



Mixed reviews as Kennedy rejoins school board fray

By CHRIS HIGGINS

The race to represent Ward 11 on Toronto's Catholic school board has heated up with the last-minute entry of former trustee Angela Kennedy.

In a dramatic reversal of her previous decision not to run, Kennedy filed her candidacy papers on deadline day, Sept. 10.

Kennedy had been a trustee with the Toronto Catholic District School Board for 10 years, but was found to be in violation of conflict-of-interest rules and was removed as trustee by a court order in August.

Kennedy has children working for the TCDSB and the judge found she voted on budget matters that could affect them.

But Kennedy is appealing the court's decisions, including the order to vacate her seat. And the judge didn't prohibit Kennedy from running again.

"I had a couple of weeks to think about the judge's decision," she said in an interview. "She said I wasn't prohibited from running."

"I have nothing to be ashamed about so I'm going to let the voters decide what my future will be."

The TCDSB has had a troubled last few years. It remains under provincial supervision because of budget mismanagement; trustees have been involved in expense account scandals and, most recently, conflict-of-interest convictions against Kennedy and fellow trustee Barbara Poplawski.

Kennedy's choice to run disappoints Murielle Boudreau of the Greater Toronto Catholic Parent Network.

"We are just appalled by this," Boudreau said. "Being found

guilty of conflict of interest is not a small matter.... This is just outrageous that she would think that she deserves a vote and to say she's not running and to run again and then to put in the appeal."

One of Kennedy's rivals for the Ward 11 trustee seat agrees.

Kevin Morrison says this is a critical election for the TCDSB and Kennedy's decision to run could further erode public perceptions of the board's credibility.

"People are so incredibly angry," he said. "I have been canvassing in parishes that have traditionally been strongholds of Angela's.... The tide of public opinion has turned against us. The single school advocates don't need any more ammunition, and that's what she's giving them."

Ryan Ward, another Ward 11 candidate, intends to make Kennedy's candidacy a factor in the campaign leading up to the Oct. 25 election.

"This will absolutely be an issue," he said. "It is critical that the person who serves Ward 11 exhibits the conduct that students, parents, teachers, school workers and Catholics from the ward expect."

Kennedy has a long record of service to the Catholic community — a point the judge acknowledged in her final report.

In spite of the trust issues surrounding the board and her candidacy, Kennedy rejects the criticisms of her tenure and insists voters will appreciate her past work as a trustee when they go to the polls.

"I've always been there for my schools, my students, my principals and my parents," she said.



Observer, Reinisa MacLeod

FLAMBOYANT FEATHERS: Miranda Allen, a performer with Clay & Paper Theatre, dances on stilts during the grand opening of the Evergreen Brick Works. Members of the troupe danced their way around the refurbished facility — the old Don Valley Brick Works site on Bayview Avenue near Pottery Road.

Welcome back, Brick Works

By REINISA MACLEOD

The air buzzed with excitement as Toronto's Brick Works re-opened in a celebration last weekend.

The opening, featuring a ribbon cutting Saturday and a multicultural festival Sunday, left a feeling of optimism and excitement for those in attendance.

George Dark, chairman of the board for the Evergreen Brick Works for seven years, hopes to showcase the age and history of the buildings as well as newer aspects of the project.

"We have new roofs, we have stabilized pieces of wall. We're trying to get the juxtaposition of old and new very apparent because we want people to see both simultaneously," he said.

The project also includes environmentally friendly aspects

and community events such as yoga and a skating rink in the winter. Innovation is the theme.

"That's what it's supposed to be about... for people to come and innovate, no matter how they think innovation should be done," Dark said.

Hilary Inwood has been coming to the site with her family for five years. Travelling from High Park, Inwood eagerly anticipated the opening.

"I think it's a really exciting event and I'm thrilled that Toronto is welcoming a new environmental community centre," she said. "It's a great way to maintain the heritage of the site, but also bring something new to it."

Dark hopes to make the buildings accessible to all age groups for exploration.

"That really wonderful process of exploration that a few people who are quite bold were able to do, now anybody can do," he said. "We have not touched, literally, not touched the vast majority of the inside, so you can still see the brick kilns, still see all the bits and pieces."

Although revitalization of the buildings isn't finished, Evergreen has moved in and started working on implementing a variety of different programs.

Al Yoshiki has volunteered with the Evergreen Brick Works for four years and is looking forward to the new programs.

"I'm really excited for the winter because most times, the buildings were pretty much hands off, but now there is just so much activity," he said.

See GREEN, page 2



Observer, Nastasha Alii

COMRADES-IN-ARMS: Former Ontario Conservative premier Mike Harris (left) and former Toronto mayor Mel Lastman (centre) joined outgoing East York councillor Case Ootes at his retirement dinner on Monday night at the York Reception Centre on Millwood Road. The three worked together on the implementation of the "megacity" — overcoming its unpopularity in East York.

Suitcase packed for Ootes: Ward 29 councillor retires

By LAURA GRANDE

Case Ootes can remember the exact moment when his career trajectory changed from business to politics.

"In 1988, I was sitting on the sidewalk, watching the Canada Day parade and then-mayor Dave Johnson drove by in his open convertible and yelled out that he wanted to see me," Ootes recalled. "He asked me to run for council because there was a vacancy coming up."

With an MBA from York University, Ootes was employed in a management position with Imperial Oil, Canada's largest petroleum company. That summer day in 1988, however, set in motion a 22-year career in the political forum.

Ootes, 68, announced back in January that he would be retiring from politics. Like any politician, the former councillor for Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth admits that he ran into difficulties time and again. He cites the locally unpopular amalgamation of East York and other

municipalities into the new City of Toronto in 1998 as the toughest moment of his career.

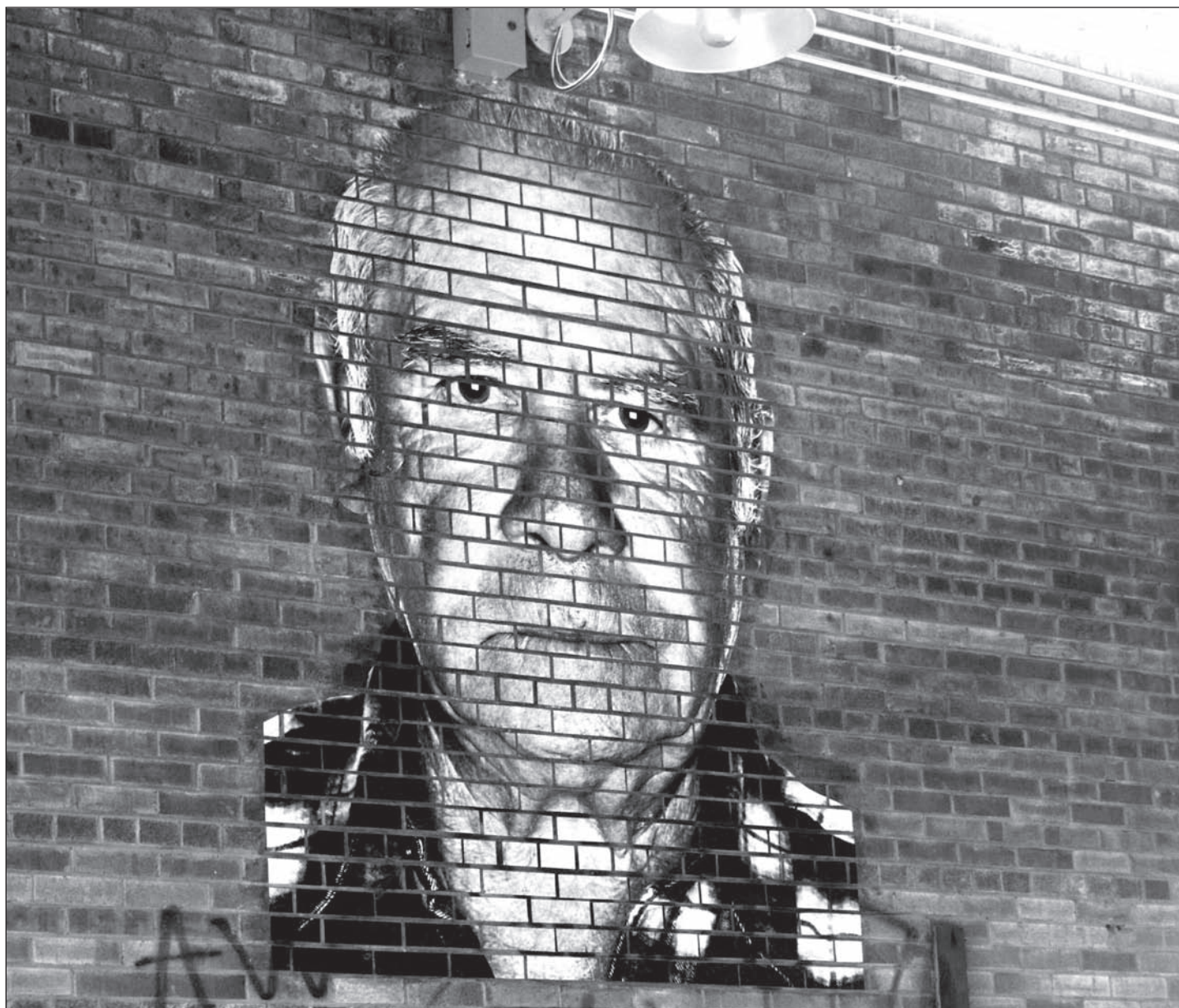
"There were problems... with the union contracts, between pensions, between all the other benefits that had to be harmonized," he said, "and the end result was that we were in constant conflict with the province."

Ootes' personal career highlight, however, was the six years he spent as deputy mayor.

"(When) we had the SARS crisis and the blackout, I took a leading role in terms of working with (then-mayor Mel Lastman)," he explained. "The mayor wasn't very good at dealing with the media, so that role fell to me which was... very satisfying to be able to play a leading role in dealing with it in a way that was positive."

Overall, Ootes felt he and Lastman balanced one another well in a delicate situation.

See RELATIONSHIP, page 7



Observer, Leticia Rodriguez

HISTORY IN GRAFFITI: Evergreen plans to keep graffiti done by ravers and merge it with new paintings of former employees of the Don Valley Brick Works.

Green future for Brick Works

By LETICIA RODRIGUEZ

It all started with a farmer, his shovel and a hole in the ground.

The Don Valley Brick Works opened in 1889 after that farmer, William Taylor, discovered clay while digging a fence post hole.

According to Anthony Westenberg, Evergreen's public relations manager, the 'Great Fire' of 1904 was when a new building code mandating the use of materials that wouldn't burn gave the Brick Works a chance to save Toronto.

With that, the Brick Works solidified its place in Toronto history.

On average, the factory made an estimated 40 million bricks a year. At its peak, it made over 60 million.

"Chances are, if you're living in a brick house in Toronto and it's a 100-year-old house, it's more in favour that it was built with bricks from Don Valley Brick Works than not," Westenberg said.

"So, it really did build the city."

Local politician Jane Pitfield also knows the Brick Works like the back of

her hand.

She says East York residents can find Don Valley bricks in their own backyards.

"Bricks were used to build whole neighbourhoods. One of them, Leaside, is built with Don Valley brick and also some of the original buildings in the industrial area of Leaside," Pitfield said.

Don Valley bricks can also be found in some of Toronto's most iconic buildings, including Maple Leaf Gardens, Massey Hall, Queen's Park and parts of Casa Loma.

In 1984, Brick Works shut down its machines and sat abandoned until 1991, when Evergreen helped the city plant trees in areas prone to flooding.

In 2002, Evergreen created a vision for an environmental wonderland.

With a few private donations, development of the new Brick Works began.

"This was a site that built the bricks for the future of Toronto," Westenberg said.

"Now the Don Valley, Evergreen Brick Works can take its place again as being

an industrial icon for the future."

The site now focuses on encouraging the community to embrace green culture.

It currently features a farmers market and a native plant nursery.

While some of the construction is still underway, the site will eventually feature an indoor ice rink, restaurant and events hall, all run on sustainable energy.

Although some residents want the site restored to its original look, Pitfield believes that Evergreen's idea is the only way to merge ancient history with a greener future.

"The best way to protect heritage is to find a new use for it. Breathe new life into it because people are not interested in just touring museums," Pitfield said.

"Now it's just a beehive of activity."

Evergreen's grand opening celebration was held on Sept. 25.

Residents of the area can now head to the Brick Works to enjoy various environmental activities that benefit the community, from both a historical and progressive outlook.

Police briefs

Houses burglarized

A Toronto man was charged with 41 offences on Sept. 16, following a three-month investigation by Toronto police into a spate of break and enters in the East York area. Police at 54 Division think a persistent burglar specifically targeted single-family homes and entered the residences during daytime hours. The charges against Drew John Kerr, 40, include 17 counts of break and enter, causing mischief under \$5,000, three counts of possession of stolen property and 17 counts of failing to comply with probation terms.

Stained glass stolen

Four large stained-glass windows have been stolen from a home that once belonged to a prominent 19th-century East York businessman. Toronto police Const. Dave Besco, the lead investigator, says the six-foot-tall Renaissance-style windows were in the front room of the John F. Taylor House, at the corner of Broadview Avenue and O'Connor Drive. Taylor, who built the house in 1890, also founded the Don Valley Brick Works with his brothers.

—Laura Grande and Tamara Baluja

What's On

Junior citizen award

Nominations are open for the 2010 Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards. Youth must be 6-17 years old to be eligible, and have documented proof of active community service. Nominees may also have performed acts of bravery or heroism in the past year. Visit http://www.ocna.org/junior_citizen for details.

Breastfeeding frenzy

Toronto Public Health invites mothers and babies to help Toronto repeat its win in the Annual Breastfeeding Challenge. Tomorrow, Oct. 2, mothers and babies will compete to set the record for the most children breastfeeding at one time. Moms in East York can participate in one of two ways: breastfeed wherever you are at about 11 a.m. tomorrow and register your participation by calling 416-338-7626 or by e-mailing ojovk@toronto.ca; or attend the official Toronto event from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (registration from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.) at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts, 711 Bloor St. E.

—Nastasha Alli

Long-gun registry conflict continues

By CHRIS HIGGINS

A razor-thin reprieve saved the long-gun registry, but the battle over gun control laws continues.

In the days leading up to last week's dramatic vote in the House of Commons, a billboard on the Danforth at Jackman Avenue urged NDP Leader and Toronto-Danforth MP Jack Layton to unite his caucus to defeat a Conservative bill to eliminate the registry.

Funding for the sign came from alumni and students of Montreal's École Polytechnique, where a gunman killed 14 women in 1989.

Although MPs voted 153-151 in favour of keeping the registry, there's more to do, according to Diane de Champlain, executive director of the École Polytechnique Alumni Association.

"We are very happy," she said. "But it's not finished yet."

For Heidi Rathjen, an École Polytechnique alumnus and survivor of the massacre who spearheaded the

billboard campaign, the vote brought relief mixed with anxiety.

"We all feel incredibly relieved," Rathjen said. "It's scary to think that we saved the registry by such a slim margin. But it's saved and that's great news. We're still in a situation where the NDP are divided. If another vote comes up, we won't know where the NDP stands. The most important thing for us now is to have the NDP finally establish a party position on gun control and the registry."

Layton wouldn't say if the sign influenced him, but he admitted seeing it. East Yorkers did, however, make their opinions known in other ways.

"We did get calls on both sides," Layton said. "I've called a number of them back and we've talked it through. Certainly, there's significant support considering we were able to get the vote. I think people are willing to consider making some changes. Even the Liberals and the Bloc, who weren't inclined to think that way once upon a time, are thinking that

way."

Layton said the next stage for the NDP involves addressing amendments needed to make the registry more palatable and convenient for Canadians. Changes, such as decriminalizing the submission of an incorrect form, sit at the top of his list.

"If someone files their form a bit late or leaves information off by mistake, they're immediately subject to a criminal charge and that's something everybody agrees is not necessary," Layton said.

Another major concern remains the amnesty granted by the federal government.

"People aren't registering... and gradually the registry is becoming out of date, making it less useful," he said.

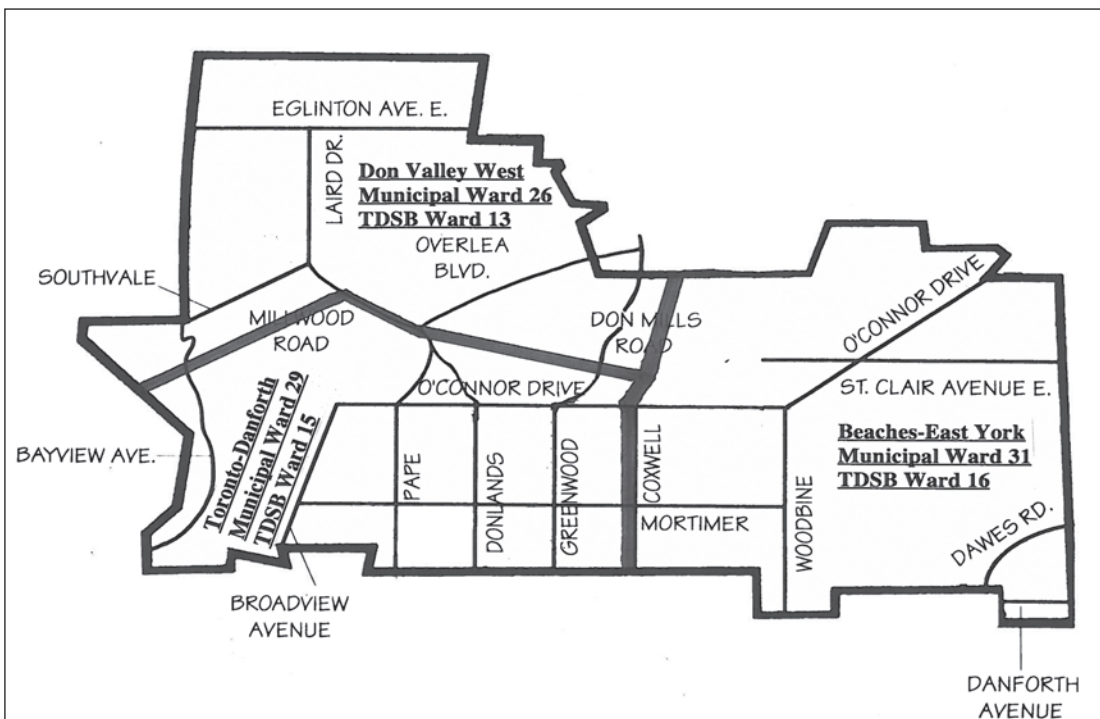
"What we want to do is find some solutions so people can participate again and not feel like they're being criminalized. What we'll be doing is bringing forward a plan with legislation to fix the registry and I know that has the full support of our caucus and party."



Observer, Chris Higgins

LETTER TO JACK: A billboard urging Jack Layton to save the long-gun registry caught the attention of passersby on the Danforth. It has since been removed.

MEET THE CANDIDATES: PART 1



KNOW YOUR WARD: This boundary map shows the municipal wards in East York. **This issue and next, the Observer profiles all local candidates. On election night, Oct. 25, follow the voting results at www.torontoobserver.ca.**

TORONTO MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2010

East Yorkers go to the polls on Oct. 25 to elect their representatives to city hall and the public and Catholic school boards.

In this issue, we profile the contenders for city council in Ward 26/Don Valley West. We also cover the candidates for the Toronto District School Board across all three TDSB wards in East York.

If in doubt, just refer to the map at the left to locate your ward.

Candidates for TDSB trustee

- Ward 13... page 5
- Ward 15... page 3
- Ward 16... page 3

Candidates for city council

- Ward 26... pages 4 and 5

Next issue (Oct. 15), we'll profile candidates running for council in Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth and 31/Beaches East York — as well as those vying for East York seats on the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Candidates for Toronto District School Board trustee in Ward 15

By **ANDREW ROBICHAUD**

It shouldn't come as a surprise that current Toronto District School Board Trustee Cathy Dandy is focusing on the students in Ward 15/Toronto-Danforth as she aims for re-election. Her plan of attack is to incorporate the whole neighbourhood into her plans for educational growth.

At a Sept. 24 Social Planning Toronto symposium dealing with schools as community hubs, Dandy spoke about the challenges faced by not only the TDSB, but residents of the area as well.

Dandy believes the issues most prevalent in the schools in Ward 15 are mental health, dealing with a culturally diverse population and food security. Most important, though, is having a public conversation to improve student success.

"We have to be having conversations... co-constructing communities together, not just from an educational perspective but also from a perspective of 'How do we hear and talk about these issues within community? How do we build solutions that are both system solutions but also local solutions?'"

Dandy, a mother of three, has been involved with youth work and the education system for over 15 years. She feels the local solution lies under the regular curriculum.

"We have to engage the children and youth themselves in terms of the reality of their lived lives," she said. "We have to deal with the hidden curriculum of their lives."

This 'hidden curriculum' is the obstacles students face outside of the classroom, Dandy explained. She believes the community can play an important role in confronting the major issues of mental and physical wellbeing before they get out of control.

"One of the things that's absolutely guaranteed is that prevention and early intervention work," she said. "Getting in, doing anti-stigma work, identifying children and youth early, getting treatments, having supports, teaching to their strengths... all those things will be the things that actually put children on a different path."



CATHY DANDY
Community matters

By **LETICIA RODRIGUEZ**

As a father of two and a certified general accountant, Nadeem Jilani says he knows what it takes to be the next school board trustee for Ward 15/Toronto-Danforth.

With the Toronto District School Board's finances in a seemingly constant state of belt-tightening, Jilani thinks that the current board members are lacking experience in proper money management.

"I don't get any indication that somebody who's competent enough in a financial background is making these financial decisions," Jilani said. "That is where my background in accounting will help, by making not the sub-optimal decisions but the competent decisions which will help the school board."

He feels it's time to be firm and to get the government to work harder in giving schools a fair share.

"It's just going down to the basics. Think about your own house budget; how would you do it?" Jilani said. "Rather than trying to say 'Cut here... and give a little bit here,' stop it and say 'This is not enough money.'"

If elected, Jilani wants all the school boards to meet with the government to revise money allocation.

"Everybody has to be a cohesive force. All the school boards go back to the government and say 'Do this.' Otherwise we're not going (ahead)," he said.

Jilani also thinks that closing Toronto schools with low enrolment to save money is a "short-sighted" idea.

He explained that the plan for school closures ignores the inevitable: immigration. "Toronto is going to get more immigrants... Anybody coming to a new country, they're not going to go and live in a rural area," he said.

Jilani believes that speaking with parents on issues like budgeting and closures will unite the community and bring about a better solution.



NADEEM JILANI
Balance the budget

Candidates for Toronto District School Board trustee in Ward 16*

*At press time, the Observer had been unable to interview trustee candidate Matthew Kennedy

By **VERONICA BLAKE**

Her tenacity has made her a fixture at the Toronto District School Board.

Sheila Cary-Meagher is the feisty 75-year-old incumbent in TDSB Ward 16/Beaches-East York. She has lived in the community for 44 years and has 24 years of experience as a trustee. And she is proud of the results.

"I haven't any faith whatsoever that the province gives a damn... and as a board, I'm not prepared to stand around and whine about inadequate funding when I'm not totally comfortable with our managing what we already have," Cary-Meagher said. "I have no illusions about this government or any other provincial government... and I believe that the boards have to get clever and creative."

She says her My School Review program has helped let neighbourhoods determine the vision for their schools. This produced extensive wishlists and one of the cheapest and easiest accommodations was giving junior schools access to swimming programs. Environmental sustainability, the conversion to K-8 schools and community focus have been other items high on the agenda.

"I wanted to begin to repair that damage that amalgamation did," Cary-Meagher said, referring to then-Ontario Premier Mike Harris's forced merger of independent Toronto school boards and then independent municipal governments.

"The use of the schools became expensive, difficult. It was like there was a wall around them after 3:30," she said. "I wanted to revivify the belief that the school belonged to the community."

Ward 16 is one of the few wards not in danger of school closures. In fact, many of its schools are at capacity. Cary-Meagher believes that the innovative programs and community spirit keep enrolment numbers high. Despite the challenges of bureaucracy, she tries to look at custom solutions for each of her schools.

"I still have my 'No Megacity' sign.... It's a little the worse for wear, but I don't give it up, because I still think the megacity was an insane decision," Cary-Meagher said. "The whole amalgamation thing has done nothing but damage. And no way are the... six boards better off than they were before."



SHEILA CARY-MEAGHER
Creative solutions

By **KERRY PRUNSKUS**

As the father of a Grade 6 student in the gifted program at Bowmore Public School, Alan Burke has a vested interest in the education system.

Burke, who is running for school board trustee in Ward 16/Beaches-East York, believes Toronto's school system would benefit from a fresh perspective.

"I don't like some of what I'm seeing the school board doing," he said. "I think they also need people with business backgrounds."

In addition to a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Concordia University, Burke runs his own Interconnect telephone system company.

He has been living in the Beaches community for 15 years, along with his wife, Janet Krulewitz, who is a family physician at Flemingdon Health Centre, and their 11-year-old daughter, Katherine.

As president of the East Beach Community Association, Burke says his proactive attitude has helped him develop strong relationships and proven his ability to get things done. The week of Canada Day 2009, when washrooms along the beach were closed down, Burke used his own money and arranged to operate a large washroom trailer on Woodbine Beach.

"I'm kind of like a MacGyver," he said. "When I want to make something happen, I can make it happen."

When it comes to issues such as whether or not to have police officers in schools, as a member of the 41 Division Community Police Liaison Committee, Burke supports the idea where he feels there is need.

"I'm a realist," he said. "I think it's a responsible thing for the trustee, if the principal and the school council and the teachers are making a request, that you would support it."

As for Ontario's modernized sex education curriculum, Burke feels it requires further consultation. He acknowledged that people with different religious and cultural beliefs should have the right to exempt their child.

"You also want them to understand what it is you're trying to achieve," he said. "So that if they make that decision (to exempt their child), it's an informed decision."



ALAN BURKE
Fresh perspective

BATTLE FOR DON VALLEY WEST



Observer, Jennifer Romano

MEET AND GREET: Jon Burnside hands out candy-floss at the Leaside Rotary Club's 70th Corn Roast on Sept. 19.

Burnside boosts youth

By JENNIFER ROMANO

From playing street hockey on Airdrie Road as a child to serving the community as a police officer in recent years, Jon Burnside is a lifelong member of the East York community.

Now he wants to put his knowledge of the community to good use and become the next Toronto city councillor for Ward 26/Don Valley West.

"What separates me is my perspective and the knowledge of the community that no one else will have," he said.

Born and raised in Leaside, Burnside, 44, spent almost 10 years as a Toronto police officer in the area. During that time, he says, he helped mend the gap between different communities — an issue he feels strongly about.

"What I noticed as a police officer after working in some successful communities like Leaside, and then some challenged communities, is that the big difference is that sense of community. That's what I've been working on building for over 25

years," he said.

He believes a big part of the answer lies in youth and sports programs. He spearheaded a free hockey league in Flemingdon Park, which brings Toronto police officers and community members together as volunteers.

"When I first got involved, no one wanted to help me," he said.

He believes the league not only brings people together but it keeps kids out of trouble, ultimately making the community a safer place to live.

"There was a boy shot in Flemingdon this summer and there were two candidates, including myself, who showed up to the community meeting," he said. "First thing everyone was asking for was more programs for the kids."

He said that this year he's expanding the program to include volunteers from Leaside to coach teams.

"It takes a community to build a community. That's something I'm trying to get across," he said.

Rents too high, Malik says

By NASTASHA ALLI

Throughout his years as a legal practitioner, journalist, businessman and immigration and traffic court consultant, Shaukat Malik says he's kept his roots in the Don Valley West community where he lives.

Malik's run for city councillor has been a long time coming. He came to Canada 18 years ago, and has made Ward 26 home with his wife and children for the last eight years.

"I know what the community needs," Malik said. "Those issues can be tackled within the framework of what the city already has, without increasing the budget allocated to Ward 26."

His top priorities include generating revenue for small businesses and supporting community initiatives such as the Gang Busters Prevention Program.

One prominent theme that he says has arisen is that rents are too high.

"My agenda is not something I've made up. It's what people have been bringing to me abundantly," Malik said.

Statistics kept by the city indicate that 77 per cent of Don Valley West residents are renters, with a majority of them living in neighbourhoods like Flemingdon — which the city and the United Way have identified as a "priority" community.

"There's no compatibility between the average cost of living and earning of an average person (whether they're highly or moderately skilled)," Malik said. "The ratio doesn't match, and people ultimately choose (to take) a line of credit."

He also plans to tackle the issue of subsidized housing, with a specific focus on the long waiting period that many applicants face.

"This is a big, big problem that cannot be tackled by small organizations," Malik said. "Only the government can take initiatives and steps to address this."

Investment required for public transit: Dhanani

By ROGER TRAN

He finished second in 2006, just 214 votes behind the winner. Now, with another municipal election looming, Mohamed Dhanani is aiming again for council in Ward 26.

Dhanani, 39, has lived in Don Valley West for most of his life. His family moved to Flemingdon Park when he was a teenager. Dhanani graduated from Ryerson University before studying public health at Yale University. Since then, he's moved back to the community and has served as chair of Toronto's Central Local Health Integration Network. He stepped down this year to focus on his election campaign.

Dhanani says the distinct neighbourhoods of Don Valley West make it challenging to identify one large problem with the area. However, he believes public transit affects all the communities in Ward 26.

"The whole issue of traffic and congestion affects the entire ward and the entire city," he said. "I'm a really big proponent of the Transit City plan. I think that's the best solution on the table right now."

Two light rail lines, the Don Mills and Eglinton LRT, would serve Ward 26 if the rapid transit plan was completed. He says it's practical because some funding is already in place.

"It's not the ideal solution, but I be-

lieve it's the best solution," Dhanani said. "Let's just go ahead and get it built; it's been over two decades since we've had a significant investment in public transit."

He argues that recreation facilities are also an issue for Don Valley West. Dhanani wants a swimming pool built for the 30,000 Thorncliffe Park residents that live there. He also wants to ensure new ice pads get built for Leaside. In addition, Dhanani wants to build a playground for residents who live near the intersection of Wynford Drive and Concorde Place.

"There's 17 highrise towers, and increasingly there's families with young children living in those buildings, and there's not one playground in their neighbourhood," Dhanani said. "(I want to) figure out how we put in a playground, so people can take their kids and just walk to their local playground."

Dhanani says that he's not affiliated with any political party, but he has support from across the spectrum, from Conservatives to Greens. And that, he says, gives him an advantage.

"It shows I have the ability to work across the different levels of government, regardless of which party is in power," Dhanani said.

"I think that's the kind of effective leadership we need at city hall... somebody who could work across party lines to get things done."

Pandor wants E.Y. to be heard

By ALEKSEJS NESTERINS

A 61-year-old bachelor of science graduate from Bombay University and a family man with seven children, Yunus Pandor has lived in Ward 26 for more than 30 years.

Aside from his main job as a service technician at ADT Security Systems for the past 36 years, Pandor says he has been actively involved in the life of the community he wants to represent at city council.

"I worked to establish the mosque on the Danforth. I've done support work for the Thorncliffe Food Bank," Pandor said. "I'm also a founding member on one of the community-based organizations where we do a lot of community work for the youths and the seniors. We are developing a mentoring program where we get the senior students to mentor the junior students."

One of his campaign priorities is to generate affordable housing in Ward 26.

"We need to have a proper landlord-tenant agreement, make sure that rent increases are justifiable and not a burden," he said.

"At the same time," he added, attention must be paid to "the people who are looking for subsidized housing, to make sure

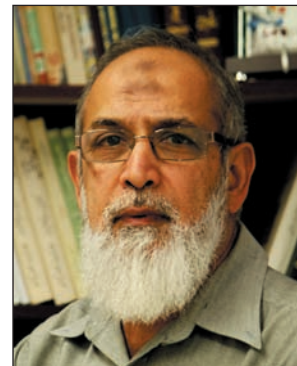
that there is a fair allotment of subsidized housing for people who are in dire need, and try and find ways to have more subsidized housing."

He also wants to see more accountability and transparency at city hall, and to create a body that will overlook the councillors' expenses.

"I don't say month-to-month, but periodically they should submit the expense and that should be approved by a body," Pandor said. "The councillors can themselves decide who should be overseeing that, and if I put in an expense for a thousand dollars, they should be able to ask, 'Why did you have to spend this?'"

At this point, Pandor isn't backing any particular candidate in the mayoral race, and he says he'll work with anyone the people of Toronto choose to elect mayor.

"There are a lot of things I learned while canvassing so far: concerns of the people, things that the people think we should have in this ward to make it better. So regardless of whether I am a councillor or a resident, I will make sure that I'll be with them to try and address the problems and try and go after whoever is there to make the decisions to make sure that they listen to the people."



YUNUS PANDOR
Willing to listen

Ahmed plans to revitalize Don Valley West

By AILEEN DONNELLY

First-time candidate Tanvir Ahmed decided to run for council in Don Valley West because of his commitment to Ward 26 and his belief that the area lacks leadership.

"My involvement with the community made me passionate about working for this community, because I believe that we are short of good, sincere leaders," Ahmed said. "If we have good, sincere leaders, we can live a better life."

Ahmed, 45, immigrated to Canada from Pakistan in 1999. He has lived in Don Valley West for the past decade with his wife and three children. During this time, he has been involved in his community. He coaches soccer in Thorncliffe

Park and currently serves as treasurer on the Thorncliffe Park Public School Council.

Ahmed said his law degree and banking diploma would provide an advantage as a city councillor.

"Finance and law are a very good combination for a city councillor, because right now in the city we have a deficit, so we have to balance the budget," Ahmed said. "We (also) have to be part of the committees which are in the process of amending or bringing bylaws and policies."

Ahmed does not claim to have all the answers for Ward 26. But he says he does plan to explore all options and take suggestions from residents.

"I cannot just unilaterally say this is

going to be the decision," Ahmed said. "My main focus would be to just get their feedback. If they elect me, I'm their property. I'm public property."

Ahmed believes the area has become stagnant and hopes to revitalize it. He said that during his 10 years as a resident of Don Valley West, he has not seen much development beyond the Thorncliffe Park Library.

Ultimately, Ahmed wants to improve the overall quality of life for residents of Don Valley West, and he believes that he can make this happen.

"I want to bring more cleanliness, safety, security, responsibility, prosperity and (create) a healthier community," Ahmed said.



Observer, Aileen Donnelly

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL: Tanvir Ahmed discusses his platform with Umaimah Khan, 4, at a family event on Sunday.

COUNTDOWN TO OCT. 25



Observer, Meri Perra

HOME-TURF ADVANTAGE: John Parker calls his home on Cameron Crescent his Leaside headquarters. The lawyer and father of five has served one term at city council for Ward 26 and has the incumbent's advantage this election.

Incumbent Parker pushes for 'main street', new ice surface

By **MERI PERRA**

In the race to represent Ward 26, councillor John Parker has the incumbent's advantage. But even with his head start, the Leaside lawyer and former Conservative MPP says he's not taking anything for granted this election.

"My ward has very distinct communities," Parker said. "Each neighbourhood is aware of the different things I've done locally."

The local accomplishments he points to include improvements to Laird Avenue, which has been a long-time sore spot in the Leaside area. Parker has the ambitious goal of transforming the strip into an attractive 'main street.' Improvements to date include a boulevard, sidewalk and irrigated medium. And, Parker says, all of this has been done without the use of city funds. Besides the beautification factor, he says, there's the added advantage of increased safety along the street.

"(There's) the subliminal effect of slowing down traffic," Parker said. "My intention is to continue that theme right down

Laird as properties are developed."

Parker is also a long-time advocate for an additional arena at Leaside Gardens. It's an issue he worked on before joining city council. But the city hasn't opened a new arena in the area for decades and the process to expand is slow and bureaucratic. "Toronto is the centre of the hockey universe," Parker said, "and Leaside is probably the epicentre of Toronto's enthusiasm for recreational hockey."

Hockey is an important issue in Ward 26. Another council candidate, Jon Burnside, has organized free house league hockey in both Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park. It's an important part of his campaign message — and Parker's competition doesn't end there. He has six rivals in total, including Mohamed Dhanani, who lost to Parker by only 214 votes in 2006.

This time around, Dhanani has been campaigning practically full-time since February.

Parker isn't concerned. "We'll find out (what happens) on the evening of Oct. 25," Park-

er said.

Some of the other candidates point to Parker's record on environmental issues as a reason for tuning out the incumbent. The Toronto Environmental Alliance gave him an "F" grade in 2007-2008 based on his votes on council. But Parker defends his position, claiming bias.

"The Toronto Environmental Alliance survey demands yes-or-no answers... answering yes to any of their questions traps the respondent into the TEA policy agenda, without flexibility to respond to evolving information, technologies, or circumstances."

Ward 26 includes the East York communities of Leaside, Bennington Heights and Flemingdon-Thorncliffe.

"The fact that it's diverse really only matters to me from the standpoint that I encounter different issues and different concerns from place to place," Parker said. "In Thorncliffe, there are certain centres where people gather. In Leaside you pretty much just walk around the streets.... I'm always at work because I live in the middle of people I represent."

More accountability needed for public recreation agencies: Khan

By **NATALIE SAMSON**

Nawab Salim Khan has called Don Valley West home since immigrating to Canada from Pakistan in 2002.

The 58-year-old father of four is running in Ward 26. Despite tough competition, Khan believes his experience as an immigrant in the area makes him most capable of appreciating and responding to the needs of a diverse population.

"I'm proud that I know (the) issues people have and how they're trying to manage them while coming to the mainstream. I'm going through all these things," he said.

Before arriving in Canada, Khan studied economics and went on to work in marketing and business development. He eventually found a place with

Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce. Since moving to East York, Khan has worked widely in management with retail marketing outfits.

While Khan cited improved programming for seniors and additional recreational facilities for youth as local priorities, his main concern by far is public accountability within community agencies.

Khan points to the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and the Islamic Society of Toronto as two organizations in Ward 26 that he says have favoured Liberal politicians over others.

"They are not working according to their agendas, according to their mandates.

The goal they want to achieve instead is promoting specific political agendas," he said.

If elected, Khan intends to address the issue of perceived bias by working directly with donors and staff at these organizations and by giving groups two weeks to end political alliances.

"They have to be neutral. They have to work with the community. They are here for the communities, not for (politicians)," Khan added.

Accessibility plays an equally important role in Khan's campaign. Khan says he spends more than five hours a day campaigning from his headquarters at the Tim Hortons on the corner of Thorncliffe Park Drive and Overlea Boulevard engaging in one-on-one conversations with potential constituents.

"People know where to find me," he said.

TDSB trustee candidates Ward 13/Don Valley West

Twenty-five years in power

By **TAMARA BALUJA**

As a grandparent with three children in elementary schools in her ward, trustee Gerri Gershon says she has a real stake in Don Valley West. The incumbent is running for re-election in Ward 13 as the Toronto District School Board trustee.

"The issues are very real for me," Gershon said, "and it's really about the kids."

On a promise to continue to deliver those learning opportunities, she has tossed her name into the election hat once again.

Gershon said her record of 25 years as a school trustee speaks for itself. A former psychiatric nurse, she was first elected as a public school trustee to the North York Board of Education in 1985 and became the chair of the North York Board of Education in 1996. After board amalgamation, she started representing TDSB Ward 13.

"It's a very interesting riding. I represent the very wealthy and the very poor, from Leaside to Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe," she said, "and we have to make sure that we have a good staff so all students have access to equal opportunities."

As technology becomes more prevalent in schools, Gershon said she would work to ensure that students in the economically poorer parts of her ward do not get left behind.



GERRI GERSHON
No student left behind

Among the various plans for Don Valley West, Gershon hopes to continue to oversee the development of a new state-of-the-art kindergarten school to ease the space crunch at Thorncliffe Park Public School.

"I'm also working to put a cricket pitch at Valley Park (Middle School)," Gershon said. Cricket is a popular sport in the South Asian community.

While she did not speak to the platform of her lone rival Muhammad Shahid, Gershon said she hopes voters recognize her years of dedication and commitment to education.

"The challenges we have are sometimes really aggravating," she said with a laugh. "But I love being in schools and overall, it's a great job that I feel I can continue to contribute to for the next four years."

Parents deserve a voice in their child's education

By **ALICIA BAIRD**

Don Valley West trustee candidate Muhammad Shahid believes fresh ideas, a new vision and the acceptance of change is the winning formula for Ward 13.

Shahid promises to deliver all of this and more, starting with a survey initiative that compares students' experiences in different schools.

"When a student enrolls into any school, we'll send a survey and ask them what the difference is between their current school and previous schools they've attended within Ontario," he said.

A six-year Thorncliffe resident, Shahid is actively involved in the community, often mentoring local immigrants, coaching kids' soccer games, attending council meetings and participating in political events.

He holds an undergraduate degree in economics, a master's degree and 15 years of experience as a project manager.

Shahid believes communities raise communities and the safety of children is not a one-man job.

"An initiative should be taken, starting with elementary schools in the Don Valley West area, that will help build a healthy mindset and healthy relationships with our students, teachers and parents," Shahid said.

"We'd engage them in sever-



MUHAMMAD SHAHID
Giving parents a voice

al activities and provide them with support systems."

As a parent in the Don Valley West area, Shahid wants to give parents a voice.

"From what I know, there are many parents who think they are not a part of the process," he said.

"They feel they just send their kids to school without knowing who is teaching them or what they are being taught... they have no say in the system."

If elected, Shahid plans to communicate with families through various forms of social media such as Facebook.

"I would also communicate with parents by visiting different communities and the events within them.

"Everyone is busy, but we need to find a way that they are somehow engaged with us and apart of the whole process," he said.

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Improved Brick Works' success depends on E.Y.

Evergreen's Brick Works project has garnered praise locally and internationally for its innovative design and programming. With the grand opening having just passed, it's important that East Yorkers maintain a balanced public dialogue about the site, its development and best use. We've put in too much time and money to forget about our stake in the project now that the Brick Works is up and running.

After production stopped at the Toronto Brick Co. in 1984, the city and province intended to purchase the land for \$4 million. When the deal fell through, a development company swooped in. Five years later, the city managed to expropriate the land with provincial backing at a price of nearly \$22 million. The purchase gobbled up almost half the funds earmarked for eight conservation areas.

Since then, millions of dollars from all levels of government, including up to \$20 million from the feds, have gone toward the Brick Works project to help the city (which maintains the parklands that cover about 75 per cent of the space) and Evergreen (which signed on in 2004 to manage the heritage buildings) execute their plans. Clearly, acquiring the land came at a heavy price for taxpayers, as well as at the expense of other conservation priorities.

As home to the site, East York and its residents must see to it that the Brick Works is worth the investment. We have a significant role to play in sustaining the project's timely development by making use of the site, participating in and providing feedback to programming, and demanding increased accessibility and signage. As it stands, there are few options for getting there by public transit and there's little-to-no signage for cyclists and pedestrians on the ravine paths or in adjoining residential neighbourhoods. The parking situation is messy at best, with illegally parked cars on the shoulder of Bayview Avenue endangering cyclists who have to go onto the road to avoid them. Evergreen is aware of the problems and plans to improve accessibility but needs the city's co-operation. Let's make sure it does.

Evergreen has done its part to get the ball rolling, but if the Brick Works is to be the state-of-the-art intersection between environment, community and culture that we hope it will be, then we have to use it, we have to promote it and we have to engage Evergreen and the city to respond to East York's diverse needs.

—Natalie Samson

Low voter turnout an issue for East Yorkers

Calling out to the registered voters in Ward 26/Don Valley West, 29/Toronto-Danforth and 31/Beaches-East York: It's time to make an appearance at the polls this Oct. 25.

According to the election pages on the City of Toronto's official website, the last time Torontonians went to the polls in a municipal election, in 2006, voter turnout was a lacklustre 39.3 per cent. Now, although East York produced numbers above the city average — Don Valley West posted 53 per cent and both Toronto-Danforth and Beaches-East York saw 43 per cent — we're still not fully flexing the democratic muscles we possess the right to flex.

As a point of comparison, the last provincial election in 2007 saw almost 53 per cent turnout across the city... and the federal election in 2008 posted even better numbers: almost 59 per cent. This isn't to say that we're proud of those turnout rates, but when it comes to municipal voting, shouldn't we as a community arrive in large numbers to support the grass-roots issues directly affecting our lives on a daily basis?

The schools our children attend, the recreational facilities we have access to (or don't have access to for that matter), the roads we drive on and even the off-leash dogs parks we love to frolic in with our pets are all matters dealt with at the municipal level. The allocation of money into our own neighbourhoods is something people should exert power to influence, but in East York, on average, only a minority are — and the situation is worse across the rest of the city.

No one expects the regular citizen to be completely attuned to every issue on every candidates' platform, but that doesn't mean, as a citizen, you don't vote because you're not a political science major. Vote because one thing matters. Vote because all things matter. Vote because you have a ballot, an opinion and a voice that you want to be heard.

The numbers say more than half of the population just isn't concerned with what transpires in their own backyard.

East York has a proud heritage of community and political spirit. There's no reason we can't continue to nurture that spirit. All we have to do is show up.

—Andrew Robichaud

Moving toward humanity is living for a better future

Will a new mayor, some new city councillors and new school board members really change the feel and flow of this metropolis? We can hope so, but real change will come when we all start to focus on what exactly it is we are moving toward.

We are beings moving toward something. We fight time as if it is a current pushing us. As Heidegger put it, 'being towards death, we fight time because it leads us to our end.'

Although right now, I feel like I am being toward life.

I feel like I am just a few steps from gaining that coveted job, house, and car. I felt like this the last time I was on the cusp of graduating as well.

My future looked bleak, graduating in the midst of the recession when seasoned veterans of the 'culture industry' were out of work and searching just as I was, but with much more experience and expertise than I had.

Now in the wake of the recession, I search and wonder what is out there. I wonder about and wait for that retirement boom that was supposed to give my generation a leg up.

I suspect that when I was told this, things were good and people had stacked retirement funds.

Now funds are gone and

Victoria
Gray



capitalism requires that we continue to consume unnecessary things way past our means — means which are already as stretched as a silkworm's thread. How can we do anything but continue to live well beyond our means in the hopes that it is bringing us toward something?

Again I ask: What are we going toward, life or death? Do we, as Marx said, consume to stave off death, or have something to leave behind so that our essence never dies? Will people remember me?

Will I ever achieve something great enough that striving toward my life and death for a great number of years will be worth it?

Are we moving toward things that are of actual importance or are we moving away from humanity? The things that I consider to be important continue to be neglected; things like family, friends, fun and our minds. Food for thought is something that may see its death in my lifetime. Schools

have personal education plans wherein children can't fail. If you can't fail, what motivates you to try?

Maybe I am just being pessimistic because the end of summer is here. The end of something I had barely begun to taste. It's the start of something new, another chapter, unread and possibly unwritten. Do I write the story of my life or merely edit it?

I have attempted to garner the interest of my peers in international volunteerism, many of whom dismiss the idea as something they don't have the time or the skills for.

We all have something to give and as terrible as it seems, it can also be about getting something.

I believe we should be moving toward a more humanitarian lifestyle, where we put more importance on people and families than we do on the dollars that they give to or leech from the system.

What do you believe?

I will continue to move toward a more people-centric lifestyle, even if my laptop has to come with me.

I will continue to try to make some kind of difference in the world while fighting for that human connection. I will be toward life.

What about you?

When classic cash goes digital

Canada might abolish its penny, as Bill C-252 suggests, and the Canadian Mint could save \$30 million annually as a result. But bigger changes await us in the near future.

How long will it be before we abolish all bills and coins and switch to digital money that reflects our technological world?

Sound like a fantasy? I say it'll be another 10-15 years before we are ready to put our wallets aside and simply rely on convenient technologies that are already available today.

I did a little case study on myself to find out how often I really use old-school cash.

My salary is transferred directly to my bank account and I don't see the cash equivalent unless I withdraw money from it.

I use my debit or credit cards to make my purchases both in stores and online. I pay my bills and manage my accounts using Internet banking.

And how many of those bank transactions are actually being done in cash anyway?

For the big companies out there, most of the money has already become electronic.

But that's still not the kind of change that I have in mind. To better understand the possibilities, let's take a look at Japan. Sony Corporation's FeliCa tech-

Aleksejs
Nesterins



nology allows cellphone users to make contactless money transactions through their pre-paid electronic accounts.

Basically, it means that you only need your cellphone to pay for goods at stores, vending machines and even for public transit as long as there are chip-reading devices around.

So imagine that instead of carrying a wallet full of change, credit, debit, business and other cards, all you would need is a couple of iPhone apps.

One to manage your accounts and make purchases, another to serve you as a Metropass, and of course the piggy bank application in case you decide to put aside a digital penny or two.

All we need is to wait for the appropriate technology to be in place — a gadget in everyone's hand and a bunch of smart devices that will make sure the whole thing actually works.

That doesn't seem like a very distant future, if you ask me. According to Industry Canada, about 70 per cent of households

had access to a wireless phone in 2006 compared to about 30 per cent in 1997.

That's more than a doubling in nine years.

Four years have passed. Who knows how big that number is now?

According to Moore's Law, a desktop computer should have as much power as a human brain by 2020, so yes, we'll probably have the technology to keep our new digital world running smoothly.

We could save a lot of money since we wouldn't have to print or produce any more... well, money. Some \$30 million saved on abolishing the penny is nothing compared to these possible savings.

Digital money could play a big role in decreasing the crime rate in our country if our cellphone apps will be able to block unauthorized access by random street robbers.

But we'd have to prepare for a different kind of criminal: not the armed-bank-robbery kind, but the MIT-graduate-with-a-laptop kind. The number of tech-savvy people who want to test the system for loopholes is always growing.

And the last question — who will be in charge of all this money that never really existed?

We welcome your input

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Observer, Aleksejs Nesterins

STILL RUNNING: Hundreds of East Yorkers got together for the 30th annual Terry Fox run on Sept. 19 in Wilket Creek Park, near Eglinton Avenue and Leslie Street. Warm and sunny weather plus a good tradition made it a perfect family event.

Dreamliner soars onscreen

By LAURA GRANDE

The sight of an animated albatross soaring across the IMAX screen at the Ontario Science Centre drew excited gasps from its young audience.

They were attending the Sept. 21 Canadian premiere of *Legends of Flight*. It's the latest IMAX film presented at the Shoppers Drug Mart OMNIMAX Theatre, a domed screen approximately 4,500 times larger than the average television screen.

The animated albatross that caught the schoolchildren's attention was meant to draw the comparison between the large birds, which can soar over great distances with very little exertion, and the radical new aircraft unveiled last year by the Boeing Company.

Directed by Canadian filmmaker Stephen Low, *Legends of Flight* chronicles the December 2009 maiden voyage of Boeing's new jet airliner, the 787 Dreamliner.

The film, an amalgamation of captivating scenery and in-depth lessons in the techniques and technologies behind the making of the 500,000-pound 787, drew enthusiastic applause from the audience.

In attendance to answer ques-

tions after the screening was Capt. Heather Ross, the Montreal-born, U.S.-based engineering project pilot for Boeing.

"I'm obviously prejudiced," she laughed when asked what she thought about the Dreamliner. "But this is a great airplane. I don't get paid for marketing, but I can say from a pilot's perspective that this really is a nice airplane."

The Dreamliner uses 20-percent less fuel than similarly sized airplanes, while Boeing also announced that 50 per cent of the jetliner's structure is made up of composite materials. With its promise of comfortable seating and larger windows that would allow the passenger to adjust the tint, the Dreamliner is expected to reach its official certification by early 2011.

However, everything didn't always run so smoothly for both the creation of Boeing's 787 Dreamliner and the documentary film. Although it's not uncommon for such a large undertaking to fall behind schedule, it brought with it a lot of added pressure to everyone involved in the project, both in front of and behind the camera.

Legends of Flight producer Pietro L. Serapiglia was also

on hand to field questions from the audience. When asked how long it took to make the film, he freely admitted to the numerous obstacles they experienced along the way.

"It was almost as difficult a film to make as it was for Boeing to make the plane," Serapiglia said, citing the fact that, as of early 2009, the Dreamliner was already two and a half years behind schedule. As a result, the film was four years in the making.

Despite the setbacks, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner is on track to become a great success.

"We've already sold over 800 airplanes," Ross said. "It's pretty graceful and very dramatic and I hope it's an experience which you will all get to see sometime soon."

When asked what her favourite part of the job was, Ross didn't pause to think about her response.

"(As a project pilot), I make decisions on how the plane will ultimately fly," she explained about flying the Dreamliner. "It doesn't get any better than this for a test pilot."

Legends of Flight runs until Saturday, Oct. 23. Check the Ontario Science Centre website for details.

St. Patrick adds arts curriculum

By JENNIFER ROMANO

Next year, students at St. Patrick Catholic Secondary School on Felstead Avenue can add music books and hard hats to their back-to-school shopping lists.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) has given St. Patrick a green light to create a media, arts and design technology department.

After the accommodation committee reviewed five high schools, St. Patrick was granted the program extension.

Angela Gauthier, TCDSB's associate director of academic affairs, believes it's because of St. Patrick's facility and enthusiasm for the arts.

"St. Patrick is very much under-populated for the capacity of the school...and it's a huge building," she said. "It's also a natural solution to build upon something that's already started at the grassroots level."

St. Patrick is proud of its few media, arts and design courses and next year it wants to expand its repertoire. It will offer more in-depth classes in music production, set design and drama. It's a concept that vice-principal Paul Adams wants to get across to parents and students.

"It's going to be a composite school, so there's still going to be the regular stream," he said. "The media, arts and technology

(program) will be acting sort of like a school within a school."

The focus will be different than other arts schools in the area, like Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts.

"We're not trying to duplicate what they're doing," he said. "Cardinal Carter is very much about performance, we're going to be very much about production."

Although performance will be part of St. Patrick's new mandate, students will also be able to take classes such as construction technology, where they will learn plumbing, home installation and carpentry. It will be offered as one of the high-skills majors to help prepare students for future careers in the field.

"At the end of high school, (it) gives them a certificate in a particular area," he said. "Be it the technology, the hospitality, the performance art like dance, visual or music.... It shows they've majored in that area."

In order to make the transition a smooth one, St. Patrick will create a committee of parents and community members, to discuss the curriculum and other administrative details. Gauthier encourages people to get involved.

"The school itself will include them in the planning process and what the revitalized focus will look like," she said.

Relationship was good with Lastman: Ootes

Cont'd. from page 1

"We had a very good relationship because he trusted me and I never violated that trust," he said. "I always kept in mind... I never did anything to undermine him."

Ootes cites his creation of the Responsible Government Group, an unofficial opposition to Mayor David Miller, as another career highlight and said he had "no major (career) regrets at all."

That assured confidence in his ability is what kept Ootes in politics for 22 years. In the 2006 election, however, he squeaked back into office with only a 20-

vote margin over his runner-up.

"Others start to view you in a different way because you've been around so long and I think it's time for younger people to move in," he laughed.

But Ootes remains upbeat as he looks back on his constituency and career.

"It's a terrific ward," he said. "I think it's probably, from my perspective, the best ward in Toronto.... I'm not talking about it being the best because of me. It's been a great honour... actually, and a privilege to have served this ward."

Case closed.

Grass alternative gardens garner awards of merit

By MERI PERRA

The neighbours call the front yard at 23 Fairside Dr. "the teaching garden."

Charming perennial shade plants, each labeled with identification tags, surround the flagstone walkway in front of the house. There's a pool where local frogs find refreshment, and occasionally a lemonade stand staffed by 11-year-old resident Laura Davidson.

June Davidson, Laura's mother, says she's gardened her front yard the way she has for environmental reasons as well as convenience.

"I think we spend far too much time fussing over grass. It's expensive," Davidson said. "(My garden) is a no-chemical garden, plain and simple. You can get great colour and it's really no fuss."

And now, "the teaching garden" on Fairside can also be called "a garden of merit." Its

gardeners have a lawn sign with a Parks and Recreation logo to prove it.

The East York Garden Society held its annual East York Blooming Contest on Sept. 22. Thirteen local gardeners, including Davidson, received awards for traditional gardens, environmental and alternative gardens and gardens of merit.

The selection process involved some work on behalf of the contest judges, who had 140 nominations to sort through.

Davidson's neighbour and fellow garden society member Suzanne Bond says alternative gardens tend to be nominated more frequently than traditional front lawns.

"About two-thirds of the nominations are for alternative gardens," she said, adding that the no-grass option is popular in East York. "Our front yards are small. So they are manageable and a good size."

Davidson says she put in the identification tags by her plants to help jog her own memory about what's growing where. Because of its proximity to Toronto East General Hospital, her garden gets a lot of foot traffic and curiosity.

"East York is very garden-friendly," she said. "(People) stop and look and say, 'What's that called?'"

Another notable winner this year is the garden at 162 Woodmount Ave. Formerly a vacant lot, its residents have slowly replaced pavement with a front garden complete with irises and smoke bush. Past garden society president Malcolm Geast praised the Woodmount gardeners for their hard work and said the judges considered giving the garden a special title.

"(We thought about naming the prize) best rehabilitation of concrete into a garden, but that got too wordy," he joked.



Observer, Meri Perra

BEST GARDEN REHAB: Karen Stolte and her husband jackhammered their way through roughly 300-square-feet of pavement to create their front garden on Woodmount Avenue.

Dominican photos provide insight to audiences

By **KERRY PRUNSKUS**

For East York college students Aleksejs Nesterins and Victoria Gray, communicating in a foreign country proved to be a challenge.

But the images they captured throughout their international service and learning trip to the Dominican Republic in March 2010 speak a universal language.

Currently available for public viewing in the second-floor "Corridor Gallery" of Centennial College's East York campus, Nesterins and Gray's photo exhibit, entitled Universal Humandate, tells the powerful story of their experience.

Over the course of the two-week expedition, Nesterins solidified his desire to pursue a career in photojournalism.

"I took thousands of pictures while I was there," he said. "It really showed me that this is what I really want to do."

Along with six other students from Centennial's other east Toronto campuses, journalism students Nesterins and Gray volunteered with youth and children in the impoverished community of Colonia Nueva in Cabarete, as part of the Dominican Republic



Observer, Aleks Nesterins

ON LIFE-SUPPORT: These illegal migrants from Haiti went to the Dominican Republic to work in the now-collapsed sugar cane industry. Now, without having any papers or government support, they survive by selling handmade jewelry to tourists.

Education And Mentoring (DREAM) Project.

Within their mandate and with the assistance of Spanish translators, each of the eight students led a workshop based

on a specific topic — including photography, blogging and first aid.

Nesterins reflected on what transpired after he gave his blogging workshop.

"One kid walked up to me, he shook my hand and said, 'This was really great, I really learned a lot; thank you,'" he said.

With a smile, he added, "As soon as I heard that, I knew that

it was all worth it."

Gray also made a significant connection with one of the children.

She took numerous photos of Geraldo, a young boy who she said had mutism, a disorder characterized by an inability or unwillingness to speak.

As she described two of the photos of Geraldo on display at the exhibit, she gave an animated retelling of their bond.

"He'd come running over and he'd jump on me and we'd play and hug," Gray said. "It was so wonderful."

Kristi Harrison, the college's associate vice-president for academic excellence, accompanied the students on the trip.

She said the intent of the DREAM Project is to give students an international experience to not only share their learning, but to also learn themselves.

Both Nesterins and Gray will appear at "Creative Fusion," a campus speakers' series, this coming Wednesday, Oct. 6, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Their talk will take place in room 106 of the East York campus, 951 Carlaw Ave. at Mortimer.



Observer, Tara Losinski

30 YEARS LATER: Greg Carducci will soon be handing over Bill's Garden Centre to new owners after running the business on Pape Avenue for three decades.

Garden centre passes the seed to new owners after three decades

By **TARA LOSINSKI**

From petunias to ornamental peppers, the retiring owner of Bill's Garden Centre is looking back on 30 years in the business of blooms.

Greg Carducci started modestly, shovelling soil at his parents' seasonal garden centre as a teenager. But as a young adult, he pursued a different passion — that of a professional musician. He first studied music at the University of Windsor and then spent time performing throughout Toronto. He even opened for James Brown.

Still, his passion for plants eventually inspired him to enrol in the landscape architecture program at Ryerson University.

The Ryerson program and its professors cultivated Carducci's love of plants. And even before finishing the program, he faced the prospect of continuing the vision of his father, Bill Carducci, for a successful urban garden centre at a time when few such businesses existed.

"He got very ill. Virtually on his deathbed, he said to me, 'If you don't go and open the garden centre, it's not going to open,'" Carducci recalled.

"So I left school, quit school and I came here, knowing nothing about what to do or how to begin."

That was 1981. Within two years, Bill's Garden Centre, as residents and patrons know it today, evolved out of the supermarket Carducci's parents and grandparents had owned and operated since the 1940s.

When Carducci decided to retire earlier this year, the choice to carry on the tradition might have fallen to his eldest son, William Carducci. But the younger Carducci anticipates another career path — so the older Carducci initially planned to just close down.

"I didn't even want to sell. I didn't even really have any intention of selling," he said. "I was going to close it. I thought, 'I'll just liquidate everything

and I'll close it."

But as Carducci told people in the industry about his intentions, offers started coming in for the business. He found a buyer willing to continue "Bill's" vision and serve the loyal customer base that had grown with him.

The new owners even asked to retain the store's name. That gave Carducci pause.

"I gave it a great deal of thought because I did want to retire it, but then I thought, 'You know what? They're right. Why retire it? If I have complete faith in these people, have complete faith in what's going to happen here, then I should be proud that the name stays,'" he said.

At 61, Carducci appears energetic and optimistic, something he attributes to his work.

"This business has been kind to me. I love this so much and I think it's been such a passion in my life that I don't feel that it's dragged me down," he said. "It's been a real gift in my life."

Wait lists frustrating to East York residents who need supported housing

By **AILEEN DONNELLY**

The search for adequate housing often adds to the challenges associated with caring for a loved one with a mental illness.

So the East York chapter of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario held an information session regarding access to supported housing at Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH) on Sept. 14.

Geoffrey Gold, 30, has spent the last eight years on a waiting list with the organization Housing Connections.

He attended the meeting at TEGH with his parents, Peter and Kirsten Gold, because they don't know if he will ever get out of the boarding house he currently lives in.

"He wants a one-bedroom apartment. I think he can be on his own. When is he going to get it? What's the likelihood of him getting it?" Peter Gold said. "Maybe he never will get it. So I have to look for myself."

Two representatives from Progress Place discussed the benefits of joining a "club-house." That kind of organization promotes psycho-social rehabilitation and members make a meaningful contribution to the day-to-day operations.

Alyssa Henning represented Coordinated Access to Supportive Housing, a program funded by Leap of Faith Together (LOFT) Community Services. She explained the new, streamlined application process for supportive housing in Toronto.

Henning estimates the current wait-time for supportive housing at one month to eight years. This disparity depends on a variety of factors, including level of support required, current living conditions and the type of housing required.

Henning explained that Coordinated Access to Supportive



ALYSSA HENNING

Streamlining applications

Housing has simplified the application process since its inception last November. While applicants once had to fill out a form for each of the 28 housing providers in Toronto, they can now use one application to apply for as many as they want.

"Our mission for the project is to streamline and improve access to supportive housing," she said. "And get the data we need for service planning so we now know how many people are waiting.... We can now start pulling it all together and start arguing for more funding."

The organization has not added units to the almost 4,500 that currently exist in Toronto. However, with reliable data, including another 2,000 applications since last year, the organization can now provide a case for more support.

Peter Gold feels disappointed with the system that has kept his son waiting, but he realizes that it takes time to create change within a government agency.

"I think funding, of course, is the number one issue. If they don't have any funding, they won't be able to do anything. But I think they're on the right track," he said.

"I would like to see this expanded. I would like to really see them communicate with the people."