

LOCAL MP CAUGHT IN HEADLIGHTS

■ Photoshopping controversy surrounds Rathika Sitsabaiesan of Scarborough-Rouge River **Page 3**



The Best of times

Cole Carruthers /// Observer

Scarborough-Guildwood Liberal incumbent Margarett Best topped PC contender Gary Ellis in the Oct. 6 provincial election Thursday. Best celebrated her victory at Prague Restaurant on Scarborough Golf Club Road.

Kenney defends PM 'Islamicist' comment

By MERSIHA GADZO
The Observer

When Prime Minister Stephen Harper called "Islamicism" the biggest threat to Canada in an interview with the CBC, Scarborough resident and PhD student Asma Bala found it hurtful and shocking to hear such language from her own prime minister.

Concerned with the increasing presence of Islamophobia, she



■ Kenney

decided to address the issue, and took it up with Jason Kenney, Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism at the Masjid Al-Jannah mosque in Scarborough on Oct. 1.

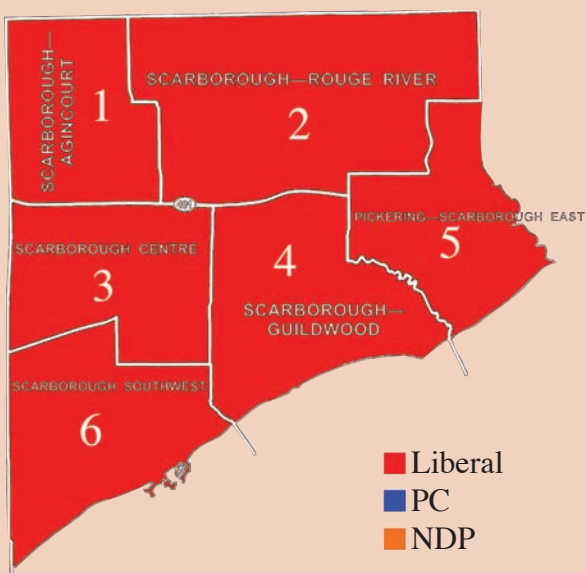
Kenney came out to endorse the election bid for the Conservatives with local candidate Gary Ellis.

"He [Harper] did not distinguish what he meant by that," Bala said, "but what he did do with that statement is paint 1.6 billion Muslims in the world with the same brush, and he made us out to be fanatics."

Bala asked, "If we're going to talk about respecting faith tradition, how can we marginalize a very important community?"

Kenney told Bala she wasn't taking into consideration all the other comments Harper made before that positively addressed Muslims.

SCARBOROUGH



1 Wong



2 Balkissoon



3 Duguid



4 Best



5 MacCharles



6 Berardinetti

■ ELECTION 2011

VOTERS PAINT THE TOWN RED

Liberals hold on to all six Scarborough ridings, en route to provincial minority for Dalton McGuinty

By KYLE LARKIN AND YEAMROT TADDESE

The Observer

Voters went to the polls on election day and kept Scarborough a Liberal stronghold, with all six ridings remaining in the Grits' hands.

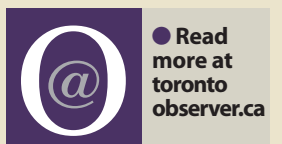
Scarborough-Guildwood was expected to be a tight race between MPP Margarett Best and PC candidate Gary Elis, a former police superintendent in 42 and 43 Divisions. The results, though, told a different story.

Best won with nearly 50 per cent of the vote, comfortably retaining her seat at Queen's Park for a second term.

Scarborough-Southwest PC candidate Mike Chopowick lost his bid, finishing third behind victorious incumbent Liberal Lorenzo Berardinetti and NDP candidate Bruce Budd. Berardinetti scooped 44 per cent of the vote while Chopowick received about 21 per cent. Second-place finisher Budd got just over 31 per cent of the vote.

Liberal incumbent Brad Duguid in Scarborough Centre won most comfortably in Scarborough, receiving more than 51 per cent of the vote, beating PC contender Carol Williams, who finished with about 24 per cent of ballots cast.

■ Continued on page 2



Soo-weet victory

Soo Wong retains Agincourt

By **ANDRE THURAIRATNAM**
The Observer

A packed house of supporters at the Queen Victoria pub on Midland Avenue cheered the news of Liberal candidate

Soo Wong's victory Oct. 6 in Scarborough-Agincourt.

The win, though, means she'll be dropping her other political job.



● How do you feel? Join our forum discussion online at torontoobserver.ca

"I will be retiring from the Toronto District School Board," Wong said at the victory celebration. "The voters know that I will continue to serve them in a bigger capacity and in different avenues of care



Soo Wong (centre) celebrates with former Liberal MPP Gerry Phillips (left) and campaign supporters as the news of her victory in Scarborough-Agincourt broke at her party Thursday night.

and concerns."

Although Wong was the favourite to win, there was still some hesitation among her supporters because of the controversy during the campaign surrounding her dual roles as both candidate and

TDSB trustee.

In the end she won convincingly with 14,903 votes to 10,216 for her main challenger Progressive Challenger Liang Chen. New Democrat Paul Choi was a distant third with 5,019 votes.

"It's been an amazing journey," she told supporters. "You people inspire me, challenge me and most importantly make me believe in what I do."

Looking ahead, Wong said the economy is a top priority.

"We will have to make some tough decisions ahead because, as you know, this is a tough economic time," she said. "We need to have strong leadership and tough MPP's supporting the ridings and community."

Balkissoon's lead cut

■ From Page 1

In Scarborough-Agincourt, a riding without an incumbent in the race, Liberal contender Soo Wong beat Liang Chen of the Progressive Conservative Party, her nearest rival.

Wong finished with nearly 47 per cent of the vote, topping Chen's 32 per cent.

In Scarborough-Rouge River, Liberal incumbent Bas Balkissoon, who won in the 2007 election by more than 17,000 votes, edged out Neethan Shan of the NDP by just over 2,000. Balkissoon finished with nearly 42 per cent of the vote, besting Shan's 36 per cent.

Pickering-Scarborough East, projected to be wide open heading into election night, was easily seized by Liberal candidate Tracy MacCharles. PC Kevin Gaudet finished 5,000 votes behind MacCharles, who ended the night with almost half of ballots cast.

PC third in Southwest

Berardinetti takes riding for third time

By **MARYAM SHAH**
Toronto Observer

Perhaps for the first time in provincial election history, the Tories have placed third after the Liberal and NDP parties in a few key ridings in Scarborough.

An example is Scarborough-Southwest where Mike Chopowick has represented the Tories. He lost to incumbent Lorenzo Berardinetti, with Bruce Budd of the NDP surprisingly placing second. Chopowick's disappointment was apparent on election night as the small group from his campaign office around him watched the results at a nearby bar.

"Like I said, I'm proud of the campaign we ran," he said. "Next step is obviously the PC party's gaining seats as we watch the elections, and we're going to continue to offer another choice for Ontario."

Chopowick works at the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, an organization representing rental property owners.

He began his campaign early, with a lot of good volunteers.



Maryam Shah // Observer

Mike Chopowick sits down with the Toronto Observer following his loss in Scarborough-Southwest. Lorenzo Berardinetti won the riding for the Liberals.

"We started knocking on people's doors and canvassing back in June," he said. "We got to meet a lot of voters, got to hear what their concerns were in the riding."

After Newman, it has consistently elected Berardinetti into power in provincial elec-

tions. He was first elected MPP in 2003 and again in 2007.

Chopowick ran on the promise of bringing great change into his riding, including firmly opposing wind turbines.

"Every wind turbine uses a thousand gallons of oil for

its moving parts and kills hundreds of birds and bats annually. They're actually having a negative environmental impact and questionable economic and energy benefit," he said.

The election may have ended in disappointment for Chopowick but he remains cheerful.

"I am very confident that we put out a choice for them to make sure Ontario gets back on the right track," he said with a smile.



● For more on this story, please visit us online at torontoobserver.ca

Duguid makes it three in a row in Scarborough-Centre

By **CHRISTINA CHENG**
Toronto Observer

Café La Roche in Scarborough is known for its mellow-shisha-smoking atmosphere but on Oct. 6 evening its atmosphere took a whole 360 as Liberal MPP Brad Duguid and his supporters celebrated his third straight provincial election in Scarborough-Centre.

"I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart — to the great people of Scarborough-Centre who had confidence in re-electing me as their MPP," he said.



■ Carol Williams

The other main contenders in the riding were PC Carol Williams and NDP Kathleen Mathurin.



Christina Cheng // Observer

Liberal MPP Brad Duguid addresses supporters at his victory party Thursday night.

Ming Pao workers strike

Chinese daily newspaper employees camp out for three weeks to fight for job security, better wages

By YEAMROT TADDESE
The Observer

Angela Fung has spent three nights out in the cold in the last three weeks.

"It's cold, it's very tiring," she said. "It's miserable."

Fung is among the 139 employees at *Ming Pao* who walked off their jobs on Sept. 20 and started picketing 24 hours, seven days a week.

Holding signs outside the Chinese daily newspaper's office near Brimley Road and Huntingwood Drive, the workers are demanding job security, better wages, shorter working hours and more vacation days.

Simon Sung, a graphic designer at *Ming Pao*, said he and his colleagues are asking for the same benefits as their counterparts at *Sing Tao*, *Ming Pao's* competitor, already have.

Job security, Sung said, is the most pressing issue as workers at *Ming Pao* don't have a contract.

Ming Pao has been using "any excuse" to lay off core members of the union ever



Two-thirds of employees at *Ming Pao* Chinese daily newspaper walked off the job on Sept. 20. They say they want job security, better pay, fewer hours of work and more vacation time.

Yeamrot Taddese // Observer

since 65% of workers joined the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP)'s Local 87M Southern Ontario Newsmedia Guild in January 2010, Sung said.

"Obviously, the action [was taken] to minimize the

union's power," he said.

There have been no talks between *Ming Pao* and the workers since the newspaper's

final offer for a contract "fell short of what anyone could interpret as fair," Paul Morse, the president of CEP, said.

"We hope the company comes back to the table with a fair offer," said Morse, who refused to get into the details of what the last offer looked like.

Ming Pao's management could not be reached for comment despite repeated phone calls.



● For more on the strike, see News at torontoobserver.ca

MP undraws the line

By MARYAM SHAH
The Observer

Rathika Sitsabaiesan recently appeared in the news for all the wrong reasons.

Her Twitter feed was filled with 140-character-long comments on the one thing that seems to matter when it comes to young women in parliament: cleavage.

Her response? "It's a non-issue, and we're not going to talk about it."

The youngest, first and only Canadian

Tamil Member of Parliament's photograph became an instant media sensation once everyone found that there was a version with her cleavage airbrushed out.

Former Scarborough Southwest MP Michelle Simson tweeted about it on Sept. 24.

"OK, so NOW I get it. Just read in 2day's paper Rathika's been really busy this summer ... "airbrushing" cleavage out of official Parl. foto."

Simson's other tweets about the young MP mentioned difficulty in getting in touch with her and the lack of an official constituency office.

Simson explained that her tweets were not meant to be negative.

"To me it wasn't any issue at all," she said.

"It just seems to me



■ Sitsabaiesan

that people zero in on what female politicians are wearing, whether they've gained weight, whether they've lost it."

Sitsabaiesan said she expected the scrutiny that she is under right now.

"I had that expectation when I committed myself to a public life," she said. "I knew that I would be under a microscope."

She became the first South Asian woman to win an election in the Carleton University Students' Association during her undergraduate degree.

■ For more, see News at torontoobserver.ca



Mersiha Gadzo // Observer

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney (far left) addresses issues of visas and immigration with the community at the Masjid Al-Jannah mosque in Scarborough on Oct 1.

Kenney addresses visa delay

By MERSIHA GADZO
The Observer

Having the bride's grandmother at the wedding is a must for many families. Unfortunately, numerous immigrants in Scarborough have had family members miss out on such family celebrations because of visa complications.

This was just one concern shared by South Asians who came to the Masjid Al-Jannah mosque in Scarborough on Oct. 1 to hear federal immigration minister Jason Kenney speak.

The long line for immigration is a "big, good problem," Kenney told them. "There are far more people who would like to

come to Canada than we can practically receive in any one time." It has been increasingly difficult to deal with the demand as

more and more applicants result in longer delays, Kenney said.

The minister was there to endorse the election bid of provincial Progressive Conservative candidate Gary Ellis. Ellis also spoke of local concerns in the community.

Rimzy Kuthubdeen, who immigrated to Canada from Sri

Lanka in 2001, said he attended the meeting because he was concerned there have been few Sri Lankan Muslims entering Canada compared to those of other religious groups from the same country.

"We feel that Sri Lankan Muslims are marginalized to a certain extent because we don't

see [many] coming in here, as opposed to Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans," Kuthubdeen said. Kuthubdeen estimated

there are only 700 Sri Lankan Muslim families in Ontario.

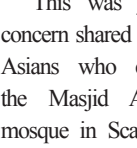
"We want to make a community among us, [but] we see that we aren't fully represented," he said. "We don't have enough manpower in here [to run the mosque]."

Kenney said there are no quotas based on religion or ethnicity. Entrance rates are based on the largest number of qualified people who apply.

Mohamed Nizam, a retired engineer who emigrated from Sri Lanka in 2005, also attended the event. After the event, he said he applied for a visit visa two years ago for his sister and brother-in-law to come for a month. He was left baffled when his application was rejected for the reason that

"there is no strong justification for them to come to Canada."

■ Find out more at torontoobserver.ca



● To see a photo gallery on this story, see News at torontoobserver.ca

NEWS FLASHES

High school to become community centre

Former public school, Timothy Eaton BTI, at Warden and Finch Avenues is to become a new community hub, city council has decided.

The hub is to be owned and operated by the YMCA.

Exposure suspect in man's death

A man, 40, was found dead on Oct. 3 at 1056 McNicoll Ave. When paramedics arrived on the scene, the man had no apparent vital signs.

The cause of death is yet to be determined but initial reports suspect exposure.

Student stabbed with scissors

An 18-year-old Scarborough student was stabbed outside his school Monday morning.

The incident occurred at Monsignor Fraser College in the Midland and Finch Avenue East area around 11 a.m., Sept. 26.

The suspects, four males between 18 and 25 years old, reportedly attacked the victim with a pair of scissors.

They were last seen boarding a TTC bus shortly afterward. The victim survived.

Churches join forces to be one

Members from four Scarborough-area Anglican churches have together formed Grace Church Scarborough on Kecala Road.

The move is in response to a steady decline in memberships amongst all four congregations.

The very first service was held Oct. 2.



Full-time banker Toufic Makhoul is an active dancer at Shall We Dance studios on his spare time. He and his dance partner show off their skills at the seventh anniversary celebration on Oct. 1.

Erica Tiangco // Observer

COMMUNITY

Shall we dance?

Scarborough dance studio showcases talent for anniversary celebrations

By ERICA TIANGCO
The Observer

Some people do it in the shower. Some do it behind closed doors. Others prefer to do it alone while still others do it with multiple partners. Whether we like to admit it or not, our bodies simply cannot resist the urge to dance.

On Oct. 1, Shall We Dance studios in Scarborough showcased their professional dance programs to community members at their seventh anniversary celebration. Dancers, both professional and recreational, showed visitors just how fun and challenging dancing can be with their synchronized moves.

Having been in the business for seven years shows the community's strong interest in dance, Egor Belashov, manager of the studio, said.

"Most studios only last a year or two so that means we're doing something right," Belashov said.

"My philosophy is everyone can dance. Some better, some worse," he said.

"It's a very good social activity. It makes a difference in people's lives."

After dancing at a young age in Russia where he owned his own studio, Belashov moved to Canada and within weeks, he began teaching at Shall We Dance studios.

Years later, he and the owner of the studio, Maria

NEWS YOU CAN USE

You can sign up for dance classes at: (416) 502-2333

Visit the studio at: 511 McNicoll Ave. Unit# 205, 2nd floor

Golovanevski, became dance partners. In 2008, the two became Canadian National Champions in American ballroom dancing.

Belashov has seen the effect dance has on many of the studio's members.

"When people come in with bad life situations like after divorces or after their beloved kids left for college, their lives are empty and we put them back on track," he said.

"They get new friends, they enjoy dancing and it becomes their long-term hobby. So, it's a life-changing experience for them. They find something they don't have in their everyday [lives]."

Located at Victoria Park and McNicoll Ave, the studio welcomes members from all over the GTA to learn various forms of dance. Golovanevski believes Scarborough's diversity contributes significantly to the studio's success.

"[You see Scarborough's diversity] 100 per cent. We have quite a good mix here. We're at the border of North York, Markham and Scarborough. We have clients in Richmond Hill, Markham, downtown Toronto and even Ajax," she said.

Natasha and Slava Fedorov began dancing together after the birth of their second child. Although they had each danced on and off for 10 years, the couple was looking for more of a serious and competitive dance. Now, Natasha, an account executive and Slava, a sales manager, specialize and compete in international ballroom and Latin dance in their spare time.

"I think it's spiritually a very nurturing thing," Natasha said.

"It's great to try to do something beautiful and to strive for perfection. And at the same time, it's very healthy. It's a lot of working out."

Each week the couple practices between six to

eight hours and notes that it takes nearly 2,000 attempts before nailing a move down pat. Despite Slava's extensive competitive athletic past in both martial arts and volleyball, he believes dancing is the most challenging of them all.

"I didn't have to practise eight hours a week in volleyball to become a really good player," he said.

Like Slava, Golovanevski says dancing offers more than just physical fitness.

"I believe it's self development... through dancing."



To find out more on this story, please see Arts at torontoobserver.ca

Malvern's little taste of paradise

Children's garden goes beyond the veggies

By KAYLA KREUTZBERG
The Observer

In Malvern, on what used to be an overgrown lot at the foot of an apartment complex on Blackwell Avenue, a little Eden is blooming.

In the Children's Garden, veggies aren't the only — or even the most important — things blossoming. Kids' knowl-

edge of nutrition and food are what the garden is really meant to grow, avid gardener and area resident Auriel Haynes says.

garden was planted, she said, when she realized the untended land behind the complex could be put to good use. Today there are about 12 children who help out in the garden on a regular basis.

It really works because Haynes is very invested in the garden, ANCM manager Alex

Dow said.

For the first two or three months, the children and residents had only hand clippers to tackle the overgrown

CHILDREN'S GARDEN VEGGIES

Other vegetables in the garden include:

Okra, carrots, lettuce, radish, green beans and potatoes



"This year we had a seed planting workshop in March," said Haynes, who founded the garden two years ago along with Action for Neighbourhood Change Malvern (ANCM).

"I asked [the kids] what they wanted to plant and they said, 'Swiss chard.' A year ago they didn't know what Swiss chard was."

The seed for the

bushes, Haynes said.

Without help from ANCM, Home Depot Live Green Toronto, United Way Toronto and the Morningstar Christian Fellowship, the garden may not have flourished, Haynes said.

"I cannot sing these people's praises well enough," she said.

Caretakers of the garden say they hope to add fruit trees next year.



Kayla Kreutzberg // Observer

The four children have been participating in the Children's Garden since 2009. They huddle around Auriel as they pick one of the last batches of carrots before the fall.



Jessica Lee // Observer

One of the 25 stray cats that Dorothy Mathieson, below, feeds daily takes a lunch break at her home on Kingston and Galloway Roads in Scarborough. Stray cats have been an ongoing issue in the area.

Cats can live nine lives at Scarborough home

Progress made but city's feral cat problem remains

By JESSICA LEE
The Observer

Dorothy Mathieson considers herself a bit of a pied piper when it comes to stray cats. She usually has up to eight of them following her around when she walks her dog.

Nestled in the suburb of Kingston Rd. and Galloway, Mathieson's house is a gathering place for feral cats.

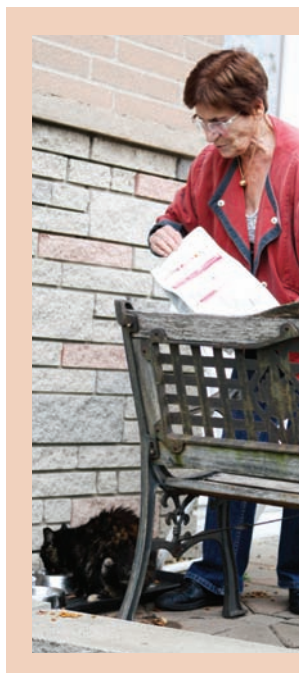
Like a caring mother, she feeds a colony of about 25 feral cats every afternoon with kibble donated by Toronto Animal Services.

"The lady next door started feeding them," she said. "And next thing you know, you got half a dozen, and all of them are having babies."

But according to Hanna Booth, Scarborough's feral cat colonies are a big problem, with about 120 cats in 10 colonies. Booth, a vet and board director at the Humane Society, added that Scarborough was the Toronto Feral Cat Coalition's first target area identified.

"We worked as a coalition to spay [and] neuter them.... I think we have about 70 per cent of those cats done now, so that's a big success."

Booth estimates there are around 100,000 feral cats wandering around Toronto,



but admits the number is conservative.

On Oct. 2, the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC Toronto), held a screening of Cat City at the Centre for Social Innovation downtown.

Although the documentary about the feral cat population in Toronto was made in 2008, the feral cat population in Toronto is still high.

"I would say that the situation [of feral cats in Toronto] gets worse every year," Booth said.

Since the making of the film, the Toronto Feral Cat Coalition was formed by several cat rescue groups to

NEWS YOU CAN USE

- Toronto Animal Services takes in about 7,000 cats a year.
- There are 2 free spay/neuter clinics in Toronto to prevent an abundance of cats.
- If you find a stray cat you can direct it to Toronto Animal Services in your area by visiting the Toronto.ca website at toronto.ca/animal_services/centres.htm

help reduce the feral cat overpopulation in the city. The coalition uses a method called Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) to combat the cat population problem. With TNR, a group of volunteers go out to the colonies and trap stray cats. Then, the volunteers bring the cats to clinics, which spay/neuter the cat. Finally, the cat is brought back to the wild and released.

The documentary attributes feral cat problems to irresponsible owners who abandon their pets. Their numbers then increase because cats are such "successful reproducers."

"The most surprising thing

that I learned [while making the film] was the suffering and the hardship that these cats were enduring," said Justine Pimlott, director of Cat City.

Stray cats in Toronto have to survive through the harsh Canadian winters, as well as finding food. Last winter, they had a new problem: a feral cat colony of about 25 at the Scarborough Bluffs was killed by a pack of coyotes.

Humans can also cause problems for cats by neglecting to properly care for them and dumping them in the wild.

Other than TNR, Booth recommends owners attach microchips to their cats to easily locate them if lost.

Once the cats are found, if owners do not claim them, the cats are put up for adoption or euthanized, depending on how much room is available at the animal shelters.

Toronto Animal Services takes in about 7,000 cats a year, according to staff member Eletta Purdy. About one third of those cats find homes, the others are euthanized due to overcrowding at the animal shelters.

Rather, the focus should be on opening low cost spay and neuter clinics, Purdy said.

There's more to be done to tackle the problem, she said.

Duo aims for Juno

Scarborough musicians travel abroad

By CHRISTINA CHENG
The Observer

With four studio albums, a live album and a recent Juno nomination for the 2011 'Roots and Traditional Album of the Year Group,' Dala, comprised of Sheila Carabine and Amanda Walther, are Canada's premiere two-piece, acoustic-folk musical group.

Both members are from Scarborough. Carabine and Walther met in a high school band class at the Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School in Scarborough, about 10 years ago.

"We became instant friends," Walther said.

"We wrote a song together, collaborated and finished it that very night and it was instant magic."

Walther says she doesn't think it's a coincidence that some of the best Canadian musicians and artists come from Scarborough.

Out of a troubled neighbourhood, art is easily created because people are looking for joy," she said.

"Scarborough has a bad reputation but anyone who lives there knows that it's an amazing place with so many different forms of inspiration."

The talented duo also draws on the Beatles for inspiration.

"We love the Beatles. That's what really brought us as friends in the first place," Walther said.

"It was our mutual

obsession with the Beatles and their tight harmonies.... It's just really, really concise songwriting," Carabine said.

"That's what really got the ball rolling for us."

The "secret songwriters of the sixties and seventies" such as Neil Young and Joni Mitchell also influenced the group.

Carabine and Walther have travelled to many places in the world, including London and California, but the two still consider Toronto home.

"Sheila and I were talking about how we feel like citizens of the world in a way," Walther said.

"But my heart is in Toronto. The more we travel, the more we appreciate our fabulous city."

Their pitch-perfect harmonies soar on acoustic folk-pop originals at the Acorn Theatre in Three Oaks on Sept. 29.

The Acorn Theatre's artistic director, Kim Clark said it was a "great turn out for Dala."

"It was a lovely show filled with beautiful voices," she said.

The folk pair admits to taking a little bit of Toronto with them everywhere they go.

"We've noticed that when we especially perform in the States, we do bring a piece of our country with us," Carabine said.

The name Dala comes from Carabine and Walther's first names.

"DA from Amanda and LA from Sheila," Carabine said.



For more on this story, see Features at torontoobserver.ca



■ Sheila Carabine and Amanda Walther

EDITORIALS

ConGritulations

Liberal sweep means good news for Scarborough

Scarborough has voted wisely by re-electing the Liberals for another term in all the six ridings in the Oct. 6 provincial election. A traditionally Liberal stronghold, Scarborough has benefitted under the Grits.

The Liberal campaign platform offers several key promises that Scarborough stands to benefit from.

With a strong immigrant population, businesses in the community can take advantage of the \$10,000 immigrant tax credit proposed in the Liberal campaign agenda.

Forbes Magazine recently ranked Canada as the best country in the world for business in part because of the introduction of the HST in Ontario and British Columbia.

Forbes said Canada moved up four places from last year's ranking because of an "improved tax credit." The hype and controversy surrounding the HST should — must — die a quiet whimper after this.

The government of Premier Dalton McGuinty has also taken the province from having the longest surgical wait times in the country to the shortest Cancer survival rates in Ontario were also ranked among the best in the world.

Let's not forget Mike Harris's Progressive Conservative government's shoddy record with health care in the province.

It's easy to see that we, as a province, are better off with McGuinty as our premier rather than PC Leader Tim Hudak.

Scarborough will continue to grow and prosper under the Liberals.

~Aakanksha Tangri

A failing grade

Credit mill students pay for success, literally

Apparently, money can buy you everything. Now up for grabs in Ontario: a brand-spanking-new education that parents can buy for their children.

At least that's what they think, as Ontario youth herd to high school "credit mills," trading money for marks.

Sorry kids. You might be getting the marks, but this is still a fail.

Consider the main goal here: parents want their kids to be accepted into a university or college, and then graduate from said university or college. Buying them high school marks ignores the latter half of that ultimate goal.

The student will be ecstatic getting into their desired post-secondary institution, but what happens then?

They'll be set up to crash and burn, that's what.

Let's make this analogous, in case credit mill graduates are reading this.

Imagine you're building a house — a house with no foundation. Would be pretty difficult, I'd assume.

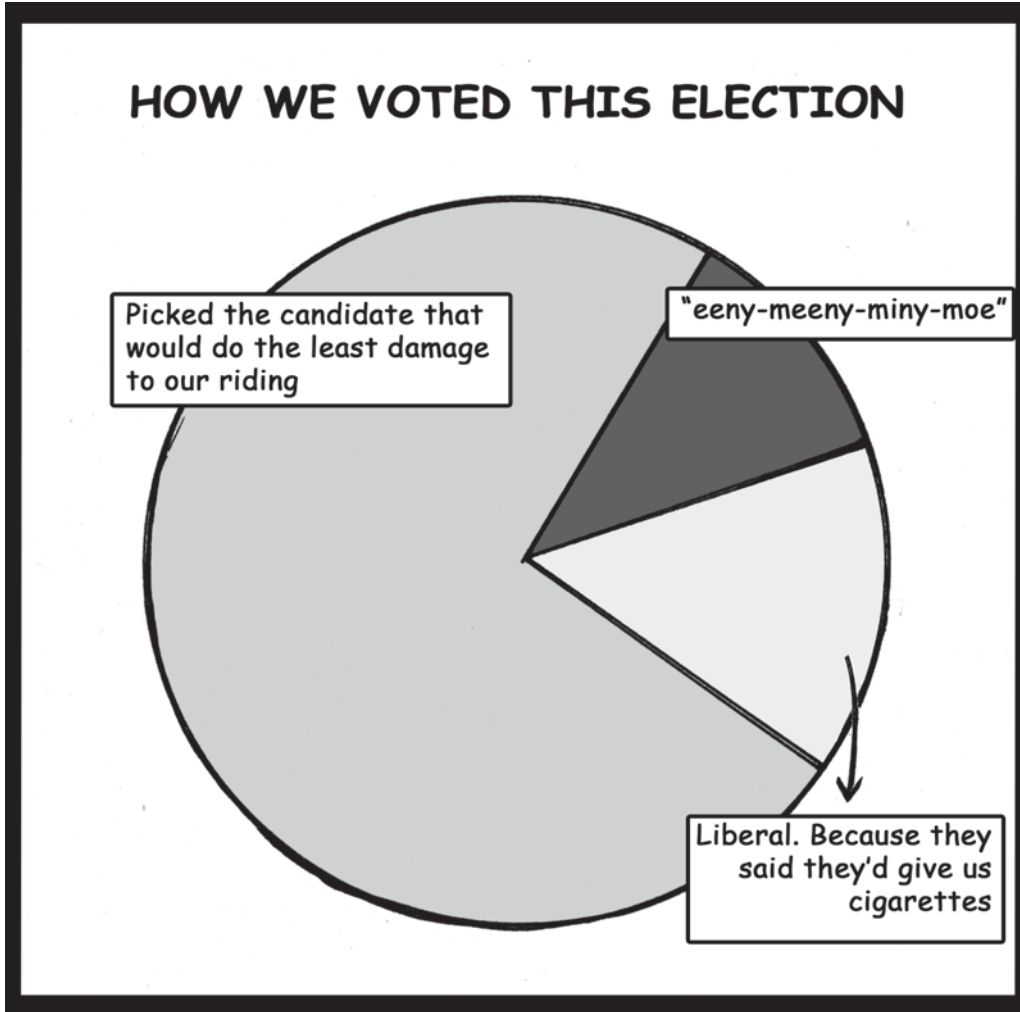
Without the prior work ethic or intelligence required to succeed in post-secondary education, parents prepare their kids for failure, not fortune.

It will be extremely tough for a student who has a phantom high school degree to keep up at the no-nonsense post-secondary level — you can damn well bet these teachers won't give you marks for doing nothing.

What makes this tragedy a catastrophe is the effect on student's vying for a spot in university or college that actually did the work, yet have their spot stolen from the credit mill alumni.

A student earning a 70 per cent average is surely a better fit than a student handed an 80 per cent, no? With the elections wrapped up, hopefully our incumbent will pay more attention to the education system — one of many topics being debated.

~ Alex Kozovski



Jessica Lee // The Observer

COLUMN

Sitsabaiesan focusing on politics, not cleavage

When it comes to powerful, successful women, one assumes she should wear dresses that end below the knee, no heel should be higher than a couple of inches and certainly no cleavage should ever show. For a woman to be taken seriously,

she must be careful how she carries herself. Especially in male-dominated careers such as politics.

These rules are implemented so women are seen as professionals, not sex symbols.

But Scarborough's own MP Rathika Sitsabaiesan knows firsthand that when the two cross each other, it can create a windstorm of controversy.

Recently, Sitsabaiesan's official parliamentary headshot was photo shopped to get rid of the cleavage that was shown. Frankly, it is not a question of whether it is right or wrong, but a wake-up call for our priorities.

What is seen as more important in a politician? Breasts or their campaign platform?

I get it: it's a controversy. It's different and needs to be published in newspapers and websites to create traffic flow. It's not a story you come across every day.

We have to remember she is still a young woman. For a 29-year-old, she is creating a promising career for herself. She is not only actively

in touch with community organizations, but still goes door-to-door promoting her position and is currently working on a petition with Olivia Chow to make a federal infrastructure strategy.

As the first NDP candidate to conquer a dominant liberal riding, Sitsabaiesan is to be commended for what she stands for as a politician. She makes being powerful and sexy possible.

She's a woman. She has cleavage. Embrace it. Of course, she could have worn a more conservative shirt, but maybe this controversy did her a favour. More people know her name — no publicity is bad publicity.

We have to prioritize before we start jumping to conclusions about professionals in any field. Hard to believe, but they are people too. They make mistakes.

Sitsabaiesan should still be respected as a professional and a strong, independent woman, known not only for her curves but for the positive changes she is bringing to our community.

Jessica Moy



Centre unveils new look

Expansion of mall in time for holiday season

By JESSICA MOY
The Observer

Scaffolding and construction tape have come off the Scarborough Town Centre to reveal the dramatic changes at East Toronto's premier shopping destination.

A number of new stores have opened following the two-year, \$62-million renovation for STC.

Justice, ecko unltd., Zumiez, Eyestar Optical, LOCALE and M for Mendocino had their official grand openings last month. And a list of big-name stores are getting ready to join them, including Victoria's Secret and Aritzia, which are opening in November.

None of the old stores were closed during the renovations to the mall.

"Stores that have closed experienced a natural expiry of their lease," Jai Lee, marketing manager of STC said.



Courtesy of Scarborough Town Centre

The new skylight at Scarborough Town Centre is one of many additions that were added in the \$62-million renovation for the mall, to make the centre more attractive for shoppers.

At Ease, Jean Machine and Fruits and Passion are among the few stores that had to relocate to make room for the additions.

The renovations add 60,000 square feet. These additions include a two-storey Forever XXI that occupies 27,000 square feet, making it one of the biggest in

the mall, which covers 1.4 million square feet in total.

Since the renovation, STC

has seen an increase in sales and foot traffic. According to a press release, fashion acces-

sory sales have risen by 20.4 per cent, men's apparel sales have increased 16.1 per cent and women's apparel sales are up 2.5 per cent.

Parking has been one of the main concerns regarding the building's expansion since traffic flow has increased.



● For more on this story, see News at torontoobserver.ca

New residents get warm embrace

By CHANTELLE HENRIQUES
The Observer

Faith Tsao expected to start a new life and a new job after immigrating to Toronto from Hong Kong. Instead, Tsao, a registered nurse, was told her credentials were not valid due to her weak command of English.

Six years later, she is fluent in the language.

"I came across The Northwest Scarborough Local Immigration Partnership (NWS LIP) and attended ESL programs and my life changed," she said.

Newcomers like Tsao shared their stories at the NWS LIP meeting on Sept. 28 at the Centre for Information and Community Services in Scarborough.

The second annual event kicked off with traditional Chinese, Indian and Tamil dances.

While programs like NWS LIP help make services for newcomers more accessible, project manager Mani Mahadevi says there is still work to be done in the Northwest Scarborough communities where 71 per cent of the population are immigrants.

There are a lot of immigrants who have little access to newcomer settlement programs, most of which are based in downtown Toronto.

Mahadevi said many newcomers like Tsao have degrees but still undergo a hard time settling into Scarborough.

"Many newcomers end up becoming taxi drivers or factory workers," Mahadevi said.

"If the government can create new opportunities for newcomers based on their skills, that would be great."

Having arrived in Toronto in the early 1970s, Soo Wong knows about the difficulties of settling in.

A Liberal candidate for Scarborough-Agincourt in the provin-

● For more, see News at torontoobserver.ca



■ Mahadevi

Private high school under fire

Principal defends school against newspaper allegations of being a 'credit mill'

By MARYAM SHAH
The Observer

Toronto Collegiate Institute (TCI) was open last week during its 8-to-5 business hours last week when

an Observer reporter showed up to interview the principal. Students were heard talking in class, instructors were photocopying papers, the receptionist was waving in visitors, a volunteer was waiting to

speak with the principal.

However, a week later on Oct. 3, a return visit found locked doors.

The *Toronto Star* recently published an investigative series exposing several high

schools, including TCI, as credit mills.

Credit mills are private schools where students can take courses towards their high school degree and get higher scores than they would in public school.

But in the *Observer* interview, principal and owner Sivam Mahalingam denied the charges.

"We are doing very good," Mahalingam said. "We are not cheating like they said."

Star reporter Jennifer Yang had gone undercover as a student at the Institute and received a high grade in chemistry despite not completing required hours and homework.

According to Mahalingam, the grade had been adjusted to reflect the lower level of the chemistry course.

"She took grade 11 and 12 chemistry already back in Alberta," he said. "So when

she ended up with the mark, there's an adjustment made for the college level. That's why she got the mark she got. They didn't mention anything about that."

The teacher of that course has since resigned, he said.

He maintained the school is running on schedule and other students recognize their disciplines.

"We didn't boost the mark, ask any student, they know," he said. "They say you are so strict, you want marks, people cry like that."

Mahalingam said that he was advised by his lawyer to continue what he is doing and leave his situation up to the law.

A high school student waiting to speak with Sivam said she volunteers there to complete her hours.

"He's the one who told me to go into pharmacy," she said, asking to remain unnamed.



Maryam Shah // Observer

Toronto Collegiate Institute was closed on Oct. 3 during business hours.



Kyle Larkin // Observer

Let's play ball!

Travis Logan practises throwing long-distance at Wishing Well Park on Oct 3. Colin Cummins (inset) runs baseball training sessions for aspiring athletes through Red Eye Pro Baseball throughout the offseason.

Centre breaks down barriers

By ERICA TIANGCO
The Observer

What a woman needs to succeed is other women, say the users of the Scarborough Women's Centre (SWC).

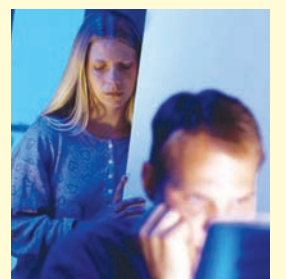
The SWC is a non-profit resource centre that has helped Scarborough women overcome hardship for almost 30 years. On Sept. 29, the centre held its 29th annual meeting to discuss its way forward.

Executive director Lynda Kosowan said the centre is all about possibilities.

"It's possible for women to move past barriers and through struggles, and become happy, independent and active people who have achieved their goals," she said.

Having served 25 years as the centre's executive director, Kosowan has seen first-hand the SWC's progress over the years, but more importantly, its significance to Scarborough.

■ For more, see Life at torontoobserver.ca



Women must know they're not alone.

Christmas sharing shut down

City council cuts program that distributed toys, helped Scarborough families in need

By NATALIE SEQUEIRA
The Observer

All he wanted for Christmas was to be a part of the Share Christmas program because receiving gifts from strangers made him feel cared for.

But this man is one of hundreds who may not be receiving any gifts through the program this year, thanks to the mayor and 24 city councillors, who voted Sept. 26 to scrap funding to the city's Christmas Bureau.

Linda Curley, volunteer coordinator at the Birchmount

Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre (BBNC), couldn't put a name to the man's face, but he stood out to her as the reason for the centre's Share Christmas program, she said.

But it's about more than just Christmas, Curley said.

"The Christmas Bureau doesn't just give out toys to children and families in need. It connects [the community], ensuring that [these] families are assisted through the winter months."

The Share Christmas program is just one of many



Natalie Sequeira // Observer

Linda Curley, volunteer coordinator at BBNC, shows helps the brochure for the Share Christmas program.

across Toronto that partners with the Christmas Bureau, which has worked since 1956 to coordinate the distribution of gifts and donations to fami-

lies each year.

Executive director Enrique Roberto plans to go ahead with Share Christmas.

"It is not the people's

fault," he said.

"[It's] the incompetency of our politicians to offer something that they cannot deliver."

He said almost 100 families will be cut off the Share Christmas list.

Part of the reason for the shortened list is that the centre will start doing its own screening this year. The BBNC plans on fine-tuning its interview process this year in preparation.

"At what moment do you say to [a] child, 'You, yes and you, no?'" Roberto added.

"Who [am I] or the steering committee ... to say to a child, you cannot receive the support ... you were hoping to receive this year?"

U of T honours longtime baseball coach with field in his name

By ALEX KOZOVSKI
The Observer

Despite having an accomplished resumé in university baseball, Dan Lang is more than a coach, according to those who honoured him Sept. 25.

The University of Toronto Scarborough Campus renamed its varsity field the Dan Lang Field after the former Varsity

Blues coach, an educator on and off the field.

University of Toronto president David Naylor, UTSC principal Franco Vaccarino and professor Ira Jacobs, dean of the the physical education and health faculty, attended the ceremony for the Varsity Blues



■ LANG

baseball pioneer.

"Dan showed a passion not only for the athletic pursuits of his athletes but also for their academic and personal goals," said Beth Ali, director of intercollegiate and high performance sport at U of T. "He was truly a player's coach both on

and off the diamond."

The 13-year veteran was honoured not solely for his body of work for the Blues, but also for his contributions to the Scarborough community.

He led the project for a permanent Blues baseball facility in Scarborough.

■ For more, see Sports at torontoobserver.ca

LINGUISTIC LARKS

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

Category

Animals

EMUO

HICRO

INHILO

ATOOPE

Nocturnal Predator

Unscramble the circled letters to form the final answer.

By Kyle Larkin