

TAKING SIDES ON STREET PREACHING

“It’s not imposed because people have the choice not to listen.”

LEVY OKINGA,
of Highfield Road Gospel Hall

Are Leslieville’s outdoor sermons a disturbance or a democratic right?
PAGE GT3

“Don’t I have a right to say, ‘I don’t want to hear this?’”

ANNA MACKAY,
Highfield Rd. resident

Miller’s last hurrah

‘If you want to analyze the polls, Rob Ford’s not leading, David Miller is’

DAVID RIDER
URBAN AFFAIRS BUREAU CHIEF

Almost 16 years after the fresh-faced politician walked nervously into his first council meeting, and as the greyer, weathered David Miller prepares to stride out of his last, the mayor is confident of one thing.

Most Torontonians, Miller said, stand firmly behind him and his legacy of “massive” investment in city-building projects — in spite of the rise of Rob Ford, an anti-Miller leading the pack to replace him.

“I think the public knows people say all kinds of ridiculous things in campaigns,” Miller said during an interview Wednesday in his City Hall office.

“There’s broad support in Toronto for environmental initiatives. There’s broad support for initiatives that make sure the people who have the least have a chance, particularly young people. There’s broad support for building transit, for Ottawa and Queen’s Park investing in this city.”

Miller brings up an Ipsos Reid poll conducted last weekend that found, were he running for a third term, he would win handily.

MILLER continued on GT4

Left: David Miller as a young High Park Councillor.
Right: Mayor Miller last December.

MORE FROM CITY HALL ON GT4

HUME: Outgoing mayor leaves city divided as never before.

THE MINUTES: Council decides to pay legal expenses.

ROB FORD: Is ordered to repay charitable donations.



Rent supplements urged to help curb abuse

Pilot project could ease subsidized housing wait lists

LAURIE MONSEBRAATEN
SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTER

It started seven years ago when Stephanie was pregnant with her second son: The snide remarks, the explosive outbursts, the physical threats.

Stephanie tried to escape two years later when she returned to work. But she was afraid.

Her spouse was tracking her every movement and had isolated her from her friends and family.

Finally last fall, when her son turned 6, she was ready.

“It was just getting too dangerous. I couldn’t do it any more,” says Stephanie, 46, who fled to Toronto’s Interval House shelter for abused women and their children. She does not want her full name used to ensure her safety and that of her children.

But 11 months later, Stephanie is still waiting to move into her own apartment and start her life anew.

Although abused women and children have priority on the city’s affordable housing waiting list, demand is so high, that the average wait has doubled from

less than three months in 2007 to as much as six months today.

Some women, like Stephanie, wait up to a year.

The backlog means Interval House, which has 30 beds and fielded about 850 crisis calls in the past year, was able to move just 37 women and children back into the community, down from 79 a year ago.

As a result, Interval House, Canada’s first shelter for abused women, is asking Queen’s Park to fund a two-year pilot project that would provide a rent supplement of up to \$450 a month to families like Stephanie’s so they can afford apartments in the private market.

The \$577,500 project, aimed at helping 50 families for two years, would free up desperately needed shelter beds, ease affordable housing waiting lists and help these vulnerable women and children rebuild their lives, says the shelter’s resettlement coordinator, Ashley Lawrence.

A spokesperson for the social services ministry said the government received the Interval House proposal this week and is reviewing it.

When women fleeing violence are housed through the subsidized housing waiting list, they must go where the units are available, Lawrence said.

INTERVAL HOUSE continued on GT2

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GREATER TORONTO

Foster children get tuition support

Funds hope to stem high dropout rate

JASMEET SIDHU
STAFF REPORTER

Like any other university student, Aisha Aberdeen is anxious to graduate.

She'll be entering her final year at the University of Toronto in September, where she has been studying forestry and Caribbean studies.

But unlike other students whose undergrad years may have been filled with dorm parties, spring break trips and summer internships, Aberdeen has had a more difficult path to her degree.

"I've taken a bit longer than most students," she says.

Aberdeen is 27 and a single mom. When she was just 14 she arrived from Trinidad, and less than four months later was placed as a Crown ward with the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

She left her foster home at 16 and dropped out of high school soon after.

Aberdeen's path is typical for the roughly 18,000 children in Ontario being cared for by children's aid societies.

Less than half of foster children complete high school by age 21, and less than a quarter of those go on to post-secondary education. By contrast, 75 per cent of Ontario youth finish high school and 40 per cent get a post-secondary education.

However, Aberdeen is on her way to defy the statistics with some much-needed financial help. She is one of the more than 100 young people in current or past foster care who on Wednesday received more than \$200,000 in scholarships from the Hope for Children Foundation. Aberdeen will get \$2,000 this year to help with tuition.

Mary Bowyer, executive director of the foundation, said the financial assistance is critical for youth who are forced, by provincial legislation, to leave care at 18, jeopardizing their



Aisha Aberdeen, with her daughter, Kenya, 3, is a former Children's Aid ward on her way to completing university.

ANDREW WALLACE/TORONTO STAR

chances of saving money for a post-secondary education.

"When you were removed from your home, that may have caused educational delays and change of schools. Being taken away from friends and families is stressful for any young person and can impact their learning abilities," Bowyer said.

"But when you turn 18, the state requires you leave foster care. They

don't have access to the same resources that children not in care receive."

Social policy expert John Stapleton agrees and says youth should be allowed to stay in foster homes until they are 21 if they choose to, and that the province should financially support those in care until age 25.

"The real de facto age of adulthood in our society is much higher and people are leaving home much lat-

er. If child welfare agencies are in the position of being a parent to a child, they should be doing what any normal good parent would," he said.

After a couple of years of getting into trouble and working in "meagre" jobs, Aberdeen decided to straighten out her life and enrolled in the U of T's transitional year program.

She knows she's in the minority of

former foster kids who make it to university, and is aware how the foster care experience can permanently affect a person.

"The system fails us, it truly fails us," she said.

"You have to leave at 18, and you hope to the best of your ability to finish high school. But (foster children) come from broken families, stressed situations. Most people forget that."

'It was just getting too dangerous'

INTERVAL HOUSE from GT1

But portable rent supplements would give women the flexibility to choose an apartment near their work or close to their children's school or daycare. And they would be able to move if it doesn't work out.

Under the pilot, the women would also participate in the shelter's employment program, which is customized for victims of domestic violence.

Last year, the program helped 73 per cent of women in the shelter find jobs in their field, with 90 per cent still employed today, Lawrence said. The rest went back to school or changed professions.

Stephanie, who is living on Employment Insurance after losing



Stephanie, a single mother living at Interval House, watches her boys play baseball. She is eager to leave the shelter and move into an apartment.

RICK EGLINTON/TORONTO STAR

her job due to the upheaval, has just become a licensed mortgage broker and is grateful to Interval House for helping her change careers. The shelter's support means she has also been able to ensure her two "baseball crazy" sons can play in city teams this summer.

"I'm anxious to find a place so we can get on with our lives," she said. "A program that could help with the rent would really help."

BY THE NUMBERS

- Almost 64,000 households are waiting for subsidized housing.
- Of those, 1,573 are on the priority waiting list.
- The priority list includes women and children fleeing domestic violence, teens fleeing abusive homes and the terminally ill.
- Just 89 on the priority list were offered housing in July.

TORONTO

Man charged in series of sexual assaults

Peel police have charged a 52-year-old Etobicoke man following a series of sex assaults against the same victim.

The arrest comes after a 31-year-old Mississauga resident contacted police Tuesday. She told them she had been assaulted on four occasions by the suspect between May and July, police said.

Investigators are concerned there may be other victims and are asking anyone with information to contact them.

Udai Dwivedi faces four counts of sexual assault. He is expected to appear in court Sept. 23.

Suspect faces 17 charges in theft investigation

A Toronto man is facing several charges in a connection with an eight-month long theft investigation.

Between January and August, police allege a man watched shop-

pers as they left stores and put their purchases in their cars. Police say he would then wait until they left to run more errands before breaking into their cars.

In some cases, police believe the man would follow the shoppers back to their homes or workplaces and break into the unattended vehicles there.

Yercit Martinez-Mayorga, 37, is charged with 12 counts of theft under \$5,000, four counts of mischief under \$5,000 and attempted theft under \$5,000.

YORK REGION

Man walking on tracks struck, killed by train

A man is dead after being hit by a Canadian Pacific Railway train in York Region.

York police said the victim was walking with his bike eastbound on railway tracks near Hwy. 27 and Rutherford Rd. Tuesday evening when the incident occurred.

The man, whose name has not been released, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Star staff

Bevilacqua resigns as MP

Longtime federal politician clears way for run at Vaughan's top job

SAN GREWAL
STAFF REPORTER

Toronto isn't the only city faced with a hot mayor's race. It now looks like the fight for Vaughan's top job will almost certainly feature longtime Liberal MP Maurizio Bevilacqua, who announced his resignation from Ottawa Wednesday.

The news was no surprise, with Bevilacqua believed to have started a "stealth" mayoral campaign weeks ago. But he couldn't formally throw his hat into the race until he resigned his federal seat in Vaughan.

Bevilacqua spoke with Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff on Wednesday and declared "his intention to not seek re-election," said Ignatieff's press secretary Mi-



Maurizio Bevilacqua started a "stealth" campaign weeks ago.

chel Liboiron.

Although Bevilacqua, 50, did not officially announce his intention to run in October's municipal election, it's clear, given the literature he has already sent to thousands of residents, Vaughan's top job is what he now covets.

"I'm not seeking re-election at the federal level. It's a time of reflection as I look back on my 22 years in office and all that was accomplished, thanks to the citizens of Vaughan. And now there are deci-

sions that need to be made and the Vaughan mayoralty is certainly an option," Bevilacqua told the *Vaughan Citizen* Wednesday.

Incumbent Linda Jackson has faced controversy during her time as Vaughan mayor. She is still dealing with unresolved charges of skirting election finance laws and demands from her own council that she resign.

After announcing his decision to leave Ottawa behind on Wednesday, Bevilacqua stressed how important public life is to him. "It was a calling at the age of 28 when I first ran and public life has provided me with great experiences and a great satisfaction of helping people."

"It also allowed me to develop a skill set and to learn. My next question now is where can I bring all I've learned, all the experience and everything that is embodied for 22 years at the federal level to the best service to the people that I've been representing for the past 22 years."

Mississauga couple sentenced for sex assault

BOB MITCHELL
STAFF REPORTER

A former stripper and her husband were jailed Wednesday for drugging and sexually assaulting a couple they had befriended in a Mississauga bar.

David Want, 40, was sentenced to six years in prison, but will only spend another three years in federal penitentiary after credit for time served in pre-trial custody.

Marcia Want, 31, was sentenced to four years, which means 18 months in a provincial jail after credit for time already served.

Both will be added to the Ontario sex registry and their DNA will be submitted to the national data bank.

In sentencing them, Madame Justice Silja Seppi described their drugging and sexual assault of strangers as "sinister and heinous."

"The violent nature of the sexual

assaults have left a heavy toll on the victims," Seppi told a Brampton courtroom. She said the use of a date rape drug for the forced intercourse of the woman by David Want was a "significant aggravating" factor.

"Their pure selfish indulgence showed little regard for the victims' emotional well-being," she said.

On June 17, Seppi convicted the Vants of drugging the newly dating couple and sexually assaulting the woman on Feb. 8-9, 2009.

Seppi found the Vants guilty of administering a noxious substance to both victims and of sexual assault causing bodily harm against HP.

The Vants gained the couple's trust that night by claiming another bar patron had spiked their drinks. Marcia told them she was a nurse at Sick Kids and the tea given to them at her apartment would make them feel better.