



■ MARCH BREAK



Marwa Mohkam Sheikh /// The Observer

Butterfly dreams

Maya Oppenheimer, 5, creates a butterfly during a craft session at Todmorden Mills' "March Mania." The session is just one of the family-oriented events running until this Sunday, March 22, as part of the Pottery Road heritage site's March break offerings.

Montreal scammers target E.Y. seniors

'Grandparents' called at seniors' homes by Quebec fraudsters

By **BRIA JOHN**
The Observer

"Hi, Grandpa."
"Billy, is that you?"
"Yeah. Listen, I need help, but don't tell mom and dad."
That's the typical script of the grandparent scam. Grandparents, believing their beloved grandchild is in trouble, then transfer money to scammers electronically.
Last Wednesday, Toronto Police Services warned East York residents about this new twist to the scam.
Det. Sgt. Jim Gotell, of East

York's 54 Division, said they tend to happen in sprees. The cases he's dealt with usually involve a "grandchild" in trouble in Montreal.
"Usually people will just hang up, but every once in a while (the scammers) will connect with someone who has a grandchild in Montreal already," he said, "so it'll be plausible to the grandparents that it could be their grandchild."
However, he said, it doesn't seem as if the scammers have particular targets in mind. It's more like trial and error.
"The last one we had that the person actually did send money, the person was living in a senior citizens home and other people in the home were contacted. So it could be that buildings where seniors are,

are being targeted," Gotell said.
"Senior citizens can be more trusting of people on the phone, and they shouldn't be." March is fraud prevention month at CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and the key there is promoting awareness. Susan Eng is vice-president of advocacy at CARP.
"The biggest thing we can do, because there's no big institutional answer to this, is to continue the public awareness campaign," she said.
"You'd be surprised at how little people pay attention to the general media. And this kind of thing is happening all the time. You really have to repeat it again and again for the penetration of the general awareness of it." She added that

her members find it difficult to talk about these scams because they are embarrassed.
"You have to look out for yourself, because the system out there is not really well-equipped to help you when the time comes," she said.
Because the money is freely given and because electronic money transfers are difficult to track, most people never see that money again.
"Once its gone, it's gone," she said. "Don't give it away in the first place."
Neighbourhood Link on Danforth Avenue is currently working with community police officers to keep senior citizens up-to-date on fraud issues.
"We all have to play a role in trying to prevent it," Eng said.

Hospital awarded 'Faces of Change'

By **KELSEY CHENG**
The Observer

There is no better person than John Harper to declare that the 20 Faces of Change Award belongs to Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH).
The Change Foundation named TEGH as one of the winners of the award last Monday. It was created to honour individuals or organizations that have made a positive impact on Canada's health care field.
Harper, 71, has been a patient at TEGH four times. He had two strokes, a pulmonary embolism and cardiac arrhythmia during a stress test. He was nursed back to health through effective and efficient treatment at TEGH – and now volunteers in the hospital's emergency room.
"I have pretty much totally recovered from the stroke, and I attribute that to the very rapid treatment received," Harper said in a phone interview from his East York home.
After being treated for his most recent stroke, Harper recalled having excellent physiotherapy and follow-up sessions from TEGH staff, who made sure that he was back in good shape.
"They did so to the extent that six months later, I got my driver's licence back," he chuckled.
Although he was anxious about each diagnosis, Harper complimented the hospital on his patient experiences, which he described as "consistently excellent."

■ See **JOURNEY**, page 8



Kelsey Cheng /// The Observer
TEGH's Wolf Klassen enjoys face-time with the award.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Macphail Award this Tuesday

This Tuesday, March 24, Muhammad Masood Alam will officially receive East York's highest award for civic activism in a ceremony at the East York Civic Centre, at Coxwell and Mortimer avenues. Alam is the winner of the 22nd Agnes Macphail Award. The event is at 7 p.m. in the council chambers. The public is invited, and there will be free parking in the city staff lot off Mortimer Avenue.

Lift that brush, paint that egg

Todmorden Mills welcomes families and children age six and up to an Easter egg painting workshop on March 28 from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. A second workshop will be held March 29 from 1 to 4 p.m. Create your own personalized Easter egg using traditional "wax resist" techniques. The cost for adults is \$10 and \$5 for children. Pre-registration is required. Call 416-396-2819 to register.

Going native in Leaside

The Leaside Garden Society's April meeting will feature a special speaker on the subject of native plants that are growing in popularity in Toronto. Paul LaPorte is a GTA greenbelt resident and past-president of the North American Native Plant Society. His presentation is at 7:15 p.m. on April 9 at the Leaside library, 165 McRae Dr.

~ Aziza Ibrahim and Zilan Zhao



Photo courtesy of David Hawe

(Clockwise, top left) Kevin McDonald, Scott Thompson, Mark McKinney, Dave Foley and Bruce McCulloch are bringing their comedy act to the Danforth Music Hall for four shows in April.

Kids in the (Danforth) Hall

By CHRIS DeMELO
The Observer

Canadian classics *The Kids in the Hall* are set to perform live for East York fans at the Danforth Music Hall. The *Kids in the Hall* comedy troupe are Dave Foley, Bruce McCulloch, Kevin McDonald,

Mark McKinney and Scott Thompson.

They plan to try out new material as well as bring back memorable skits and characters like the terrifying Chicken Lady, proto-hipster Darill and the cops of "Police Department."

The *Kids in the Hall* had

their own television series from 1988 until 1995 on CBC, and from 1989 to 1996 on HBO.

The TV series received award recognition with the 1993 *Rose d'Or*, given in Montreux, Switzerland. The troupe also received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame, in To-

ronto's theatre district.

There will be four shows at the Danforth Music Hall, 147 Danforth Ave. near Broadview: April 23 at 7 p.m., April 25 at 6:30 and 10 p.m. and April 26 at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$58.75 plus tax and are available at the box office or through Ticketmaster.

College takes stand on sexual assault

By JEFFREY SZE
The Observer

Kayla Marcozzi, a student at Centennial College's East York campus, says she's pleased the school is developing a sexual violence policy.

"Hopefully they do it right," says Marcozzi, a second-year graphic design student at the college's Story Arts Centre on Carlaw Avenue.

She says sexual violence is "a major issue that does not get the recognition it deserves."

Centennial College is "committed to addressing sexual assault and violence that impacts

our community and is actively involved in the development of a sexual assault and violence policy with Colleges Ontario," said Craig Stephenson, Centennial's vice-president of student and community engagement, in an emailed response to a question.

He said the policy will be geared toward providing "a holistic approach of care and support to every survivor, on and off-campus."

The new policy, for Centennial's multiple east-Toronto campuses, will be officially released on March 31.

According to the Canadian

Federation of Students, four out of five undergraduate students report being victims of violence in a relationship.

Yesterday, March 19, students began gathering in Ottawa at a CFS conference to discuss ways to end campus sexual violence.

This conference comes after Premier Kathleen Wynne announced new legislation to end sexual violence and harassment.

Under the legislation, colleges and universities are required to have a sexual assault policy, which includes the public disclosure of all sexual

assault incidences and ensuring students have the necessary resources to prevent sexual violence and harassment.

"It's great that they're looking at it now," says Joshua Harricharan, a film and broadcasting student at Centennial's Carlaw Avenue campus. "Students banding together and talking is the best way to approach it."

Marcozzi finds the debate often revolves around gender and victim blaming. She hopes it doesn't get that way.

"The number one thing I want to see is equality," Marcozzi said.

That sinking feeling just won't go away

By ETHAN MANNINEN
The Observer

For people driving around the intersection of Coxwell Avenue and O'Connor Drive, it was — in the immortal words of Yogi Berra — 'déjà vu all over again.'

Almost exactly three years after a massive sinkhole

opened at that corner, Toronto works crews returned to repair a smaller pavement cave-in that appeared early on the morning of March 4 at almost the same spot.

The Toronto works department received a call at around 9 a.m. regarding the issue.

Todd Keats, one of the Toronto maintenance workers on

the scene, said, "We believe it (the sink hole) is due to a water-main break."

But unlike the big pavement collapse in February 2012, this sinkhole wasn't that disruptive. Some drivers appeared to not even notice the hole and the repair work going on around it.

One neighbouring resident,

who did not wish to be named, said the home's occupants also weren't aware of the sink hole outside of their own front window.

Considering the relatively minor damage compared to three years ago, crews were able to make quick work of the repairs to the water main and to the road.

POLICE & FIRE

Man gets ride, robs taxi driver

Toronto police are searching for witnesses who can help identify a man responsible for the robbery of a taxi driver on March 4. The robbery took place after the suspect entered a cab at Pape station at around 10:30 p.m. The man asked the cab driver to take him to the corner of Chatham and Greenwood avenues, where he assaulted the 61-year-old cab driver, demanding cash. The driver complied and the man fled. The suspect is described as 25-30 years of age, 6'-6" tall, 200-230 lbs. with a clean-shaven face. At the time of the assault, he was wearing a dark hooded jacket with a white wool hat. If you have information, call Crime Stoppers at 416-222-8477.

Prescription drugs stolen

Police have issued an advisory after some potentially dangerous drugs were stolen on March 13 around Broadview and Danforth avenues. Police say a man was delivering medication to Loblaws when he was assaulted by a man who fled with his burgundy plastic tote containing fentanyl patches and Lorazepam, some of which was later found nearby. The suspect is described as white, in his 50s, 5'6" with a skinny build, scruffy face and salt-and-pepper hair. He was in a bomber jacket and skinny dark jeans.

~ November Chernick and Brandon Kajioka

■ COMMUNITY

Remembering a 'brave...vibrant spirit'

Trans community concerned about woman's death

By KEI LAM
The Observer

A March 3 memorial service for Sumaya Dasia Dalmar brought some closure for the transgender woman's friends and family. But only some — despite the observance, and despite police assurances that Dalmar's death was not a homicide.

Dalmar, who also went by the name Sumaya Ysl, was found dead on Feb. 22 in her East York-area apartment, near the intersection of Danforth Avenue and Main Street.

Dalmar was a transgender woman who was well-known in the ballroom scene, and who had done some acting and modeling. Facebook messages poured in from across the city and elsewhere in remembrance — calling her "brave" and "a vibrant spirit."

"She used her life as an example of what was possible when you were true to yourself," said a friend, Lali Mohamed. "She inspired us all to be our fullest selves in a world that doesn't always create the conditions for us to do so."

According to some of Dalmar's friends, a man called to notify Toronto police of her death early that Sunday morning. Those friends say they would like to know what the man's identity is.

But police spokesperson Meaghan Gray stated in a Facebook post that the Toronto police currently have "no evidence to indicate the death is suspicious."

But some in the trans community say they still have suspicions. They say that police often mishandle cases involving transgender individuals. Mohamed said that the police have "a complicated history" with the trans community.

"I'm terribly concerned that it may be politically expedient for the Toronto Police Services to not deem the death of Sumaya as suspicious because if it is not suspicious in their eyes, they don't have to investigate it," he said. "But there are so many questions that

remain. The Toronto Police Service has a long way to go before they can expect us to just take them on their word. It is infuriating that they just want to let this go."

Mohamed started a GoFundMe page to raise funds for the memorial service as well as for a commemorative tree. The page raised thousands of dollars.

"We also have plans to honour her memory through an educational scholarship for black trans students," Mohamed said.

"Despite the structural barriers that trans women face when trying to enter post-secondary institutions, Sumaya was passionate about pursuing her education. She was hoping to go back."



■ SUMAYA DASIA DALMAR

Read a meter, snap a photo

Former E.Y. employee shares photo collection with historical society

By THEMISTOKLIS ALEXIS
The Observer

A member of the East York Historical Society is rewriting the area's history, one photo at a time.

Jim Lister recently presented his collection of photos of old East York homes to more than 20 fellow EYHS members at the S. Walter Stewart branch of the public library.

The collection featured 174 photos in total, some of which Lister took himself. They were all taken decades before the 1998 amalgamation of Toronto. The way Lister went about building his collection is rather unusual.

As former East York mayor Alan Redway, who aided Lister in his presentation, said of his fellow society member: "If you paid a water bill in East York, this is the guy who read your water meter."

Jim Lister worked for the former borough between 1952 and 1987, collecting water bills and reading



Themistoklis Alexis /// The Observer

East York's oldest privately owned home, located on Beechwood Crescent. It was built in 1840 and is still standing today.

residential water meters. He covered the entire area on his daily route from Victoria Park to Broadview, even venturing into Leaside.

Lister, who was working for the borough of East York while

Redway was in office, said he had a better job than the former mayor, even though he was paid a lower salary. As a regular visitor to countless East York homes, Lister struck up friendships with many

of his customers, often asking them about their time in the neighbourhood.

"East York always tried to help people and that's what I tried to do," he said. "I think I made a lot

of friends amongst my customers, even the one's where I had to turn the water off."

Working for the former borough afforded Lister an unexpected perk. When a house was to be torn down, Lister's job required him to make one last visit, where he was able to capture the home in its now former glory.

"When they were going to tear down a building or an old house, I was one of the first ones to go there because I had to remove the borough township equipment, the water meter and whatever," he said. "So I had an opportunity to find the ones that were going first."

Some of the homes in Lister's collection are still standing, among them East York's oldest privately owned home. The four-chimney house, located on Beechwood Crescent, was built in 1840.

Also in the collection was a Leaside farmhouse once owned by former NHL player and current Rogers commentator Nick Kypreos.

The photos will be entered into the archives of the East York Historical Society at the S. Walter Stewart library.

Parents not on board with advisory council name

By STEPHANIE HINDS
The Observer

Alongside its struggle with a surprisingly large deficit following accounting revisions, Toronto's Catholic school board is also working on less weighty matters — as illustrated by a February board discussion around the proposed name-change of the Catholic School Advisory Councils,

and the merging of CSACs' funding into the schools' general account.

Representatives from parent councils came to speak at the meeting to address their concerns over the name change — to "Catholic School Council" — and had a lot to say.

Kelly Ann Belton, former chair and community representative for Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts, spoke

on behalf of parents.

"Our parents adamantly insist that the word 'parent' be in it," Belton said.

She often put "parent council" in brackets next to the CSAC heading so that students, teachers and parents understood who the notice was coming from. The ambiguity of the current name has confused people, she said.

Angela Kennedy, trustee

representing East York and the rest of the separate board's Ward 11 responded: "I think the confusion comes from what I call things, what you call things and what other people call things."

The second issue of merging bank accounts was also heavily discussed at the meeting.

"One of the problems that the parents have is that by putting the funds in complete

control of the principal, parents can't expect to have some voice and some control in how the funds are utilized," Belton said.

Kennedy also expressed her opposition to the idea of mixing council funds into general school budgets, saying that there are already adequate safeguards around the integrity of the council funds and their use.



■ KENNEDY

New nation, new love, new art

By ERIC PEMBER
The Observer

A pair of immigrant artists told their stories about moving to Canada and setting themselves up as artists in their new nation at a March 4 event called “Stories Untold,” held at the Children’s Peace Theatre on Dawes Road.

Paralia, an artistic collective especially for newcomers, held the event in conjunction with East End Arts, an organization that promotes community arts in East York and the surrounding area.

The two artists who spoke on March 4 were Mirna Chachin, 63, and Tania Iraheta, 50.

Chachin’s medium is photography. She ran an imaging business in Venezuela until a couple of years ago, when she moved to Canada.

Why? That old artistic cliché: love. Venezuela’s recognition of gay rights is uneven compared to Canada’s, and Chachin wanted to take advantage of the more liberal Canadian environment.

“I’ve had a spouse for 13 years that is a woman, and we wanted to have a normal life here,” she said. “We wanted to live in a country where, as a gay couple, you have the same rights as the other couples.”

This reinvigoration of her love life accompanied a similar reinvigoration of her artistic life.

“I’ve now been exploring a new way to showcase my work other than framings,” Chachin said. “I’m not interested anymore in framing my photographs. I’m interested in creating dynamics and an ‘intersection,’ where people become a part of the photograph.”

Her first experiment in this direction — simulating photographs that include audience members — was at a presentation at the Mu-



Eric Pember /// The Observer

Venezuelan photographer Mirna Chachin (left) and Chilean abstract artist Tania Iraheta told their stories at “Stories Untold,” an East York discussion around transitioning to Canada and the Canadian arts community.

seum of Contemporary Art in Venezuela just this past November. It went over so well she’s trying to bring it to Canada.

“In order to recreate the experience of being inside the photo, I make the photos black and white, and I put on the music, and people went into this, and they were part of the photograph,” Chachin said.

The other speaker at the March 4 event was Iraheta, an abstract painter. Unlike Chachin, she moved to Canada when she was a teenager. But her youth in Chile continues to be a massive inspiration.

“I did a series of places back home in Chile,”

Iraheta remembered of her early pictures, “so when I started to paint this abstract art, it had a feeling to it of houses on hills, and I just started painting, and that’s what it developed into — and then it developed into a series of my memories of Chile.”

She said she tends to not have any concrete ideas in her head when she starts painting. Usually, the images she creates are of places that she remembers from her youth in Chile.

“When I was small, I used to walk through this neighbourhood and there was this house that I’d walk by all the time,” she recalled. “It would catch my attention because of the

colour, and then it would come into my mind when I’m painting, and then I do that, right? There’s a lot of texture, because of the feeling of history, even memories, you know?”

Much like Chachin, Iraheta said she experienced a reinvigoration of both her artistic and her professional careers later in life.

“That was when I went back to my art in a more serious way; like I immersed myself in it, and at the same time I indulged my teaching side where I found out that I’m really good at teaching,” Iraheta said.

“People connect to me and I connect to people very easily.”

Getting better with a little help from her friends

By NICOLE DAWE
The Observer

Even when Leslie Bennett was sleeping on the streets of Vancouver, she didn’t realize how unwell she was. It wasn’t until she was checked into a hospital psychiatric ward in 1997 that she understood the full extent of her illness.

“In the beginning, I thought I was experiencing depression, so I went to the doctor and they prescribed me anti-depressants,” she said. “I really didn’t know it was bipolar disorder.”

Bennett, now a resident of East York, is currently the executive coach, mental health awareness advocate and cofounder of Open Spaces Learning. Two years ago, she also took over one of four facilitating positions for the peer-support group, the Toronto Bipolar Disorder Group, which has 663 registered members online.

According to a study conducted by the National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association, 69 per cent of patients with bipolar disorder are initially misdiagnosed as having depression. Many are not diagnosed with bipolar disorder until they have experienced a manic episode.

Dr. Benjamin Goldstein, who specializes in bipolar disorder at Sunnybrook Hospital at East York’s northwest corner, said misdiagnosis is common because many patients experience feelings of depression and anxiety for years before they experience a manic episode.

He described a manic episode as “an extended interval of time during which someone experiences uncharacteristically high energy



Illustration from Fotolia

and elevated irritable mood, which are accompanied by other symptoms and together lead to a noticeable change in a person’s behaviour.”

That’s how it was for Bennett.

“I was renting a house with some friends in Vancouver, but I actually wasn’t even living in the house. I was living on the streets,” she said. “In my head I didn’t even know there was anything wrong with that.”

Bennett’s friends recognized that her behaviour had become unusual and made a phone call to her parents in Toronto. Concerned, her mother and sister flew out to Vancouver to get a better sense of what was going on.

“I had a lot of resistance in listening to any-

thing they were saying in terms of what was wrong with me, because in my head I didn’t think there was anything wrong,” Bennett said.

She attributed her delusions to “mania” — one of two different types of episodes that a person with bipolar may experience. The other is “hypomania.”

Goldstein explained that hypomania consists of relatively mild symptoms, while mania’s symptoms are severely impairing.

“Mania is commonly accompanied by symptoms of psychosis such as delusions, fixed beliefs that are false,” he said, “or hallucinations, most commonly seeing or hearing things that are not real.”

After being admitted to St. Paul’s hospital in

British Columbia and receiving medical attention, Bennett said that was when she decided it was time to move back to Toronto where her family could support her.

Within six months, she was feeling well enough to live on her own because she attended talk-therapy sessions with a psychologist at Sunnybrook. It’s been 18 years since her last manic episode.

Bennett described the peer-support group that she helps to facilitate — the Toronto Bipolar Disorder Group — as being comfortable and judgment-free for those who have been diagnosed with the disorder.

“They can come and talk to other people who have lived through a similar experience and know exactly what they’re going through,” she said.

Tim, who wished not to be fully identified, is also a member and facilitator of the group. He said it offers more than just peers — they’re also friends.

“If I’m going out on the weekend, there’s a very good chance I’m going out with somebody I met from there,” he said.

While a place of anonymity and comfort is necessary to some with bipolar disorder, Bennett said, a lot of good can come from sharing stories.

“For 10 years, I didn’t tell anybody about my diagnosis. I was looking at it like I was diagnosed with this illness and now I am this illness,” she said.

“But once I realized that it doesn’t define who I am, I decided to speak about it, to educate people and to create awareness about it — and in doing so I know I can help to decrease the stigma that exists in society.”



File photo from Fotolia

After accounting revisions, the Toronto Catholic District School Board may have to make job cuts to deal with a unexpected deficit.

Board now faces debt

By **STEPHANIE HINDS**
The Observer

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is trying to find out how to deal with a \$16.9-million deficit. There are reports that this is the number the board will be facing after accounting revisions reversed what initially looked like a surplus.

In a meeting on March 3, the board discussed a range of possibilities to make up for the shortfall — mostly job cuts that would become effective in September.

Both the TCDSB and its public counterpart, the TDSB, have found themselves in deficits.

The main concern for both boards is that the cuts will come at a cost for students,

but TCDSB trustees say that they're trying to keep the changes as distant from the students as possible across East York and the rest of Toronto.

"It's pretty clear we understand where some of the major structural deficits are," said trustee Jo-Ann Davis.

"We know we're going to have to make some decisions around those, but I'm not going to feel comfortable or confident making a decision until I understand what the impact of that is to our students."

Trustee Maria Rizzo's statements to the media about wanting to involve the public in the decision-making process in an open and transparent manner were challenged in the meeting when Mario

Bernardo, president of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers (TECT), spoke.

"How can the TCDSB claim transparency when the stakeholders that are amongst the most directly impacted are not privy to the circumstances that got us to where we are and are not properly consulted on the best way to get to where we need to go?" Bernardo asked the board.

He suggested that the board be "intensive and authentic" in their considerations of what cuts to make.

"If we fail to broaden the scope of this discussion and fail to thoughtfully examine all other avenues of savings, we will be stripping all of our libraries of our teacher-librarians, classrooms of valuable resources and staff, and per-

haps harshest of all, we will be stripping indispensable support from the children in our system," Bernardo said.

In the coming months, the TCDSB will have to delineate the areas where they will be making cuts in order to start trimming the deficit.

In addition to this task, the board says that it is also facing a significantly smaller amount of funding from the ministry of education. It says it is expecting \$26.75 million less for the upcoming school year.

In a document entitled "Deficit Recovery Options and Financial Forecast," options for significantly reduced spending are discussed that would bring the board back to a balanced budget within three years.

TRANSPORTATION

Planning for transit relief

By **NOLAN WHITE**
The Observer

East Yorkers got an update on plans for the proposed "downtown relief line" (DRL) subway at a public meeting on March 3.

The meeting was held at Calvary Church on Pape Avenue — fittingly enough, just a stone's throw north of the Pape Avenue subway station.

The current version of the DRL proposal has a new subway line travelling east from Yonge Street off of the Yonge-University-Spadina line.

It would originate somewhere between the Wellesley and Union stations. It would then pass through a portion of the southeast portion of downtown before heading north and terminating at a subway station somewhere between Pape and Woodbine stations — along the Bloor-Danforth line. There's also a possibility that the line could branch west to connect to a station on University Avenue.

"I think we need to look at all our options around how we're going to solve our transit problems," said Mary Fragedakis, the city councillor for Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth.

The DRL is one of many transit proposals being discussed at a series of public meetings — along with other transit improvements that could take hold throughout the GTA, some of which would work with the DRL.

The Toronto Transit Commission and City of Toronto representatives say they're taking advantage of the meetings to gain input from residents as to where they would like to see stations placed and the layout of possible future routes.

But while some see this approach as one that gives a sense of inclusiveness to the public in the decision-making process, others worry that it leads to the possibility of false hope.

"The thing that bothers me here is that it's sort of the chicken and the egg situation here, where they say, 'Well we got so many places that we could put stations, but we don't actually want to draw alignments until we know where people think are important places for stations,'" said transit blogger Steve Munro.

"Realistically there are only a certain number of ways to get from downtown to the Danforth, and that's a function of where it's physically possible to build. If there are major nodes that are key pieces of whatever plan, say so and tell people that these are some of the constraints."

Councillor concerned about city's coffers

Patchwork solutions to budget woes not enough, Davis says

By **DENICE RAAGAS**
The Observer

East York councillor Janet Davis voted for the city budget that passed last week, but she still has reservations about municipal tax increases — especially the eight per cent hike in water and wastewater consumption rates charged to flat rate consumers.

Davis, the representative of Ward 31/Beaches-East York,

was among the 42 councillors who voted in favour of the city budget on March 11.

Only two councillors dissented: Etobicoke's Rob Ford and North York's Giorgio Mammoliti.

After the budget was passed, Mayor John Tory congratulated councillor Gary Crawford, his budget chief, on his success.

"It is an absolute win," Crawford said. "We have kept property taxes low and that was one of the goals that we wanted to do from the very beginning."

Crawford said it is an affordable budget that keeps taxes below the rate of inflation.

"We have a very balanced approach to the budget," he said.

There are, however, bigger increases in things like TTC fares, water and sewer rates, and garbage collection rates.

Council approved the 2016-2024 "Recommended Capital Plan" for Toronto Water.

It totalled up to \$7.275 billion in project estimates, including \$149 million in 2016. But realistically, Davis said, the ambitious work plan for Toronto's waterworks is going to require an infusion of provincial money.

"We are delaying dealing with the reality of the financial



■ **DAVIS**

situation in the city of Toronto," Davis said.

"We cannot continue to finance this budget with at or below inflation tax increases." She was referring to the modest tax increase in the overall

budget: 2.25 per cent, plus another .5 per cent specifically for the Scarborough subway. That small hike opens a gap between revenues and projected city expenses — that Toronto will try to close by borrowing from its capital reserves. Council is also looking at measures like a storm water charge this coming spring, which would be another tool for the water budget.

But Davis said patchwork solutions aren't enough; she said it's time to look at building a sustainable financial foundation at the city of Toronto.

"I would like to see a pro-

vincial capital grant," she said. "Ottawa gets something we call a 'national province grant' and maybe we need to say to the province that Toronto is special."

She observed that Toronto is the economic centre and political capital of the province, and added that the city is home to many of Ontario's leading postsecondary institutions, large hospitals, cultural institutions and other aspects of provincial infrastructure.

"Millions of people from outside of the city come every day," Davis said. "They don't pay a single dime to this budget."

■ EDITORIALS

Accessibility for all

Ontario's disabled community being woefully neglected

Imagine wanting to shop in a trendy little boutique in Pape Village — but just getting through the door is a struggle. Or wanting to eat at a restaurant along the Danforth that you've heard good things about — but the dog who you need to help you navigate isn't welcome. These are scenarios that the disabled people of our province face all the time... and there isn't enough being done about it.

Ontario is home to 1.8 million disabled people, and this abstract number represents a community that is currently being neglected.

Picture this: There are 53,000 businesses that employ more than 20 people at one time in Ontario right now. In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and official legislation, these establishments are required to file reports about how they train staff to accommodate disabled customers, and how their facilities correspond to the needs of consumers with disabilities.

Seems straightforward, right? Apparently not. The latest figures show that not only have almost 60 per cent of these businesses not filed their reports for 2014, but that 65 per cent of them haven't even filed their reports for the year 2012. This is an absolutely appalling reality, not to mention a violation of the AODA on an ominously grand scale.

But instead of combating this with stricter measures, it appears that the government has decided to diminish the rules and their enforcement. In fact, Brad Duguid, the economic development minister, has affirmed that this year, provincial officials will be conducting 1,200 "compliance activities" — a number that is significantly lower than the 2,000 checks conducted last year and the 1,900 the year before that.

It doesn't take much to understand that establishments are and have been getting away with not doing their rightful duty toward their fellow citizens. And by scaling back on the regulations, the government is pouring fuel all over an already flaming fire.

We are failing a significant number of Ontario's residents, and the authorities in charge either don't understand or don't care. Either way, we are on the way to becoming a less feeling society, and we need to reverse course. The inexcusable figures of the rampant violations thus far should be a wake-up call for our officials to come down harder on establishments than ever before, and fight for our disabled.

That power-door needs to work. And the service dog needs to be let in. Because if accessibility isn't for all, then we should all be for accessibility.

~ Marwa Mohkam Sheikh

The kids are all right

Sex ed curriculum will help, not hurt, our children

The schools in East York and across the rest of Ontario are probably the last place where a child will learn about the concept of sex. The mainstream media are full of oversexualized content — from half-dressed models in fashion magazines to lewd comedy on television to raunchy music and music videos. And think about it: right at their fingertips, children with computers or a smartphone have access to outright pornography via the Internet.

Amid our sexualized North American culture, it is our duty to teach our children what is right at a young age. If it is withheld, their naive curiosity will only get the better of them.

Premier Kathleen Wynne is putting into play a new sex education curriculum for students in this province. The curriculum hasn't been touched since 1998, and by almost any standard, it's badly outdated. Still, many people are angered by the changes. Parents and various religious groups are saying that it is immoral to teach children about things like oral sex and sexual orientation at such a young age. There have even been public protests and online coalition campaigns to stop the changes in the curriculum.

Yes, it can be a scary notion to think about your child getting sexually involved. But if the curriculum serves to teach them how to be safe, not only with sex but with interactions on the Internet, why should the information be withheld?

As a society, we let our children drive cars at 16, let them go off to college or university at 17, vote at 18, drink at 19. Children are expected to grow up faster than ever. So why are some people so blind to the fact that this new curriculum is simply a reflection of the need to keep up with the maturity of our children?

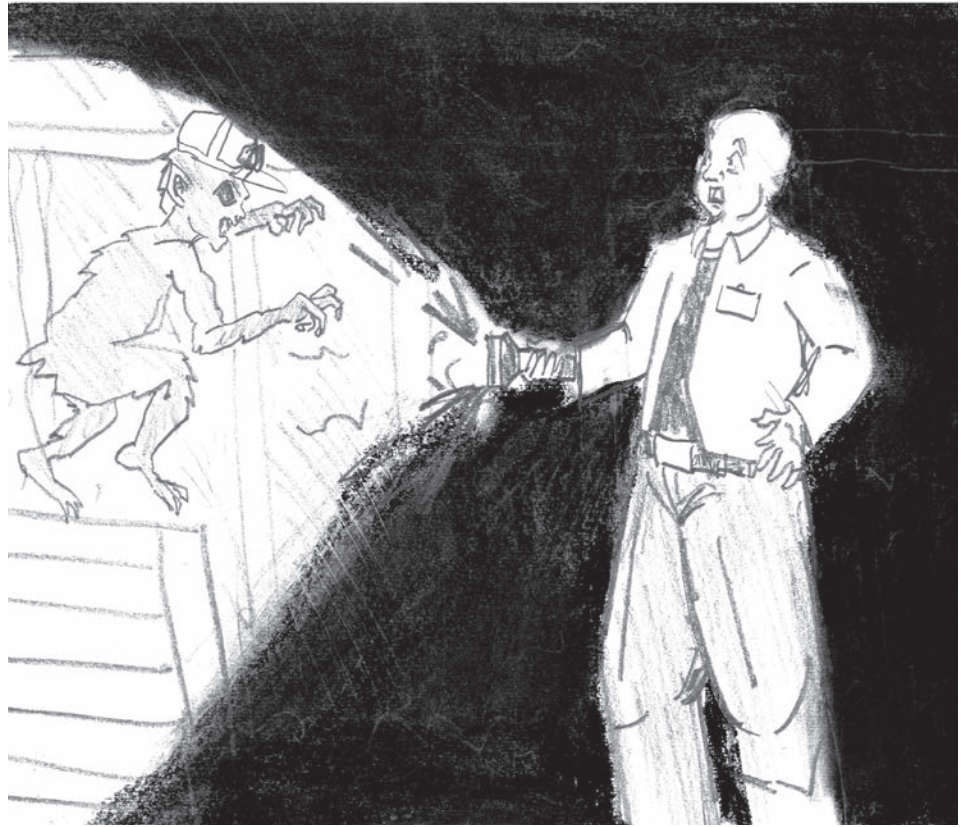
This new curriculum will not only teach children about positive relationships and what it means to consent to something, but it will also help prepare them (and not terrify them) into making the right decisions about intimate relationships.

If you think that comprehensive sexual education is simply going to make children want to have sex, then maybe it's time to look in the mirror — and consider moving your own thinking into the 21st century.

~ Tara Fortune

■ EDITORIAL CARTOON

Observations...



Rob Catherwood for the Observer

News Item: York University tunnel reconjures memories of Toronto's 'Tunnel Monster'... Will it reappear in East York as workers dig the Eglinton Crosstown LRT?

■ COLUMN

Fire hose vs. tail-light

Toronto Fire Services, like other fire departments, consists of a courageous group of individuals whom I respect tremendously. People look at these workers in emergency services as heroes — and rightfully so. But in so doing, we sometimes forget that firefighters are people too. People make mistakes, sometimes costly ones.

A few days ago, while on my way to get gas and then drive to school, the car I was in had a close encounter of the most unpleasant kind with a fire truck speeding northbound on Yonge Street in Richmond Hill, just north of Major Mackenzie Drive.

Its lights and sirens were on. The standard protocol in such situations took over, as I and the two cars in front of me pulled over to the right to let the fire truck pass. But as it got closer and those sirens got louder, the passenger in my car noticed that something was wrong. The fire hose was dangling far behind the truck... and was simulating a weapon of mass destruction.

A standard fire hose is 50 feet long and has a large brass attachment at the end of it, called a coupling. So a speeding fire truck whipping its hose violently across one of the

busiest thoroughfares in York Region is a recipe for disaster.

And within a second of the fire truck passing my vehicle, the hose strafed the side of my mother's Pontiac Grand Prix... and the brass coupling at the end turned the driver's side taillight into a patch of colourful plastic shards spread across the pavement. (Had it connected one foot higher, it might have come through the rear windshield — and could have resulted in something much worse than property damage.)

They continued northbound on Yonge Street to answer the call, the hose still flying across two lanes of traffic.

While I was sitting in the police station after reporting the incident, the fire truck's driver and another firefighter came in. They'd been alerted of the mishap. They had no idea that the hose had come undone until

they arrived at their destination. The sirens were too loud and the dragging hose fell into their mirrors' blind spot. They were embarrassed and apologetic.

The damage to the vehicle was almost \$3,500, which was covered by insurance. Two other drivers also reported damage to their vehicles — but thankfully no one was

hurt. For me, it was an extreme case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The police, the insurance company and the auto repair shop all said that they had never heard of anything like this before.

I take this experience as a lesson learned — that anything can happen on the roads. And the next time I pull over for a fire truck... I'll probably duck my head too.



Braydon Holmyard

The East York

OBSERVER

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

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Photos courtesy of City of Toronto Archives

The changing face of East York's Woodbine Avenue

The Observer resumes its look back on East York history through photographs from the City of Toronto Archives. The picture on the left shows Woodbine Avenue in East York, somewhere between Danforth and Cosburn avenues, prior to Woodbine's widening in 1956. The staining on the photo is a phenomenon known as "vinegar syndrome," according to the archivists. The photo on the right is the intersection of Woodbine and Danforth avenues in 1954.

Truck drivers need to take care - and notes

Proper training essential before getting behind the wheel of a big rig, says driving instructor

By ANUSSA NITHIYANANTHAN
The Observer

Who hasn't cursed the big trucks that sometimes seem to dominate the streets and highways that run in and around East York?

Maybe Deshaun Rajan of "A Great Toronto Truck Driving School," located at 1616 O'Connor Dr. in East York.

Considering the importance to the economy of big rigs reliably moving goods for manufacturing and retail, their presence on the roads seems inevitable.

But Rajan said that through proper training, operators can minimize the likelihood that

they'll unnecessarily impede other traffic because of breakdowns or mishaps.

"I advise my students. I tell them that we always have fluids and tools in a well-equipped truck," Rajan said. And he teaches them to observe the speed limit — especially when driving in slippery conditions.

"I also tell them, when changing gears, always be careful and look at blind spots," he added, "and also, look for pedestrians."

A lot of Rajan's counsel for professional drivers can also be applied to people who get behind the wheel for commuting, errand-running or just pleasure.

The massive pileup that closed the 401 west of Belleville on Wednesday demonstrates how a late winter-early spring storm can still cause havoc. So it may be too soon to swap out the snow tires for the summers. Rajan said it's even a good idea to have a spare snow

tire, in case of a flat. He also said to make sure of the brakes, carry a lot of windshield wiper fluid — and even a spare wiper blade.

Another thing to beware of is the possibility that daytime thaws and nighttime freezes could lead to icy conditions overnight and in the early morning.

Black ice is especially treacherous, he said. It usually forms during the early mornings or at night, when the temperatures reach their lowest. Black ice is also formed on roads that aren't heavily used. Bridges are another black ice danger zone.



Small brewers poised for growth, as sales loosen

By CAMERON AXFORD
The Observer

The Amsterdam Brewery on Esander Drive in Leaside may be a craft brewery, but by no means is it small. Over two years ago the company moved from its tight downtown location to the spacious East York facility to increase production. It even has a reception hall with multiple taps at hand, with glass walls that allow a view of the stills.

Now, with a liberalization of beer sales apparently on the horizon, Amsterdam and other craft brewers appear poised for more growth.

Jeff Carefoote, the owner and operator of the Amsterdam Brewing Company, explained that despite his company's success, Ontario's traditional alcohol laws and the domination of



Cameron Axford /// The Observer

Jeff Carefoote, owner of Leaside's Amsterdam Brewing, is waiting on provincial liberalization of beer sales.

the Beer Store have made it difficult to be a small beer-maker.

"Logically thinking about it, who is going to let their competitor gain share and volume and grow a busi-

ness in a store they own?" Carefoote said. Sleeman, Molson Coors and Labatt are the Beer Store's owners of record, but Carefoote said that tracks back to largely foreign ownership.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne is strongly hinting that the provincial government is about to loosen restrictions around the sale of both beer and wine. Queen's Park's plans apparently include a new "franchise fee" that it will charge the Beer Store's owners to continue operation of their retail chain. But even with that fee, there are indications that the government will soon allow the sale of beer and wine in about 300 of Ontario's larger supermarkets.

Still, some members of the Wynne government say that the traditional system of beer sales has served the province well until now.

"Every small brewery typically has the same marketing opportunities as the big brewers, in that you go to the Beer Store and every product is on the wall," said Arthur Potts, the Lib-

eral MPP for Beaches-East York.

But to Carefoote, what he called the domination of the Beer Store has been detrimental to the community. To him, a looser sales structure will mean a stronger brewery, and a stronger brewery will mean more opportunities for Leaside.

"We try to be part of the community. We do a lot of local things. We don't do the NHL. We're doing the local ball league, the local hockey league," he said.

"We use our facility to host fundraisers. It's just a totally different approach to business and consumers and communities benefit from our presence. I think there's a place for Budweiser and Coors Light, but there's also a place for beers that are made in our own little place in Leaside."



Photos courtesy of Cyr family

Amanda Cyr, now 20, started with the East York Gymnastics Club as a near-toddler. After leaving to compete at the provincial level, now she's back to lend a helping hand. The two photos show her progress through the years.

A little help goes a long way

By **JASON SUTCLIFFE**
The Observer

When Anisa made her way across the balance beam at the East York Gymnastics Club, her mother, Tabassom Momtaheni, was both ecstatic and proud.

"It's great for me," Anisa's mother said. "I never thought she was going to walk by herself."

What made this moment so remarkable was that Anisa, 6, had a brain tumour. It affected her balance and co-ordination and made walking a nearly impossible task.

But with a helping hand, Anisa was eventually able to make her

way across the beam.

That helping hand belonged to Amanda Cyr.

"It was incredible," Cyr said. "She was able to walk... seven or eight steps by herself without her parents, which was a huge accomplishment.... It was really heartwarming to see her improve so much over the course of just a few months, and to see the benefits she got from the program."

Cyr, now 20, has been involved with the East York Gymnastics Club since she was 18 months old. She competed at the provincial level and following her competitive career, has worked to give back to the community.

Cyr first met Anisa when she created the East York Gymnastics Children's Funded Program.

The 10-week program gives access to children otherwise unable to participate.

The club's program manager, Sandi Robertson, recalled the work Cyr put into the program.

"She got all the sponsorship herself," Robertson said. "She really went above and beyond to bring something back to these kids.... She recruited coaches herself to help her teach (without remuneration).... When it ended, she did it again. She said, 'I don't want to stop. These kids want more.' I get goose bumps... just thinking about

it."

For Cyr, giving back comes naturally because that's the way she was assisted.

"My gymnastics coach, Jessica, played a very large role in my life. She was more than a coach to our group; she was a confidant," Cyr said.

"She gave me appreciation for going the extra mile for others.... Her compassion and determination to help others — even just in our group — really gave me an appreciation for helping others in my own life."

Her own coach's gift to Amanda Cyr, proves that a bit of volunteer time can do a lifetime of good.

When the bull sees red

By **BRITTANY CAMPBELL**
The Observer

The premise seems straightforward, but ominous — three co-workers waiting for their boss in a small office, anticipating the news that three of them will be fighting for two jobs.

It raises the question: How far would you go and whom would you step on in order to save yourself?

Nasty, excruciating, brutish. These are some of the words that have described Mark Bartlett's suspense-driven theatrical, *BULL*, which debuted on Tuesday night at the Coal Mine Theatre at 798 Danforth Ave.

Diana Bentley, who plays Isobel and who is also the artistic producer of the Coal Mine Theatre, described the tone of the controversial play as being almost like "survival of the fittest, but in an office environment."

The stakes are high and in the ring are Isobel (played by Diana Bentley), Thomas (played by Ryan Rogerson) and Tony (played by Damon Runyan) — all waiting to meet their boss, Carter (played by Mark Caven) who will inevitably decide their fate.

"The threat of losing your job when you are supporting your family is huge," explained Bentley. "These people are vicious and they're so quick, harsh and ambitious. It's a bit like 'House of Cards.'"

The metaphor of the title can't be missed.

"When you see a bull fight, there's this whole culture that is obsessed with watching a bull being killed but when we see it, it's disgusting and it's horrible," Bentley said, "so the play is very polarizing."

BULL is playing every night except Mondays through April 5. Tickets: www.brownpapertickets.com

Journey to an award-winning patient experience

Cont'd. from page 1

"The doctors were very good at explaining exactly what was happening throughout the process, as were the nurses," he said. "They were there when I needed them."

Harper's positive experience with the hospital was one of many patient-oriented initiatives TEGH has been recognized for.

The Change Foundation was particularly impressed by the hospital's Patient Video Program initiative, where patient feedback and experiences are documented in three- to four-minute videos and showed during leadership team meetings. These are followed by the discussion and planning of patient-centred improvement opportunities.

Mari Iromoto, director of Improvement and Innovation at TEGH, described the program as a journey, and "by no means an easy one."

It started as a two-person operation, and has since grown into a more distributed team model involving five departments within the hospital.

"It's a point in time where we can stop and actually be recognized for the work that we've been doing," Iromoto said.

Since 2011, Iromoto and her team have been able to capture more than 100 patient videos.

Patients were asked questions not only about their medical procedure experience, but also about everything else, from food services to the layout and temperature of the room.

"We ask (ourselves) what could we have done differently, what were some of the causes of the patient's experience and who else would benefit from seeing this video," Iromoto said.

Wolf Klassen, vice-president of Program Support, was able to bring the patient videos before the hospital's board of directors.

"We have found the videos an excellent way for our board of directors to hear directly from a patient, as often, there wouldn't be that opportunity," he said. "Patients wouldn't be comfortable coming into a room of people meeting to share their stories."



Kelsey Cheng /// The Observer

John Harper, 71, has been a patient at Toronto East General Hospital four times. He now volunteers every Wednesday in the hospital's emergency room.

To Klassen, patient-oriented culture at TEGH means putting the patient first. Judith John, patient specialist and one of the jurors of the 20 Faces of Change award, agreed.

"They had a very clear commitment to patient engagement, and

were involved to drive changes within the system," she said in a phone interview.

According to John, the review process for the award was precise, with a detailed strict scoring system. A key criterion the jury was looking for

among the nominees is measurable impact.

"Every organization has the will; every hospital says that they are dedicated to patient-centred care — and it's true — but we were looking for new initiatives and results that could be mapped, and for the involvement of the patient throughout the process," John said.

"It reminds everybody in health care that a person wearing a blue hospital gown is more than a patient number or a procedure there," John said. "The people they are taking care of are people. The person is looking for acknowledgement as an individual as well."

Harper now volunteers at TEGH's emergency room every Wednesday. Between tucking in patients with colourful handmade blankets and making sure visitors know where they're going, he takes the time to talk and listen to everyone. That makes him one of the most recognizable faces at the hospital.

"I'm very, very proud to be part of the team at the hospital," he said.