



Anti-Islamophobia event an eye-opener for students

Sam Juric and Jess Reyes

SENIOR REPORTERS

A slew of verbal and physical attacks on Muslim women walking the streets of Toronto last November has fueled University of Guelph-Humber students in combatting Islamophobia.

Ron Stansfield, professor in the Justice Studies program at Guelph-Humber was particularly struck by the intolerance demonstrated by Torontonians in the wake of the Paris attacks.

Stansfield asked his students if they would be comfortable if he wore a hijab as a show of solidarity.

Faiza Zulfiqar, a fourth-year Justice Studies student suggested offering students an opportunity to wear a hijab and talk about the experience in the GH Atrium yesterday.

It was then that the Guelph-Humber Against Hate event came into being.

"I was very upset to hear about those events," said Stansfield, "It led to a discussion in class on how this is a human right that is being trampled on and we need to do something about it."

Thursday's event was the second of its kind at Guelph-Humber and the group is hopeful to



JESS REYES

Hira Zulfiqar (second from left) and Faiza Zulfiqar (far right) helped organize the GH Against Hate for the Justice Studies program at Guelph-Humber.

have many more in the future, said Stansfield.

Zulfiqar took on the role of lead organizer of the Guelph-Humber Against Hate event with the hope that it would help dispel feelings of prejudice towards Muslim women on campus.

The event featured a

board covered in students' hand-written personal experiences of Islamophobia to show that discrimination and intolerance are issues affecting students routinely.

"Women in this school have been assaulted physically and verbally," said Zulfiqar. "Students here need to realize

that and support these women around campus and anywhere outside of it."

"The key point here is that prejudice is about ignorance. Prejudice towards women who wear the hijab is ignorant," said Stansfield.

Hira Zulfiqar, Faiza's younger sister, is also a Justice Studies

student in her second year. She became involved with the event after reflecting on her personal encounters with Islamophobia.

"I've had some really bad experiences by wearing the hijab, myself, and being a Muslim woman," she said.

Stansfield was happy to see the perspectives of students be-

ginning to expand as non-Muslim students tried on the hijab.

Wearing the hijab, some students felt passersby were staring, while others said, "covering my hair really made a difference," said Stansfield. "The more informed people are, the less likely they are to be prejudiced," he said.

Humber launches fall reading days for 2016

Students seek full fall reading week in 2017; union concern is with forfeit pay for contract teachers

Daniel Caudle

NEWS REPORTER

In lieu of a much-anticipated fall reading week, Humber College students will be getting two days off attached to the Thanksgiving long weekend in the upcoming semester.

They are not getting a break in their tuition, however.

Moreover, the move could cost two-thirds of the college's teachers, part-time workers on limited contracts, two days of pay.

The college announced on Jan. 15 that students would get Study Break Days on Oct. 6 and 7, leading into the Thanksgiving Day weekend.

The days are in addition to the winter Reading Week beginning Feb. 13.

The winter break incorporates the Family Day civic holiday and represents four days leave from classes.

College facilities will remain open during the two days for student use, and the University of Guelph-Humber will remain open and continue to run classes, said Humber Student and Community Engagement vice-president Jason Hunter.

OPSEU Local 562 vice president Paul Michaud said full time teachers will still be required to work these two days and ultimately students

will get less classroom time but will pay full tuition.

Two-thirds of Humber's faculty are part-time contract workers and the collective agreement between the union and college restricts the part-timers to a maximum of 12 teaching hours a week.

Humber's Bachelor of Nursing program has a yearly tuition of \$7,368.77 for domestic students. With about 140 school days a year, the financial value of the two break days equates to about \$100 for nursing students.

The two days break, combined with the Thanksgiving weekend to produce a five-day interval from school, will give students time to hang with friends, flexibility in their schedule and a chance to catch up on studies, said Humber student Daniel

Brown.

But he added the college should reduce tuition rates or compensate students for lost classroom time.

This is the first success for student government in the fight to get students a full week fall break., said Humber Students' Federation president Ahmed Tahir.

The drive has been ongoing for a year and Tahir said it's vital for students' mental and physical well-being and to help them determine if are in the right program.

Humber may implement a week-long fall Reading Week in the 2017 term if the two days off prove successful said Tahir. The format would follow a seven-week study period, followed by a week off, and continued by a seven-week study period.

Humber receives \$5 million

Corey Brehaut

SENIOR REPORTER

Humber College has received a \$5-million donation from The Barrett Family Foundation.

The donation, the largest the college has ever received, will be used to create an Access to Education and Skills Training fund as well as the creation of a Technology and Innovation Centre.

Bob and Francine Barrett established the charity which supports educational, environmental and humanitarian causes, as well as health and the arts.

Bob Barrett is the presi-

dent and CEO of Polyainers, an Etobicoke company that makes rigid plastic packaging for yogurt, cream cheese and other products.

"The donation from The Barrett Family Foundation is structured in two parts," said Alister Mathieson, vice-president of advancement and external affairs at Humber, in a videotaped media release.

"The first is the provision of awards and scholarships for students pursuing technology-related programs and the second is the initial funding of a centre of innovation and technology."

"What I noticed is at Humber the executive team has a passion and then when I went down on the floor into the classrooms I could see it was flowing over," said Barrett in the video announcement.

Backfill renovations at North campus underway

The undertaking of 47 new projects, over 146,000 feet are slated to be completed by the end of 2016

Chris Besik
NEWS REPORTER

An abundance of vacant space due the recent launch of the Learning Resource Common at Humber North campus has the college wondering what to do with it.

A 'Backfill Project' open house today provided a public discussion and feedback as how the space will be used.

"What you're looking at today is more conceptual renderings as to what the spaces are going to look like," said designated project manager Robert Balicsack of MHPM.

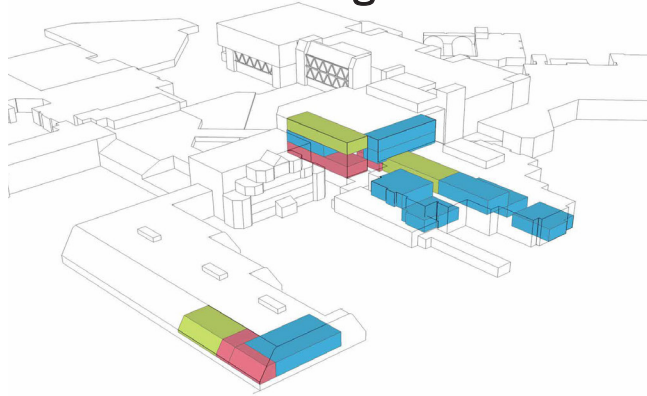
"Now it's the visual impact of what that is, we can see what the design is looking like."

The Backfill Project will relocate 146,000 square feet of space at North campus.

The empty rooms were created when such school services as the library moved into the new LRC building.

The project had mostly shared information through text but today's open house provided a stronger visual idea of what the changes will

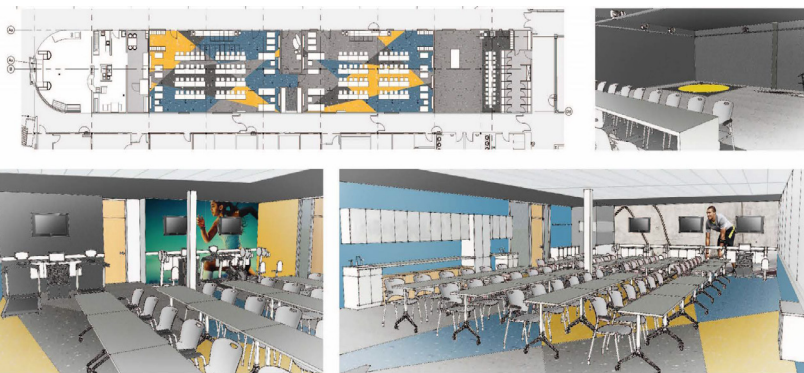
NX and N Building – 3D View



Building B – School of HRT Offices



E Building – School of HRT Laboratory



Floor plans from Humber's Backfill Project open house show planned renovations for vacant space in North campus. There are 47 projects include labs and office spaces for School of Health Sciences, School of Applied Technology; School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism.

look like.

The event was meant to educate the college community about what the backfill project encompasses.

"This provides everybody with a lot more detail," said Scot Valens, the director of capital development who is

responsible for delivering the project on time and budget.

The project is expected to have all of the relocation and construction projects complete by the end of 2016.

"The chaos should be over," said Balicsack.

The college is working with

MHPM project leaders to achieve their goals.

The event provided visuals of the new rooms for the various schools of study: School of Health Sciences, School of Applied Technology; School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism. A new daycare fa-

cility is also included.

"My office is going to smell like pastries, and I'm excited," said Stephanie Afonso, the administrative assistant that organized the event. "The baking labs are moving from LB to the old registration in D building."

Guilty verdict in Forcillo trial sets Toronto precedent

Toronto Police need more training in de-escalation techniques: Mayor

Natalia Vega, Veronica Appia and Ryan Durgy
REPORTERS

Torontonians have finally received the Const. James Forcillo trial verdict.

The ruling on the 2013 shooting death of 18-year-old Sammy Yatim left Forcillo suspended with pay after being found guilty of attempted murder on Monday. The officer had fired nine times at Yatim, who was disoriented and wielding a knife on a Toronto streetcar during the incident, which was captured on phone video by a bystander.

He was found not guilty of manslaughter, second-degree murder and aggravated assault.

The verdict was reached after six days of deliberations.

It was relatively peaceful outside the 361 University Court House in downtown Toronto following the verdict, save for a few protesters.

One protester, Miguel Avila, a representative for Cop Watch Toronto, held up a cardboard sign with the statement "Jail the killer cops!" in purple ink.

"As a regular observer and monitor of Toronto Police acts of brutality against Toronto citizens, I think there is a huge mountain to climb in terms of discipline," Avila said.

He wants to see the Police Act of Ontario reevaluated to make it easier for police boards to fire officers charged with and found guilty of criminal negligence, he said.

Forcillo will continue to be suspended with pay, Chief of Police Mark Saunders said in a news conference a few hours after the verdict.

The crisis training officers receive is adequate but there is room for improvement, he said.

"We've added another full

day dedicated to training of people in crisis," he said. "We are teaching the officers the importance of de-escalation."

Forcillo is currently out on bail and will be back in court on May 16.

In this case, the minimum penalty for attempted murder is five years imprisonment and the maximum is a life sentence.

Saunders did not comment on the case since Forcillo's sentencing has yet to take place.

The death of Yatim is a "tragic loss for his family and this community," said Mayor John Tory at City Hall on Monday.

Tory supports Saunders implementing the necessary training of law enforcement in order to reach a goal of no injuries or casualties, he said.

When Yatim's mother exited the courthouse she expressed her grief at the loss of her son.

"For me, it's the first step," she said. "I would now like to be part of the discussion to change the police training policies when dealing with



Miguel Avila, a representative for Cop Watch Toronto, held up a sign in protest outside the Forcillo trial after the verdict was released.

people in crisis, so this painful incident does not repeat again. Sammy was a young man who had his whole fu-

ture ahead of him ... we lost him forever. Nothing in this world will compensate me for the loss of my son."

TCHC facing serious problems, no funding

Natalia Vega and Aaron D'Andrea
SENIOR REPORTER

Questionable living conditions for over 1000 tenants in Toronto Community Housing were revealed in a new report Tuesday.

Mayor John Tory along with Councillor Ana Bailao and Senator Art Eggleton detailed plans for TCH in a news conference that morning.

The homes have been in poor quality – one example being poor heating. In some cases that's because of poorly built infrastructure, Tory said.

In some cases the only option is to demolish and rebuild.

Recommendations made in the final report to improve community housing include making TCHC a non-profit organization, going forward with renovating or rebuilding all properties and giving support to those with disabilities, mental illness and senior citizens.

There is a \$2.6 billion capital repair backlog and by the end of the year the operating deficit is expected to reach \$200 million, said Tory.

Tory is looking to the three levels of government to help with those costs, and said he doubts those calls for help will be ignored, he said.

There is no official timeline for when the housing project will be completed.

Once funding is available the project will proceed but waiting a long time is out the question, Tory said.

Not everyone is pleased with talk of demolishing certain properties.

Natasha Doyle, a former resident of the Lawrence Heights community grew up in TCH and is concerned for those who have been displaced in areas like Zachary Court, she said.

"I hope the people who are being displaced or are forced to leave the neighbourhood are given a good chance, and that they're provided with the help that they need," said Doyle.

She also said that although Lawrence Heights is portrayed as a "bad area" it's her home, and seeing homes in the area torn down creates the sense something was wrong with how they lived.

"TCHC is trying to make it look like they're trying to do something positive by forming a mixed income area but I really just think it's prime capitalism."

A more detailed report is expected this fall.

Campus

Food truck unfazed by skyrocketing produce costs



PHIL WITMER

The Humber food truck uses healthy alternatives in its menu and homegrown ingredients to offset rising price of food.

Phil Witmer
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

Though the price of food has taken a hike, the team behind Humber's food truck isn't sweating it.

"A case of asparagus is \$98

for an 11-pound case," said Kevin Chong of the Humber School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism, "so we go to green beans."

Chong is in charge of the ordering and receiving of fresh ingredients for the

food truck's student-prepared meals.

While the current climate of \$8 cauliflowers has made things more difficult, the food truck is committed to a menu and work experience that stands out from Hum-

ber's other opportunities, he said.

"It's for student learning. Sustainability is a responsibility of the college. It's a protocol. So we try to ensure that we buy from vendors that are responsible [like] local farmers."

Currently, all items on the food truck's menu are set at \$6, unchanged from when the truck launched back in September.

"We were set a budget on how we wanted to sell [the food]," said Adam Lucko, associate chef, "so we took the reference point of what one can spend as a student."

Keeping all items the same price not only helps tailor them to student spending habits but also allows the Humber truck to competitively price itself against other food trucks which typically hover around \$12 to \$13 on average for each product, said Lucko.

"We're not trying to make a buck, we're trying to promote healthy eating and culinary excellence by our HRT," he said.

Antonio Folino, who runs the truck's booking and catering service, said he agrees with the non-profit mindset, adding that hospitality is "the only industry where you're expected to give things away for free. People don't want to

pay the price that's already set."

Folino isn't worried about the food price crisis, he said.

"Everything is on a cycle. In the wintertime you're always paying more for food and in the summertime the prices are a lot less so you make your profit margins higher. You make that loss."

Labour fees have made more of an impact on the food truck than the rising price of obtaining the food itself, he said.

"We pay our students minimum wage. The wage only went up by twenty-five cents but it does affect the overall outcome. In hospitality, a nickel makes a huge difference."

Obstacles like this are par for the course, said Chong.

"It's the cost of doing business. If [the price of] electricity is too high are you not going to use electricity? We have to deal with change on the fly."

Humber Students' Federation to launch rebranding campaign

Jess Reyes
ONLINE EDITOR

The Humber Students' Federation (HSF) is moving away from its original brand, first conceived in the early 2000's.

In the hopes to further integrate the students of University of Guelph-Humber with those of Humber College, the students' federation has decided to change its name.

HSF is looking to promote an environment of inclusivity, allowing for students attending both Humber and Guelph-Humber to feel like one student body, said Ammar Abdul-Raheem, HSF vice president of student affairs.

Many students are unfamiliar with the planned changes to the federation, said Abdul-Raheem.

Ahmed Tahir, president of HSF, has confirmed that the new direction in branding will be launched in Fall 2016.

"The rumours people are whispering in your ear,

they're all correct," said Tahir, "We will be having a new name, a new brand."

"There's a lot of great work being done and making sure that the students in the end feel better about this brand. We want to make students' lives better," Abdul-Raheem said

HSF has verified it has recruited a third party advertising firm to assist in shaping the organization's new identity.

A look into HSF's Consolidated Operating and Capital Budget shows no evidence of a reserve fund for a rebranding project.

HSF executives have declined to comment on where the organization intends to get the finances to pay for rebranding and for the advertising firm's fees.

This begs the question of how much the process will cost Humber students.

Both executives declined to disclose the advertising firm's name or the cost of their services.

Humber Et Cetera inves-

tigated and found a study by Webpage FX, showing that the average national medium of web content marketing campaigns can cost between \$6,000 and \$12,000.

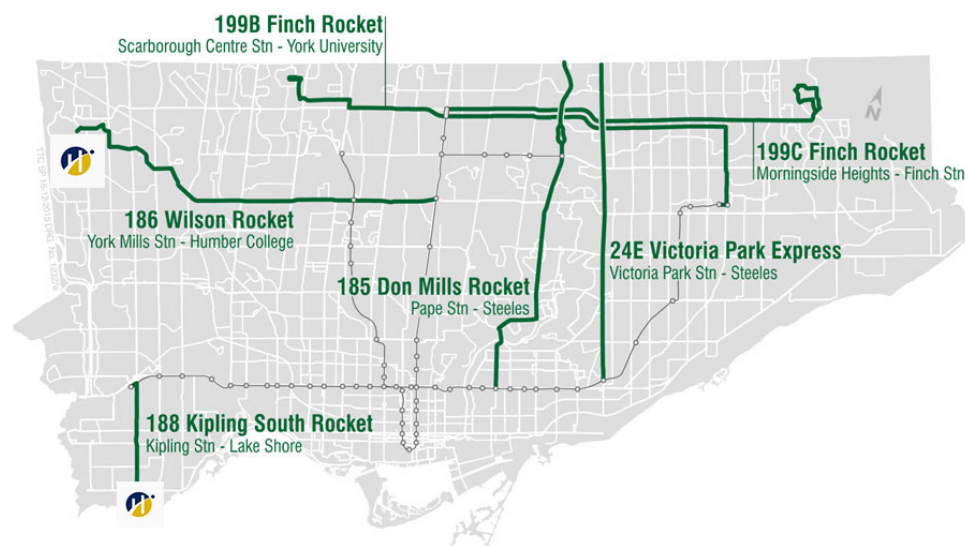
There is a concern among the organization that students have a difficulty in identifying themselves with the current branding, said Abdul-Raheem.

In alignment with the federation's new attempt at student inclusivity the organization is considering bringing in a student vote on renaming into the mix.

Due to HSF's involvement with the third party a student vote is not guaranteed.

Tahir was asked by what prompted such a significant change to the federation's identity but has given inconclusive answers.

"We want students to know that we're here to fight for their rights and advocate on behalf of them. We want to feel like students can come to us with any issue and any problem," Tahir said.



COURTESY TTC

This map shows the projected new express routes, with Humber's North and Lakeshore campuses indicated.

New TTC express routes to ease commute

Phil Witmer
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

The TTC announced Tuesday that it plans to implement five new express routes for its buses.

The routes span a wide area of the city, including two that provide quick access to Humber's North and Lakeshore campuses.

"Humber commuters form a significant part of our rider base, so they definitely played

a part in the decision," TTC representative Danny Nicholson told Humber News.

Nicholson said the Humber-specific routes; the 188 Kipling South and the 186 Wilson would speed up transit time by about 20 per cent.

"The roads that we picked are those that are conducive to express routes...they're wider and have high traffic," said Nicholson.

Reaction to the news has been positive, with Hum-

ber's International Student Advisor Matthew McDonald among those praising the TTC's plans.

"Great news for @HumberLakeshore #TTC users," tweeted McDonald.

"Nice to see more service for Flemingdon & Don Mills residents. #TTC launches five new express bus routes," tweeted @iammannyj.

The routes will go into service on Mar. 27.

Commentary

The thin blue line: Toronto Police to get assault rifles

The Toronto Police Service is primed to be outfitted with assault rifles various sources reported on Jan. 19. The weapon is the C8 carbine, an automatic that can fire dozens of rounds in seconds. Each one costs \$2000 and they will be issued in every Toronto division.

Concerning the plan, Toronto Police spokesman Mark Pugash told the CBC, "we're always looking at technology to see if it offers us additional safety, additional accuracy, something that can help us protect the public."

We really hope people aren't buying this.

The police community would have people believe that Canada is in grave danger, and they point to a shooting rampage from 2005 in Mayerthorpe, Alta. and another in 2014 that left three dead in Moncton, N.B.

These incidents were tragic but anomalous. Violent crime has been

on a steady downturn in Canada for over two decades. Compare this to more mass shootings in the U.S. than there are days in a year for 2015 and it's hard to understand why a Canadian police force would think it necessary to outfit their officers with paramilitary weapons.

Police do need to defend themselves and it's puzzling that police in the U.K. are unarmed. Our men and women in blue should be well equipped to keep the peace but the C8 is a weapon of war and not a tool for keeping the peace.

Toronto police chief Mark Saunders claims police will actually become less lethal since they will be given "sock rounds" – non-lethal ammunition comprised of granular material in a Kevlar sac --for the shotguns they already have in their cruisers. This is just not true at all. Less lethal would be to give them sock rounds and take the slugs from

the shotguns. The current initiative makes police more lethal while expanding their non-lethal options. The difference is small but important, and it's hard to believe that the chief misspoke on the matter.

A shotgun seems to be a reasonable place to draw the line on what is needed to protect a city in a non-military capacity.

Not to mention, the TPS's Emergency Task Force has had access to C8 carbines for 16 years and they are the only force that we can imagine would have any need for an assault rifle.

Saunders assured the public that officers will be properly trained in the use of the rifle as well as better de-escalation training. So far, those are the only details we have on the training. It had better be good, since Sammy Yatim was unlawfully gunned down by an officer armed with only a pistol.

Ottawa criminal lawyer Michael

Spratt seems to agree. "Weapons, when they're accessible to police, tend to be used," he told *Huffington Post*.

Police worldwide are becoming increasingly lethal and militarized, viewing the public they were once charged to protect as enemy combatants in a warzone, particularly in inner city settings. This has been seen time and again in Canada and the United States.

Whether it's procuring increased budgets in Toronto, currying popular consensus in the wake of a shooting on Parliament Hill or suppressing those with legitimate grievances in Missouri, those with the power to do so will prey on the fear and grief of the population to further their own ends that are increasingly divergent from the actual will of the people.

People can still stand up against this push in a civil, legal manner but it's only a matter of time before it'll just get you shot.

Congratulations, you've sponsored a Syrian refugee



Sam Juric
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Canadians are saving the lives of Syrian refugees.

Haven't you heard how generous and hospitable we are? We're heroes, if you really think about it. We endure the merciless frigid Canadian winter in shorts and t-shirts without flinching, we are polite and apologetic to the point of nausea and we help disenfranchised Syrians escape an existence rife with violence and terror to boot.

We will accept medals, cookies

and gold stars for our job well done.

We are making a difference as we bombard Syrian refugees, arriving at Pearson Airport, with our burning questions, 'What does it feel like to finally be on Canadian soil?' 'What was it like to be living in war-torn Syria?' We fumble with our recording equipment as we try to capture the journalistic equivalent to pure, solid gold: a picture of Justin Trudeau and a refugee family.

Sitting in our living rooms, we need to have the instant gratification of seeing the tired, sunken eyes of real-life Syrian refugees illuminated by cameras flashing unrelentingly. We need to see the fruits of our labour!

We are saving lives when we forgo extravagant and entirely unnecessary \$40,000 weddings. It's a sacrifice to get married at City Hall and we will document it in the form of posed photographs with Mayor John Tory who was there to tell us how great we are.

This isn't the same as privileged white volunteers smiling for cameras with starving African orphans clustered around them on volun-

tourism trips. We aren't exploiting disenfranchised people. No...we're saving lives.

This is also in no way to be confused with all those times the world's wealthiest people returned from trips to Malawi or Cambodia with souvenirs in the form of traumatized children of war. Cough. Madonna. Cough. Angelina. No... Syrian refugees are of all ages and they are delivered in cute family-sized packages. If you are lucky, some families come with adorable babies as well.

Prada, Gucci and Louis Vuitton who? Refugees are the new status symbol.

Groups of two aren't as ideal to sponsor. Families make for nicer pictures and are a wealth of entertainment. Mothers accompanied by teenagers aren't as exciting to sponsor. Don't worry about them. They'll figure it out.

Don't think about the 'what-ifs'

What if we're incompatible and the sponsorship disrupts? What kind of insurance plan does the government have in place should dis-

rupted sponsorships occur? Where will they go?

What if we're sponsoring for the wrong reasons? What if sponsoring doesn't have anything to do with how good it makes us feel about ourselves? What if Syrian refugees are actually people and not political tools to be used by the Prime Minister to steer the eyes of Canadians away from the glaring issues of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement or Bill C-51? Don't worry 'bout it!

Instead, we should film ourselves with our brand new Syrian refugee in tow, sledding down a glistening hill of fresh snow. Super Canadian, eh? Even better: we'll play Jimmy Cliff's 1993 classic, I Can See Clearly Now in the background of the video. Everyone will be so proud of the work we've done. To make sure as many people as possible can offer us a pat on the back, we'll post it on YouTube. We deserve it. This will be the story mythologized at dinner tables across Canada for years to come.

After all, we are Canadian and we are saving Syrian lives. The least they can say is, thank you.

QUOTED How do you feel about lack of diversity among Oscar nominees?

It was a little shocking that there was lack of diversity, but at the same time years past, there's been several African-American winners



Adonai Tesfai
FILM STUDIES, 1ST YEAR

There's a lot of black movies that came out and they didn't get nominated...



Alliyah Mason
COSMETIC MANAGEMENT, 1ST YEAR

It's 2016, there should be more diversity... The consumers who go out to watch the movies...Don't have a say in them



Romayne Napoleon
COSMETIC MANAGEMENT, 1ST YEAR

HUMBER
Et Cetera

Humber Et Cetera serves to inform the Humber community and give its readers well rounded coverage on the things that matter to them.

Executive Editor
Sam Juric

Managing Editor - News
Corey Brehaut

Assignment Editor
Phil Witmer

Opinion Editor
Sam Juric

Arts & Life Editors
Jess Reyes
Phil Witmer

Sports Editor
Jess Reyes

Online Editor
Jess Reyes

Faculty Adviser
Salem Alaton

Creative Adviser
Marlee Greig

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Newsroom:
416-675-6622 ext. 4514

Email:
etc.humber@gmail.com

Twitter:
@humberetc

Advertising:
416-675-6622 ext. 79313

Sympathy unwanted for autistic teen



Phil Witmer
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

disguised revulsion, the “good for them” pity games that sufferers of Down syndrome or cerebral palsy get, is ignorant and reductionist.

Carly Fleischmann, the also-autistic videographer of Sam’s moves, likely didn’t intend to exploit what she and Sam identify as involuntary muscle movements that the teen chooses to make light of by transforming them into shimmies.

Fleischmann wanted to show the many who still misunderstand autism that the condition comes in many shapes and sizes. This mentality is welcome after the anti-vaccination controversy of last year led to mass outcry from parents over fears of having an autistic child. (To which this author says that yes, you do want one; we’re not much for conversation but you won’t find better list makers.)

However, the reason for the video’s spread probably owes more to the well intentioned but sort of clueless activism that ends up making its subjects into cutesy examples of how “they’re just like us!” It reduces thinking, feeling and complex people to points on someone’s awareness checklist.

Furthermore, it creates more of a sense of the “other” for autistic people, especially young people like Sam. The conversation about autism isn’t being engaged; it’s being kept at arm’s length.

When does genuine interest and compassion express itself as guilt? Which feeling among casual clickers was responsible for Sam the Dancing Barista’s (step right up, folks!) Internet fame?

I was diagnosed with having autism spectrum disorder and ADHD

(attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder) when I was 10. Overcoming simple social hurdles and the process of steadily becoming a more open, flexible person has marked my life.

Never have I had to deal with being made an example of an “inspiring mental health sufferer”; since I had no gimmick to zero in on.

I feel sorry for Sam, not because he has autism but because he has been gimmicked. The kid might have a burning passion for computer coding that can be parlayed into any number of valuable careers but to nearly everyone he’s a bouncing cartoon character.

There needs to be a better understanding among neurotypical people about what autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is. Granted, many experts themselves still can’t agree what exactly it is, but as the rate of autistic child births in North America grows to something like one in 70, it’s time to stop looking at us like we’re special. Programs in middle and high school that integrate autistic kids into classrooms instead of separating them are a start.

For adults, giving autistic people a voice in our own matters and having us speak on our experiences can help to illuminate the truth about our misunderstood condition. We just think differently, that’s it. It’s a different way of being that can exist alongside and within neurotypicals. If we can integrate ourselves and educate others on what ASD entails, then maybe that can be truly inspirational.

Nothing makes the viral wheels spin faster than an opportunity for people to show how much they care.

This goes double for Canadians, the self-appointed guardians of politeness and niceness worldwide.

Thusly, when a video of a gawky, teenage Starbucks employee dancing gained five million views on Facebook a few days ago, some saw it as a victory for the oppressed. The barista, a Torontonion named Sam, shot to Canada-wide fame but in his one public statement about it asked to not be treated with sympathy and for others to keep an open mind.

Day before yesterday was the occasion of Bell’s #LetsTalk initiative, wherein social media is intended to play host for frank discussions on mental health and ending the stigmas surrounding it. Some tweeters suggested Sam as a topic of discussion.

Firstly, autism is not a mental illness. It’s a different form of mental processing, an alternate wiring of the brain. Treating it with the same

Autism Canada describes Autism Spectrum Disorder

Each person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is unique and will have different abilities. Symptoms caused by ASDs might be very mild in one person and quite severe in another.

Individuals with severe autism conditions may have serious cognitive disability, sensory problems and symptoms of extremely repetitive and unusual behaviours. This can include tantrums, self-injury, defensiveness and aggression. Without appropriate intervention, these symptoms may be very persistent and difficult to change. Living or working with a person with severe autism can be very challenging, requiring tremendous patience and understanding of the condition.

Individuals with mild autism conditions, however, may seem more like they have personality differences making it challenging to form relationships.

The primary symptoms of autism include problems with communication and social interaction as well as repetitive interests and activities. Here are some of the characteristics that may be present.

Strengths exhibited by individuals with autism

- Non-verbal reasoning skills
- Reading skills
- Perceptual motor skills
- Drawing skills
- Computer interest and skills
- Exceptional memory
- Visual Spatial abilities
- Music skills

Weaknesses exhibited by individuals with autism.

The above exceptional skills may be combined with subtle or significant delays in other areas of development. All individuals with the diagnosis demonstrate some of the following:

- Impairment in Social relationships
- Deficits in communication/language
- Perseveration on interests and activities
- Dependence on routine
- Abnormal responses to sensory stimulation
- Behaviour problems
- Variability of intellectual functioning
- Uneven development profile
- Difficulties in sleeping, toileting and eating
- Immune irregularities
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Gastrointestinal problem

PRESTO! You’re being unfairly fined



Jess Reyes
ONLINE EDITOR

Viva has been using this system for 11 years and has made it very clear that there will be a \$155 penalty fee if a rider doesn’t have a proof of payment.

The PRESTO card is supposed to be an important part of the new system of payment. There is some good news in relation to PRESTO. The card is no longer just used for GO Transit. It’s now a virtual card that can be used to make payment for York Region Transit, Toronto subway stations and the new streetcars along Spadina Avenue.

That’s all fine – if the system is working properly.

Having a PRESTO card is convenient because you just tap-and-go. When you tap your card at the machine you should see your remaining balance, followed by a small noise and a green flash. If there isn’t enough money on the card you will hear a loud alarm-like sound and the machine will flash red.

Which would be pretty embarrassing, no?

Being a PRESTO cardholder for more than three years I have developed a habit of just tapping the card and not looking at the balance, when I know I have enough funds. Many cardholders like myself have their settings to an automatic refill each month so they don’t have to worry about putting money on the card and constantly checking the balance.

But when the system malfunctions, as Toronto press reports indicate it has done with some frequency, the consumers are the ones who pay for it.

Relying on having all our money on one card is a mistake. Technology can be unreliable. Computers

freeze and crash all the time.

In the fall of 2015, I was riding the Viva and was accused of not having my proof of purchase, despite having a full PRESTO card (which I had tapped when I entered the station). Waiting at both exit doors of the bus, transit officers who were dressed as security guards took out their notebooks and PRESTO machine readers like they owned the world.

When it was my turn to show my PRESTO card I heard an unusual beeping noise. The transit officer escorted me off the bus. They surrounded me as if I’d committed a crime.

The experience was beyond humiliating. Everyone was staring at me as if I were getting arrested for murder. To avoid an outrageous fine of \$155 for an infraction I hadn’t committed, I lost a day in travelling to a courtroom in Newmarket where I was cleared of the fine yet ended up having to pay a \$15 court fee.

Most people would not fight the ticket but the incident raised the larger question of what GTA transit users are looking at over the next few years. Thousands of dollars a year are going into machines that are malfunctioning. Until PRESTO works nearly perfectly, we should consider it as not working at all.

The Toronto Transit Commission has announced that this year will be a year of enforcement. New TTC streetcars will now be using an honour system that will be monitored by random fare inspections at different stops.

For people who live in York Region, this isn’t something new. The

