



# Liberal budget draws fire from East York MPPs

Prue, Tabuns  
wanted more  
spending for  
E.Y. residents

By GEOFFREY MOSHER

East York's New Democratic MPPs have come out swinging against the new provincial budget.

Finance Minister Dwight Duncan tabled the budget last week. It's the provincial Liberal government's last budget before the Oct. 6 Ontario election — and is being described by its backers as Ontario turning the corner after the global recession.

Duncan told the legislature that the Liberals are trying to find a balance between deficit-elimination and ensuring that Ontario keeps recent gains in health care and education. Duncan announced that the deficit is also projected to be \$3 billion lower than the Liberals' forecast in last



PRUE

year's budget.

Michael Prue, the New Democratic MPP for Beaches-East York, said he's extremely disappointed with the budget.

"New spending is in little tiny amounts of money. It contains nothing except patting on the back," Prue said. "Not a single word about poverty,

about cities... not addressing areas such as transportation, housing and the environment — while continuing with corporate tax cuts."

Duncan countered that "the key decision for Ontarians is how... do you get back to a balance," adding: "We've laid out 20 different initiatives...



TABUNS

that speak to transforming government, reforming how we do government." Peter Tabuns, the Toronto-Danforth New Democratic MPP, also criticized the budget.

"Another big concern for East York residents is the fact that despite the hype surrounding all-day kindergarten, East York will not see any spots until 2012," he said. "Isn't it instructive that we got cut out?"

Duncan defends his choices in the budget.

"We are not only moving forward on deficit reduction; we are making certain strategic investments in health care and education," he said.

"We are looking at what will benefit our families and what will protect the progress we have made."

Duncan concluded that there are difficult choices to be made to maintain the balance between good-quality affordable health care and education, while ensuring that Ontario gets back to balanced budgets in a responsible way.



Observer, Dennis Wu

**MARCHING FOR GREECE:** (From left to right) Carmelo, Anna, Athena and Blake march in the Greek Independence Day parade on March 27. The parade route ran along Danforth Avenue, between Donlands and Broadview avenues.

# Potholes empty your pocket

By MELANIE SCHAWILL

Spring is in the air and as new life begins to emerge, so do potholes all over the streets of Toronto.

So far this year, over 70,000 potholes have been repaired at a total cost of about \$1.6 million, said Toronto director of transportation Myles Currie.

Each pothole costs approximately \$25 to repair, and while potholes are cheap to fix, Danforth Midas owner Geoff Brown said the damage done to your car costs a lot more.

"It can range anywhere from as simple as 50 bucks, to like a 1,000 bucks plus," he said.

Brown added that the amount of damage potholes cause depends on many factors.

"It depends on the impact, like how big the pothole is and

how fast they hit it," he said.

"There are a whole pile of factors that go into it and every car would be different, like how it would effect a pickup truck versus a Mercedes-Benz Smart Car."

Potholes start appearing on roads once ice and snow begin melting. To fix a pothole, it's important to notify the city as soon as you see it.

"People can call 311 to report a pothole, so we can repair it," Currie said. "That way a service request is recorded and tracked."

Depending on the road, potholes are usually repaired in one to five days.

"Expressways, like the Don Valley or the Gardiner we would try to do it within 24 hours," Currie said. "Side streets would generally take five days."

There is no sure way of avoiding damage from potholes other than staying away from them, which is almost impossible. Brown spoke of how city driving makes it a lot harder to steer clear of potholes.

"I try to avoid them, but sometimes if the traffic is really close together you can't see them coming," he said.

Car owners may be reimbursed by the city for damage to vehicles from potholes by contacting the city clerk and filling out a claim request. Currie explained the process.

"They would write to city hall at 100 Queen St., to the attention of the city clerk to put in the details of the road, time of day, and the damage," Currie said. "Then when that's received, an investigation gets underway."



Observer, Kristin Annable

**CRANES FOR JAPAN:** St. Josaphat Catholic School student Ryugen Perklita, 10, helps fold paper cranes for Japan.

# Paper cranes carrying hope

By KRISTIN ANNABLE

There is an ancient Japanese legend that says for every thousand paper cranes you fold, one wish will be granted. For students of St. Josaphat Catholic School, this meant folding thousands of paper cranes for peace and prosperity in Japan.

According to Reuters, as of press time 11,063 people have died and 17,258 people are still missing after last month's devastating earthquake and tsunami off Japan's northeast coast.

In partnership with East York's Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) and the Toronto Catholic School Board, schools all around the city are folding origami for Japan. Sarah Hnatkivskyy, a Grade 3 student at St. Josaphat is proud that her school is helping out Japan.

"We are folding cranes so we can make a wish for Japan to

have a brighter future and feel better," she said. "The other thousand cranes are for the first wish to come true."

The students made over 2,000 cranes to present to the JCCC. Last Friday, they held a ceremony during which they officially presented the cranes to representatives from the centre. The JCCC will send the cranes to Japan.

Lisa Uyeda, the Project Coordinator at the JCCC, says that sympathy and empathy is important for the victims of the earthquake.

"This is a necessary project because establishing financial and physical support is important, but people often forget the emotional support that is needed," she said. "It is a great way to connect the two countries emotionally."

St. Josaphat Principal Lucy Dyczkowsky said she loved the

idea of students sending messages of hope to students in Japan.

"It is such a strong message being sent, kids-to-kids. At one school in Japan, 70 per cent of the kids are missing," she said. "School begins in April, and they have no school to go to and there are only 30 per cent of their students left."

The ceremony involved grade seven student Alina Lepak singing the song "Cranes over Hiroshima."

The ceremony especially touched Grade 5 student Ryugen Perklita, whose mother is Japanese and has family living there.

"This makes me feel so happy. I was shocked about the earthquake and I didn't know how I could help, so I am happy I can help now," he said. "It makes all my classmates great friends and shows they care."



## Police briefs

### Victim crawls for help

A 21-year-old man is expected to recover after being stabbed while walking through a schoolyard near the Chester TTC station on Wednesday night. Police say he was attacked from behind at around 9 p.m. by two men brandishing a knife and a blunt object. The victim dragged himself from Jackman Avenue Junior Public School to a nearby friend's house, where EMS was called. Police are looking for two men, both described as 6'3" and wearing dark clothing.

### Man charged after brawl

A man in his 50s has been hospitalized with serious injuries following an altercation with another man. Police say a verbal dispute escalated at 2:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning on Coxwell Avenue between Milverton and Springdale boulevards. Facing assault and weapons charges is John Tahir, 57.

### Police look for suspect



BOLLERS

Police in East York's 54 Division have issued an alert for a man wanted in connection with occurrences late last month. Michael Bollers, 21, of Toronto, is charged with two counts of failing to comply with probation and one count each of forcible confinement, threatening death and assault causing bodily harm. He is described as black, 5'7" with a heavy build, black hair and brown eyes.

### Firefighters battle blaze

A two-alarm fire broke out at 45 Lesmount Ave. between Cosburn Avenue and Plains Road on March 29. The fire started on an awning over a rear porch and then spread. More than 50 firefighters were at the scene and were still checking for hotspots hours later. Fire crews believe the cause was related to careless smoking. Damage is estimated at \$40,000.

### 13-year-old girl missing

Police are asking for the public's help in locating a missing 13-year-old girl. Crystal Iahtail was last seen on March 24 in the early evening around Pape and Wroxeter avenues. She is described as 5'5" with brown hair and brown eyes. She was last seen wearing a long, dark-brown coat with a sweater underneath and dark pants.

—Deeanna Charrion

## What's On

**HAPPY NEW YEAR:** Harmony Hall Centre for Seniors is hosting a celebration for Bengali New Year next Saturday, April 16. The celebration will take place between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the Crescent Town Community Centre at 2A Market Place. Activities include a community Boishakhi fair, 'dress as you like' for children and cultural programming. For table registration, contact A.K.M. Hassan or Afsana Chowdhury at 416-693-5300.

**SPRING STREET SALE:** The Topham Park Homeowners' Association is holding its 11th bi-annual "10 Streets Street Sale" on Saturday, April 30 from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Over 100 houses will participate in the event, selling furniture, clothing, electronics and more. The sale, incorporating the Westview Presbyterian Church Spring Sale, takes place on Westview Boulevard, one block east of O'Connor Drive and one block north of St. Clair Avenue. In case of rain, the sale will take place on May 7.

—Geoff Mosher



Observer, Dennis Wu

**STARS COME OUT:** Phil Chow, right, adjusts the telescope he's looking through to see a distant star, while fellow astronomical society member Blake Nancarrow looks on. The Ontario Science Centre celebrated Earth Hour on March 26 with events such as stargazing.

## Science Centre turns off the lights for Earth Hour

By DENNIS WU

Children and parents were looking at various displays and booths March 26 at the Ontario Science Centre when suddenly the lights went out. There was a short pause, and then everyone cheered.

"I guess it must be 8:30," said Guy Nason, event organizer for the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC). "Earth Hour starts now."

The Earth Hour movement started in Australia in 2007. It encourages people around the world to shut off their lights for one hour.

The Science Centre celebrated by hosting outdoor and indoor activities including stargazing, drumming, storytelling and a live stage show by TVOKids.

Sara Poirier, a researcher at the Science Centre, was the evening's head organizer. She says that Earth Hour should be carried out every day.

"The goal tonight is to raise awareness about the impact that we are having on the climate," she said. "It's a great reminder for us to be accountable to the



POIRIER



NASON

public and to the world and the way that we use energy."

The activity that attracted the most people was the 15 telescopes set up in a large oval by RASC members. Nason explained why Earth Hour is important to astronomers such as himself.

"We have a very strong interest in keeping the skies dark and minimizing light pollution," Nason said. "So this is a wonderful opportunity for us to spread that word to the public."

The RASC holds "star parties" at the Science Centre at least four times a year. Thanks to the society's generosity, the public can view stars, nebulae and entire galaxies in glorious detail.

In the hour that the lights were off, news spread that Saturn

would be visible. Unfortunately, an apartment across the street obstructed the view of that part of the sky.

A few RASC members moved their expensive telescopes further down the street, past the building, to see the planet. A large crowd soon gathered around the two telescopes on a little pathway.

Lucy Zou, 16, was one of the first people to see Saturn that night.

"It's so beautiful," she said. "The rings around the planet are the best part. So pretty."

Although the Science Centre turned off its lights, the lights of nearby buildings, car headlights and streetlights were still on.

RASC member Phil Chow said the public needs to be responsible for the amount of energy it uses.

"This is a public awareness campaign to make people aware that there is both a monetary and an environmental cost for energy," he said. "People need to know that it doesn't hurt to turn their lights off every now and then."

## Danforth bars told to quiet down

### Residents upset with local bars for noisy nights

By DEEANNA CHARRION

Extending hours of operation for bars and their patios is leaving some residents living around Pape and Danforth avenues rattled.

Resident Lesley Luce says neighbouring bars are not complying with a bylaw that states businesses serving alcohol must clear out patrons and close by 11 p.m.

And starting next month, and until September, 14 Danforth bars are permitted to lengthen their hours to midnight on Friday and Saturday — and Sunday if the following Monday is a holiday.

"The challenge is that MLS cannot go to every bar on the Danforth every night at once to see if they're closed and cleared at midnight," Luce said.

Lambros Babacsikos, who has owned 521 Café and Bar for 12 years, believes sound complaints against his establishment are simply one person's opinion about whether it is loud or not at 11 p.m.

"If they find it loud, it's something I'd love to measure.... I would like to do a measurement one way or another but either way, we'll try and keep the volume down for them," he said.

521 Café and Bar has no live bands, as opposed to other bars that showcase louder entertainment during the week.

Babacsikos argues that businesses cannot thrive on week-end revenue alone.

Luce has presented 21 outstanding charges and six letters of criticism against 521. She said Fenwick Avenue residents want frequent abusers of the bylaw to receive extra scrutiny from city officials, including enforcing tickets and shutting patios down when necessary.

Babacsikos said that some bars are louder than others, and proposed solutions like sound-proof walls will not solve anything.

"Closing patios on the corner or barricading it? Esthetically that wouldn't look nice either. But shutting down businesses on the Danforth is not a good move," he said.

Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth councillor Mary Fragedakis represents 12 of the 14 restaurants that applied to have their hours extended until midnight. She agreed with Babacsikos that cutting hours would be bad for business.

"It's been a very difficult economic year. I've taken a stroll down the Danforth and I've noticed a lot of establishments have closed," she said.

"It's concerning to me because I want to live in a place that is vibrant. Empty storefronts certainly don't add to the property value or the attractiveness of the neighbourhood."



Observer, Aneta Tasheva

**THANK YOU, DRIVERS:** During a spot check, Toronto Rock Lacrosse team member Cam Woods hands a driver tickets to a lacrosse game. Team members spent the evening of March 28 in East York alongside police, including officer Tony Foster (left). MADD Canada representatives also joined them.





Observer, Nicholas Pescod

**ALL-STAR LINEUP:** (Left to right) Drew Taylor, Elena Semikina, Mary-Margaret McMahon, Joanna Britton, Justin Van Dette and Kris Aiken hold up a cheque for \$10,000 raised by Murphy's Law Irish Pub. The money is going to Toronto East General Hospital and will be used for new equipment and other projects.

## Pub serves hospital-ity

By NICHOLAS PESCOD

A local pub has been making a big difference in the East York community.

On March 26, Murphy's Law Irish Pub, located at 1702 Queen St. E., hosted its sixth annual charity night.

The staff presented Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH) representatives with a cheque for \$10,000.

Over the past six years, the pub has managed to donate \$30,000 to the hospital.

This is something that the manager of corporate and com-

munity relations for TEGH, Justin Van Dette, is grateful for.

"What they are doing is setting a local example by giving back," Van Dette said. "They are having a huge impact on patient care."

The money raised from Murphy's Law goes toward new beds and equipment, as well as other projects.

One of those projects is the Capital Expansion Campaign, the initiative to help pay for TEGH's major redevelopment — including a new, multi-storey building for patient care.

Murphy's Law general manager Joanna Britton said she believes strongly in giving back to the community.

"Here at Murphy's, we feel it's important to be part of our community," she said. "We know we have to support the people who support us. That's why we decided to support the Toronto East General Hospital."

For Britton, there is a personal connection to the hospital.

"TEGH was where my cousin was born," she said. "He spent the first year of his life there and they really took care of him."

The Saturday evening event attracted Toronto city councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon, former Toronto Argonaut Kris Aiken, Canada's 2010 Miss Universe, Elena Semikina, and Toronto Maple Leafs Intercounty Baseball Club player Drew Taylor.

Councillor McMahon spoke highly about Murphy's Law continued community involvement.

"I'm blown away by the support of a local pub," she said. "I think that speaks volumes for our community."

Murphy's Law staff members said they're proud to be making a difference and hope to continue supporting TEGH.

"We want to make sure we are stepping it up each year," Britton said. "We just want to be as active in our community as we can."

## History repeated as politicians honour legendary Macphail

By FARHANA UDDIN

It's been more than 50 years for 87-year-old Eileen Adams, but she can still easily remember how she became acquainted with the legendary member of Parliament for East York, Agnes Macphail.

In the spring of 1951, Adams attended the meeting of a women's group where Macphail was a speaker. Macphail had retired from politics by that time, but was still active in the prison reform movement.

"She had visited a modern reformatory for women. She was very much concerned as to what was happening with these women in their time in prison and after their release," Adams told members of the East York Historical Society at their March meeting.

"She told us that men have the John Howard Society to help them reintegrate themselves into society. Women have practically nothing."

Adams spoke to the society at the S. Walter Stewart library branch.

Macphail's advocacy for women caught in the criminal justice system influenced Adams and eight other women. Together they formed committees that provided community support for women who had faced conflict with the law.

Adams soon became one of the founding members of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto.

Today, Elizabeth Fry Toronto provides traditional housing, counselling and community education for these women.

Stories about Macphail dominated the historical society's meeting.

But considering the theme of the gathering — former East York politicians — other names also came up.

These included East York's first mayor, the colourful Jean "True" Davidson, and R.H. McGregor, who served East



Library and Archives Canada  
**AGNES MACPHAIL**  
'Favourite daughter'

York for a half-century in various public offices.

Mary Fragedakis, the new city councillor for Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth, sat in the audience listening to the stories.

Fragedakis said later that she was particularly interested to hear more about Macphail, who is arguably East York's favourite and most famous daughter.

**'She told us that men have the John Howard Society to help them reintegrate themselves into society. Women have practically nothing.'**

—Eileen Adams

Macphail was an energetic human rights activist her entire adult life. She was the first woman elected to the House of Commons and one of the first two elected to the Ontario legislature.

Macphail died in 1954.

"Working in politics and living in this community, it's really exciting for me to hear about female politicians in East York," Fragedakis said.

She also said she was working on getting a plaque dedicated to Macphail at the politician's former home, located at 2 Donegall Dr.

"I've been waiting for years to see (the plaque put) up," Adams said in response to Fragedakis' pledge.

"I'm turning 88 this September," she joked, "so please try to hurry."

## Soccer club kicks off its \$1,000 scholarship

By NATASHA JAFERI

The East York Soccer Club is doing something different for its 35th anniversary year.

For the first time, the club is offering a scholarship of \$1,000 to a player who is involved with the club and planning to attend a post-secondary institution starting in September.

"We chose to do a scholarship because we wanted to provide some assistance to a player who has been involved with the club," said Karen Sommerville, the equipment manger of the soccer club, adding that the scholarship

is "targeted to someone from our older competitive teams and our house league players."

When applying, players are to hand in a 500-word essay on their involvement with the East York Soccer Club, outlining why the scholarship should be awarded to them, as well as three references, proof of acceptance to an accredited post-secondary institution and transcripts.

The application form can be found on the East York Soccer Club's website.

Application forms are due June 1.



Observer, Beth Ford

**PUSHING UP ROSES:** The president of the Canadian Rose Society, Sheri-Lyn Safir, shares some of her secret recipes for growing beautiful roses organically.

## Growing roses au naturel

By BETH FORD

Nobody likes intruders, especially the creepy crawlers that lurk in our gardens each summer.

The president of the Canadian Rose Society, Sheri-Lyn Safir, has a solution to the problem.

She uses an all-natural approach to clearing the critters out of her garden.

"When it comes to aphids, you can blast them off with one simple recipe. All you need to do is crush seven to eight cloves of garlic and place them in a container filled with one gallon of water," she said. "Let the mixture stand for at least 24 hours, then strain and spray."

She added that leftover spray can be refrigerated.

On March 17, Safir shared tips for growing roses organically with a packed house at the East York Garden Club.

Safir brought in plants from her garden to demonstrate how variation among the rose species works.

She also discussed techniques on how to produce beautiful roses by selecting natural fertilizers such as banana peels and Epsom salts.

Garden club member David Brooks said he has been growing roses for over 15 years and liked the way Safir covered the topic without going overboard.

"In a club like this, you have people with very little knowledge and people who could qualify as experts," he said.

"In this situation a general

talk is a good thing to do. I think she hit a nice note in between the two."

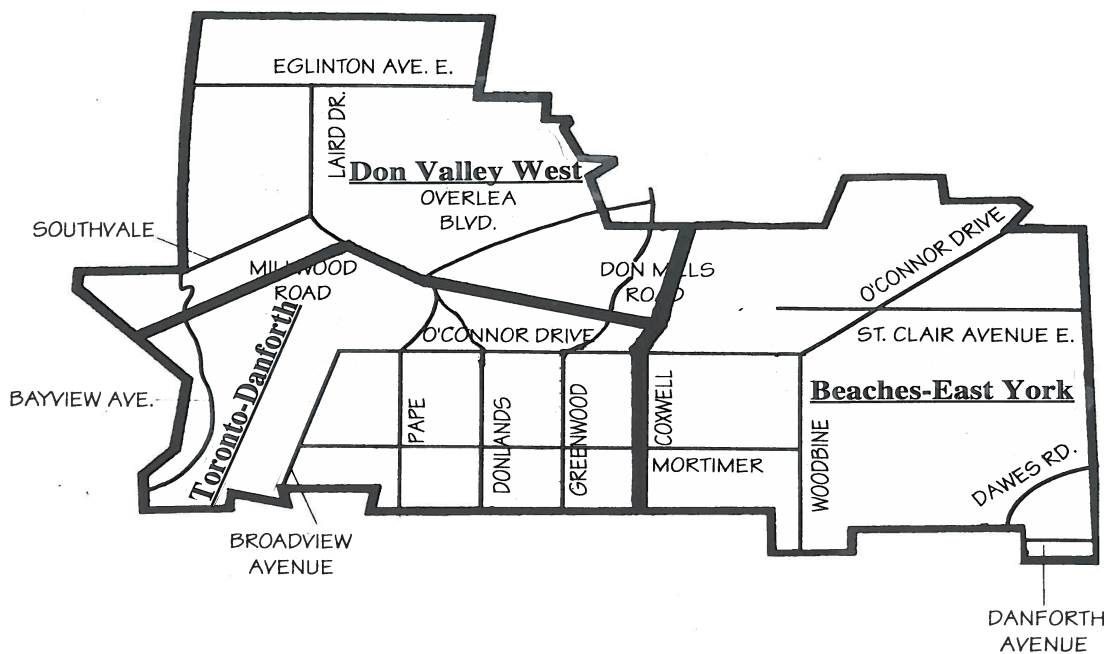
For anyone planning on growing roses for the first time, Safir recommended starting out with Explorer roses, since they are hearty enough for the Canadian climate and easier to work with than other types of roses.

These roses are named after Canadian explorers like Champlain.

When it comes to finding a fertilizer that will yield beautiful, healthy roses, Safir said nothing beats horse manure. It adds organics to the soil and stimulates soil fibres to convert various nutrients into food that can be taken up by the plants, she explained.



# Meet Your Local Candidates



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** With this instalment, East York's Observer begins a two-part series profiling the major candidates running locally in the May 2 federal election. This week, we offer coverage of the contenders from the Liberal, New Democratic, Conservative and Green parties vying for votes in Beaches-East York. There, Liberal incumbent Maria Minna — first elected in 1993 — is defending her House of Commons seat in the face of challenges from novice NDP, Tory and Green candidates. Published and broadcast reports have suggested that the NDP's national campaign war-room considers Beaches-East York ripe for a New Democratic takeover. Both the constituency's sitting New Democratic MPP and liberal city councillor are endorsing the NDP's Matthew Kellway. But in the 2008 federal election, a well-known New Democrat, former MPP Marilyn Churley from neighbouring Toronto-Danforth, finished about 4,000 votes and nine percentage points behind Minna (with the Conservative running a distant third, and the Green party candidate finishing fourth). In our next edition, we'll profile the races and the candidates in the two other East York ridings: Toronto-Danforth and Don Valley West.



Observer, Jesse Mirsky

**TALKING POLITICS:** Beaches-East York Conservative hopeful Bill Burrows (right) canvasses O'Connor Drive and speaks to Jawny Baker's restaurant manager Tom Zoras and Chris Menary (left), Tory candidate in this fall's provincial election.

## MP hopeful promises to prioritize the economy

By **JESSE MIRSKY**

As some seasoned Liberal and NDP politicians manoeuvre for advantage in a riding that some say is swing, the Conservative in Beaches-East York is fresh-faced and soft-spoken.

Bill Burrows, 42, is new to politics. His path to the Tory nomination in Beaches-East York has wound through community involvement and service.

As the spokesperson for the Kew Beach Neighbourhood Association, Burrows has helped give Beach residents a voice on various issues.

Now that he has stepped up to electoral politics, he said he's ready to provide a Conservative voice to a riding that has been dominated for years by Liberals federally and New Democrats provincially.

"Most of the folks that I've been speaking to have been saying to me that they want change and that they want somebody different," Burrows said in an interview.

"They want somebody who's going to be listening to them and actually taking positions and working and advocating on behalf of the constituents and the local residents."

Burrows, who is married and has one daughter, studied political science at York University and did a post-graduate course in telecommunications at Sheridan College.

He said he's been directly affected by the global recession of 2008, and he identifies with the Conservative party because of the Tories' focus on jobs and

economic growth.

"My core concerns and my core focus are stimulating the economy, making sure that we generate jobs," Burrows said. "I'm all for lower taxes for businesses so that they can stimulate the economy as well."

Another part of his platform is a focus on seniors and the arts.

"The federal (Conservative) government has committed more money to the arts than any other government in the history of Canada," he said. "A lot of people in the arts don't always necessarily associate the Conservative party with that type of engagement."

Burrows said he believes in land development in the riding, but puts the emphasis on responsible development.

"Our group is in favour of development. We're not opposed to it," he said. "We want developments that take place in the neighbourhood to follow the proper process and protocols and essentially be built according to the rules."

Burrows said he hopes his community-based focus can trump his political inexperience. He predicted a Conservative government after May 2, and added that he'll offer a voice for the riding's constituents that an opposition MP simply can't.

"This is an opportunity for me to get involved and to actually be the voice of the community inside the government," Burrows said, "as opposed to have someone like the current MP who is the voice inside the opposition."

## Liberal aims to invest in people

By **BRITNEY BRADY-MAGINLEY**

With the 2011 federal election campaign well underway, Beaches-East York Liberal incumbent Maria Minna stands by her promise to invest in the people.

Minna has lived in East York for 17 years. Since she first entered politics in 1981, she has been an advocate for social justice in her riding.

She is known for supporting the rights of children, women, visible minorities and immigrants.

Minna said she is inclined to fight for additional funding and home care for seniors, reducing child poverty, improved environmental legislation, maintaining the health-care system and funding pharmacare for catastrophic drug costs.

She lobbied to improve children's welfare by bringing in the National Child Tax Benefit, and Early Learning and Child Care programs that were slashed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The candidate hopes to reinstate these programs if the Liberals are elected, because she believes families need help.

"I have worked very hard to benefit the community. I've brought in close to \$30 million on



Observer, Britney Brady-Maginley

**WORKING THE PHONES:** Liberal incumbent Member of Parliament Maria Minna talks to a volunteer at her office at 1950 Danforth Ave.

programs for the community," Minna said. "I fight hard to get the proper support because I believe in strengthening our community and implementing the right services."

She acknowledges that improving the country's education system is a necessity for students, and recognizes that literacy programs need to be reinstated and apprenticeships need

to be improved.

"We have a huge literacy problem in the country. It's an important aid for our economy, productivity and the people," Minna said.

"Also, if you get the grades, you deserve to go to school. We want to improve apprenticeships for those who don't go to college or university."

Another point on Minna's agenda is strengthening Canada's manufacturing base to create jobs.

"We are a very wealthy country in natural resources, but we don't refine anything here. That's where the value of added jobs are," she said.

Minna notes that before the Harper government, Canada had low interest rates, low unemployment, low debt, low inflation, well-regulated banks and a \$13-billion surplus.

She said this change translates into a government that does not invest in the people or the economy, and shrinks the government of Canada's ability by spending elsewhere.

"We were the best of the G8, but when Harper came into power in 2006, we got into a \$500-million deficit," Minna said. "He was spending in areas that were not for the people."

## Tax cuts needed: Green candidate

By **ANDRE WIDJAJA**

Aaron Cameron, the Green party's candidate for Beaches-East York, says he's always had "green political allegiances."

In 2007, Cameron, now 29, studied in South Korea.

He says his call to action was solidified when he helped clean up the MT Hebei Spirit oil spill, which was the country's worst spill since 1995.

"Just seeing the devastation and destruction; that entire society still hasn't recovered and probably never will," he said. "It was that realization that what we do every day will affect future generations."

The political science and economics graduate is now devoted to bringing that environmental consciousness to his Beaches-East York riding.

"It's not debatable that the environment is depleting," he said. "We need to use a triple-based system, using social, economic and environmental variables to make decisions."

Cameron's economic agenda also aims to relieve individuals of some tax burdens and trans-



**AARON CAMERON**

Devoted to the environment

fer them to corporations.

He says that corporate subsidies do not usually benefit the middle and lower class.

"I personally believe that this is the best strategy," he said. "It's a mindframe that people need to get over, that healthy corporations mean a healthy society, which is not necessarily true."

Since many people in his riding use public transportation to

get to work, Cameron says he will push for employer-provided or tax-exempted Metropasses.

He believes it's important for employers to promote public transit.

His agenda also focuses on more environmentally friendly transportation alternatives.

Cameron says he will push for tax exemptions when people purchase bicycles, roller blades and any other gear for "greener" ways to travel.

The first-time candidate hopes to build on support from the 2008 federal election.

The Green party captured 9.8 per cent of the vote in the riding under former candidate Zoran Markovski.

"I don't know what to expect," Cameron said. "We'll be out there seven days a week, walking around town, trying to get our face and our message out there."

Cameron currently works in commercial real estate at a downtown brokerage.

He is also a member of Bluebird, a non-profit food exhibition.





Observer, Alissa Randall

**MEETING THE COMMUNITY:** Beaches-East York NDP candidate Matthew Kellway (left) chats about his campaign with a voter at the corner of Danforth and Coxwell avenues.

## NDP candidate focuses on eco-urban agenda for community of East York

By ALISSA RANDALL

NDP candidate Matthew Kellway believes he's a good advocate for Beaches-East York because he's deeply rooted in the community.

As a husband and father of three, he was involved in the community as chair of a local parent council and daycare board.

Kellway led the community fight against the Portlands gas-fired generator on the waterfront.

He said the generator was hazardous to the health of his children and the community.

He decided to form the Toronto Energy Coalition because of his passion for the environment.

"I've lived in this community and brought my family up in this community (and believe) that I will be a good advocate," Kellway said.

"I am deeply rooted and deeply proud of belonging to this community."

His vision for the neighbourhood and Toronto focuses on urban issues and how the en-

vironment relates to them.

Kellway has been talking to community residents about "the need to bring urban issues to the forefront of national politics."

He explained that of the 80 per cent of Canadians living in cities, 20 per cent reside in the GTA, surrounding Beaches-East York.

While canvassing the neighbourhood, residents showed Kellway the high costs of their energy bills.

"You'd be amazed at the number of times people bring their hydro bills, gas bills, oil bills and their energy contracts to the door for me to see how much they're paying every month for those utilities," he said.

Investing in public transit is also a concern due to traffic congestion and urban sprawl, Kellway said.

"(The) subway system has reached capacity and beyond. It really is a matter of adding more transit and making it more accessible for people," he said.

He added that lower-income families that cannot afford hous-

ing near transit live outside cities, and therefore rely on their cars.

His campaign also focuses on improving immigrant services, as well as providing affordable housing strategies, affordable childcare, universal and accessible healthcare and stronger guaranteed pensions.

Kellway said that when speaking to residents, concerns arise over Liberal MP Maria Minna's level of involvement in the community for the past 18 years.

"People wonder where she is, what's she's been doing, why she hasn't come to their door before," he said.

"(For the) vast majority of Canadians that still have a sense of pride in this country, the things that they're most proud of are the things that the NDP (has) championed over many years and will continue to champion," Kellway said.

"These are the things that the NDP champions: universal health care, a pension system for seniors, support when they lose their jobs."

# Yovanoff brings youthful face to Don Valley West

By KRISTIN ANNABLE

In a small room on the second floor of the Ontario Federation of Labour building sits a tray of homemade muffins, a quart of coffee and fewer than 10 members of The New Democratic Party from Don Valley West.

They are here to nominate and discuss the new NDP candidate for the riding.

As the meeting is called to order, Eddie Ste. Marie, the president of the riding association, announces that the candidate they will be nominating, Nicole Yovanoff, will not be present.

The riding of Don Valley West, currently held by Rob Oliphant, has been a Liberal riding since 1993.

At the March 29 nomination meeting, Ste. Marie acknowledged that the riding is a tough one for the NDP to compete in.

"We are going to work hard and we know we have a bit of a hill and we hope we can make some inroads," he said. "We are hoping to build a bigger base for the future."

According to Elections Canada, in the 2008 federal election, Oliphant garnered 44.2 per cent of the vote. In comparison, David Sparrow, the NDP candidate in the riding, received 10.2 per cent.

Cliff Orchard, a member of the NDP party, said the riding is very divided when it comes to wealth.

"This is a riding where they are a lot of people who are not well off. Yet there is also the area where there is a lot of money," he said.

"We want a candidate who represents the right side of Don



ORCHARD



STE. MARIE

Valley West."

Another member of the party, Leonard Swartz, said he hopes the candidate will represent the party's platform.

"At the core, our platform is about spreading the wealth. Sometimes that is lost when Ignatieff and Harper go off on trivial issues," he said.

"We want things like equity in housing and an equal playing field when it comes to education."

Ste. Marie said that he believes Yovanoff represents

a fresh, youthful face for the NDP.

"Nicole has been involved with the party for many years. She is young, vibrant and knows the issues," he said. "She represents youth and it is time that a lot of ridings start looking at young people."

The Observer tried repeatedly to contact Yovanoff through the riding association, but was unsuccessful.

Her biography states that she is an advocate for clean water and water protection. She currently works with an organization called Residents of South Simcoe Conserving our Rural Environment.

The group is working to stop new developments from polluting the Humber and Don Rivers.

**'Nicole represents youth and it is time that a lot of ridings start looking at young people.'**

—Eddie Ste. Marie

## Peewee boys hockey team wins ultimate prize

By DENNIS WU

A Toronto hockey team has finally won a Stanley Cup. It's much smaller in size, but just as important to the players as the real one.

The two top local peewee teams, Toronto and Detroit, battled for the coveted trophy on April 2 at the East York Memorial Arena. Toronto dominated with a score of 6-1.

Connie Mitchell, the peewee convener for the East York Hockey Association (EYHA), said both teams were pumped for the big game.

"They're pretty excited. I saw some shaking knees this morning in the hallways," she said. "When they last played last week in the semi-finals, they tied. It's a big thrill for them."

At the final buzzer, the winning team threw their gloves in the air, followed by pile-up in front of their net.

Then, just like the stars of the NHL, the Toronto team lifted the cup over their heads and skated laps around the ice.

Jeannette Kozovski, vice-president of the EYHA, said the game is a big annual event for the community. She said the coaches simply love to coach and are just as enthusiastic as the young players.

Also, winning the cup isn't just for bragging rights.

"We send it out to get engraved every year," Kozovski said. "Their names stay

on there forever."

The cup was first played for in the 1954-'55 season. There are a few cases where names of both father and son appear on the cup. It is amazing to see, she said.

Michael Ilcio, father of Toronto player No. 16 Marshall, waved a gigantic Toronto Maple Leafs flag to cheer on his son's team.

"The Leafs are going to win the cup today. It's going to be fantastic!" Ilcio said. "They only lost one game since my son was traded to Toronto. They deserve to win for sure."

Beaches-East York MPP Michael Prue was impressed by the level at which the kids played.

"One day, I hope that a whole bunch of these kids get to play for the Toronto Maple Leafs," he said. "The downtown Toronto team needs them."

Team Toronto's assistant coaches David Blois and Kathi Fujino were overjoyed that their team triumphed.

"I can't believe it. We tied this team in the semis," Fujino said. "We were playing very differently from last week."

"We played a great game. We were taking time and space, we skated well and we were knocking guys off the puck," Blois said. "They have to believe in themselves and in their team that they can do the job and they did just that."



Observer, Nicholas Pescod

**RAISE THE CUP:** Toronto player No. 10, Paul Napolitano, hoists the Little Stanley Cup. Toronto won the championship game over Detroit 6-1.



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## TTC forgets E.Y.

The announcement from the subway car maintenance barn at the Wilson TTC station last week sounded like good — and momentous — news to many: Mayor Rob Ford and Premier Dalton McGuinty stood side-by-side as they announced that Toronto will get more than \$8 billion for Ford's transit plan. And that plan calls for a 19-kilometre light rail line along Eglinton Avenue between Jane Street in the west and the Kennedy subway station in the east.

The Eglinton LRT will be underground, including a stretch across the northern extreme of East York. There are stops planned for Bayview, Laird, Leslie, Ferrand, Wynford, Bermondsey and Victoria Park.

But while the announcement was indeed momentous — involving a ton of money and a massive construction project to bury 19 kilometres of railway — don't be fooled into thinking this is good news for East York or the rest of Toronto.

Premier McGuinty may have been all smiles when he said, "We've got to get people moving." But the premier's and the mayor's actions speak much louder than their words. The real news here is that McGuinty and Ford have driven the final nails into the coffin of former Mayor Miller's thoughtful and comprehensive Transit City plan.

So instead of eight projects spread around the city that would have helped get more people moving in an efficient and environmentally respectful way (including along congested Finch Avenue), we get three: the Eglinton tunnel, a rebuild of the Scarborough RT and an extension of the Sheppard subway.

It's interesting to note that, according to some reports, the TTC played no role in the McGuinty-Ford redesign of Toronto transit. And the head of Metrolinx says the city will pay dearly for its sudden and drastic change of course. Metrolinx is the former Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, and last year it signed a contract worth \$770 million to purchase 182 light-rail vehicles that would have operated on Transit City's Eglinton, Finch and Sheppard lines. Now there are millions in contract cancellation penalties to pay.

Ultimately, all Torontonians were shortchanged by the announcement made last week by the premier and the mayor.

That tunnel under Eglinton looks suspiciously like a primrose path.

—Nicholas Pescod

## Letter: Reader hears 'gravy train whistle'

### To the editor:

In the curious case of director Ford recasting political character actor Ootes as chief of Toronto Community Housing, the question has to be asked: Who is the real person behind that stolid countenance?

So, flush with his \$100,000 golden handshake, indexed OMERS pension and fat benefits from city taxpayers, retired Toronto-Danforth councillor Case Ootes has now returned to the city stage in another leading part at further taxpayers' expense.

He is now shamelessly triple-dipping; despite Mayor Rob Ford's spoken aversion to mere double-dipping!

For a limited engagement, Ootes is playing the entire board of the TCHC — for the same pay as all of them combined!

I hear the gravy train whistle loud and clear. Memories of this political chameleon's checkered past rush in.

I recall his strident performance at the OMB hearing called to rule on ward boundary changes.

It was soon after amalgamation. The deputy mayor appeared as a local councillor in support of changes

to his own ward that favoured his re-election (at least in the opinion of his opponents, the anti-amalgamation Team East York).

He even hastily conscripted a chorus of sycophants to parrot his lines. The muted audience cries of "shame," "conflict of interest" and even "gerrymandering" were shrugged off.

Former TCHC chiefs Ballantyne and Nakamura earned reputations for being compassionate, competent and honourable.

Yet they have been dismissed without due process.

After my 20-year observation of Ootes, I limit my rating for him to merely competent.

He and the Ford tag-team duo have once again performed their bull-in-a-china-shop act — to the detriment of TCHC and their own reputations. The applause is tepid at best.

This is a case of speaking truth to power.

Case Ootes has been well-rewarded for his years in office. It's time to drop the curtain on his appearances for good and give him the hook from Toronto's political stage.

—Tim McDonald  
Leaside

# Ending the many myths of the ditzy dumb blond

Q: How do you keep a blond busy?

A: Write "please turn over" on both sides of a piece of paper.

Q: If a blond and a brunette fell off a building, who would hit the ground first?

A: The brunette — because the blond would have to stop and ask for directions.

A couple of months ago, I walked into work to find I was no longer the only blond.

One of the new girls, who had been a brunette, bleached her hair the same colour as mine.

Since I was no longer the one and only blond in the restaurant, I got excited. Excited to know I wasn't going to be the only one to be joked about anymore.

This was her first shift at work as a blond. As one of the other servers walked by, he stopped, looked her over, and then called out to me.

"Melanie, you have a twin!" he said. "You should give her tips on being blond."

From that moment on, she was in the same boat as I am — struggling to watch everything I say and do in order to not be categorized as a "dumb blond."

I have always wondered where this stereotype came from. I

Melanie  
Schawill



hear it expressed everywhere.

Joking put-downs to a blond... or even telling someone they should go blond because they do dumb things.

So I decided to look into the origins. I went through theory after theory — everything from the Greeks to the Middle Ages to French prostitutes.

While searching, I found a few accounts of the first "official" dumb blond. Her name was Rosalie Duthe, a French courtesan from the 18th century. She was a beautiful blond woman who seemed to be dumb because she used long pauses in her speech.

So now I have at least some sense of where the stereotype came from.

What I still don't understand is how people find it OK to joke about "dumb blonds" and not expect us to be offended by it.

Maybe they've been desensitized by the culture. After all,

blond women have often been portrayed in the movies, for instance, as bubbly, flirty — and dumb.

Take Marilyn Monroe. In almost every movie she acted in, she was given a role to promote her as a sexy but ditzy blond. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* places Monroe as the dumb blond character beside her smart friend, the brunette Jane Russell.

Monroe herself eventually rebelled against this stereotyping; she reached a point where she didn't want to act in those movies anymore because she wanted to be taken more seriously.

She may have begun asking herself: Isn't it a form of discrimination to be judged on the colour of your hair? Few today would make jokes based on the colour of someone's skin.

It's reached the point where I try to just ignore the jokes that come my way — but just seeing how many other girls have to put up with it (including the girl I work with) still makes me wince a little.

So next time you talk to a blond, don't assume she's dumb, stupid, or an air-head. She might just be one of the smartest women you will ever know.

## Liberals woo students to learn by cash incentives

Whoever believes high school dropout rates are still up there, be advised: The dropout rate is actually in decline. Four out of five students graduate — including about 72,000 from Ontario last year. And the good news for those who will finish high school with flying colours? You may be awarded with free money should a Liberal government come into power.

The Learning Passport, which Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff announced last week, would give a boost into university or college. Imagine — \$4,000 available over four years for post-secondary education.

Should you really be bribing students into getting post-secondary-worthy grades? Not really. First, they may get too accustomed to handouts. Second, not everyone figures out their career paths before 18. I didn't, and suffered major anxiety for two years before entering journalism at Centennial College.

Perhaps this money the Liberals are promising would be better-spent on the infrastructure of the education system. After all, institutions are teaching with less money per student compared to 20 years ago, meaning the quality of learning isn't what it could and should be. Resources from kindergarten to Grade 12 and beyond have not kept pace with enrolment; that's

Deeanna  
Charrion



why you see so many kids in one classroom.

Besides, let's not forget that promising apparent riches to teenagers not to drop out and continue their education may translate in an unanticipated way. Let's be realistic here: kids like to party in high school and college. I did my share. But I've heard of others, including many on the Ontario Student Assistance Program, painting the town red until their bank account balance was the same negative colour.

My family income was too high to qualify for OSAP. But luckily, my mother had contributed to an RESP, which under government matching rules helped give me a semester free-of-charge.

Maybe my skepticism about the Liberal plan has to do with the fact that I'm having to pinch my pennies these days due to unemployment at the moment. But I'm still in school. I haven't dropped out.

I must acknowledge that many low-income families genuinely can't support their

children's pursuits in the post-secondary world. Ignatieff has promised them even more under the Learning Passport proposal: as much as \$1,500 per year over four years, tax-free through an RESP, without any contributions from the family. That's \$6,000!

Sounds attractive, but before people start equating this to hitting the lottery, remember that attending college or university is an expensive proposition indeed. And Ontario tuitions are especially high.

With that in mind, what will an extra \$1,000-\$1,500 per year really do?

(By the way, the education and textbook tax credit would be written off to help pay for the Learning Passport.)

I imagine that if Iggy reigns supreme on May 2, the influx of people suddenly feeling flush with tuition money could further strain the post-secondary system. And some kids will be kids and spend it frivolously.

I still feel sort of cheated. A monetary incentive kind of defeats the purpose of obtaining knowledge to enrich your life and get the proud acceptance from parents that students dream of. My incentive to go on to college was to get the feeling that I had accomplished something more valuable than money anyway.

## We welcome your input

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# Sick of elections? Stop blaming the politicians

Sigh. Didn't we just have one of these three years ago?

Elections in this country are like our winters; we go awhile without one and then suddenly, out of nowhere, we're hit with a big one. One day it's sunny and warm and we've got our elected officials in office doing what (some of us) voted for them to do.... Then the next thing you know, snow is falling and someone in Parliament is pushing a non-confidence vote.

By now you know that Canadians will be returning to the polls on May 2. And the one question that's on your mind may well be this: Why?

Well, there has been a bevy of reasons given to us: the unprecedented proroguing of Parliament back in 2009. The charge that the Harper government was in contempt of Parliament. Individual policies and projects that apparently don't have the public's best interest in mind — including the purchase of new fighter jets to replace our aging CF-18s.

Yet, despite all of that, the campaign polls so far show that the Conservatives maintain the highest level of favour among

**Scott  
Reid**



Canadians.

Wait. So a plurality of Canadians think Stephen Harper is the best person to lead the country, and yet we still have an election coming? Something's missing here. The foundation for democratic government is the concept of "by the people and for the people." So why does it seem like the will of the people is being eschewed in favour of the will of politicians?

It's no secret that elections cost taxpayers money. Money that, in these financially uncertain times, we can't afford to be spending on costly elections that are simply unwanted by most Canadians. Since the year 2000, we've had four federal elections, and now we're staring down the barrel of a fifth.

The problem is (and has been for many years now) that Canadians are indifferent when it

comes to politics. We really only have ourselves to blame for allowing our elected officials to turn elections into Canada's third national obsession, behind hockey and Tim Horton's coffee. Politicians know that our weakness rests in our incapacity to get passionate about politics, and they exploit that lack of passion.

The fact is that voter turnout is gradually declining. So in elections and the campaigns that precede them, the politicians are looking for some way to reach us. They're looking — often in vain — for that one spark that's going to move us to the polls.

So let's stop blaming the politicians for forcing these elections and start blaming ourselves. We're letting them happen by not taking part in our national right, nay, responsibility to vote. We need to vote *because* we're sick of voting. We need to reduce that margin of non-voters to an inconsequential minority, if we have any hope of curbing this semi-bi-annual routine of governments calling elections.

So, to you, non-voters: Get out there and vote. Just do it.



Observer, Shannon Keller

**THE WRITE STUFF:** Dr. R.B. Fleming spoke to the East York Historical Society about his new book, *Peter Gzowski: A Biography*.

## Drinks and demons: Gzowski's dark side exposed to the light

By SHANNON KELLER

Dr. R.B. Fleming's latest book explores the work and life of Peter Gzowski, the public radio host with a surprising dark side most listeners didn't know about.

Gzowski hosted *Morningside* on CBC radio for about 15 years, and succeeded because of the framework laid out by the producers, Fleming said. He had a dedicated audience ranging from stay-at-home moms to criminals and people living on the street.

Fleming spoke at an East York Historical Society meeting on March 29.

The crowd gave the renowned author a warm welcome as he discussed *Peter Gzowski: A Biography*.

"I didn't go into the project ever dreaming that one of my heroes had all these demons," Fleming said. "Biography takes the light and the dark."

Fleming was especially surprised that Gzowski's personal life included an inability to tell the truth and infidelity. Joking with the crowd, Fleming hoped that Mayor Rob Ford has a dark side that the public hasn't seen yet, because he seems to be doing everything perfectly so far.

Fleming immediately established a rapport with the audience at the S. Walter Stewart Library. He began by discussing the differences between writing a biography versus a novel.

One of the difficulties in writing the biography was the number of unanswered questions. Fleming often wondered about some of the things Gzowski had done and why he made some of the decisions he did.

"Biography is allowed to imagine, not invent like a novelist," Fleming said.

The author recounted the wide variety of people he talked to about Gzowski to uncover the truth behind the icon. One of the sources interviewed was an old-school journalist who said that at the prime of their careers, most of her peers drank heavily. The source preferred to remain anonymous, but during their interview Fleming drank mineral water while she had two double Gins.

He also told stories about how revered Gzowski was by the public. A man once wrote a letter about a street person named Maggie. She was panhandling in front of his office one morning. The man asked her what she planned to do with the money, assuming she was collecting for either alcohol or drugs. He was surprised when she asked him for batteries to listen to Gzowski on *Morningside*, which was starting in 10 minutes. She would listen to the three-hour radio show every morning on a bench in a little mall.

"It gives you the breadth of his listenership, and it was enormous," he said.

## East York and province team up to tackle problem of elder abuse

By ALEXANDRA WARD

Community Care East York is looking to put a stop to elder abuse.

It's a problem that is often ignored due to the stigma that surrounds it, experts say, and that's why the local agency has partnered with the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (ONPEA) to host a luncheon workshop on the subject.

Scheduled for May 4 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the workshop will take place in the recreation room at 12 Thorncliffe Park Dr., which is one of Community Care's satellite locations.

"It's something that our clients have asked for," said the agency's Jane Weber.

The goal of the workshop, she explained, is to educate community members about what elder abuse is, how to identify it and what to do if you are the victim of abuse or know somebody who is.

Monita Persaud, the GTA regional elder abuse consultant for ONPEA, will be leading the workshop.

"There are many strategies to combat elder abuse," she said.

The most common type is financial, she said, as it can reach a breaking point faster than other types of abuse. An example is when a senior is evicted because he or she can no longer pay the rent.

"We know that financial abuse does not happen in isolation of other types of abuse," Persaud said. "It comes like a package, with emotional and psychological abuse. A senior is more comfortable seeking help when it's financial abuse rather than emotional, physical or psychological abuse."

ONPEA has developed a resource kit for people who want to tackle the subject but don't know how. It focuses on start-

ing the conversation in a non-confrontational manner.

Persaud noted that many seniors are reluctant to address the abuse because the perpetrator is often a family member or somebody close to them and they value the relationship. ONPEA works with seniors to improve the relationship.

"What we've been doing is talking to a lot of seniors," the consultant said. "(We are) really trying to encourage them about who should own the problem and help them recognize that sometimes they have to articulate the issue and figure out where they want to go."

ONPEA operates a Senior Safety Line (1-866-299-1011) that can be called 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is staffed by trained professionals who offer support and suggestions about what seniors can do if they are victims of elder abuse.

## Community comes together to save the environment



Observer, Dennis Wu

**DOWN AND DIRTY:** Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth councillor Mary Fragedakis shovels some soil at an environmental awareness event at Dieppe Park on Saturday. Community residents were welcome to take as much soil as they wanted.

### Locals kick off spring cleaning at Dieppe Park

By NICHOLAS PESCOD

East Yorkers took advantage of the beautiful spring weather on Saturday by heading to Dieppe Park for a good cause.

Community Environment Day provided residents with the opportunity to safely dispose of unwanted household materials.

Many of those items, including skates, books and art supplies, will be donated for reuse.

Councillor Mary Fragedakis attended and said the event benefits everyone.

"This is a great day for the community," she said. "It's a great way to build the community."

There were also green bins and kitchen containers available for free, as well as backyard composters, rain barrels and indoor water efficiency kits available for purchase.

Residents also had the opportunity to pick up as much free soil as they wanted. East Yorker Spiro Mastoris took advantage of the offer.

"I grow a lot of tomatoes," he said. "This soil is good for them because of the nutrients in the soil."

Besides safe disposal bins for electronics and hazardous household waste, community organizations such as Toronto Water, Waste Management and

Ward 29 Bikes took part.

Ward 29 Bikes has been around for three years and campaigns for safe biking around East York and the Danforth area.

Val Dodge, a Ward 29 Bikes member, has been a part of the organization since the beginning and was excited to promote biking in the city.

"It's important to get out early in the spring because people are just starting to think about cycling," Dodge said. "We want to give back to the community. We want to make it a better place."

For more information on Ward 29 Bikes, visit [www.29bikes.ca](http://www.29bikes.ca). To find out more about the event and future event locations, visit [www.toronto.ca/environment\\_days/schedule.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/environment_days/schedule.htm)



# Conserving the Peruvian Amazon

By ANETA TASHEVA

When Teddy Yuyarima, a field guide in the Peruvian Amazon basin, travels through the Samiria River to help with research, he takes his role very seriously.

On March 11, Yuyarima stepped out of a research boat to count the offspring in a caiman nest he had spotted. He began picking up some of the young caimans (alligator-like reptiles) so he could carry them back to the boat for the conservation biologists to study. When Yuyarima had picked up five babies, the researchers spotted the mother caiman swimming very close to the research boat and returning to her nest.

Instead of running for the boat when he saw the two-metre-long caiman, Yuyarima decided to count the rest of the babies in the nest, so that the biologists could record the data in their research.

When he had finished, Yuyarima told the biologists that 11 young caimans lay in the nest altogether. Then he carried the five caimans he had in his hands back to the boat.

After the biologists had measured, weighed and determined the species and sex of the young caimans, Yuyarima released them back into the river so they could join their mother in the nest.

I witnessed all of the events unfold from the research boat as I sat next to the conservation biologists. They said this wasn't the first time Yuyarima had demonstrated his devotion to the conservation projects.

On March 5 of this year, as a

student at Centennial College's East York campus, I began my long journey to the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve. Seven other Centennial students and four faculty members also came on the expedition to the reserve, located in the Peruvian Amazon basin.

It took several days to reach the Pacaya-Samiria and included travel by plane, bus and boat. Once we arrived at the reserve, we spent one week going on daily excursions with field guides and conservation biologists who studied the animals of the Amazon rainforest. They worked for various wildlife conservation organizations, including AmazonEco. The animals they studied included caimans, macaws, river dolphins, various species of fish and different species of monkeys.

The expedition to Peru, organized by the college's Global Citizenship and Equity Learning Expeditions, lasted for more than two weeks. It gave the students the opportunity to see conservation research in action.

Part of the reason why the biologists and field guides conduct this research is to determine the state of the different animal populations in the region. By going into the rainforest, they can count the animals and study their behaviour.

Using their research and statistics from previous years, they compare the numbers of the populations to establish the sustainability and environmental state of the area.

Since many of the biologists and all of the field guides spoke little English, or none at all, the Centennial students on the expedition discovered much of what occurred in the environment through observation.

As students, we witnessed a partnership between conservation biologists and villagers, like Teddy Yuyarima, who live in the rainforest.

According to Tula Fang, the logistics co-ordinator of AmazonEco, Yuyarima has worked as a field guide for about 15 years. He lives in a small village by the name of San Martin, which is located in the rainforest. When Yuyarima doesn't need to guide groups of conservation biologists or students going on expeditions, he goes back to the village of San Martin where his family resides.

Most days, when Yuyarima works as a field guide, he leads a group of biologists and students through different treks in the rainforest from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Then, from 8 p.m. to midnight, he guides groups on a boat through the Samiria River, as he did on March 11 when he showed his devotion to the wildlife projects by stepping off the boat to count the young in a caiman nest.

Tula Fang said Yuyarima isn't the only one of the villagers who cares about preserving the wildlife in the Amazon. She said the villagers know all the plants and animals in the area and are devoted to conserving the rainforest.

"Conservation begins with the people who live in this area," Fang said.



Observer, Aneta Tasheva



Observer, Aneta Tasheva



Observer, Aneta Tasheva



Observer, Aneta Tasheva

**OBSERVE THE ANIMALS:** (Clockwise from top) After biologists on the boat have finished recording data about a common caiman, Teddy Yuyarima holds the alligator-like reptile just before untying and releasing it back into the Samiria River. Children in the small town of Nauta, located in the northeastern part of the Peruvian Amazon, pose with a puppy that roamed the roads. A male howler monkey keeps a close watch on conservation biologists who travel through the rainforest to record their observations of the wildlife. A grey river dolphin briefly surfaces for air, exposing its dorsal fin, while fishing in the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve.

## Connecting a community through cricket

Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute student Arsan Ali, 14, is suited up to play in a cricket match at Valley Park Middle School's gymnasium.

Observer, Andre Widjaja



By ANDRE WIDJAJA

Waiting to watch Sri Lanka and India square off for the Cricket World Cup, Arsan Ali was even more ecstatic about the cricket field that will be built near his Thorncliffe neighbourhood.

"I'll be looking forward to the summers," said Ali, 14, said.

On Friday, April 1, approximately 500 people – from politicians to students – spent the evening at Valley Park Middle School taking in some of the cricket-related festivities as part of the school's "Crazy for Cricket Party."

The event was organized to help support the \$1.7-million project, which will help build a full-size cricket field behind Valley Park Middle School. Attendees were also able to stay at the school overnight to watch the championship match of the ICC Cricket World Cup between Sri Lanka and India.

For an entrance fee of only \$3, which all went toward the plan, people were able to enjoy free

food and refreshments, along with various musical and dance acts throughout the night.

"It's not really a fundraiser. It's a friend-raiser," said Nick Stefanoff, principal of Valley Park Middle School and co-chair of the Go Green Cricket Field Project. "We want the community to feel that they're a part of the project, but we didn't want to overburden them with donations."

Stefanoff said the sleepover was a way to get the community and sponsors excited about the project.

Local politicians attending the event voiced their support for the community.

"This is a demonstration of something we need more of," said Rana Sarkar, Liberal candidate for Scarborough-Rouge River. "It's exactly what this community needs and I hope that everyone gathers in support."

The proposed plan will also create a baseball diamond, soccer field, amphitheatre, butter-

fly garden and additional green space.

Canadian actress Lisa Ray, who's a big fan of cricket and whose father is of Indian descent, was one of the few guests who took the stage to express her excitement for the new cricket field.

"This is an incredible initiative and I love to see the community come together," she said. "We needed a cricket field and I think this is Canada's first sustainable cricket field."

Other guests included Councillor John Parker and Liberal MP Rob Oliphant, both representing Don Valley West, and Michael Landsberg, host of TSN's *Off the Record*.

While guests spoke in the auditorium, a group of young volunteers played a scrimmage game of cricket in the school's gymnasium.

Stefanoff said the completion date for the project has yet to be determined, but he's hoping that the field will be ready in two years.