full moons, the

Cellphone use gets out of hand

You know that ringing you heard just a while ago? Yes, that one. The one you thought was in your head but really wasn't? Well, that was your newest body part: the cellphone.

Take a good look around. Cellphones and headsets connected to cellphones are attached to almost every person walking down the street.

Sometimes you might not even notice the gizmos (they come in all shapes and sizes), but it's hard to find a person these days who doesn't own one. Cellphone-free folks must be out there somewhere — but they're more and more of an oddity in this day and age.

The devices really are verging on becoming a part of human anatomy. I look around and they are in people's hands or in their pockets. I have even heard of a cellphone chip that could be placed in a person's

Alexandra

Kazia



fixed equinox and the astronomical equinox. So for now, let's just say it has to do with where the moon is, and when. Despite the fact that "East" and "West" churches both follow that method, the difference is that those dates are based on different calendars.

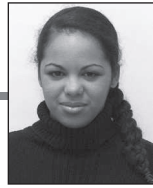
The Western church, or as my elementary school classmates would refer to it, the "regular" church — comprised of all Protestants and Catholics — uses the Gregorian calendar. The Orthodox churches (such as Greek, Russian and many others) use the older Julian calendar.

Regardless of contrasting calendars, the premise is very much the same — even moreso for those who participate in Lent ("Great Lent" for those of us who are Orthodox). Lent involves many things, but for the most part, it's the diet and other sacrifices that are largely noteworthy.

Although Catholicism origin-

Elana

Saimovici



tooth. (How crazy is that?)

But let's get serious now.

Imagine living without your cellphone. I certainly can't. It would be like living without my hand or foot. For some people, that's how bad their addiction has become.

It's the third wheel in a relationship. Instead of holding hands at the dinner table, gazing lovingly into each other's eyes, embracing time together, couples are holding onto their cellphones for dear life and gazing into the blinding light of an LCD screen.

What about people who name their cellphones? A friend of mine has named her Blackber-

ally had a strict fast in place during this time, over the years it has relaxed for many people and is often observed by giving up one thing that you love (i.e. chocolate).

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, however, Lent generally still means a vegan diet, among other things. Some of my friends are counting down to when I will be fun to go to restaurants with again.

This year marks my first attempt at following the fast for the entirety of Great Lent. What I miss the most right now is my grandmother's Easter bread and cookies. As she bakes them to give to family and neighbours, my brother and I count down the days until Easter.

Whichever way you look at it, we're all giving up something, and for the same reason, whether we're Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant.

Besides, this movable holiday is not always split apart by divisive calendars. Next year the two Easters will coincide on April 4.

That leaves only one question: why is there only one Christmas?

Well, there isn't, but that's another story.

ry "Tye."

That's cute enough. But not when it gets to this point: "Have you seen Tye? I don't know where he is! I have to find him right away."

Then we have a problem. (What's worse is that she's also thought about a last name.)

Cellphone use has gotten so bad (or good?) that LG even hosted texting championships in 2007 and 2008. The winner got a cool \$50,000 — for enduring the whole competition. I wonder if a hand massage was thrown in.

So from phone to reader: One thing is for sure, and it's that with technology evolving the way it is, cellphones aren't going anywhere for a while.

Now if you will excuse me, I have some text messages to read, some calls to return, and a game of Brick Breaker to play.

Government takes wrong approach with new-car incentives

A friend of mine has driven the same run-down beater for years.

While his piece of scrap metal doesn't grab the attention of the opposite sex like a brand-new sports car, it's dependable, rarely needing anything more than a routine tune-up and oil change. It's cheap on gas too, which helps because he's a cash-strapped student.

But now that the struggling auto industry is pushing the federal Conservatives to subsidize car-owners who trash their clunkers for a new set of wheels, my pal might seriously consider an upgrade. Too bad he can't afford it.

Car manufacturers are asking for a larger stimulus package than the \$12 billion announced in the 2009 federal budget. Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd. wants the government to offer \$3,500 to consumers who trade in a vehicle, 11 years or older, and purchase a brand new one.

There's a national vehicle

scrapage program already in place, giving car owners a \$300 credit when they dump old cars. But as the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

The economy is what's broke and in dire need of fixing — not our vehicles.

And trying to save auto workers' jobs at the risk of Canadians falling into more financial debt does not solve the problem; it simply adds to it.

So encouraging consumers to spend thousands of dollars on a new car is not just unreasonable, it's nonsensical.

Desperation is driving top-level car executives to continually use the Oliver Twist routine on Finance Minister Jim Flaherty: "Please sir, can I have some more?"

What's disconcerting is the present government might be listening to all this whining.

Instead of pushing for clean, affordable, fuel-efficient vehicle models, the Conservatives are close to handing out meal

tickets, without question or accountability, to compensate for existing fleets of unaffordable gas-guzzlers nobody's buying. It's a short-term fix, with no clear long-term solution.

Flaherty and Prime Minister Stephen Harper better start playing hardball fast.

The North American auto industry's business model needs a complete overhaul and proposing conditional stimulus packages is a good place to start. Reward manufacturers who encourage the production of hybrid, elec-

Aidan

Chafe



tric and other energy-efficient vehicles and spend money on research into carbon-free alternatives.

In 2006, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty tabled a \$2,000 tax rebate for hybrid cars. That's more of what both the industry and Canadians need: incentives

We welcome your input

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COMMENT

Spring in T.O. a warm, fuzzy feeling for former Maritimer

Moving to Toronto from another province is a little intimidating. Learning how to drive in this city is hard enough, and then you have to factor in the great probability of getting lost amid such density. (And being given directions as if you carry around a compass isn't helpful either.)

But while Toronto may have its faults, it is owed great thanks for giving this Maritimer her very first actual spring. As James Taylor told us through song, seasons follow a famous schedule of "winter, spring, summer or fall."

Our Mother Earth offers us a plethora of seasonal goodies: summer brings us radiating heat and the possibility of a romantic tanned glow; fall shows us Earth's most beautiful colours as the leaves fall; winter blankets us with snow and brings us silent nights and holy nights and eight crazy nights; and spring ends the seasonal cycle by melting the snow and giving us a taste of the

Jenna

Conter



warmer weather that summer will improve upon, starting the cycle again.

Well, at least that's how the seasons are supposed to happen.

Maybe it's climate change or just bad karma, but somehow the Maritimes never got the memo about how the seasons are supposed to unfold. In fact, as I write this, Halifax has just enjoyed its 25th snow day — and it's already April. Nowhere else in the world does the old adage, "if you don't like the weather, then just wait five minutes," hold more true than on the East Coast of Canada.

It has always been my belief that spring was merely a figment of folklore, a lie spread

through children's fairy tales. I believed that, in fact, summer would never really begin until mid-July — unless the Farmers' Almanac called for rain, and then all bets were off.

So when I came to Toronto during the tail end of summer, the notion of a real spring was far-fetched. Fall here was a letdown; the lack of trees and Technicolor foliage was sub-par in comparison to the East Coast. What leaves Toronto had fell and winter came in on time (but too soon for me). The usual suspects — freezing rain, snow and hail — checked in and made themselves comfortable.

And then, just like it's supposed to here, the snow melted (except for the giant pile near the airport) and the temperature crept into the positives.

People are finally putting their floor-length parkas in storage and beginning to don their shorts, thus announcing to cynics and skeptics everywhere: spring is here!

The popularity of healthy living makes it achievable, more fun

Smoking is no longer socially acceptable, so I quit; the media tells me to reduce my carbon footprint, so I ride my bike to work; gyms become the social capital of the city, so I join the biggest and most expensive one.

Health has become a monopoly.

Ever since Billy Blanks and his Tae Bo videos took over the sports and fitness shelves at Blockbuster, we've become hooked on working out and being "healthy" — whatever that means.

Does it refer to the annoying pang of guilt we all feel when we choose regular Pepsi instead of diet, or white bread instead of multigrain? Or is being healthy as simple as depriving ourselves of ice cream?

Low-fat, non-fat, diet, sugar-free, low-cal, organic — we've seen them all before. They are the pesky health food labels that consistently taunt us as we cruise down the aisles at the grocery store. Everything we

Allison

Werbowsky



eat has been made into these for-your-benefit weight-friendly products.

Ever since we were old enough to sit up at the dinner table, we've been told to eat our vegetables, and we all remember getting a stern slap on the wrist as we reached for the cookie jar.

And television's *Body Break* team, Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod, have been telling us this for years; why have we only just started to listen now?

It's not the celebrities we're mimicking (they're too busy getting drunk and crashing into things) and I don't think there have been any amazing medical discoveries that have recently convinced us to wise up.

Perhaps we should all thank

Lululemon for making workout gear part of our everyday attire or *Grey's Anatomy* for making the consequences of ignoring your health so in-your-face.

Exercise and healthy eating are mainstream now, and almost too fun to be "good" for us. I compare working out to broccoli and the fancy gyms and workout gear to the yummy Cheez Whiz that makes it all edible — or in this case, enjoyable.

Lifting weights in a three-storey fortress in figure-hugging yoga pants and munching on a cookie dough-flavoured protein bar sounds pretty good to me. Why wouldn't I want to join the healthy people?

So I pick up the diet Pepsi and hold it in my hand like a trophy. I gaze proudly at the tiny black writing under the "Nutritional Facts" on the side of the can: "Calories 0%," "Fat 0%."

"I am healthy," I say to myself, satisfied, yet totally oblivious to the 124 mg of harmful aspartame stewing inside it.

Science centre asks for your memories

By CONOR O BRIEN

The Ontario Science Centre wants Ontarians to delve deep into their minds for their favourite memories of the institution.

Now celebrating its 40th year, the centre is starting a "Memory Bank" online to see what people are able to dig up from their experiences at the centre over the last four decades.

Even Premier Dalton McGuinty has fond memories of the centre, and his were the first to go into the new initiative.

The premier remembers how the centre sparked his lifelong love of science.

"I recall bringing my own kids when they were young to the Science Centre and seeing in their faces that same fascination," McGuinty said in a press release.

The centre's CEO, Lesley Lewis, said that everyone has a story or an anecdote about how the centre has touched their lives.

"This is an opportunity for our visitors to share their memories online, bringing our history to life and inspiring generations for many years to come," Lewis said in statement from the centre.

Since the inception of social networking sites like Facebook

and Twitter, people have been capitalizing on the ability to reach such a wide audience.

Media relations officer Christine Crosbie said in an e-mail the centre is using these sites to gather memories and pictures from people all over the world.

"Having a Facebook public profile makes it easy for people to just type in their memories, submit a photo, or even record a YouTube-style video describing their favourite memories of the Science Centre," Crosbie said. "Anyone is welcome to mail us their photos and letters, or drop them off in person."



Observer, Lara Willis

SACRED PLANET: Parishioners at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church celebrated Earth Hour with a candlelit service on March 28. The sermon emphasized ecological responsibility.

School rankings raise question of demographics

By OMAR MOSLEH

East York Collegiate Institute's place in the recent Fraser Institute rankings may have a lot to do with student demographics, says East York school trustee Sheila Cary-Meagher.

East York Collegiate Institute (EYCI) was rated lower in academic performance than its counterparts in the report card.

The report rates schools nation-wide, measuring academic performance through means such as the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) exams, and other provincial tests over a five-year period.

EYCI rated below five out of 10. Its lowest rating was 3.9 in 2003, with the highest being 4.5 in 2006.

As of 2007, the end of the database, that grade dropped to 4.1, well under the average of 6.2.

Peter Cowley, author of the report, said that EYCI's background statistics, such as parents' average education and percentage of special needs and ESL students, were all near the national average, so there is no obvious reason for the school's performance.

"From the contextual evidence that we have, it doesn't look like East York Collegiate should be below average," Cowley said.

Leaside High School, in contrast, continuously rated above average, with a median of 8.3 over five years, a high of nine in 2004 and a low of 7.2 in 2007.

Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, the only other high school in East York included in the report, averaged six out of 10.

Sheila Cary-Meagher, trustee for Ward 16/Beaches-East York, attributed the discrepancy in academic performance to the social demographics of EYCI's catchment area.

"As an inner-city school, there is more poverty in East York Collegiate than would be prevalent at Leaside," she said.

EYCI is ranked 55 of 111 on the Toronto District School Board's Learning Opportunity Index (LOI), a measure of schools with students facing external barriers with a rank of one indicating the most challenged school. It was previously 49 on the list in 2001.

Leaside, by comparison, was ranked 110.

While Cary-Meagher pointed out that inner-city schools get additional teachers and funding from the board, she emphasized that many students don't have the help they may need outside of school — like parental involvement or even private tutoring.

"If you need tutoring in math right now, and you can't get a teacher to help you, you begin to fall behind, and it just compounds," she said.

According to her, this puts an extra strain on teachers.

"Many of the teachers do brilliant jobs, but if they had additional resources they could do an even a better job," Cary-Meagher said.

Karen Hume, principal of EYCI, declined to comment on the specific data in the report, but stated the school has been doing what it can to improve academic performance.

"There is an initiative that we are also working on school-wide; every student that is involved in EQAO testing has the opportunity to do practice tests, and we analyze that to see where there are difficulties," Hume said.

"We then focus classroom work in every subject to address issues where they might not have done as well," she said.

Gerri Gershon, trustee for Ward 13/Don Valley West, has Leaside High in her jurisdiction.

She said the area is generally more affluent. Leaside had a 2.2-per-cent higher level of parent education than EYCI. She acknowledged that extra resources could be a primary factor behind Leaside's higher academic ratings.



Observer, Davud Nicholas

ALL TOGETHER NOW: Conductor Michael Dufault and his Grade 8s from Our Lady of Lourdes school take the stage at St. Patrick Catholic Secondary School on Felstead Avenue, during the Toronto Catholic schools' music festival, running since March 26 and concluding on April 23.

Strict release conditions drive father back into custody

Cont'd. from page 1

allegedly extended to family outings as well. Lumley said the family got reprimanded on one occasion for using a pedal boat at a park because the conditions stipulated Mahjoub was not permitted to board a boat.

Mahjoub was originally detained in June 2000 under suspicion of terrorist ties and held for seven years without any official charges, under a Canadian security certificate. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that some parts of the process related to security certificates are unconstitutional, but the federal government has reworked the law to address at least some of the court's concerns and continue its detentions.

There is also a provision to deport suspects, but if Mahjoub is deported back to Egypt, he believes he will be detained and tortured.

"Why don't they just present the evidence and have an open trial?" Lumley asked.

He believes that if there hadn't been an active campaign sup-

porting Mahjoub and four other Canadian security detainees, they would have already been deported.

In 2007, a Federal Court judge ordered Mahjoub to be released on bail under strict conditions, pending a review of his case. Lumley offered a monetary surety and volunteered to act as a supervisor and to monitor Mahjoub's compliance with his conditions in order to secure his release. He provided the court with an affidavit outlining his reasons for doing so.

Lumley said that every person's human rights should be protected and has made a conscientious effort to support Mahjoub and his family.

"I thought to myself, if I was a resident in Egypt, but not a citizen and I was thrown in jail, it'd sure be nice if somebody came along and tried to defend me," Lumley said.

For two years, Lumley played an important role in the life of the Mahjoub family. His responsibilities as supervisor demanded he be available to the family

if and when the need arises.

Mahjoub's wife, Mona El Fouli, and his adult stepson, Haney El Fouli, also acted as his supervisors. Since he could not be left alone as one of the conditions, Lumley travelled to the west end of the city to supervise him when they were unable to.

'Our children are being taught by the CBSA to hate.'

—Mona El Fouli

Something as simple as one of the children's dentist appointments demanded a juggling of people and schedules to ensure the conditions of Mahjoub's release were being followed appropriately.

Lumley acted as surety and supervisor for about two years, until recently, when, he and the family say, conditions became

unbearable.

Mahjoub's wife and stepson, accompanied by Lumley, went to court on March 18 to withdraw their position as supervisors because they felt they had no other choice.

Lumley said the family decided Mahjoub was better off in jail than at home — for the children's well-being. He said the treatment from CBSA agents doubled with the strict conditions were causing extreme stress to every family member, but especially the young children in the home, who are nine and 11 years old.

He recalled what Mona El Fouli said in court when she withdrew her supervisory responsibility.

"We want to teach our children to love everybody, but what they are being taught by the way they are being treated by the CBSA is to hate somebody," she told the court.

Their withdrawal forced the court to detain Mahjoub once again and he was returned to the Kingston Immigration Hold-

ing Centre, specific to security certificate detainees.

Now that Mahjoub is back in detention, Lumley's responsibilities as surety and supervisor have ended, but he still stays in touch with Mahjoub and feels it's important to maintain a friendship with him. Lumley has spoken to him twice on the telephone and is waiting for approval by the CBSA to visit Mahjoub.

"We've become friends. I respect him very much and he's a very honourable man," he said. "In my affidavit I noted that I did not think he would do anything once released that might separate him from his kids and now I believe that more strongly than ever, having visited him a number of times over the last two years."

This is not the first time Lumley has stood up for what he believes is just.

He was first introduced to social activism back in the 1980s and has gradually become involved with various issues of importance to him.

Board cuts EA funding

Cont'd. from page 1

improve," Maloney said. "If the programs are cut, they might start to lag behind again. Especially when you see the EAs are making a difference, a good difference, it's hard to think it's all going to disappear."

While EAs who specifically help out with special needs students, such as Maloney, will be the last group affected by the cuts, it is still a concern. Maloney fears for her job, and for the fate of children who are losing their support system.

"They usually go after the kindergarten EAs but where do they think the kids with special needs go first?" Maloney asked. "That's just where it starts. Then they start going across the board."

Maloney warns that cutting EAs can become a health and safety issue. Some children are violent, some run away, and some require assistance to eat or go to the bathroom. Maloney says you need the extra help for safety reasons.

"Kids with learning disabilities are going to lose out, especially if their parents don't know how to advocate for their children," Maloney said. "They're going to fall through the cracks and be lost."

Cary-Meagher laments the loss. She says the board neglected its poorest schools up until three years ago, when it started putting more resources into them — and to see schools lose those resources now is a blow for the children. Cary-Meagher says the board has never dealt with its needy schools well, and this is a step backwards.

"Any cut that takes anything out of the city schools I'm going to oppose," she said.

Gershon feels the same way about the loss of funding, but considers the board's hands tied.

"Trustees have been entrusted to manage an amount of money given by the government responsibly and wisely," Gershon said. "So we had to make this difficult decision."



Observer, Lara Willis

GREAT EGGS-PECTATIONS: Spencer Brooks, 4, decorated Easter eggs at the Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Arts Centre on Saturday, April 4. The family workshop taught pysanky — an ancient Ukrainian batik method of painting eggs with wax designs.

Budget benefits residents: councillor

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"The so-called Responsible Government Group's proposal was totally irresponsible," she said.

In the end, the group's proposal was defeated 26-19.

Davis said despite what the other councillors say, the new operating budget is actually a good thing for Toronto's residents and still leaves them the lowest-taxed in the area.

"I think the city put forward a very prudent and responsible budget," she said. "We've reduced expenditures by \$106 million, invested in critical programs to help people during a recession and kept the lid on tax increases to make sure they remain below other municipalities."