



GOING THE FULL MONTY
The countdown to opening night begins at Scarborough Village
- See page 5

WINTERLICIOUS KICKS OFF
Restaurants in Scarborough take part in the annual food festival
- See page 8



THE EAST TORONTO OBSERVER

• Friday • February 4 • 2011 •

• PUBLISHED BY UTSC/CENTENNIAL COLLEGE JOURNALISM STUDENTS AND SERVING SCARBOROUGH •

• TORONTOOBSERVER.CA •



JESSICA MOY/The Observer

Kung Hei Fat Choi

Scarborough Town Centre celebrates the year of the rabbit with traditional lion dance parades, said to bring good luck and fortune. The spectacle ran Jan. 29-30. See page 4.

Toxic gas kills man

Furnace fumes send two police officers to hospital

KYLE LARKIN
The Observer

Carbon monoxide leaking from a faulty or decrepit furnace killed a man in his Scarborough home and sent two police officers to hospital.

"They ... barely made it out of the house," Det. Jason Cole of 42 Division said.

The officers arrived at the home on Wishing Well Drive near Sheppard Avenue East Sunday after a call from a worried neighbour.

They were searching the home for anyone else who may have been inside after discovering the man's body, Cole said.

"As [the officers] entered the basement, they were both overcome by carbon monoxide," he said.

The officers were rushed to North York General Hospital where they were treated for non-life threatening injuries. They have since been released.

Cole could not confirm reports that a paramedic was also hospitalized.

Toronto Fire Services confirmed the source of the noxious fumes was the faulty furnace, police said.

The furnace may have been an outdated model left over from a conversion to gas from oil, Cole said.

TTC heeds public over bus route concerns

COLE CARRUTHERS
The Observer

The TTC announced Sunday that it will only be cutting 19 bus routes.

Public consultations over the last few weeks drew various objections to cutting the original 48 routes under consideration.

Scarborough residents went to the Scarborough Civic Centre on Jan. 26, to voice their concerns.

TTC chair Karen Stintz and other representatives answered questions from community members about the

proposed cuts to routes from all over the city.

"The data [of the routes and ridership] is always available and at the ready," TTC service manager Mitch Stambler said. "We had to decide what the cutoff would be [and] check the area for community access so we don't leave a gaping hole."

The TTC's proposed route changes would take effect on May 8. The slash-and-burn approach to bus routes was delayed to Jan. 12 to decide which routes had the lowest levels of ridership.

"The route changes being

proposed will help increase service on routes where it will be needed most this fall in anticipation of record-level ridership this year of 487 million," according to TTC information at the event

Marjorie Nicolaou, a resident of Scarborough, came to the meeting to suggest staggered service instead of full-out cuts.

"I want the TTC to look into timing and scheduling," Nicalou said. "I see buses go by on weeknights and it's empty, but they should still offer hourly service. This brings major concern for the elderly."

Malvern resident Rathika Sitsabaiesan uses the TTC to get to work. She is concerned that once services are cut, they will never return.

"It's not like we're ever going to get a subway," Sitsabaiesan said. I was told at the meeting it will be a hundred years before a subway comes to Scarborough."

She worries about friends



COLE CARRUTHERS/The Observer

With the proposed changes of the TTC accepted, 10 Scarborough routes will be altered, including the 116 Morningside.

and family who will be affected by the cuts.

"I know people who might have to quit work because of this," she said. "Service should get better over time, but they're just taking [it] away and making it more difficult."

Sitsabaiesan sighed when asked about the low turnout and the impact of

the public meeting.

"I don't have much faith," she said. "Look how many people are here. They're too busy working their two or three jobs to be as involved as others in the city."

With the proposed changes already being fine-tuned by the TTC they said, it is at least encouraging that officials are listening to the public's input.

I don't have much faith. Look how many people are here.
— Rathika Sitsabaiesan

Scarborough routes affected

- 43 Kennedy
- 42 Cummer
- 116 Morningside
- 169 Huntingwood
- 167 Pharmacy N.
- 130 Middlefield
- 86 Scarborough

School board parking lot a tough sell

Rigid condition of sale for excess land proves discouraging to buyers

CHANTELLE HENRIQUES
The Observer

Potential buyers are being scared away from a piece of real estate behind the Scarborough Civic Centre because of one rigid condition of sale.

The Toronto District School Board has been trying to sell the parking lot on Borough Drive since 2008 but has only received signs of interest from one source.

Shirley Hoy, CEO of the Toronto Lands Corporation, says the trouble lies with the board's desire to maintain a minimum 123 of the 200 available parking spaces.

"I reported in June of last year saying as long as that condition is there, no developer or private interest can be developed," said Hoy, whose

company is marketing the property to potential buyers.

The Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) was interested in buying the land, which it had planned to run as a city-owned Green P parking lot, she said.

The TPA backed out of the deal after it learned of the TDSB's condition of sale, parking authority spokesperson Ian Maher said.

"They did not indicate that they in fact did have an ongoing interest in the lands," he said.

The TDSB did not respond to requests for comment by press time.

The board has a policy of selling surplus property — often the result of declining enrolment — to free up money that can be used to fund other priorities.



CHANTELLE HENRIQUES/The Observer

The TDSB plans to keep at least 123 parking spots out of 200, near the Scarborough Civic Centre, discouraging buyers. The parking lot has been for sale since 2008 but only attracted interest from one potential buyer.

Egypt turmoil prompts concerns for relatives

JANICE YEUNG
The Observer

As thousands of protestors in Egypt take to the streets, demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, many in Scarborough are left worrying about stranded family and friends.

Crowds there are defying imposed curfews and gathering in Cairo's Tahrir Square into the night.

As tension in Egypt heightens, groups of Canadians are being evacuated to Europe every day.

Canadian embassy staff members are meeting evacuees at Frankfurt airport.

Passengers are on their own to make travel arrangements when they arrive in Europe.

Political uncertainty in Egypt is affecting people as far away as Scarborough.

"The mother of my son's closest friend is in Cairo at the moment," said Victoria Tahmasebi, assistant professor of women's studies at the

University of Toronto Scarborough.

"She was on the street with other protestors.

"The government is trying to scare people now by not protecting them, but in fact, the Egyptians have shown their unity by coming together to protect their neighbourhoods."

She described her friend's accounts of locals taking over from police and cleaning the streets after protests — all of which she says displays genuine selflessness and a touching determination to overthrow the autocratic

regime.

"Democracy is not something you gain overnight," she said. "The mother of my son's closest friend is Canadian but was born in Egypt. She is just visiting the country but decided to stay because she believed in what her fellow countrymen were fighting for."

The online censors in Egypt have proven how undemocratic the government is, Tahmasebi said

Social media sites were blocked last Friday, with government officials minimizing Internet traffic to near nothing.

"No one has done what Egypt is doing now," Tahmasebi said. "This gets the people very angry at the government."

Eid Saleh is the manager of Lotus Catering and Fine Food, an Egyptian restaurant on Lawrence Avenue East. He has most of his family in Cairo.

"Egypt is a very good country," he said.

"It is just that the government lacks values and people are suffering from the autocratic regime.

"I would go back to Egypt now if I could, but how can I do that with a business to run here?"

The Foreign Affairs Department Emergency Operations Centre in Ottawa promises to transport any Canadian citizens out of Egypt as long as they have their documentation ready.

There were approximately 6,500 Canadians in Egypt when protests started, of whom 1,200 are registered with the Canadian embassy.

Donor equality sought by service

Ban on blood donations from gay men is appealed

JAMES WATTIE
The Observer

Blood donations are a gift thousands of people depend on to survive. However, due to a 1977 prohibition, many gay men are denied the opportunity to donate.

Canadian Blood Services (CBS) has publicly announced it is pursuing a change in policy that has banned men who have had sex with men from donating blood.

CBS is hoping to reduce the time they must wait as well as target precise high-risk sexual activities instead of focusing on orientation.

"Both patient groups and Canadian Blood Services agree that the current lifetime ban needs to be reconsidered," a post on the CBS website said.

CBS has reached out to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in the months since a court ruling decided the prohibition was not discriminatory due to scientific evidence.

The court case involved Freeman — whose first name

was never released publicly — a sexually active gay man who donated blood and repeatedly gave misleading answers during the screening process.

Freeman then sent an anonymous email to CBS saying he gave incorrect information because he disagreed with the MSM — males who have sex with males — policy.

Janet Wong, a spokesperson for CBS, said that was the first time such a case was brought forward.

"As a result of the email, CBS was required to pull that unit of blood from the system," she said. "In order to do that, we needed to apply to the courts to have the Internet service provider release Mr. Freeman's name."

Freeman then counter-sued CBS and the attorney general of Canada. He charged that the policy was discriminatory under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"A lifetime deferral on MSM just isn't supported by logic," said Marcus McCann, managing editor of the Canadian gay and lesbian news site Xtra.com.



MCCANN

News Briefs

Deceased man identified

The Special Investigations Unit has identified the man who died after being arrested for allegedly shoplifting in a Scarborough grocery store on Jan. 26. Kenrick Terrence McLennan, 51, went into medical distress while being questioned by police. The SIU is investigating the case.

Grits hold budget meeting

Scarborough Liberal MPs held a pre-budget consultation meeting Saturday with residents at the Scarborough Civic Centre. Locals voiced their concerns about the amount of time it would take to get out of the \$56-billion national deficit. Corporate tax cuts are unfair when small businesses pay more.

Principal wins national award

Paul Ambrose of Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute in Guildwood has been named one of Canada's Outstanding Principals. Ambrose was nominated for introducing leadership programs and increasing enrollment.

Democracy is not something you gain overnight
— Victoria Tahmasebi

NEWS

Bridlewood gets Botox

Controversial redevelopment may take 15 years

ANDRE THURAIRATNAM
JAMES WATTIE
The Observer

Controversy continues to swirl around the Bridlewood Mall area while construction dust is still settling at Bridlewood Library.

Work on the library, which wrapped up on Jan. 21, is part of a controversial renovation and redevelopment plan that includes building 975 condo units.

Area residents are worried about the impact of the project, which could take the developer, Malibu Investments Inc., anywhere from two to 15 years to complete.

"[Two to 15 years] is a time commitment that is put on this development only in the fact that the ownership believes these condominiums will sell and hopefully very quickly," Bridlewood Mall property manager Jeff Nelson said. "It really depends on the market and what the demands for the new condominiums will be: whether the market will stay hot enough for the next five or six years and, if so, the span of this project will be shortened."

The new condos will be a boon to the mall's retailers, he said.

"This will drive more traffic through the shopping centre and have the businesses increase their sales,"



COURTESY BRIDLEWOOD MALL WORKING GROUP PRESENTATION

A renovation and redevelopment plan for the area around Bridlewood Mall is set to transform the intersection of Warden and Finch avenues. The plan was approved by Scarborough Community Council in August and is expected to take up to 15 years to complete.

Nelson said.

But some local residents are concerned about the impact increased traffic will have on their neighbourhood.

"Traffic is going to be ridiculous. Realistically, there are two major roads in this area: Warden and Finch," said Jordie Scott, a nine-year resident of the area. "They're going to have to widen the roads or something, otherwise there are going to be big traf-

fic problems. The intersection is busy enough as it is."

Ward 39 councillor Mike Del Grande, head of the community council dealing with the redevelopment, said traffic problems are inevitable.

"Any new development brings with it structural and planning issues," he said.

The city's transportation officials have already considered those issues, Nelson said. "It is going to make the traf-

fic around this area busier, no question," he said. "However, part of the approval process is that the transportation department for the city had to do numerous traffic studies and evaluations on the impact."

In August, the Scarborough Community Council approved the redevelopment plan, which included 975 condo units and allocated \$2.4 million for the Bridlewood Library revamp.

The original proposal, which was made in 2007, was to construct eight buildings in the mall's parking lot.

In response, a citizens' group made up of residents from wards 39 and 40 was formed to represent the community's interests.

Three years of community meetings, reports and revised plans for Bridlewood Mall's future followed.

Alleged rape at school

MARYAM SHAH
The Observer

Allegedly raped on school property and declared a slut on Facebook, Kate (not her name) found high school to be a real-life nightmare.

Kate was "repeatedly harassed, sexually assaulted, tormented, physically and emotionally abused" by a boy in her school, according to a claim she filed recently with Toronto Superior Court.

Sixteen at the time, she complained to vice-principal, Vince Meade, about the threats made against her. According to Kate, he took no steps to protect her.

Shortly after, the boy allegedly raped her on school property.

He and another student "openly abused the plaintiff" and "acted irresponsibly and irrationally" toward her, according to the claim.

"She's issued a statement of claim and we're waiting for a response," Kate's lawyer, Sandra Zisckind, said.

After the rape, her situation escalated to depression, suicidal thoughts and decreased confidence and self-esteem.

Facebook abuse

Allegedly, another female student joined the boy in verbally attacking Kate and bullying her online by creating a Facebook page. They also embarrassed her in front of her classmates and threatened her.

Her family has filed a \$4.25-million lawsuit for psychological injury and special damages for "medical, educational and other costs and expenses."

Kate, who reportedly attempted suicide months later, finally revealed the alleged rape to her father, prompting the family to take legal action against Meade, the school board, the alleged rapist and the female student.

The boy accused of raping her was acquitted at a criminal trial. Neither his name nor the female student's are being released because of their ages at the time.

School principal, Paul Ambrose, was unable to comment on the case specifically, but spoke about the programs in place to solve social conflict in the school, including Girl Space and Peer Mediation.

"The girls sit down, and they talk about the issues that they're facing," Ambrose explained. "The vast majority of kids say they feel very safe in this school."

The Toronto District School Board did not respond to calls.

Kindergartens try out extended hours

Scarborough becomes testing ground for full-day learning

CHRISTINA CHENG
The Observer

A total of 90 schools in the Toronto District School Board plan to offer full-day kindergarten classes this coming fall.

A total of 42 Scarborough schools (and 11 more expected) were part of the 90 that started the program last September. The province has committed to phasing in full-day kindergarten in all Ontario elementary schools of Ontario by 2015.

"There are parents that love the idea of full-day kindergarten," said Corrine Pech, an early childhood educator (ECE) at the St. Rose of Lima YMCA Childcare Centre. "I love the idea because you're preparing them for what's really going to happen in grade one."

On the other hand, Monica Dillon, a secretary for the Toronto Catholic School Board, is not too fond of the idea as she finds it completely unnecessary.

"If you look at educational laws, they don't even have to be in school until the age of six but now we're making them go all day at [an earlier age]," she said. "[It's the] parent's job to prepare [the younger kids] to be here."

The government announced that YMCAs across Ontario would allow partnerships between school boards and childcare organizations.

Rob Armstrong, senior VP of YMCA Ontario reported that the YMCA community have been "strong supports of the government's groundbreaking full-day learning program."

"[The government and school boards] are looking for more ECE positions," Pech said. "They want it to be more like a YMCA curriculum where...they are trying to incorporate more play."

Although some may disagree with the new curriculum, Pech said she believes it will benefit the children.

"There's one thing that kids have in common - all kids play, and when they

play, they learn."

The full-day kindergarten classrooms will be equipped with teachers and early childhood educators who will help construct a full-day curriculum of play-based and academic-based learning activities.

"Teachers and ECEs were all trained differently - teachers are more academic but we're more developmental so it blends really well together," Pech said.

Recently extended kindergartens

- Cedarbrook Jr. Public School
- Charles E. Webster Jr. Public School
- Driftwood Elementary
- Gosford Public School
- Knob Hill Jr. Public School
- John G. Diefenbaker
- J.R. Wilcox Community School
- Pauline Jr. Public School
- Timberbank Junior Public

ARTS & LIFE



JESSICA MOY PHOTOS/The Observer

Ritual Chinese drummers mark the opening of New Year celebrations at Scarborough Town Centre on Jan. 29.

Hopping into the Year of the Rabbit

JAMES WATTIE
The Observer

Have you made plans to ring in the year 4078?

Feb. 3, 2011 (or 4078 on the Chinese calendar), is the official start of the Year of the Rabbit.

Chinese New Year is the most important event on the Chinese calendar.

Legend has it that a beast would attack villages on the first day of the New Year.

The villagers learned that leaving food in front of their homes meant the beast would not attack.

They discovered the beast was afraid of the colour red and hung red lanterns and scrolls in their

windows and doors.

These traditions, including the launching of fireworks, continue to this day.

Lion dances remove bad spirits. The God of Fortune hands out red packets, usually filled with chocolate coins or similar treats, to wish all a prosperous and lucky year. There are plenty

of attractions to check out in Scarborough to commemorate this festival.

Traditional lion dance parades, martial artists, an eye-dotting ceremony, chop sticks competition and interactive games with the God of Fortune were all part of the festivities at Scarborough Town Centre last weekend.

“

The best part is you don't have to be Chinese to enjoy this festive event

— Jai Lee

“Chinese New Year is huge at [the mall],” STC marketing director Jai Lee said.

“The best part is you don't have to be Chinese to enjoy this festive event. There's something for everyone.”

“We'd like to introduce different Chinese traditions to all,” Lee added.

“The MCs for the event will speak in Mandarin, Cantonese and English, so it's not just performances, it's a learning experience.”

Councillors Raymond Cho and Glenn De Baeremaeker were among the councillors expecting at this event.

Kung Hei Fat Choi!

Chinese New Year's local events

■ Celebrating the Year of the Rabbit

Where: Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, 5183 Sheppard Ave. E.
When: Feb. 5, noon – 2 p.m.

■ Chinese New Year Celebration

Where: Scarborough Civic Centre
When: Feb. 6, 2 – 4 p.m.

■ CCC Year of the Rabbit Banquet

Where: Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, 5183 Sheppard Ave. E.
When: Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.
Tickets: \$39

■ Second Chinatown Foodies Walk

Where: Lucky Moose statue 393 Dundas St. W. at Beverly St.
When: Feb. 5, 6, 12, 13 10 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.



Chinese dragons perform at Scarborough Town Centre.



VIPs take part in the eye-dotting ceremony, including Police Chief Blair (left).



ANDRE THURAIRATNAM/The Observer

With a few days until opening night, the cast of *The Full Monty* rehearse choreography for the first time at the Scarborough Village Theatre.

Theatre troupe bares all

Full Monty premieres in Scarborough this weekend

ANDRE THURAIRATNAM
The Observer

With only a few days to opening night, the cast and crew of *The Full Monty* at the Scarborough Village Theatre are eagerly awaiting their moment in the spotlight.

Having only auditioned in mid-November, the past few months have been a very busy time for everyone involved – especially the cast. The play follows six

unemployed steel workers who decide to form an all-male striptease act at a local club to raise money. Beneath the physical insecurities, the group must come to terms with their innermost fears, anxieties and personal demons in a relentless, judgmental society.

Actor Mike Scott, who plays Buddy “Keno” Walsh, is also in charge of publicity and promotions. His passion for theatre is what drives him

“

You should feel like you're at a strip club...
— Mike Scott

to take part in community theatre productions. “It’s all volunteered. I have a day job, so 9-to-5 I’m testing computer software, then come here for the evening and try to fit all the other stuff around it,” Scott said.

Demand for tickets has been so high that an additional show date was added to the run.

Artistic director Michael Jones addressed the challenge in putting together a play of a mature nature.

“There certainly is a fair amount of nudity and coarse language in the production, but the challenge of this production will be to absorb the audience in the humanity of the story,” Jones stated in a press release.

Another unique aspect to this particular performance is the inclusion of audience participation, which adds a whole new

dimension to the work.

“It’s not your traditional piece of theatre because we want the audience to be involved,” Scott said. “In the opening of the show when the women are at the strip club, the audience is the audience [at the club]. You should feel like you’re at the strip club – feel free to hoot and holler and go along.”

The theatre’s architectural design promotes the interactive relationship between the audience and the players.

Kelly Lovatt-Hawkins, who plays the role of Estelle Genovese, has come to recognize the power of the set in her experience with the theatre.

“This is my fourth show with the Scarborough Village Theatre. [The venue] is really intimate and allows you an opportunity to break the wall and draw the audience in – it allows you

to bring them in to your story,” Lovatt-Hawkins said.

As one can gather from the play’s title, the six-man striptease act believes they will be better than the Chippendales dancers because they intend to go all the way – the “full monty.”

Twaine Ward, who plays Noah “Horse” T. Simmons, said he was drawn to the production for this reason, seeing it as an opportunity to grow as a performer.

“I definitely needed to push myself as an artist in getting comfortable on stage with nudity,” he said. “This was huge for me because I’ve never been comfortable with my naked body by myself – let alone with people watching me and judging.”

“This was really good for me as an artist to really get me out of my shell, get me more comfortable and to break down some of my barriers as a performing artist.”

Another key element to the success in this production is the choreography. With more than 10 musical numbers, the cast has spent a lot of time with choreographer Janet Flynn. Flynn has had years of experience in community theatre, but this was her first time choreographing a striptease.

“That was very interesting because I’ve never taught a strip before ... or been a stripper myself! I did a lot of research,” she said. “I looked at the movie, and any other versions I could find to see how they did it. For instance, what would be the easiest motion for getting a tie or a shirt off? I did a lot of practising in my kitchen which was funny for my family.”

The *Full Monty*’s 12-show run premieres this Thursday at 8 p.m.

Show Times

■ Feb. 4	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 5	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 6	2 p.m.
■ Feb. 10	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 11	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 12	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 13	2 p.m.
■ Feb. 16	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 17	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 18	8 p.m.
■ Feb. 19	2 p.m.

For tickets, contact:
416-267-9292

or buy online:
theatrescarborough.com

Cost: \$25



ANDRE THURAIRATNAM/The Observer

John Palmieri, left, and Twaine Ward play off each other’s energy in a physically demanding dance sequence.

Learning from Egypt: Be the change

Be the change you wish to see in the world," Gandhi once said.

In the past month we have seen just that. No longer satisfied with the way their country was run, Tunisia ousted leader Ben Ali from his presidential position. About 1,800 political prisoners have been released, and a new interim government is in place.

Following the events in Tunisia, Egypt is currently undergoing a similar revolt in the hopes that President Hosni Mubarak will step down from his leadership role.

Yemenis are gearing up for a protest against their government as well. So how can international events apply to our own lives here in Scarborough?

Instead of just grumbling to yourself or to family about your situation in life, think of ways to improve your way of living. Actively control the course of your life and hold accountable the people who govern it by speaking to your MPP, actively participating in community events or even writing a blog.

Don't like the way Rob Ford is running Toronto? Write him a letter. Tired of being mistreated at work? Stand up for yourself or find a new job. Bored with the same old routines in your life? Maybe it's time to go back to school, find a new hobby or take a break to travel around the world.

While many of these things are easier said than done, all it takes is a little courage to get the ball rolling.

Change might not happen quickly, but "where there's a will, there's a way."

Rosa Parks sat in her bus seat to further the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. made a speech. Suffragettes protested, went to court and became martyrs to make a case for women's rights.

If something isn't right in your life, don't sit back passively and hope it goes away. Take action and push for a change. All anyone needs is a little will and determination to start a revolution — whether in themselves or in society.

Life is too short to live unhappily. This is a call for everyone to start living his or her best.

—Jessica Lee

Budget cuts blind to poor, homeless

It may be just another budget meeting, but at least this time residents got to tell city council what they thought.

At the Jan. 20 meeting, Scarborough residents complained about bus route cuts but also brought up major service cuts throughout the budget.

Council of Agencies Serving South Asians representative Neethan Shan pointed out proposed cuts to community housing funds and a \$100,000 cut from the Tenant Defence Fund.

Other community activists like Colin Hughes from the Children's Aid Society argued against proposals to freeze grants to community arts programs, increases to recreation user fees and the move from shelters to homeless motels.

They all reflected big service cuts which do not serve the good of Scarborough's 21 low-income neighbourhoods.

It seems mind-boggling, given "Scarberia's" already poor city services — inefficient transit, sparse local libraries and limited snow removal mechanisms — that the city still contemplates reducing more services.

Some of the services are essential. The homeless still need to have a roof to sleep under.

It is bewildering how city council has the mere thought of making low-income families pay higher fees to use gym facilities or have their children take skating lessons.

The latest budget cuts simply reinforce the fact that when you are poor or homeless, you are invisible.

Good luck to Scarborough when administration at the top is this apathetic, pitiless and indifferent.

—Janice Yeung



JESSICA LEE/The Observer

Impressive European standards show Toronto transit off track

Rush hour is way too crowded, but the train finally arrives. Dirty and rusty, it sounds like fingernails scratching down a chalkboard. The doors open and it's a competition to get in first. I push through but immediately regret it. We're packed like sardines.

The doors close. I feel my lungs tighten and realize I'm not breathing normally. The guy standing next to me starts swearing.

I'm relieved as lots of people get off at the next stop, but then the loudspeaker comes on telling us the signal has been lost. We all have to get out again and wait 20 minutes for the next train to come in.

Sound familiar?

It's sad that Canada's biggest city has such outdated public transportation. The TTC is the most expensive yet least subsidized transit system in North America. This is not how transit in a city of 2.5 million should be run.

Embarrassingly enough, Toronto comes up ninth on the list of most expensive transit fares in the world, according to priceoftravel.com, which maintains databases on travel costs. Vienna is eighth with fares only a few cents more than Toronto's.

Yet European cities, which fill the top spots, have such comprehensive transit systems that they make Toronto look



Mersiha Gadzo

primitive.

Munich is half the size of Toronto, yet it has 25 kilometres more in subway lines with only 400,000 riders daily compared to Toronto's 1.5 million. During my time there, I was amazed at how all the subway stations and vehicles are kept immaculately clean. It is the most punctual system in the world, with monitors in vehicles displaying the stops and connections for its riders.

The fares in the U.S. are also reasonable. Chicago has more than 144 stations operating 24 hours a day. Fares cost \$1.54. A monthly pass in Los Angeles costs \$75.

A strong public transit system brings a wealth of opportunities to the areas it reaches. This would be especially useful for Scarborough, which seems to be isolated from the rest of the city.

It's important for transit to be efficient for environmental reasons as well. More

than half of people in New York City and up to 75 per cent in Manhattan rely entirely on transit. In Hong Kong, 90 per cent of travelling is done by mass transit.

This is what mass transit should be when countries need to cut back on greenhouse gas emissions as per the Kyoto protocol. Canada has the second highest level of greenhouse gas emissions per person among the G7, falling just 1.3 tonnes short of the U.S.

Officials need to get their act together for Transit City, which has been changed numerous times. According to Richard Gilbert, a consultant on transportation and energy, the costs estimated for Transit City are unrealistically high and need to be rigorously scrutinized.

We are not asking for much. We don't need to be as advanced as Munich; we just want to get to places quickly and comfortably.

The TTC needs to be further subsidized in order for the subway's extension to be realized. The Harper government is willing to spend \$16 billion on 65 fighter jets, which no one needs.

Yet, according to the TTC's annual report from 2009, the federal government only provided \$207 million in capital subsidies.

Clearly the government needs to get their priorities straight.

The East Toronto OBSERVER

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The East Toronto Observer Serving Scarborough is published by University of Toronto/Centennial College journalism students under faculty supervision. We are located at the Centennial HP Science and Technology Centre. Please address correspondence to **The East Toronto Observer**, c/o Centennial College, 755 Morningside Ave., Toronto, ON M1C 5J9, 416-289-5000, ext. 8306, fax 416-289-5168. Email: HPObserver@centennialcollege.ca The opinions expressed in The Observer do not necessarily reflect the views of the college. A companion website is at torontoobserver.com.

Sports Briefs

Local athletes go international

Abdi Dini and Adam Lancia of Scarborough have both been selected to represent Canada in the upcoming 2011 Parapan American Games. The tournament kicks off Nov. 12 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Snowballing through history

The Scarborough Diving Club is hosting its annual Snowball Classic Invitational on Jan. 29 and Jan. 30. This is the 26th year of the event. It will be hosted at the Centennial Recreation Centre, beginning Saturday at 2 p.m.

Resident inducted into hall of fame

Former Scarborough car salesman Harry Pidhirny has certainly made a name for himself. He was inducted into the American League Hockey Hall of Fame on Feb. 1. He amassed more than 1,000 games of playing experience.

Humber College to host UTSC

The University of Toronto Scarborough campus (UTSC) men and women's tri-campus teams will compete in the UTSC annual Extramural Tournament on Feb. 4. The event will be held at Humber College.

Local gold-winning duo aiming for top at Worlds

Victory in Victoria gives Poirier, Crone high hopes for Tokyo

ALEX KOZOVSKI
The Observer

Newly crowned Canadian figure skating champi-

ons Paul Poirier and Vanessa Crone already have their sights set on the world championship.

The pair captured gold in

the ice dance competition at the 2011 BMO Canadian Figure Skating Championships, which wrapped up Jan. 23 in Victoria, B.C..

"We hope to make it into the top five, the prestigious 'top group,' as it's called," said Poirier, who trains with Crone at the Scarborough Figure Skating Club. "Our programs still have a lot of room to grow and we have two months of training until then to make sure we're skating at our best when the time comes."

The duo tallied a combined score of 164.21 in the short and long programs in Victoria, clinching top spot and a berth at the 2011 world championships, set for March 21-27 in Tokyo, Japan.

Poirier, a native of Unionville, attributed their win to hard work.

"We train every weekday from 6:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., and another three hours on Saturdays," said Poirier, who along with Crone finished 14th at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games. "As for sacrifices, I cannot even begin to count them."

A big source of their motivation, he said, is Carol Lane, a coach at the Scar-

borough Figure Skating Club since 1987.

In addition to their on-ice exercises, she has her pair training in ballet, modern dance and ballroom dance.

"Aside from their personal fitness

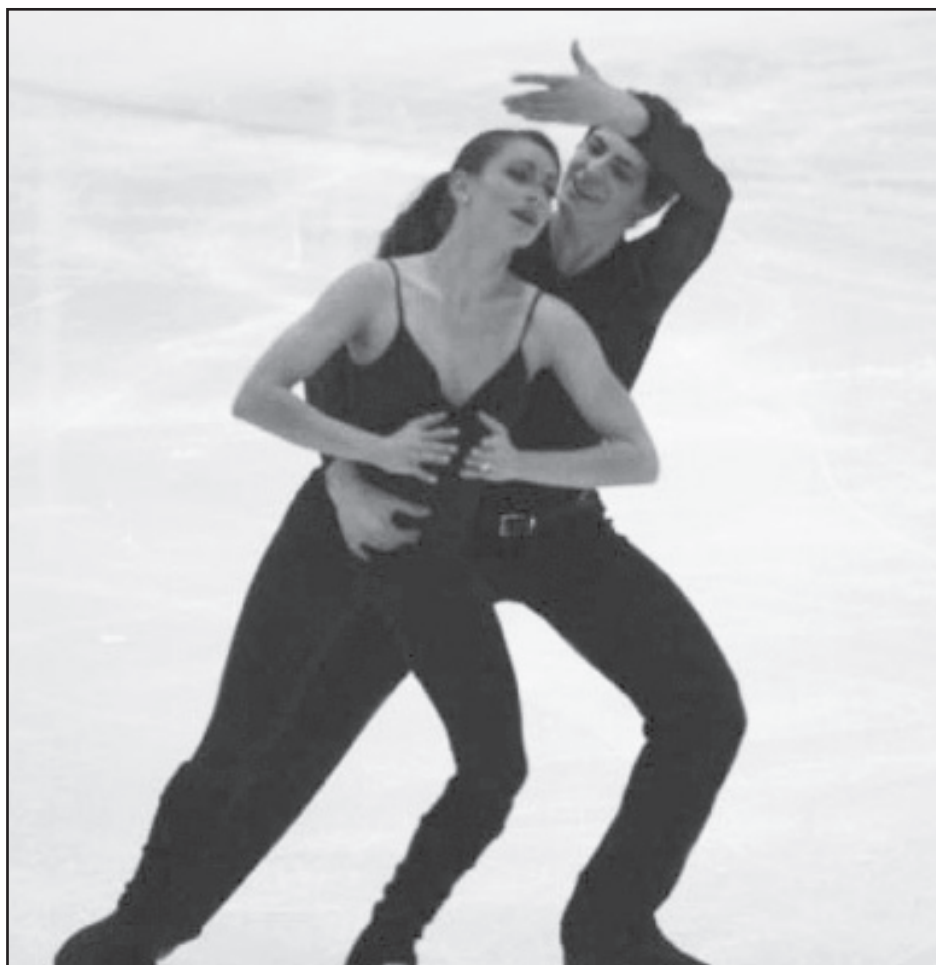
trainers, they do these off-ice exercises to help with their balance, posture and feeling of movement,"

Lane said. "But aside from the training, I tell

them to trust in their training and each other, and go and skate the hell out of the routine."

Waterloo's Andrew Poje and Toronto's Kaitlyn Weaver took home the silver medal from Victoria, along with the third and final Canadian spot in Tokyo. Defending Olympic champions Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue hold the final spot.

Just missing out on a Canadian championship podium finish were Kharis Ralph and Asher Hill, who finished fourth. The Toronto natives are also coached by Lane at the Scarborough club.



COURTESY BEV CRONE

Paul Poirier and Vanessa Crone practise their "Eleanor Rigby" routine that won them gold at the 2011 BMO Canadian Figure Skating Championships in Victoria, B.C. The championship wrapped on Jan. 23.



CRONE, POIRIER

Fiery house league competition heats up on ice

Scarborough teams score hat trick of championships at Don Montgomery tourney

ALEX KOZOVSKI
The Observer

Although most junior hockey players in Ontario don't play in serious leagues like the OHL or Junior A, that doesn't mean they don't play serious games.

Recreational or house leagues still provide good competition and exciting hockey. Scarborough's four day Don Montgomery Memorial Hockey Tournament — which rounded up its games on Jan. 16 — showed how successful, competitive and passionate the players are.

"All the kids in the tournament are playing house league. People are so crazy with Triple A, these kids should get an opportunity to

play too," said George Rennie, tournament organizer and board member of the Scarborough Hockey Association.

"It doesn't matter what level you're at. When you have a game going into triple overtime with three skaters a side, it would be just as exciting with everyone standing and watching."

The annual tournament is hosted across rinks in Scarborough, and is sponsored by the SHA, Scarborough Youth Hockey League and the Scarborough Bandits.

The tournament hosted 56 teams with 10 age divisions, from all over the GTA and even as far as Kingston.

Both the Scarborough Bandits and West Hill Golden Hawks organizations fared

well, with three teams from the area winning in their age groups, and two more reaching the finals.

Rennie and the SHA see the tournament as a real symbol of community within Scarborough, as the tournament creates a hockey community in itself.

The commitment to the tournament was exemplified by one of the Forest Hill entry teams, which has participated three years in a

row, progressively getting better and winning the title this year.

"It gives the chance [to those] playing in house league to play in a tournament atmosphere. This is where most of the money goes," Rennie said.

The money from the tournament has no predetermined designation, and only goes back into the Scarborough programs to benefit the players in the

house leagues.

Even with the HST raising the price of ice time by 13 per cent, the SHA has not upped the prices for players. Returning players in the Scarborough leagues get a \$100 refund, showing the respect and appreciation towards the players and community.

This falls in line with the kind of hockey character Montgomery was. Former president of the SHA for 40 years, he was an integral part of the Scarborough community. A philanthropist, he raised thousands of dollars for hospitals, founded the hockey and soccer leagues in Scarborough, and remained modest throughout.

The tournament was formerly known as the Scarbor-

ough Youth Hockey League January Tournament, but was renamed after Montgomery last year.

With the rave reviews and tons of emails to Rennie, the tournament would have made Montgomery proud, as it lived up to the tradition of being a major success.

"This was the best part about house league," said Derek Boshkov, a former minor league player in the Scarborough youth leagues. "The games were more meaningful, and the team and parents would be a lot more involved [in] the action and games."

Rennie hopes to expand the tournament across the GTA, making it the biggest hockey tournament of its kind.

These kids should get an opportunity to play too
— George Rennie

U of T raises funds for Jaago event

Students perform to build schools for Bangladeshi children



MERSIHA GADZO/The Observer

Rebecca Nazz (right), and her back-up dancer performed at Rex's Den during Jaago last Thursday.

MERSIHA GADZO
The Observer

With almost half the population living on less than a dollar a day in Bangladesh, many families there can't afford to educate their children.

Jaago, meaning "step up" in Bengali, is an international foundation that raises money to build free-of-cost schools for children in Bangladesh, where students are required to pay tuition as early as kindergarten.

That's what inspired 19-year-old student Tajrean Kashem to organize a Jaago event with musical performances and a dance competition to raise awareness and as much money as possible.

University of Toronto Scar-

borough students poured into Rex's Den, cheering on Toronto's first Jaago event.

"This event turned out better than expected," Kashem said. "I didn't think I'd have so many audience members."

From belly dancers to hip-hop acrobats, the talented performers attracted a huge crowd.

The manager of Rex's Den had to stop people from coming in because the room was well over capacity.

"After it ended, I couldn't believe how successful it was," Kashem said. "Everyone was talking about it and

gave positive feedback. All those sleepless nights were definitely worth it."

Kashem, the Toronto representative of Jaago, along with volunteers invited dance teams from several universities in Ontario to participate. They raised funds by selling raffle tickets.

In November 2007, Jaago opened its first school with 17 children attending. Today, more than 300 are enrolled, and the construction of a second school is almost complete.

The funds collected from

Toronto's event will go towards building a third school.

"I decided to start something here because this is my country," Kashem said. "I'm living a great life [in Canada] so I might as well do something to help them out."

Subha Salwa, an 18-year-old volunteer, says she joined Jaago because it's important to spread awareness about the issue in order for people to help out and donate.

"These children could have a better life like how we have here," Salwa said.

"I think that [education] should be free as they grow up so that whether you're poor, middle-class or rich, everyone could have the education that they need."

“This event turned out better than expected — Tajrean Kashem

Musical tribute to black history

ERICA TIANGCO
The Observer

The sounds of heavenly music will once again introduce this year's Black History Month to Scarborough.

The Evolution of Gospel Music is set to run on Feb. 4 and 5 at Global Kingdom Ministries at 1250 Markham Rd..

Robin Viau, "The [performance] is a mixture of dance, drama, music and multimedia [taking] audiences on a musical journey to today's contemporary gospel music scene, event publicist said.

The event features a powerful show focusing on the defining moments of black culture, she said.

"It shows us how people survived the [changing times] with gospel music," Viau said. "It's music that kept our ancestors going. It empowers us, gives us strength and

a sense hope. Gospel is the music of the people."

"Gospel music is the grandfather of all of the Black music that we love today," she said. "The voices belonging to mega stars such as Aretha Franklin, Jennifer Hudson and Whitney Houston are all a testament to the power of this great genre."

Although Christian singer Joel Anderson, who leads his own church's praise and worship team, will not be singing in the production, he said he will attend to honour the music that has impacted him.

"I was introduced to gospel music at a very early age" Anderson said.

"It's so important that we, as a community, pay tribute to something that's been so influential in our culture, he said. It hasn't only changed our lives, but it's changed so many others, regardless of their skin colour."



COURTESY OF THE EVOLUTION OF GOSPEL

The cast performs a drama routine at last year's Black History event at the Global Kingdom Ministry. This year's event is set for Feb. 4 and 5.



JESSICA MOY/The Observer

Chefs from Canoe restaurant cook up samples at the Winterlicious City Hall kick off on Jan. 28.

Winterlicious adds flavour to bland season

JESSICA MOY
The Observer

Sub-zero temperatures in the city force those who can't stand frigid weather into hibernation.

But with the arrival of Toronto's Winterlicious, there's no excuse for staying inside.

The annual event highlights diversity in 150 of Toronto's best restaurants and will be satisfying hunger until Feb. 10.

"A lot of our regulars look forward to Winterlicious," said Tom Kelly, a waiter at Joey Bravo's Ristorante. "We provide different pairings we don't regularly have on the [menu]."

The Sheppard Avenue East restaurant has a cozy dining area and set menu ready for the two-week event, serving pan-fried tilapia in white wine sauce

or rigatoni in meat sauce. The small eatery is a local hot-spot for Winterlicious in Scarborough.

"The event infuses a lot of customers to come out and try different things," Kelly said. "It also infuses the industry and [gives] something for people to look forward to."

Joey Bravo's is expected to serve more than 1,000 new customers in the next two weeks. Half of those will return within the year, generating stability for the restaurant.

Scarborough resident Malcolm Wong took part in the festivities, ordering roasted Cuban lobster tail in garlic butter at King Street restaurant Fred's Not Here.

"If there were more Winterlicious options in Scarborough, I believe people would be willing to try them just because they are closer

to home," Wong said.

Some residents are not aware of the participating Scarborough restaurants.

"I think there should be more," Toronto resident Kiki Serdaridis said. "This would help Scarborough because people who generally don't live [there], like myself, may go try a new restaurant outside the downtown core."

"I maintain that it's all about the food, and if there are kitchens in Scarborough up for the challenge, by all means join the fun."

Presented by American Express, each restaurant offers Winterlicious *prix fixe* menus.

Dinner choices at Joe Maggiano's on Sheppard Avenue, for example, include zuppa di pesce, gnocchi pesto or panco crusted pork loin sandwich.

"The goal is to support the restaurant industry," said

Shannon Carr, director of marketing for AMEX Bank of Canada.

"It's exciting how the program has grown over the years as it starts to stimulate excitement for restaurants during historically slower times."

There are 3,000 restaurants in Toronto employing over 35,000 staff.

They amount to about six per cent of Toronto's population, making the food sector an important one for the city.

Since 2003, Winterlicious has generated \$116 million in direct spending and 2.7 million meals served.

"Winterlicious is vital for Toronto's economic development," Ward 37 councillor Michael Thompson said.

"It has put Toronto on the culinary map. I'm going to be getting out. I'm going to be eating, dining and having a great time. Are you?"