



THE TASTE OF SCARBOROUGH
Savour the sights, smells and spices of South Asia in East Toronto
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Mayor Ford hopes for SRT expansion
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THE EAST TORONTO OBSERVER

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New Zoo chair backs pandas

YEAMROT TADDESE
The Observer

Completing the panda exhibit is his first priority, says the newly elected Toronto Zoo chairman.

The proposed panda exhibit will not only bring in revenue but also serve as a pleasant gesture to the city's growing Chinese community, which sees pandas as "a national treasure," Joe Torzsok said.

"To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time ever where the Chinese government has said, 'We're not just lending pandas to a city, we're lending pandas to a country as a cultural gift,'" said Torzsok who beat former chairman and Ward 44 councillor Raymond Cho and Etobicoke councillor Gloria Lindsay Luby for the job on Feb. 14.

Torzok had been the vice-chair and one of the two citizen members of the board.

"Under the previous chairman and previous boards, we've really started down a good path on a number of areas," Torzsok said. "We recognize the cultural diversity of the city."

"In the past, you'd go to the zoo and see an animal. Now you'd see the animal and see how it fits the cultural context."

But providing a home for the pandas will be very expensive, Lindsay Luby said.

"They have ... dreams of this panda exhibit and that's going to cost millions and millions of dollars," she said. "I don't know where they're going to get it from."

"It's one thing to dream, it's another thing to deliver," she said, adding she doesn't think the board has been active enough in raising funds.

However, Torzsok said he's confident the zoo can find the money for the panda exhibit and that the cost will be worth it.

"We've had interest from corporate donors in terms of sponsoring it," he said.



TORZSOK



JESSICA MOY/The Observer

'Hero lives forever': Concert for Scarborough's fallen cop

Crucial Volume plays at the MOD Club for police officer Sgt. Ryan Russell (inset), who was killed Jan. 12 in the line of duty. Headlined by Florida-based Black Star Whiskey, the night raised \$1,460 for his wife Christine and 2-year old son Nolan. Story on page 3.



School reno at Chester Le

Community says \$3.7-million construction 'much-needed'

ANDRE THURAIRATNAM
The Observer

Construction is underway on a \$3.7-million expansion to Chester Le Junior Public School in the Victoria Park and Finch area.

And it's about time, supporters say.

The expansion includes a new childcare facility and a 460-square-metre community centre, something the community has needed for a long time, says Ninder Nann, Toronto's manager of community development.

"We interviewed more than 450 residents in the

Chester Le community who expressed that what was lacking in their neighbourhood was a place where residents could go," she said. "Not just going and hanging out at a coffee shop, but a place that has meaningful opportunities for them to engage in bettering themselves."

Plans for how the space in the city-funded centre is used will reflect the needs of the growing Chester Le community, Nann said.

Former Ward 39 resident Ryan Marshall grew up in the area. He says an expansion to the public school is a great step in encouraging the



ANDRE THURAIRATNAM/The Observer

Former Ward 39 resident Ryan Marshall says he's happy with the expansion to Chester Le Junior Public School.

sense of community among residents.

"The Chester Le community is one of the most tight-knit communities that we have in that area," Marshall said. "I feel like [a community centre] will be a better way for them to watch out for each other and keep that tight bond going. If a neighbourhood has that type of mindset, we should encourage it."

The Chester Le community is part of the Steeles-L'Amoreaux priority neighbourhood, one of 13 such Toronto neighbour-

hoods identified as lacking in services and facilities.

Steven Ly attended Chester Le public school almost 10 years ago. He says there was a lack of attention to the neighbourhood by the city.

"I always felt that our school [was] a bit neglected," he said. "Our classrooms didn't have doors, and were small and cramped. I remember in Grade 3, we had to share half the room with a Grade 5/6 class."

The neglect went beyond the classroom and into the schoolyard, Ly said.

"Half the swings were missing, the best slide we had was rusting and falling apart, and out of four possible see-saws, four of them were missing."

Marshall said he welcomes the city initiative as a way to eliminate the negative stigma attached to the neighbourhood.

"If they keep doing things like this, like expanding, it will benefit not only the neighbourhood but Scarborough as well," he said.

While this expansion will benefit the immediate area, Councillor Mike Del Grande says its effect will be felt throughout the ward.

"The new space and childcare facility will help with community gatherings and additional programming for youth in the entire ward," a spokesman for Del Grande said.

"This new community space will benefit everyone [in Ward 39]."

Construction is set to finish in September, with the community centre opening its doors to the public in early 2012.



Our playground was something out of a Third World country
— Steven Ly

Subway vs. LRT debate takes off

Plans for Scarborough transit will halt construction on Sheppard LRT

JESSICA LEE
The Observer

Scarborough can pretty much say good-bye to faster transportation in the community for the next couple of years.

Since Rob Ford's meeting with the provincially owned transit operator/financier Metrolinx on Feb 15, Toronto

is closer to getting new subways instead of light rail transit (LRT). Ford's plan would extend the Don Mills subway to Scarborough City Centre, upgrade the

existing Scarborough RT line to a subway line, and extend the Sheppard subway line to Downsview station.

"It's good for the long-term growth of our city," Ford press secretary Adrienne Batra said.

Jessica Roher, coordinator for the Scarborough Civic Action Network, disagrees, saying Transit City

was a much better plan for Scarborough.

"We only have three stops in Scarborough," said Roher, "Victoria Park, Warden and Kennedy —then we have the RT which is crumbling and needs to be replaced and is not really an effective mode of public transportation. [The new subway plan] only covers not even half of

We have the RT...it's crumbling and needs to be replaced.

—Jessica Roher

Scarborough... It stops at the Scarborough Civic Centre which isn't even the centre of Scarborough."

According to the Pembina Institute,

a non-profit think-tank organization funded by government, the four previously proposed LRT lines of Transit City would serve "290,000 more Torontonians than currently have service today."

Ford's subway extension would only impact one part of the city and 61,000 people.

Ford's proposed subway



JESSICA LEE/The Observer

Mayor Rob Ford is proposing to upgrade the Scarborough RT line into a subway and cancel the previously approved Transit City plans.

would cost \$6.2 billion for 18 kilometres of subway, not taking into account for additional costs to the plan.

It would cost \$8.73 billion to build 52 kilometres of LRT lines for phase one of Transit City and an additional \$1.83 billion for another 23 kilometres.

So far, \$137 million has already been invested in Transit City and \$1.38 billion in contracts have al-

ready been signed. Also, 182 LRTs have been ordered.

"There's some part of the lines that are going to be built," Batra said.

"There's also the tunnel-boring machines that have been purchased. The dollars on those types of equipment will not be lost."

With the new subway proposal, research would have to go into its preparation. New contracts would have

to be established and funding would have to be secured. The Sheppard LRT line, which is currently in construction, would be halted.

"Scarborough for a very long time has been patiently waiting for a proper transit system and over and over again the city has prioritized downtown," said Roher.

Roher made it clear that she is not against subways. She says she would just like

to see city transit better serve the community.

"What we're proposing and what this light rail plan proposes is a system where the most or more people in the city can get around to more places so that will include as well an underground component," Roher said

Recently, the TTC announced it would cut or allocate 41 bus routes, seven of which are in Scarborough.

SmartCentre development hits a 'wal'

ALEX KOZOVSKI
The Observer

Don't overextend your powers as a councillor, Ward 43 representative Paul Ainslie warned Ward 38's Glenn De Baeremaeker on Feb. 25, after a debate over a multimillion-dollar mall proposed for Markham Road and Eglinton Avenue East the previous week.

He accused De Baeremaeker of having pressed to get the city involved in individual property rights for a business investment.

SmartCentres, a Canadian real-estate developer, plans to build an \$18-million, 9,500-square-metre mall at the site anchored by a Walmart at . The site will pay \$740,000 a year in property taxes to the city.

But for the project to happen, adjacent land from the

project must be expropriated by the city.

SmartCentres needs that land for a new street on the west side of the property. This is where Ainslie and De Baeremaeker have opposing views.

"If I own a property, and don't want to sell, I don't

“

I just think he kind of crossed the line...

—Paul Ainslie

expect a municipality to come along and expropriate part of it to accommodate an adjacent land owner," Ainslie said.

"I just don't think the municipality should get involved in a private business deal that will favour one land owner over another."

SmartCentres has agreed

to pay all the cost the city may incur to acquire any additional lands, to build the road at no cost to the city and to convey their lands to the city at no cost, according to the motion proposed by De Baeremaeker at last Monday's meeting of council.

The motion, seconded by Counc. Joe Mihovc, was one that was presented earlier, but shoved into a government management committee agenda by De Baeremaeker.

Delaying the issue until March could set back the construction a year, leaving 200 potential jobs in the area that could be had 12 months earlier, De Baeremaeker said.

But Ainslie scoffed at that charge.

"I don't think you'll find a municipality in Toronto that isn't in need of



ALEX KOZOVSKI/The Observer

SmartCentres plan to develop an \$18-million project to be anchored by a Walmart.

more jobs. You can get into the whole quality of jobs, whether commercial buildings pay more than retail, but to me it comes down to property rights."

Ainslie says De Baeremaeker should consider the municipality as a whole, and to watch which matters he gets involved in.

"I understand he wants a business in his ward," Ainslie said.

"I just think he kind of crossed the line between looking over the whole area, and getting into individual property rights which I think is beyond the parameters of what city councillors should be doing."

"As a councillor you should be looking over the betterment of the entire city, and treating everyone equal."

News Briefs

Man gunned down

A 20-year-old man is dead and two men are facing first-degree murder charges after a shooting late Saturday night. Joel Waldon was shot dead near the Neilson Road and Sheppard Avenue area on Feb. 26 at around 11 p.m.

Violent sex assault

Police are warning the public to be careful after a woman was sexually assaulted in Guildwood Park on Feb. 24. The man allegedly threatened the woman with a knife and knocked her unconscious.

Murder charge laid

A man has been charged with first-degree murder in the death of Lorenzo Martinez. Martinez was shot near Lawrence Avenue and Markham Road on Feb. 11. He died on the way to Sunnybrook hospital.

Vanier students take top prize

High school wins first at auto show

MARYAM SHAH

The Observer

Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School won its second consecutive Toronto Automotive Technology Skills Competition in a row on Feb. 17.

Two automotive technician students, Moses Jordan Guce and Shaquille Lecesne, attempted to start a 2011 Volkswagen Jetta that was rigged with a no-start condition.

Their success in this task, as well as various other timed technical tasks, placed them first in the competition.

Organized by Centennial College, the competition is in its twelfth year, taking place at the Canadian International Auto Show. The winners will represent Canada in the National Automotive Competition in New York in April.

"Since I was a kid, I loved cars and I just want to work with them," Lecesne said quietly. "Since I own one, I want to be able to work on it to fix it."

He currently owns a 1996 Honda Accord, he said with



MARYAM SHAH/The Observer

Shaquille Lecesne (left) and Moses Jordan stand with an automobile engine in their school's shop. The two took home first place prize for the Toronto Automotive Technology Skills Competition at this year's Canadian International Auto Show. Both plan to enter the apprenticeship program in automotives after graduation.

a smile.

Guce and Lecesne have been childhood friends since the fourth grade.

"I plan to go more into the trade," Guce said about his post-high school plans. "I really like working with my hands, I learn easier with hands-on things. That's how I learn."

The two boys credit Isaac Ozah and Roy Iuliani, their

transportation teacher and head of the technology department respectively.

"We came 14th in New York last year," Iuliani recalled. "We expected to finish in the top three."

Central Tech represented Canada and won the National Automotive Show three years ago. Last year, Jean Vanier students James Ryan Bachiller and John

Gonsalves won the Toronto competition, but lost in New York.

Iuliani is more optimistic about this year.

"We're going there to win," he said.

Lecesne and Guce seemed unfazed by the attention, shrugging off any doubts about their chances in New York.

"I'm excited," Guce said.

"Hopefully, we're going to win."

The two friends spoke of opening their own shop together sometime down the road.

For now, they plan on entering the apprenticeship program in automotive studies after graduation.

"I love cars," Guce said smiling, as they have much to look forward to.

New library to begin construction by 2012

JANICE YEUNG

The Observer

Scarborough Centre residents will finally have an easily accessible library within walking distance.

The Toronto Public Library (TPL) is planning to construct a new 15,000 sq. ft. library branch to the south of the Scarborough Civic Centre by 2012.

The expected date of completion is in 2014, but a meeting seeking public input was held on Feb. 17.

"The library's designs have been at review panels," said Joe Nanos, a community planning manager at Scarborough Civic Centre. "There will be improved connections from Borough Drive to the Civic Centre. About \$8.2 million is being budgeted for by the TPL boards, the construction projects are to alleviate the lack of services in an area where a lot of residences and condominiums have been built."

Having hours of operation on weekends and evenings, Nanos believes the area would be livelier.

TPL proposed the Scarborough Centre Library Branch be located at 150 Borough Drive back in Jan 2009.

Now, the library will be constructed on city-owned land, with a capital of \$200,000 to be taken from the city's budget.

New atmosphere

The new library will contain a collection of 50,000 items and provide bookable meeting rooms, quiet study spaces and designated zones for adults, teens, and children.

Other items included in the design are an area for public art display, a café, free access to high-speed wireless internet, and an outdoor reading garden.

Sam Cuadacino, a retired Italian immigrant and Scarborough resident, agreed the library will benefit the Scarborough community and those visiting the area.

"A new library would be good for kids and students," he said.

"For sure, a library needs a lot of money for construction and I feel that \$200,000 from the city's budget might not be enough to complete the whole project."

The new library would be adjacent to the giant white wall on the southeast side of the civic centre, which might even be used as a screen for projecting artwork or movies.

Concert tribute to fallen officer

Show raises money for Russell family

JESSICA MOY

The Observer

A benefit concert was held in remembrance of Scarborough resident Sgt. Ryan Russell at the Mod Club last Thursday.

A veteran of the Toronto Police Service, Russell, 35, was killed in the line of duty on Jan. 12 after being struck by a stolen snow plow near Davenport Road.

Florida-based rock band Black Star Whisky headlined, as money raised went to Russell's wife Christine and two-year-old son Nolan.

Band member Wade Sabourin said he thought it his obligation to help the family. He contacted Toronto resident and bandmate Vic Abade to help put this event together.

Four other bands performed, including Crucial Volume, Sweet Fire, Mcrae and Retro Boogie — the latter two having members who are Toronto police officers.

Buying a commemorative T-shirt and pin at the event,

Toronto paramedic, Taz Mouhteros, said he is glad everything raised during the benefit went to the Russell family.

"Events like these are a major necessity for slain officers," Mouhteros said.

Russell's "son's going to go through life without his father, only in memory," said Mouhteros, a single dad.

A giant banner hung across one side of the club reading "A Hero Lives Forever," with a picture of the Russell family in remembrance.

Many, including fellow officers and friends, enjoyed the music as they rocked out in front of the MOD Club stage, supporting and donating to the cause.

"It's not all about the money," Mouhteros said.

"It's the emotional support [which] goes farther than monetary issues."

A day after the benefit concert, Sabourin and Abade dropped by 52 Division, where Russell worked and presented \$1,460.

Other divisions are participating in the commemoration as well.

Officers from 55 Division played shabby at Kew Gardens Park last week in honour of Russell, who was an avid hockey fan.

Many more events such as this will happen throughout the year and years to come, according to Black Star Whisky.



JESSICA MOY/The Observer

Crucial Volume performs original songs for Sgt. Ryan Russell's benefit concert at the Mod Club last Thursday night. Money raised went to the Russell family.

“

It's the emotional support [which] goes farther than monetary issues — Taz Mouhteros

FEATURE

Is TTC important enough to be an essential service?

Transit employees want right to strike

CHRISTINA CHENG
The Observer

It's 7:30 on a Monday morning. The hustle and bustle of the morning rush has begun in Scarborough. Newspaper stands are half empty. There is not a seat on the subway, or even room to stand. Hundreds of people are packed in every car, shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back trying to get to work or school on time.

The TTC is the country's largest public transit system, providing service to more than 1.3 million people a day in Toronto.

Ontario's Liberal government announced Tuesday a prohibition on strikes from Toronto Transit Commission workers, declaring the transit system an essential service.

The government and the city are looking to have this declaration officially passed before the first labour contracts expire at the

end of March.

Scarborough residents and officials appear to support the move, with only transit workers opposed.

A TTC driver for the Malvern Division in Scarborough who only identified himself as Paul W., says he's not happy about it.

With their right to strike taken away, Paul worries about his and his co-workers' safety on the job.

"Have you ever been

spat on?

Abused at

your job for

no apparent

reason?"

he asked.

"One woman

in the union

is now half-

deaf because

of a rider who

was having

a bad day

and decided

to punch her

in the ear continuously.

So are you saying

we have no right

to strike for

our safety?

For our

benefits?"

The government argues

that a city as large as Toronto

cannot afford to grind to a

halt when buses, subways

and streetcars aren't running.

“
*It's either
you strike
or for years
to come
your job is in
smoke*
— Paul W.,
TTC driver



CHRISTINA CHENG/The Observer

Commuters line up for the 38 Highland Creek bus during rush hour on Monday. Many believe the TTC should be an essential service because it's often their sole option of getting around the city.

Vikas Gupta, a student at Centennial College HP campus in Scarborough, relies solely on the TTC and favours making it an essential service.

"I totally depend on TTC for my convenience to school, to my job, and even for my weekend groceries," Gupta said sitting on the 38 Highland Creek bus heading to school.

Paul doesn't agree with making public transportation an essential service when he believes people

have other means of getting around.

"If there's no bus, there's taxis, bikes, and people can walk. So when you can walk and you are not stranded then it's not essential," he said. "Everything in North America is essential because we're spoiled," he expressed loudly, gesturing animatedly with his arms.

During the 2008 strike, TTC workers have had the right to strike for only two days before they were legislated back to work by Queen's Park. The strike was expensive and disruptive to many. It can cost the local economy an estimated \$50 million a day.

However, in the case of Ontario, the legislation says they are not about saving money and by declaring TTC an essential service, it is expected to cost the city more, but for all the right reasons.

Mike Foderick from Ward 17 is Coun. Cesar Palacio's executive assistant. He says a TTC strike is unnecessary and causes chaos in and around the city.

"I don't want to generalize but the polls show that those who take the transit are workers and so people

can't go to work, can't make it to their shifts, and they'll have to take their vacation days. This causes Toronto a ton of chaos," he said.

Paul argues TTC union workers aren't as important as police drivers or ambulance drivers but according to legislation, that is all about to change.

The legislation has mentioned they would agree to put the TTC workers within the same category as EMS, firefighters and police for the sake of labour contracts including a review after five years of the essential service designation.

According to Foderick, "making the TTC an essential service is the most pro-worker thing you can do because when transit shuts down, it literally grinds the city to a halt."

If the motion to make the TTC an essential service fails, and the public falls into another strike, Gupta said there would be thousands of students like him who depend on the TTC, left with no alternatives.

Gupta said without the TTC, he couldn't even imagine himself attending school. He sees the TTC as his "lifeline."

In the beginning of February, the Toronto Transit Commission mentioned they were going forward with the move to cut services to 10 bus routes in Scarborough and 41 cuts altogether. Funding is to go towards overcrowded routes instead.

The commission says they are looking to use \$4 million to increase services on busier bus lines. Affected routes will have no weekend, late night or holiday services as of May 8. Whether the TTC will be considered an essential service is expected in May.



CHRISTINA CHENG/The Observer

There is little space left on Scarborough buses. These kinds of conditions are typical on any given weekday with riders even being turned away due to overcrowding. The public remains concerned if essential service debate continues to be unsolved.

Route Changes

- 9 Bellamy
- 20 Cliffside
- 130 Middlefield
- 132 Milner
- 169 Huntingwood
- 42 Cummer
- 43b Kennedy
- 116 Morningside
- 167 Pharmacy North
- 86 Scarborough Beechgrove

Slice of Kerala in Wexford

Supermarket owner finds success in Scarborough

KAYLA KREUTZBERG
The Observer

Hankering for the flavours of Kerala, the southwest Indian state?

Then your best bet is to head to Victoria Park and Lawrence Avenue East and visit Royal Kerala Foods, store owner Saji Mangalathu says.

"The things you see [in the store] are very unique, you don't find no where else," he said. "That's why if you need it, you need to come to me."

The South Indian specialty supermarket has been in business for 15 years, the last five of which have been at 1738 Lawrence Ave. E.

Royal Kerala Foods doesn't really rely on a local customer base, Mangalathu said. He added many of his customers come from all over.

"They don't live in one area, not like other companies," he said. "It is very much diversified."

Mangalathu said he sees

a lot of professional people — including social workers, nurses and teachers — walk into his store.

"They want good quality food and that is what I have," he said.

The supermarket sells an assortment of spices and pickles, Kerala snacks, fresh vegetables and tropical fruits, as well as frozen Kerala foods.

"We are very much diverse and very much specialized in Kerala food items," Mangalathu said.

In addition to the Scarborough location, Royal Kerala Foods distributes to stores in Edmonton, Vancouver and London, Ont.

"I studied food," said Mangalathu,

a Centennial College food services graduate. "I know my food. Nobody can beat me on that."

Mangalathu is a member of the Wexford Heights Business Improvement Area board. The BIA helps promote The Taste of Lawrence.

"The festival brings a lot of people into the local area," he said.

They want good quality food and that is what I have

— Saji Mangalathu



AAKANKSHA TANGRI/The Observer

The Indian Spice Kitchen specializes in Indian cuisine, using rich aromatic herbs to spice up vegetables, lentils and rice. The kitchen also offers vegan meals.

Indian Spice not so nice

Scarborough restaurant has friendly staff, efficient service, but food not up to standard

REVIEW

AAKANKSHA TANGRI
The Observer

The Indian Spice Kitchen has fast become one of Scarborough's most popular Indian restaurants. On most days, the place is packed with students, families and those in line for takeout.

The staff is friendly and the service is efficient, but since opening in 2009, the quality of food seems to be decreasing.

The aroma of different spices and freshly made naans — oven-baked flat bread — drew me to the buffet.

For starters, I had pani puri, hollow balls of crispy dough filled with potatoes, chickpeas, onions and spicy tamarind water. The puri



AAKANKSHA TANGRI/The Observer

Vibrant and colourful sauces to brighten up grilled meat and fish dishes: (clockwise from top left) chili chutney, mango chutney, tamarind sauce and mint sauce.

tasted stale and was not as crispy as it is traditionally supposed to be.

I moved on to one of my favourite appetizers: pakoras. They were delicious and

reminded me of my grandmother's cooking, possibly the greatest compliment I can give.

The buffet offers a wide variety of dishes, including masala aloo (potatoes cooked in spices), chicken tikka masala (chicken cooked in a clay oven), and the staple Indian dish dal makhni (black lentils cooked with milk and sometimes butter).

But the main course that followed didn't meet expectations.

I ate chicken tikka masala, masala aloo and chana masala (white chickpeas) with naan.

The chicken tikka masala was slightly burnt and bland. According to the label

at the buffet, it was cooked in spicy sauce but my taste buds didn't pick up on any hint of it.

The masala aloo and chana masala fared better, featuring the right amount of spice and masala. The potatoes were tender but the chickpeas weren't as soft as they're supposed to be.

The naans were good: crispy, yet soft and buttered.

For dessert I had gulab jamun, hot dumplings. Succulent and sweet, the gulab jamun were one of the more memorable parts of the meal.

And the price? My non-vegetarian buffet came to \$10.99 before taxes.

I give them 3 stars out of 5.



AAKANKSHA TANGRI/The Observer

The gol gappa comes in six pieces and costs \$2.99.



KAYLA KREUTZBERG/The Observer

Saji Mangalathu, owner of Royal Kerala Foods, has been selling Kerala foods in Scarborough since 1996.

Scarborough: A region with potential

Since Scarborough is often stereotyped as a dangerous place, rampant with violence and crime, it is easy to forget that every city has its bad and good citizens.

Looking back on the events of the last month, it becomes obvious that there is a strong sense of pride and appreciation for others in many Scarborough neighbourhoods. It seems that every bad event is followed with an act of kindness.

Sgt. Ryan Russell was a good cop trying to right a wrong situation and he, sadly, was lost. In the wake of his death, Scarborough residents and charities came together to throw a fundraising event to support his wife and child. Such empathy for a stranger's family displays the generosity of this city.

This same spirit is affecting younger generations in the Scarborough community as well. Sir William Osler High School embraced First Nations youth and raised funds through a carnival.

Not only are Scarborough residents defying stereotypes through their actions, the city itself is getting a makeover. New libraries are being added to enhance education and literacy, community centres are being built and many neighbourhoods deemed to be "dirty" are receiving transformations.

Being culturally diverse is something residents of Scarborough should be proud of. Family owned restaurants and supermarkets are adding flavour to otherwise bland areas of the city.

With these changes, Scarborough is on its way to becoming a respectable part of Toronto and a great place to live in, in the eyes of outsiders. The rude comments spewed from the mouths of people who are not from Scarborough are becoming increasingly tiresome and false.

If not to prove to others what a great city Scarborough is, let's at least be outstanding citizens for ourselves.

—Chantelle Henriques

TTC too essential to leave to chance

As Ontario's legislature debates whether the TTC should be declared an essential service, Torontonians are once again caught in the middle.

No one wants to pay more for a service that saw a price increase just last year.

But ask any TTC rider if they would risk seeing a strike bring the city to a standstill and the debate over cost and service becomes a personal one.

Mayor Rob Ford campaigned on getting this declaration passed and, as he has done before, he will do whatever it takes to keep his promise.

Not everyone agrees completely with his plans, but when it comes to the TTC, he got this one right.

The TTC is an essential service. It may not be fundamental in life-and-death terms like the police or ambulance services. However, it is a daily part of millions of lives.

Mothers, fathers, students, workers, the elderly and children are all dependent on public transit.

It's been estimated that for every day the TTC is on strike, Toronto's economy takes a \$50-million hit.

Deeming transit an essential service takes away TTC employees' right to strike and many fear doing so will open the door to doing the same with other public sector workers.

That factor shouldn't come into the debate at Queen's Park. What needs to be considered is whether or not Toronto needs this service to function on a daily basis.

The TTC has driven its way into the lives of hundreds of thousands of commuters and to have it depart for even one day would be disastrous.

Ask any Torontonian and the answer is clear: We cannot risk having a union bring our city to its knees.

Passing this legislation and declaring the TTC an essential service is the best way to ensure this city stands up straight and takes its place alongside the other elite capitals of the world.

—James Wattie

Clearly why Toronto was
rated 4th most 'livable'
city in the world



JESSICA LEE/The Observer

Struggling to be inclusive in multicultural society isn't easy

Last week, 21-year-old Aliya Naqvi walked into the recreation centre in her condominium at Don Mills Road and Finch Avenue when a worker at the front desk stopped her. She asked her if she lived there.

Naqvi was more than a little surprised. She'd been living there since 2004. She opened her mouth to say so, but the worker called security in a split second.

The worker, a young white female in her 20, proceeded to complain to the senior citizens gathered in the recreation centre about "these kids" who walked in and made her feel scared for her life.

This occurred while Aliya was upstairs in her condo looking for something to prove that she lived in the building. Her friend, who was with her at the time, remained downstairs and overheard the worker trying to gain the crowd's sympathy.

After all, all young brown kids are dangerous, right?

Naqvi is my best friend. Unfortunately for her, this was the first racist incident she'd experienced. Through tears, she felt it was unfair that racial profiling targeted her in her own home. She was enraged and still is.

It's happened to me too.

I was 11 years old and visiting Naqvi



Maryam Shah

with my family. We were on vacation two months before 9-11 from Pakistan. They dropped me off at her place in Richmond Hill and went off to sightsee downtown.

Meanwhile, Naqvi and I decided to board the bus and go to the local strip mall for ice cream and catch up on gossip. I hadn't seen her in two years. We had plenty to talk about. We were excited and couldn't wait to transit on our own.

I was told to get off by the bus driver once I stepped inside.

"No brownies allowed," he said.

I was shocked. My 11-year-old mind was confused. What had just happened? Why couldn't I board the bus? I had the ticket. I swear I had the right ticket. Maybe he didn't see it. Maybe he thought I was dangerous. What did he mean by "brownie"? I'm more caramel as it is. Was I a "brownie"?

Maybe he was just racist.

Racism still happens. I see it every day. You might not be able to; depending on how much faith you have in the multicultural "It's a small world after all" myth that has grown in Canada.

You could work for an equal opportunity employer but still have a prejudiced boss. It shows one way or another. Maybe you get more work or less pay. Maybe you get fired a little too easily.

I was standing in line at Tim Hortons in my Scarborough neighbourhood a few months ago. There was a black female cashier behind the counter. She was serving a white man who looked to be in his 50s.

I believe something went wrong with his order because he suddenly started screaming and yelling about black people and how they can't get anything done right.

This was in the middle of the day, in a crowded Tim Hortons, surrounded by Canadians of all colours.

It still happens. Don't kid yourself with multicoloured flags, ribbons and bumper stickers. Adornments advertising anti-racist sentiments aren't the same. People standing up for victims of racism, on the other hand, are the real deal.

Unfortunately, I have yet to meet one.

The East Toronto OBSERVER

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Sports Briefs

Woburn goes provincial

The girls' volleyball team at Woburn Collegiate will go to the OFSAA for the provincial championships early March. The team won the East Scarborough title and the TDSB championship this year.

Curlers slide into finals

The Sir Oliver Mowat Mustangs boys curling team skips into the East Region Tier 1 final at the East York Curling Club today at 2:30 p.m. The Mustangs are currently first overall with 28 points.

Crash of the Titans

The Mother Teresa Titans lost to the Father Henry Carr Crusaders 65-58 at the Catholic Board basketball championships last Thursday at Ryerson University.

Panthers claw their way to final

KYLE LARKIN
The Observer

Patrick Jackson scored a thrilling game-winning goal on a solo rush to help the Birchmount Park Panthers defeat the York Mills Titans 3-1 on Wednesday.

Just 54 seconds into the final period, Jackson rushed the puck up centre ice, squeaked past a defender at the blue line and sniped the puck into the far side of the net.

The goal sealed a berth for the Panthers in the North/East Region Tier 1 final against first-place Sir Oliver Mowat.

The game at Canlan Ice Sports Scarborough was a back-and-forth affair until the third period when the Panthers came out flying.

"I told [the players] to keep the tempo up," coach Adam Dahlke said. "I could tell we were tiring [the Titans] out and we were in good shape."

The Titans' frustration escalated as time waned, resulting in back-to-back minor penalties, giving the Panthers a five-on-three power play with eight minutes to go.

The Panthers, looking to put the game out of reach, capitalized on the opportunity. Justin Crofts feathered a cross-crease pass to Devin Retzer who one-timed the puck into a wide open net past a sprawling



KYLE LARKIN/The Observer

Justin Karavonopolous of the York Mills Titans hauls down a Birchmount Panther late in the game Wednesday. The Panthers' 3-1 win ensured their berth in the North/East Region Tier 1 finals.

Titans goaltender.

Titans keeper Scott Lung played a solid positional game in a losing effort.

At the opposite end of the rink, Alex Chandler stopped a late third-period flurry, keeping the highest scoring team in the division to one goal.

"It was great goaltending today by Alex," Dahlke said.

"He played awesome."

Chandler was tested early, making a desperate toe save a minute into the game. Aside from allowing a screened puck past him on the penalty kill, he was equal to everything the Titans fired at him.

The Titans opened the scoring halfway through the second. John MacIver's shot from the

point found the back of the net on the Titan's second power-play opportunity.

The Panthers responded by tying the game just 43 seconds later. Jordan Robertson accepted a pass in front of the net, brought the puck to his backhand through the crease and roofed it.

Coach Jeff Simpson of the Titans said he knew missing his

top scorer due to a shoulder injury wasn't the only reason for losing.

"Discipline was a major issue. We had a game plan that wasn't stuck to," he said.

"We tried to play a physical game but were out-played by a skilled game. Birchmount is a very skilled team and we just couldn't match them."

Scarborough teen signs with Rangers FC

Grade 10 Albert Campbell student joins Scottish Premier League, part of Under-17 youth squad

MERSIHA GADZO
The Observer

Fraser Aird's childhood

dream of playing professional soccer for his favourite team came true this month after signing a contract with the Scottish

Premier League team Glasgow Rangers FC.

The Rangers fan from Scarborough left for Scotland on Feb. 13 after training for three years with the Markham Lightning Soccer Club, which helped him develop into the athlete he is today.

Aird's coach from the Markham Lightning, Dino Cramarossa, said he was lucky to have coached Aird.

"I'm very proud of him. I'm very satisfied," Cramarossa said. "When you get an athlete that goes on to, hopefully, a professional level, it's very satisfying."

The 16-year-old attacking midfielder will join the Rangers' Under-17 youth squad, which is third in line to the official soccer club, after the reserve team and the Under-19 squad.

"I'm very pleased to have signed Fraser," Jim Sinclair, director of the Rangers' Murray Park Academy, said. "He is a very direct, technical player who appears at this stage to have a combative, competitive style."



COURTESY OF AILEEN WILSON/Rangers Media

Scarborough resident Fraser Aird (front row second from left) joins the Glasgow Rangers FC. He played with the Markham Lightning for three years.

Aird's early goal will be to adapt to life as a full time athlete, he said. He'll be training at the same facility as the top Rangers' squad.

Aird, a former Grade 10 student at Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute, showed passion for soccer at an early age.

He joined the North Scarborough Soccer Club when he was just 3, playing with older 5-year-olds. He played against older kids until he joined the Markham Lightning in 2008.

Aird's speed with the ball

sets him apart from the rest, Cramarossa said.

"To me, he's gifted," he said. "He's one step ahead of everybody at all times."

"He just has a great offensive ability to just be so calm and yet so gifted around the net. That's what makes him special. That's something that is very hard to teach in soccer."

Pursuing his career overseas, Rangers is the third club he's been with on trial. Aird had a trial in 2008 with Celtic FC and with the Rangers last Octo-

ber. In 2008, he had a trial with second-tier Burnley FC from the English Premier League.

"He's mentally tough," Cramarossa said. "He's a competitor and he just hates to lose. I think that it does not matter what sport he plays; he could play a game of checkers and he wants to win. That competitive instinct in him is alive and well."

"He'll give it 100 per cent every single game to do whatever it takes to come out on the other end of the scale to win."

LINGUISTIC LARKS

With the letters given, guess the horizontal clues. Work your way to the vertical clue.

Category

Members of the United Nations

R N O

J O U

Z

R E

Unscramble the circled letters to form the final answer.

One of four countries to use the Shilling

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

By Kyle Larkin

LAST WEEKS ANSWERS

Horizontal: Bruins, Jazz, Falcons, Orioles.

Vertical: Grizzlies Bonus: Rangers

Museum goes manic

Kids get artsy at mad scientist workshop

ERIC TIANGCO
The Observer

From baking over a 200-year-old stove in a historic pioneer home to dyeing the snow in Thompson Memorial Park, the Saturday Adventurers Club showed science and fun go hand in hand.

At least Joanne Elliot thinks so.

The 6-year-old is a regular at Thompson Memorial Park. Now in her second year with the Adventurers Club, she says her favourite part of this month's activities was "trying out fun experiments."

Saturday marked the wrap up of February's month-long Mad Scientists theme at the Scarborough Museum.

"We did a lot of body awareness this week with the science experiments," camp leader Cheyenne Twiner said.

With each experiment, the children were taught a lesson on the functions of the body. In one activity, the children pushed a ball using their noses.

"The girls could do it, but the boys usually fell over,"



Children from left, Joanne Elliot, Alyssa and Alexandra, work together to make cookies from scratch at the Scarborough Museum Feb. 26, the last day of February's Mad Scientists theme at the Saturday Adventurers Club.

ERICA TIANGCO/The Observer

Twiner said. "[The experiment] explained how boys are usually top heavy while girls are usually bottom heavy."

February has been a huge success, she said, especially for the kids. She thinks science interests children because it's about the unknown.

"They're still learning,"

Twiner said. "Not understanding how everything fully works but getting the hands-on experience is what they love."

Kristen Kane, a volunteer with the club, agreed. She said the children have been extremely receptive and eager.

"It's always fun," she said.

"Last week, we took them outside with coloured water bottles and we drew in the snow. Everyone has a good time."

The club welcomes children aged 5-12 every Saturday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Prices vary, ranging from \$45 to \$60 for three to four sessions.

March Mix-up Mania picks up where Mad Scientists left off.

The new theme starts tomorrow.

The museum is set to present Pioneer Adventure Day Camp over March Break, where kids will get to experience life as an early settler.

Library promotes new art

NATALIE SEQUEIRA
The Observer

For Christine Hirtescu, finding happiness through art was more important than finding money.

"I didn't pursue art initially for fears of financial gain," the Ontario College of Art and Design student said Saturday. "But ... ultimately everyone needs to do something that makes them feel good about the talents that they possess."

Hirtescu was February's featured artist at Woodside Square Library near McCowan Road and Finch Avenue East. Her exhibit was part of an effort by the Toronto Public Library to give new artists some exposure.

Hirtescu was glad for the chance to exhibit her work in what was her first art show,



HIRTESCU

which has received positive feedback, she said.

"I'm really proud of the show," she said. "I had heard about this great... They insure your work, and the artist gets to keep what they earn from what they sell."

Hirtescu said she's had an interest in art since she was a child but only started taking it seriously a few years ago.

The library holds exhibits every month but turnout greatly fluctuates, Librarian Winnie Leung said.

Artists wanting to show their work submit an application about a year in advance of the date of the exhibit.

Hirtescu said she draws inspiration from walks in places that are personal to her. She also draws on literature, music and colours.

"It's like watching a movie and seeing ... one frame," Hirtescu said. "Artists can tell a story with a single image."

Scalpel. Stethoscope. Microphone.

Scarborough hospital team competes in Canada Sings contest

YEAMROT TADDESE
The Observer

Nine doctors, nurses and other staffers of the Scarborough Hospital are colleagues-gone-gee clubbers.

The hospital is one of several workplaces in the GTA participating in Global TV's Canada Sings production, six Glee-inspired live-to-air shows featuring hidden Canadian talent. Canada Sings premieres this spring.

Teams from each workplace will compete against each other to win a yet-to-be announced donation to a charity of their choice.

"They started very nervous but they're very dedicated to their charity," said Sharron Matthews, the hospital team's vocal coach. "They're extremely hard workers."

The name of the charity cannot be revealed yet.

The team is not given any musical notes to read during

rehearsal. Most of the learning is done through listening to music and lots of practice.

Choreographer Christian Vincent is working with Matthews to prepare the hospital's team for the challenge. In terms of dancing, he said it has been a "rough road starting."

"Let's just say that this group in particular had a little bit more experience singing

than dancing," he said.

Most of the group knows how to carry a tune, but the biggest challenge has been singing and dancing at the same time, Matthews and Vincent agreed.

"We've got a lot of natural talent," Matthews said.

Some team members have had experience singing for charities, choirs and local functions, but none has had

professional training.

"The progress they have made has just been inspiring," Vincent said. "These individuals had problems learning a step and now they're doing an entire performance effortlessly."

The team, Vincent added, is a "great representation" of Scarborough.

The hospital has given the group their own room to rehearse in. Matthews said the team printed pictures of her and Vincent and put them at the front of the room for inspiration.

"They have an amazing sense of humour," she said.

Vincent and Matthews could not say which song the team will be singing, except that "it's awesome."

"I think the people of Scarborough will really enjoy watching their own people overcome the challenge," Matthews said. "[The group members] really care about their community."

Teams competing

- Air Canada
- Toronto Fire Dept.
- GoodLife Fitness
- Just Energy
- The Keg
- Boiler House Restaurant
- Eric Hamber Secondary School
- Lone Wolf Real Estate Technologies
- Hamilton Police
- Scarborough Hospital

The Scarborough Hospital community is excited about seeing its own on TV, hospital spokesperson Dave Bourne said.

"We're thrilled that our hospital's glee club has the opportunity to showcase their singing talents on national television," he said. "We wish them the best of luck and look forward to seeing their performance later this year."

All members of the Scarborough Hospital team are from Scarborough.



COURTESY OF SHARRON MATTHEWS

Vocal coach Sharron Matthews is working with the hospital team to prepare them for the sing-off.

“

Everyone needs to feel good about the talents they possess — Christine Hirtescu