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Local youth show off
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Ash borers prompt tree
quarantine in Scarborough
See page 3



THE EAST TORONTO OBSERVER

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Explosion leaves condos powerless

Guildwood residents forced from homes by hydro mishap

MATTHEW ALLEYNE
The Observer

A week after an electrical explosion that left the Guildwood Village Condo complex powerless, more than 500 residents were still not allowed to return home.

The residents of 3650 Kingston Rd. were forced to evacuate after an explosion in the condo complex led to a chain reaction that destroyed a Toronto Hydro transformer next to the building.

Destroyed room

The explosion happened on March 19 at 2:30 a.m., destroying one wall of the electrical room and leaving both the nine-storey condo complex and several townhouses on the complex's west side without power.

Fire officials led an evacuation that took place over several hours throughout the morning.

"We were just told to evacuate," said Lavindra Thurairatnam, who was waiting outside with his family. "I don't even know why, or when we can go back home."

Police made the determination to evacuate the entire building "in the interest of safety," said Insp. Bernadette Button from 43 Division.

Temporary shelter

"There is no fire protection, there are no elevators, and there is no power in the building," said Bob O'Hallarn, Toronto Fire division commander.

City spokesman Patricia Trott says the temporary shelter at the Scarborough Village Recreation Centre was used to house 30 people the first night.

It remained open past the first 24 hours due to the need.

Residents were allowed last weekend under escort to



MATTHEW ALLEYNE/The Observer

Residents from the Guildwood Village Condo complex carry belongings out of their apartment after the explosion.

return home to pick up needed personal items, such as clothing and medication.

"The recreation centre is stilling being used as an information centre for residents where they can find further information on city

services," Trott says.

"Some families have been provided with hotel accommodations until Saturday March 28, and extensions will be addressed on a case-by-case bases."

Unlike the event that took

place earlier this year on Second Ave., which left 900 people displaced for six weeks, this explosion was isolated to an electrical room and an outdoor transformer, and not a hydro vault, O'Hallarn said.

But after a week, there still has been no cause for the explosion given by the condo's management.

Trott says that work on restoring power continues but it may take some time since there was extensive damage.



Courtesy of Abi Singam

Protesters take part in Scarborough rally against employment insurance policies they call unfair on March 16.

Jobs group seeks EI changes

ANTHONY GEREMIA
The Observer

Several hundred people demonstrated outside a Scarborough Employment Insurance office on March 16 to press the federal government to change employment insurance policies.

The rally was organized by the the Good Jobs for All Coalition, a group of over 35 labour, social, and community organizations.

The government has shown a lack of response to the global economic crisis, the rally was told by Peggy Nash, senior representative of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) and member of the Coalition.

"Employment insurance is one of the best economic stabilizers during a downturn,"

Nash said. Yet the new budget introduced in Ottawa earlier this year contained no efforts to fix employment insurance policies, she said.

Because the rules for EI had been changed earlier, she said, the government ended up with a massive surplus.

But rather than fix it to help mitigate the crisis, the government chose to balance the budget, Nash said.

She called for EI to be made easier for people to access, since "a majority of unemployed people can't collect it. There's a patchwork of hoops to jump through."

With unemployment in Ontario at 8.7 per cent, its highest rate in 12 years, more citizens might need the temporary help of employment insurance these days.

However, due to policy changes introduced from 1990 to 1996, many Ontario citizens are finding the insurance failing them when they need it most.

StatsCan reports that only 30 per cent of the unemployed in Ontario qualify for EI.

This number is less than the national average of 40 per cent and much less than

the 80 per cent boasted by Newfoundland and New Brunswick.

The objective of the rally was what Nash referred to as "a call to the federal government."

The coalition proposes the government set a standard of the minimum required hours to qualify for the universal insurance. Right now, the standards varies in different areas across Ontario.

In addition, the Coalition wants beneficiaries to receive a minimum of 60 per cent of their former wages for 50 weeks. The current system allows only 38 weeks.

Nash says she remains optimistic about their chances, pointing out the rally so far has been "making an impression in the media."

Employment insurance is one of the best economic stabilizers during a downturn
- Peggy Nash

NEWS

Meters show promise

New electricity system alleviates high demand

KATRINA ROZAL
The Observer

Three months after Toronto Hydro's installation of smart meters, East Scarborough residents appear to be accepting the province's gradual transition towards a new electric billing system.

"The new smart meter is great because it's more accurate than the old one," said Revathy Navaretan, a resident of the Rouge area for four and a half years. "I had a problem with the old one: because of its estimated measurements I was once charged twice for my monthly bill and having to fix that was a hassle."

Most of East Scarborough's

houses and small businesses lost their old electric meters to smart meters, which became mandatory as of last November.

Houses and small commercial areas in the West Hill, Woburn, Highland Creek and Malvern areas, except for a couple of thousand properties with locked gates, have had new meters installed, according to Toronto Hydro's Tanya Bruckmueller-Wilson.

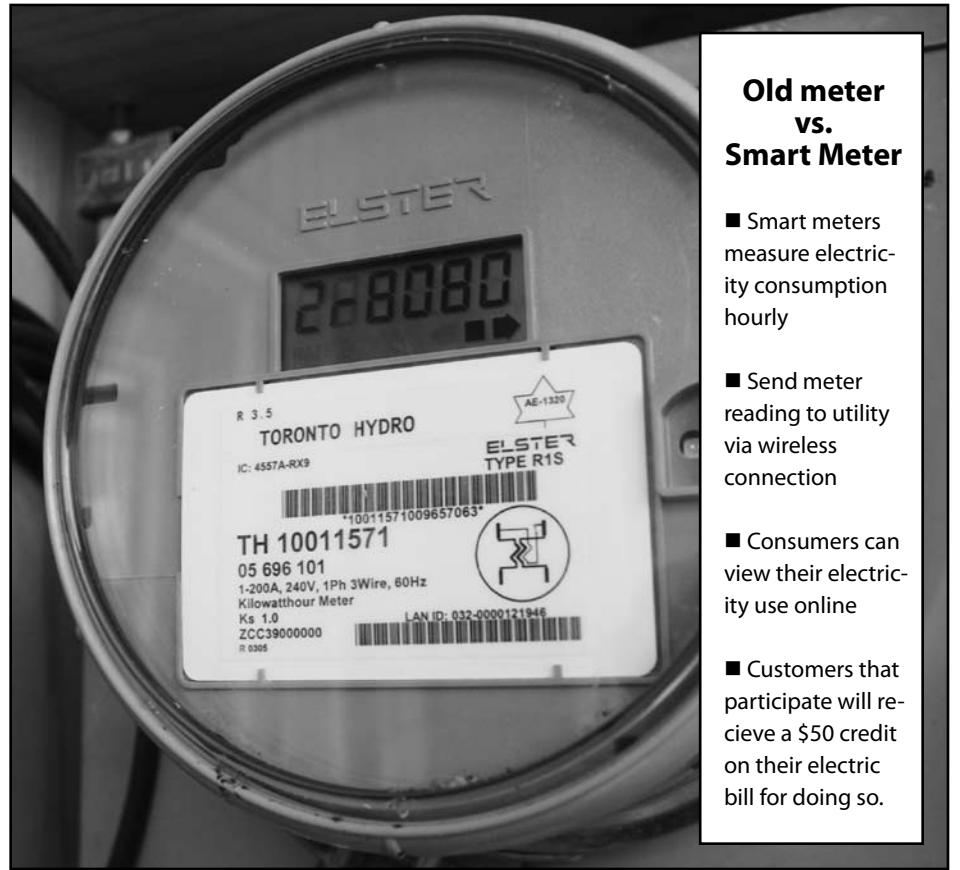
A smarter decision

A smart meter records total electricity consumption per hour and sends it to a wireless device. This allows property owners to measure electricity consumption at different

times during the day. This should reduce peak periods along with demand for non-environmentally friendly forms of energy such as coal.

The smart meters go hand-in-hand with a time-of-use electricity rate system to be made mandatory in the near future. The rate system consists of three periods: off-peak (at 4 cents/kwh), mid-peak (at 7.2 cents/kwh) and on-peak (at 8.8 cents/kwh).

Pricing is subject to change every six months, but the lowest price generally applies from 10 p.m. to 7 p.m. as well as holidays and weekends. Toronto Hydro will announce when this billing system will become mandatory in East Scarborough.



Old meter vs. Smart Meter

- Smart meters measure electricity consumption hourly
- Send meter reading to utility via wireless connection
- Consumers can view their electricity use online
- Customers that participate will receive a \$50 credit on their electric bill for doing so.

KATRINA ROZAL/The Observer

The province's goal is to have smart meters become standard by 2010 and for Ontario to have a new electricity system by 2025.

School cuts still a danger: trustee

STEPHANIE LEUNG
The Observer

High enrolment and large class sizes won't necessarily mean fewer education assistant and teacher-librarian cuts for public schools in East Scarborough, warns a local trustee.

The number of educational assistants' job cuts will depend on each school's population, class size and the number of student enrolment they have every year, Ward 19 trustee Scott Harrison said.

"Schools in East Scarborough are at or over the capacity but it means nothing to the bigger factor," Harrison said.

The Toronto school board's budget for 2009-10 has not been finalized yet, so it is uncertain whether or not the educational assistant job cuts will affect the area.

On March 18, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) voted on making 36 teacher-librarian and 150 educational assistant cuts in Toronto public schools due to the board's \$23-million deficit next year.

The TDSB is yet to decide in which schools they will be making the cuts.

Education assistants and teacher-librarians who are on contract will be notified by the board in March or April.

Open house celebrates youth immigration centre

TEVY PILC
The Observer

Overcome with emotion, Frankie Zhang started to cry.

"I have been enrolled in the Host Mentorship Program for about 4 months," said Zhang, a grade nine student at Sir Winston Churchill Collegiate Institute. "I emigrated from China and have been in Canada for almost three years."

Service for everyone

Frankie is just one of several young immigrants active with the Newcomer Services for Youth (NSY), which held an open house at one of its new centres March 19. The storefront facility on Kingston Road, just south of Lawrence Avenue, was filled to capacity, as guests enjoyed in the celebrations.

The new location will help serve the settlement needs of immigrant youth between the ages of 13 to 24 in East Scarborough. The centre is one of four new locations in Toronto, including one in Malvern,



TEVY PILC/The Observer

TDSB trustee Nadia Bello, MP John McKay, Councillor Ron Moeser and Newcomer Services project administrator Bantu Mutenka cut a ceremonial cake at the open house for the new Kingston-Galloway centre for youth newcomer services.

providing support.

Guests included local MP John McKay and Councillor Ron Moeser, who alongside organizers helped cut the ceremonial ribbon and cake.

"It's neat to see the community try and bring itself together," McKay said. "There are so many types of communities and the tendencies to

do our own things, yet people come to Canada and become Canadian and this is one of those facilities that allow everyone to become Canadian."

The event also featured raffles and prizes, refreshments and a special performance by local singer, Damone Clark.

The centre opened nearly

six months ago at the start of the school year.

"We're the first agency of its kind in this area," said Yasmin Dinally, NSY Intake Orientation and Outreach Director. "We're unique because we only serve ages 13 to 24, but right now we're trying to service basically everyone in the community."

Organized and operated by the TDSB, the NSY offers a variety of programs and services for immigrant youths in Toronto. One of its central parts is the mentorship program, which matches a student with one of the volunteers or workers with NSY. The centre also helps people with building job resumé.

One of a kind

"There aren't a whole lot of social services here in East Scarborough," Ward 22 trustee Nadia Bello said. "We're really under-resourced, but a place like this can become a place where all youth can gather, like a safe space for youth, and become adjusted and integrated.

"It gives you a lot of opportunities, like free trips and help with job searches," said Advait Kirtane, a grade 11 student from Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute. He came to Canada eight months ago. He frequents the centre as an afterschool hub where he can do his work, browse the internet, or just relax.

News Briefs

Possible source for employment

The Ontario Power Generation said last week the construction of the proposed nuclear plant at the Darlington site will create about 3,500 jobs for Scarborough, Peterborough and Northumberland.

Scarborough rapper in India

Kardinal Offishall began his tour in India on March 19. He will perform in Mumbai, Delhi and other cities. Born in Scarborough, Harrow has released two albums including Eye & I and Quest for fire.

Two men on the run after assault

Two middle-aged women were mugged in the area of Sheppard Avenue East and Hallbank Terrace on March 18. Only one victim suffered minor injuries. The suspects fled the scene and are now wanted by police.

Milner fire costs \$200,000

A fire at a Scarborough townhouse complex on Milner Avenue caused \$200,000 in damages on March 13. It started in one of the units at 10 a.m. No one was injured. The source of the fire was electrical.

Diversity at UTSC on display

Students at University of Toronto Scarborough celebrated Cultural Mosaic week during the week of March 16. Students showcased their cultures through a fashion show, an international food fest and dance.

Toronto proposes hiring 1,300

City looks to create new positions

RIMA RAMOUL
The Observer

Local residents are tweaking their resumes as the City of Toronto prepares to embark on a massive hiring spree, opening up to 1,300 new positions.

A few city councillors may be questioning some of the proposed positions, such as a BlackBerry specialist. But this still comes as good news to many who have been searching for jobs or have been laid off.

Tahmina Sarwari, a 21-year-old student, purchased her first car nearly a year ago.

She now has to worry about her insurance, her tuition, and her cell phone bills piling up. Her credit cards are maxed out and she finds herself in a desperate situation.

The fact that she is also



RIMA RAMOUL/The Observer

Shoaib Quraishi searches for jobs on his laptop after City Hall proposed 1,300 new positions. Potential jobs include a BlackBerry specialist, administrative support, maintenance patrollers, counsellors and inspectors.

unemployed doesn't help either. She's been searching for a job for over seven months.

"It's been hectic, I didn't

realize how hard it would be," she says. "I mean as a bilingual person I thought it would be easy, especially

with my experience in finance.

"But I'm starting to personally feel the impact of the

U.S. economy crashing."

She says she generally dismissed ideas of a recession, saying the claims were

overblown, and thought she was immune to its effects. But now she has second thoughts.

"I feel like that with the limited amount of positions out there I feel like there's a lot more competition than, say, a year ago."

After one of her friends alerted

her about the city's potential hiring spree, Sarwari immediately jumped



SARWARI

online and started sifting through the possible job opportunities.

The jobs are making their way through the city's budget process and will go to council for final approval next week.

Proposed jobs include a manager in charge of keeping our streets clean, a maintenance patroller, inspectors to crack down on grow-ops.

To get more information on how to apply and a list of jobs available from the city, visit toronto.ca/employment.

Trees protected from bug attack

MAXX SMITH
The Observer

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is quarantining trees in Scarborough to save them from a bug infestation.

Just one centimeter long, the emerald ash borer has been found in Scarborough ash trees in the area of Sheppard Avenue East and Highway 404 in North York. The insect from Asia attacks all species of ash trees.

"The emerald ash borer has killed millions of ash trees in Southwestern Ontario, Michigan and surrounding states, and poses a major economic and environmental threat to

urban and forested areas in both countries," the CFIA reported.

The bug was discovered in 2002 in Detroit. Having been present for years before its discovery, the insect had wreaked havoc on Canadian trees without any measures of control against it.

It is very difficult to detect infestations because symptoms and damages usually become evident two to four years after the initial infestation.

"Infestations elsewhere in North America have

increased and spread despite significant control measures attempted. Once established, the emerald ash borer has proven impossible to control," the City of Toronto warned.

The CFIA has placed restrictions on the movement of nursery stock, trees, and lumber from all ash species, as well as firewood from all tree species outside the area, to prevent the spread of the insect.

To report a tree that may be infested by the emerald ash borer, call 1-866-463-6017.



ASH BORER

Signs of infestation

- S-shape tunneling under bark of the tree
- Thinning and yellowing leaves
- The presence of roots with leaves growing from the trunk
- Vertical cracks in the trunk
- Tree death

Love never grows old

AMANDA LY
The Observer

Dating is not only for lusty teenagers, as area seniors are joining in on the fun too.

St. Paul's L'Amoreaux Centre is creating a speed dating service for seniors and older adults. It is open to anyone age 55 and up and people from across the GTA are welcome to sign up for this event taking place on April 4.

Though speed dating may seem novel to some, it still upholds traditional rules of courtship. Each couple will spend seven to 10 minutes talking. As a nod to chivalry, at the end of each round the women stay seated while the

men must get up to meet their new partner.

At the end, each person writes down the names of people they're interested in and, if there's a match, St. Paul's will inform both parties.

It's not all about romantic relationships, said Michele Cauch, a communications representative for St. Paul's.

"What we're trying to do is bring people together. It's challenging to meet companions at any age but perhaps a little more challenging at this age."

To participate, call St. Paul's at 416-493-3333. The next session will be held in September.

News Briefs

File tax return for free

The Highland Creek library will host a free income tax clinic on March 28 from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Volunteers from the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program will help residents with their tax returns. For an appointment call 416-396-8876.

Library looking for tutors

The Morningside library is looking for volunteers, including seniors and students, to tutor elementary students. Volunteers should be available for one hour per week. If interested, contact the library at 416-396-8881.

Local CIBC opens Sundays

Beginning on March 15, the CIBC branch on Morningside will open from noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays. CIBC plans to do the same with the other branches by the end of 2009, Christina Kramer, vice-president of retail markets said.

Romeo and Juliet in town

Romeo and Juliet will be on stage at the Theatre Scarborough next month. The shows will be from April 2 to 4, 9 to 11, and 16 to 18, starting at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$17 for adults and \$14 for seniors and students. For tickets, call 416-396-4049.

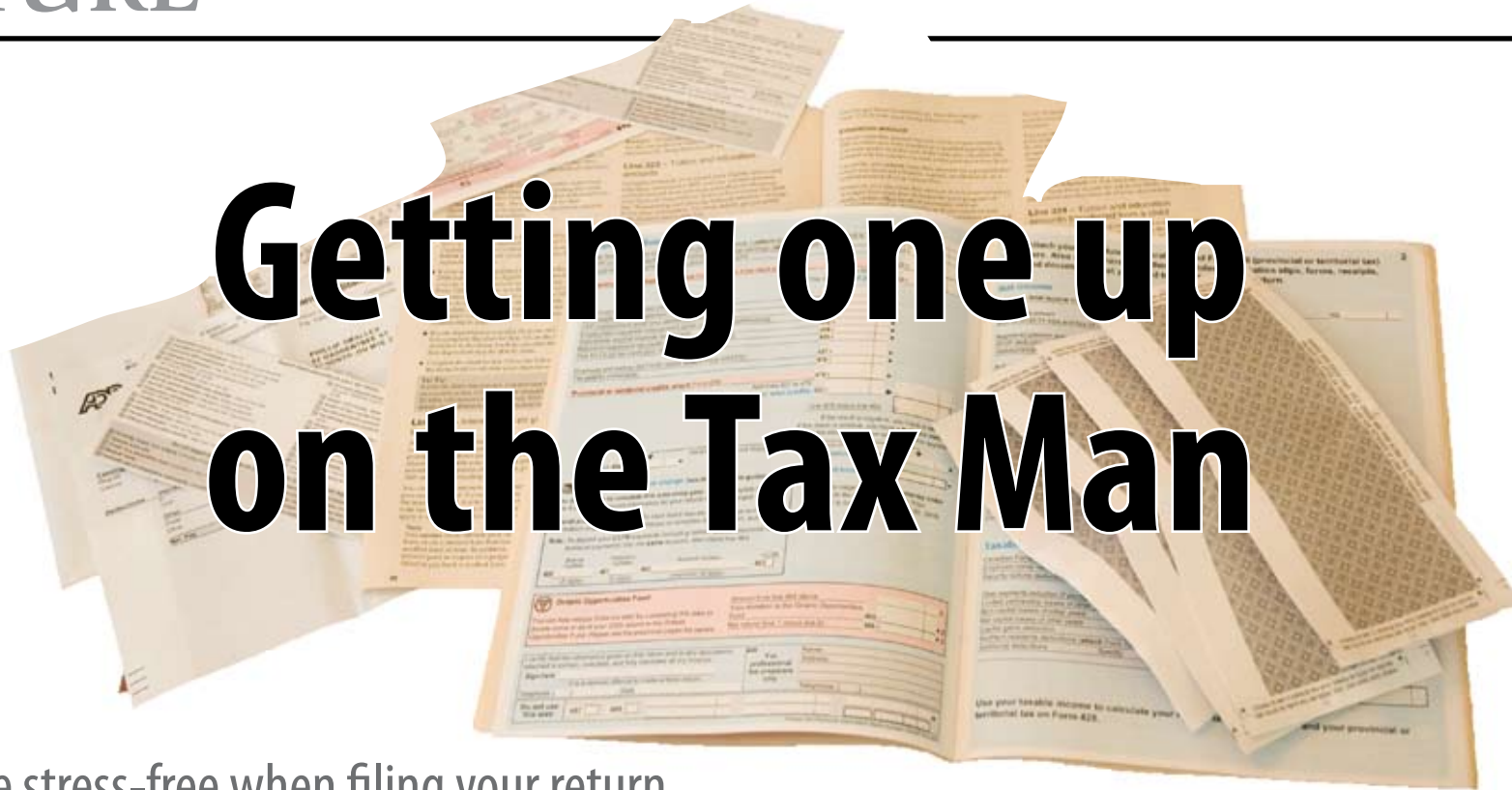
Auditions open for Tom Jones

Scarborough Players is looking for actors for the upcoming play Tom Jones. Audition dates are March 28 at 2 p.m., March 29 at 4 p.m. and March 30 at 7 p.m. The play is based on Henry Fielding's novel. To audition, call 416-439-1104.

Students finish cooking classes

The culinary program for Scarborough's youth at risk ended on March 10. The 14 participants of the Eastside Cooking Corner received their certificates at their graduation dinner. The program was created by two officers of 43 Division.

FEATURE



Getting one up on the Tax Man

How to be stress-free when filing your return

If you are expecting a tax refund this year, you have options that can decrease the wait time from weeks to days — or even minutes — before you have your money in your pocket.

Gone are the days when it was necessary to spend a whole weekend with a pencil, calculator, and a stack of forms going over a year's worth of financial information. Software like QuickTax and Ufile are designed to help Canadians wade through the complex calculations involved in filing personal taxes.

"Times are pretty tough right now for a lot of people. For a lot of families in Canada the tax refund cheque they get every year is the biggest one, and we want to make sure they get every dollar they deserve," said Geoffrey Morgan, PR manager for QuickTax publisher Intuit.

Both QuickTax and Ufile have an online version and a downloadable version of their program which supports Netfile, an electronic filing system used by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) that replaces paper copy and allows for a refund to be processed in as little as eight business days.

For those worried about security and identity theft, Morgan says most Canadians are comfortable using the net for secure transactions, which makes it easy to file online.

"With the same security standards of most banks — if you are comfortable paying a bill online, you should be comfortable doing your taxes online too."

But for those who prefer a more traditional human touch to filing taxes, without the traditional wait time for returns, Daljeet Sahota, of H&R Block at Kingston Rd. and Morningside Ave., and her staff are waiting to help get you your money.

"We have a staff of 15 that speak various languages from Tamil to Mandarin, because we want people to feel comfortable when they come into our office."

The average time from when you walk into their office to when you get your return can be as short as 15 minutes. H&R Block files returns electronically and gives their customers the choice of either waiting for their return from CRA or instant cash back.

Like QuickTax and Ufile, H&R Block also has an online site that can be used to help file your taxes. The cost involved in using QuickTax, Ufile, or H&R Block can vary, depending on factors such as income and age.

If you are still not sure which service to use, an *Observer* reporter tested all three online services to compare usability and the amount each service calculated for a refund.

The results were identical in all three. The only difference was the general interface of each service taking you through preparing your taxes, which varies in features, comprehensiveness, and technical support. We found QuickTax offered their users a wider range of support options than the other two services.



Matthew ALLEYNE



Photos by **MATTHEW ALLEYNE**

Above: H&R Block customer walks in and gets her 2008 tax return in just 15 minutes. Below: Trudy Firmage at the H&R Block at Morningside and Kingston Road.



Major Federal Tax Relief for Individuals and Families

Introduced in 2006:

- Introduction of the Canada Employment Credit
- Double the pension income amount
- Increase the Age Credit amount
- Introduction of the Public Transit Tax Credit

Introduced in 2007:

- Reduction of the lowest personal income tax rate from 15.5 to 15 per cent
- Introduction of the Working Income Tax Benefit
- Introduction of the Child Tax Credit
- Introduction of pension income splitting

Introduced in 2008:

- Reduction of GST rate to 5 per cent

Introduced in 2009:

- Increase in the basic personal amount to \$10,100

Source: budget.gc.ca

Dealing with the necessary evils and benefits of taxes

Aside from nicer weather and cleaning up the house, spring means one thing for many people: Tax time.

Peter Delis, spokesman for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), says it's important to file your return. With lots of tax credits, you might find yourself with more money than you think.

"We've got this campaign, where basically if you've earned it, claim it," he says. "You've got charitable deductions, Metropass credits, a whole list of things that could help."

Tax jargon

But the process can sometimes be daunting. Local resident Mihir Sircar feels the tax language is too difficult to understand for the average person.

"The government has made the forms easy for themselves, they're set up in [the government's] format," he says. "These forms need to be in plain English, it should be the gov-



Phil SMALLEY

ernment's job to decipher our language instead of our job to figure out their complicated paperwork."

Sircar feels it's unfair Canadians don't get paid to file our tax return, and CRA employees do. The worst part is that there can even be criminal offences charged to those who file late or improperly when they owe the government

The government has made the forms easy for themselves.

*- Mihir Sircar
Local resident*

money. At the very least, there are fines.

"If you don't get the forms in on time, there is a five percent penalty on the total, along with one percent added every month it is late," Delis says.

"But it is really unnecessary, because you have a lot of time to do it," he says. "Also, if you are self employed, the deadline is extended to June 15."

Hand it in

Every spring Ottawa saves a lot of money by those who do not file on time.

One interesting thing to think about for the upcoming year in taxes is the Home Renovation Tax Credit. It's only available if you start a project after Jan. 27 of this year, but its only valid until Feb. 1, 2010.

This one-time deal is meant to lift a sagging economy and is family based, with a tax credit limit of up to \$10,000. Documents aren't completely necessary, but you need to keep records of everything in case you get audited.

For more information go to www.cra-arc.gc.ca.



DAMION AUGUSTIN

Rapping a new tune for Toronto

RIMA RAMOUL
The Observer

Calling all singers — professionals and amateurs alike.

To celebrate its 175th anniversary in true style, Toronto is hosting a song competition.

The city is looking for an original song “that is evocative of our wonderful city” and will “pay homage to Toronto’s amazing spirit and its unparalleled diversity,” according to the city website.

One prospective contestant is Scarborough’s Damion Augustin, 28, who has already put out two albums.

Toronto is often an inspiration for this rapper, but it was the incessant acts of violence occurring in the city that informed his lyrics.

When he heard about the city hosting a song competition, he wanted to write again, but this time to paint Toronto in a positive light.

New tune, old city

“Welcome to my city,” he raps. “One hundred and seventy-five years of greatness/ welcome to my city/ Toronto is a city where everyone is welcome/ the multiculturalism is the best thing/ it separates us from all the other cities/ welcome to my city/ welcome to Toronto /175 years of greatness/ welcome to my city.”

He has not yet decided whether he will enter the contest, but he came up with the short rap just in case.

So far, not many details about the contest have been released. Participants are encouraged to record their song in any musical style they wish.

It also needs to be four minutes long, or even shorter, and in MP3 format.

And if you need a little push to get you to start composing, maybe this will help.

The winner will receive a cash prize of \$5,000.

More details will be posted at www.toronto.ca/175/song_competition.htm.



Courtesy of Meghan Janushewski

Clothes by aspiring designer Monique Marianchuk are among those modelled at the Fashion Phoenix show at the Scarborough Civic Centre this month.

Local fashion phoenix rises

Scarborough showcases style

AMANDA LY
The Observer

Scarborough has style too. Not to mention creative designers and beautiful models — as seen at a fashion show at Scarborough Civic Centre on March 14.

ANASA (Always Nubian Always Scarborough Association) put on the event to show its members and the community it’s possible to have a future in fashion — even if you come from Scarborough.

The show, called Fashion Phoenix, coincided with Toronto Fashion Week. Three designers and ANASA’s youth committee sent four collections down the runway. The production took about eight months to plan.

Youth worker Nadine Peazer said she and most of the volunteers had no previous professional fashion industry experience, so putting on a show for 250 people was no easy task, but this was too important to give up on.

“We in Scarborough are

lacking when it comes to resources and public space for people to create,” Peazer said.

“It’s important to give light to young leaders doing new and inventive things in this area.”

The girls ages 14–24 learned new skills they can take with them to future careers.

Some of the girls come from Malvern and Scarborough Village and face social barriers unique to their environment, Peazer said.

Some of the young women she encountered were single mothers, some told stories of dropping out of college for financial reasons, while others dropped out of high school because of an education system they felt marginalized in.

The Scarborough-based group helps the girls improve their self-esteem through workshops that address health, relationships, and employment opportunities.

“We want them to advance in all areas of their life,” Peazer said.

REVIEW

Topical play sheds light on dark content

LAURA ROSS
The Observer

Despite touching on sad subjects, *Kiss the Moon*, *Kiss the Sun* stayed light and humorous. It reminded me of how amazing and how important the bonds we form with other people can be.

Kiss the Moon, *Kiss the Sun* is a two act comedy written by local resident Norm Foster, who attended West Hill Collegiate Institute.

The play’s appeal was its simplicity and the intimate setting, which the Scarborough Theatre Guild provided.

The small stage was surrounded on three sides by the audience and divided into four permanent sets.

The cast of only five easily got the audience involved in their stories as the characters developed.

A 35-year-old man with the mental capacity of an eight-year-old, Robert Castle is a charming and endearing character. Played by newcomer to



Courtesy of the Scarborough Theatre Guild

Robert Castle (Tommy Boston) meets the pregnant Holly Fitch (Julie Jarrett) for the first time while waiting for the bus.

the theatre Tommy Boston, who had the audience laughing the whole show with his antics and unfiltered honesty.

Robert misses his bus one morning and meets a girl named Holly Fitch crying at the bus stop.

She has just told her boyfriend Simon she is pregnant.

He is her former professor and still going through divorce proceedings, so he sees the pregnancy as an unwanted complication.

Robert innocently tells

Holly that there is no need to cry because another bus will come by in 10 minutes — and the unlikely friendship starts.

The title of the play was inspired by the touching relationship between Claire Castle and her son Robert.

Before leaving the house, Robert always kisses his mother on the cheek and says, “Kiss the moon.” This represents his mother watching over him because he will always be a child and need protecting.

Claire responds by kissing Robert on the forehead and saying, “Kiss the sun.” This signifies the light and joy that Robert brings to her life every day.

What follows is a complex web of interconnected obstacles that the characters must overcome

On the surface, *Kiss the Moon*, *Kiss the Sun* is about a mentally handicapped man named Robert Castle.

But on a deeper level it is also about relationships born out of hard times and the connections we make with other people.

Kiss the Moon, *Kiss the Sun* was a pleasure to watch, so look out for the next Scarborough Theatre Guild production, *My Darling Judith*, coming in May.

Respecting our troops

When a news commentator for Fox News made disrespectful comments against Canada's military, it created a media firestorm. The news came on the heels of four more Canadian soldiers killed and eight others wounded in two separate roadside bombings in Afghanistan.

On his show *Red Eye*, Greg Gutfeld said, "Meaning, the Canadian military wants to take a breather to do some yoga, paint landscapes, run on the beach in gorgeous white Capri pants." His comment came after Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, the chief commander of the army, said the military might need a year to recover after Canada's mission in Afghanistan ends in 2011.

The Canadian military should be respected unconditionally for the sacrifice they are making overseas to make someone's life better. Canada bows its head when a procession carries the dead on the Highway of Heroes. Canada sheds a tear when another soldier is lost to a firefright or roadside bomb. Canada celebrates when our boys make it home alive.

It is disappointing when some late-night news host on an American network makes defamatory remarks against the Canadian military. It is practically a slap in the face to every Canadian and every soldier fighting in the war in Afghanistan. But then again, who cares? Who cares what this guy on TV has to say?

Greg Gutfeld's show is broadcast at three in the morning on weekdays on Fox News. It is his career he puts on the line when he says rude comments about something so important and honoured. When the government of a foreign nation calls your employer, demanding an immediate apology, it looks bad to your audience and to the world. (Gutfeld did indeed apologize, but almost a week after the fact.) Who would watch your show after that?

His comments are inconsequential to those in Canada and those in Afghanistan.

It is a drop of water in a sea of people who care for the mission in Afghanistan and would never breathe a bad word against it.

— Lauren Hummel

More than just an hour at a time

The second anniversary of Earth Hour is almost here. Many people will participate by shutting off their lights and other energy-consuming products in support of the global fight against accelerated climate change.

The rest of us, though, won't participate in Earth Hour because it might be too much of an inconvenience or some people might not even know about it.

Though "Saving the Earth" may be part of a popular fad, it's also a small step toward something more sustainable in the long term. But some have problems about the longevity this initiative seems to lack, which is the inaction before and after Earth Hour. What's going to happen when everyone flicks on all their electronics and lights after Earth Hour is up?

If these 60 minutes of the year is all you have to feel good about yourself for making a difference, it's time to get your head out of the sand. Step back and look at the bigger picture.

When you look at the bigger picture you will see that a global recession could have been prevented if it was not for careless overconsumption and widespread greed. Now we have a bigger problem — there is too much demand on our planet's fragile ecosystem. Something bigger, better, and more innovative is needed to stop temperatures from rising, to stop our icebergs from shrinking, and to stop our sea levels from rising.

People need to put more pressure on their governments to make long-term decisions on low carbon growth technologies and alternative energy sources to reduce greenhouse gases. The Canadian government has been lacking in making these long-term goals. It has ignored the Kyoto Protocol and failed to meet any of the greenhouse gas emissions standards set in the treaty.

In a society so transfixed on technology, taking responsibility is the first step to a sustainable future. If you do decide to look at the bigger picture, you will see in the battle of action versus inaction, the cost of action is far less.

— Kareen Awadalla

Local heroes save the day



PHILLIP SMALLEY/The Observer

Highland Creek sends out S.O.S

Recently a resident of Highland Creek started a discussion with me regarding his community. He was very passionate in explaining that, as a young adult living in the area, he found Highland Creek was in desperate need of modernization and general upkeep.

But Highland Creek has never received any help from any levels of governments to beautify the area. Whose responsibility is it to restore this historic community to its former glory? Is it the government's responsibility or is it the people's responsibility who make up the community?

Back in the 1850s, Highland Creek was the largest residential and business community in Scarborough.



Celeste
De Muelenaere

While many other smaller communities within Toronto, especially in the west end, have flourished over the last decade or so, some areas such as Highland Creek have become outdated and rundown.

In the late 1990s there was much expectation and high hopes that a cameo of one of Highland Creek landmarks,

Amazing Ted's Restaurant, in the film *Pushing Tin* would elevate the community to new heights.

Many people had hoped such exposure would bring a new popularity to this Scarborough community. But Highland Creek is now better known for decrepit roads, rundown buildings, and Old Kingston Road that runs through it.

So where have all the community's finances gone? Has the government neglected this east-end community in favour of a multi-million dollar project in aid of the Pan Am games?

While some developments, such as The Mills at Highland Creek homes, are in the

works, this will not help the community's status. These modern residences will start at half a million dollars, a ridiculous amount considering our current economic troubles.

Instead of building new homes, we should invest in the upkeep of all the historic buildings and homes, some of which are the oldest in Scarborough.

It is the government's job to provide the necessary funding for upkeep and development. However, each person has their part in maintaining the aesthetics of their community.

With a little paint, some road work and community support, Highland Creek could become the east end's Uxbridge.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I'd have to agree with Anthony Geremia's editorial "Post-Secondary Thought": university students going for vague liberal arts or social science degrees tend to find

themselves lost after graduation.

Most undergraduate degrees no longer signify qualification.

They denote only the ability to commit to something and work moderately at it for four years.

Now that everyone and their

mother has these once prestigious pieces of paper, they've become an expectation for many employers, not an edge for graduates.

So far all my UofT Bachelor of Arts has earned me is \$28,000 of student debt (but I admit that the job market really sucks lately).

If the government really wants to boost the economy and employee rates, maybe it should consider spending money fostering entry-level jobs to help new grads get their foot in the door.

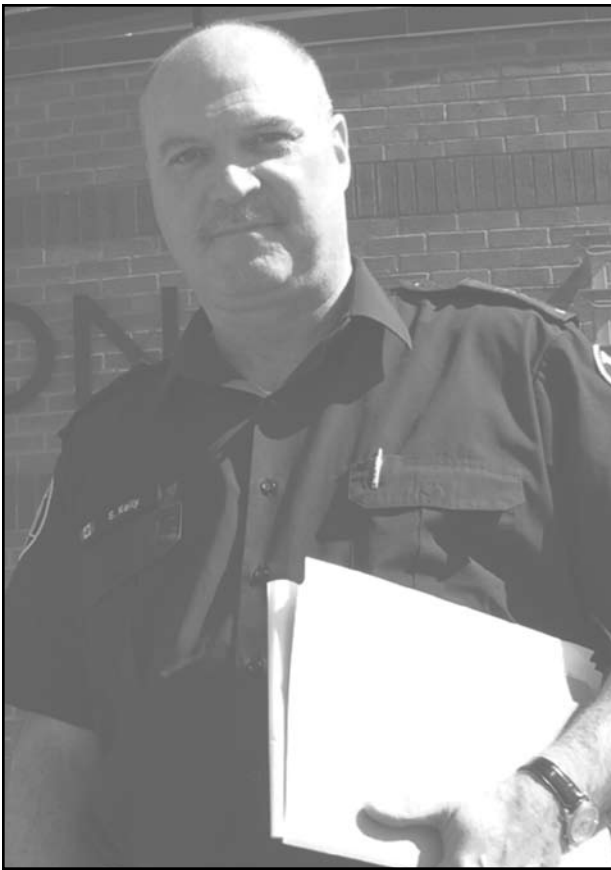
— Shayla Duval
(Malvern resident since 1989)

The East Toronto OBSERVER

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GESILAYEFA AZORBO/The Observer

Sergeant Steve Kelly heads up the new Bail Compliance Unit, which aims to deter violent re-offenders.

Cops toughen bail restrictions

New 43 Division program to keep close tabs on accused before court date

GESILAYEFA AZORBO
The Observer

Residents of south-east Scarborough can rest a little easier knowing a new aspect of crime prevention has been added to police coverage of the area.

A spokesperson for 43 Division announced the creation of a new unit to tackle the problem of bail re-offenders, called the Bail Compliance Unit. Police Constable Bill Campbell, crime prevention officer for 43 Division, announced the new initiative at a town hall community meeting with Councillor Paul Ainslie of Ward 43 on Feb. 26.

The new program was

created to help prevent crime suspects released on bail from committing more crimes while waiting for their court date. This is to be done through unannounced police checks.

"Our Bail Compliance Unit now is going to be going around daytime, nighttime, afternoons, knocking on their door," PC Campbell said. "They have to answer the door, present themselves in person. If they're not there and they're under house arrest, they immediately get arrested, a warrant's taken out for them, they go back to jail."

The unit at 43 Division is the first fully operational

unit following successful pilot programs at 22, 55 and 51 Divisions. The program was created in part due to public outrage over the number of crimes committed by people in violation of their bail conditions.

The *Toronto Sun* compiled a list of some of the most recent of such cases, which included the October 13 killings of Scarborough resident Saramma Varughese and her daughter Susan John by their neighbour Nathaniel O'Brien, who was out on bail and under house arrest at the time.

"The chief and command have recognized that there's been an outcry from the citizens of Toronto that there

have been a lot of high-profile cases where people that are out currently on bail are committing other crimes. These are serious crimes we're concerned with, violent crimes," Sergeant Steve Kelly said, head of the unit at 43 Division.

The program is designed to monitor known violent offenders to deter them from future violent crimes. The unit has a top-ten list of the most wanted or most violent offenders who have warrants out for their arrest.

According to 43 Division one of the tasks of the Bail Compliance Unit will be to actively search for and arrest these offenders.

Businesses impacted by Walmart expansion

MATTHEW ALLEYNE
The Observer

One-stop shopping has found a new home in East Scarborough as Walmart celebrated the opening of its latest Supercentre at Morningside Ave. and Hwy. 401 on Feb. 27, but not everyone is thrilled.

The 15-year-old location underwent extensive renovation and expansion over the last year. More than 50,000 square feet was added to the facility's present size,

measuring more than 100,000 square feet.

"I have never been in a location where as many customers have come to me and thank me for doing this," store manager Mark Blake said. "They love the idea of the convenience of one-stop shopping."

The new store still has many of the departments and services such as the pharmacy and the one-hour photo centre, but with the added addition of an expanded grocery department.

"The new grocery department includes fresh bakery goods, frozen foods, meat and dairy products, fresh produce and a variety of organic products," Walmart Canada's Felicia Fefer said. "The store also includes a full deli with a variety of prepared foods."

But not everyone is immediately happy with the new superstore.

"Sales are down over all," Al Duke said, grocery manager of Sobeys' at Morningside.

We have noticed an impact, but we feel we still do fresh better
- Sobeys' manager

"We have noticed an impact, but we feel we still do fresh better than they do and our strength is our customer service."

Walmart currently employs 360 people at its Morningside location, 100 of which are positions added

by the expansion. Blake said the store will be looking to fill various seasonal positions throughout the summer months.

Walmart also celebrated the grand opening with the donation of \$30,000 to local Scarborough charities, such as the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club (ESBGC).

"We are looking forward to an ongoing relation with Walmart and look forward to the possibility for other fundraising activities in the community in the future," said Ron

Rock, executive director for ESBGC.

Rock says the \$4,000 the club received will go to funding summer programs and providing needy families with opportunities for their children to go to camp.

Other charities receiving donations include Birkdale Family Services, Breakfast Clubs of Canada, Scarborough Fire Department, Toronto Police 42 Division, West Hill Community Services and West Hill Public School.

SPORTS

Titans celebrate after successful season

TRISTAN CARTER
The Observer

"A TDCAA Championship and an OFSAA medal."

Those were the two goals Richard Gallacher, Mother Teresa Catholic Secondary School's senior boy's basketball coach, set out to accomplish at the beginning of this season.

The Titans successfully achieved these goals after earning a silver medal at the AAAA Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association (OFSAA) tournament and winning the Toronto District College Athletic Association (TDCAA) finals.

They finished their league's regular season by claiming the division A TDCAA championship after routing Father Henry Carr Catholic Secondary School by a score of

67-46. Entering the OFSAA tournament with a 35-5 record the Titans were expected to do well but Eastern Commerce was still the favourite, since they ranked number one in the province.

In the beginning

In the first two days of the tournament, Mother Teresa breezed through the opening rounds with an average margin of victory of 33 points. While St. Marguerite d'Youville from Brampton presented a challenge it was nothing that Ashton Khan and Maurice Walker couldn't handle; Khan scored 24 points while Walker scored 22.

Their first real test came in the semi-finals against the Pickering Trojans who were the eventual bronze medalists. Gallacher wanted to



TRISTAN CARTER/The Observer

Winning season: Mother Teresa's Titans have now added a TDCAA championship and OFSAA silver to their record.

play against the Trojans for a while.

"We still never played Pickering. I think they're ranked ahead of us. It's hard to tell where we're going," Gallacher said, in January.

The Trojans were the two-time defending OFSAA champs. Gallacher's team

passed that test with flying colours after a decisive 60-44 victory over Pickering, led by Jonathan Alexander's 22 point outing.

In a heartbreaking game that went down to the wire, the Titans barely lost to the Eastern Commerce in the finals by a score of 50-49. Mother

Teresa came with a balance attack, with Ryan Augustine dropping 11 points. Ashton Khan and Onnex Blackwood both scored 10. Eastern Commerce did a good job of containing Titans star Maurice Walker.

Walker was one of five players recently named the

Toronto Star high school basketball all-star team. He averaged 20 points and 14 rebounds per game this season. He is considering multiple offers to college teams in the United States next year. Titans guard, Ashton Khan was also mentioned in the *Star's* annual all-star list.

NEWS

Psychiatric ward under scrutiny

Allegations of mould, insect infestation and overuse of restraints

LAURA ROSS

The Observer

Charges of substandard living conditions at the psychiatric care unit at Rouge Valley Centenary Hospital are "wild and unfounded", says a health system spokesman.

David Brazeau, public affairs director for the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS), was responding to a letter from the Friends of the Ajax Pickering Hospital and articles in the *Toronto Star*.

The group wrote to the board of directors of the RVHS after saying they heard first-hand accounts of supposedly intolerable living conditions in the psychiatric ward. Complaints included unsanitary rooms with what looked like feces smeared

on the walls, insect infestation, black mold, overuse of restraints, overcrowding of rooms, substandard care and the lack of a psychiatric intensive care unit (PICU).

Consolidation issues

The Friends say these conditions have existed since 20 mental-health beds were recently moved to the Centenary campus from the Ajax and Pickering campus to save money and reduce debt.

"The Friends were opposed to the move of the psychiatric ward beds and the substance of their letter and subsequent story published in the *Toronto Star* were incorrect," Brazeau said in an interview. "Some of the allegations are just wild and unfounded and

the story of feces on the walls is completely untrue."

Another story, published the next day included an interview with chairman of the RVHS's board of directors, Janet Ecker. Brazeau said it included facts, not just unfounded accusations.

According to this article however, the Ontario Nurses Association claims the Friends' accusations are true. Friends co-chairman Walter Donaldson also still has concerns, despite the issue being addressed at Centenary's March 24 board meeting.

"The people who spoke to us said they wouldn't go back and are adamant about what they saw," Donaldson said.

Brazeau said Centenary has undergone renovations and the consolidation of psychiatric

wards is complete.

The next step in resolving this issue, according to Brazeau, is to get the facts out to the public. The hospital plans to write an official letter to the Friends of the Ajax Pickering Hospital, countering their allegations, and will send a copy to everyone who received the Friends' original letter. "Our facilities are clean and safe, quality of care and patient safety is the priority at Rouge Valley Centenary," Brazeau said, adding the PICU opened this week.

He said the hospital could not comment on specific patient care because of confidentiality issues. Therefore he would not answer questions on the original source, Gord Holliday, who spoke to the *Star* about his stay.



LAURA ROSS/The Observer

The 10th floor of the Rouge Valley Health System's Centenary Campus is where Gord Holliday spent a week in the allegedly substandard psychiatric ward.



KATRINA ROZAL/The Observer

Auto sales staffers examine a white spray-painted line that marks city property. Cars past the line will be towed.

Stores holding line against bylaw

KATRINA ROZAL

The Observer

Several auto sales businesses along Kingston and Galloway roads are furious with the city's enforcement of the Kingston Road improvement initiative.

City officials have been studying the area for six years and drafted bylaws to improve the area's streetscape and increase property values.

The city warned business owners last August to ensure none of their merchandise is on city property. In recent months, city officials have gone back to ensure compliance with the property bylaws, according to Ward 43 Councillor Paul Ainslie.

The source of contention

between auto business owners and the city are white spray-painted lines between private property and city land.

Infringing rights

One business said a city official came in insisting its vehicles were on city property.

"He just stormed in unannounced, pointing frantically at the cars outside—I didn't even have a chance to get my coat or find the correct person to deal with the situation," said Kelly Beardsworth at the Loan Arranger. "I ran outside and had no choice but to stand between the car and the tow truck."

Her father, owner Frank Bozz, has run the auto sales business since 1984.

"I'm not opposed to the betterment of the community. But they're infringing on my rights to enjoy my property freely and peacefully without harassment from anyone," Bozz said.

Several other businesses on the strip said they felt intimidated by the way city officials performed their bylaw checks.

Managers argued with officials and no vehicles were towed.

Ainslie said zoning bylaws were introduced a few years ago to make it more attractive for developers to purchase small businesses, since the city can't afford to buy them.

The bylaws increased the density allowance on property to make it more valuable.

"Some property owners say city staff are harassing them when in fact it's our right to tow their car if it's on our property," Ainslie said. "We could just show up and cut their fence down without explaining because their fence on our land would be trespassing."

Transportation right-of-way supervisor Bob Taylor said the area's auto business owners obey the bylaws, not letting their vehicles trespass over the white spray-painted lines that mark city property.

The city is resurveying the area to establish the lines of ownership. The city would like the area to develop the same commercial and residential intensity as Queen St. at the Beaches.

Break-ins on the rise in local area, police say

COURTNEY ROBERTS

The Observer

Police in 42 and 43 Division have seen an increase in the number of break-ins at homes and businesses.

Both divisions have also received a large number of 911 calls for robberies in March.

On March 19, police received a call from three children in the Meadowvale and Ellesmere Rds. area, saying people were trying to break into their home.

They heard knocking at the door but didn't answer. Then their front door was forced open. The children called 911 and ran upstairs to hide in a closet.

Three arrested

Three suspects were arrested at the scene of the crime after trying to escape. An investigation revealed the suspects were staying illegally in Canada.

Constable Tony Vella says burglars look for neighbourhoods with easy targets. This may explain the string of robberies in the area.

On March 17, an employee of Mac's Convenience Store at 1401 Ellesmere Rd. was robbed at gunpoint. No one was hurt.

A similar yet more severe incident took place on March 13, at Net Plus College, which is also on Ellesmere.

One female and two male employees reported just after midnight that two men entered the premises. They were wearing disguises.

Victim hit

One of the victims was hit over the head with a gun, while one of the robbers took off with a laptop, a cell phone and cash.

Police are still searching for the robbers.

"Some people are professional burglars. They may go to prison for similar crimes and do the same thing when they get out," Vella said.

Vella advises people to use motion detectors to prevent burglars from breaking in. This way if someone goes on to the property at night, a light will automatically turn on.

He also recommends setting a timer for lighting or even music when you're on vacation, as well as asking a neighbour to collect the mail that may pile up.

If you have information regarding these robberies, you can contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.