

# TORONTO

‘There are similarities but we don’t have anything [to] link [the fires].’ — Constable *Wayne Patterson*, Peel Regional Police

## GOING TO THE MAT TO HELP BEAT ARTHRITIS



TYLER ANDERSON / NATIONAL POST

Thousands of Canadians participated in yoga events yesterday to raise money for arthritis research. The Power of Movement fundraiser, which began three years ago with 250 participants in Toronto, took place in 10 cities and collected \$250,000. Participants in the Greater Toronto area, including those who met at the Wellesley Community Centre, pictured, contributed about \$52,000. Proceeds are donated to the Arthritis & Autoimmunity Research Centre (AARC) Foundation and several chapters of The Arthritis Society. More than 4.5 million Canadians live with arthritis, one of the leading causes of disability, and autoimmune diseases.



FAMILY PHOTO

Lucy Maxwell plays with Zoe, a pet chihuahua that was snatched by a coyote.

## Pets falling victim to coyote in Beach

BY KATHRYN BLAZE CARLSON

Sean Maxwell's backyard is off-limits to his two young daughters and his dog ever since Zoe, his six-year-old chihuahua was snatched on Saturday morning by a pouncing coyote that residents fear is responsible for a rash of missing pets in the Beach neighbourhood.

In a flash, Zoe, who Mr. Maxwell, 32, described as the “more playful of his two dogs,” was helplessly dangling from the mouth of a coyote that had vaulted a four-foot chain-linked fence and then bolted up a hill, bounding through the snow and falling through the ravines.

“I scrambled up the hill, but I was in such a panic and she was falling all over the place,” said Mr. Maxwell who lives

on Neville Park Boulevard near the R.C. Harris water treatment plant. “I did my best trouncing through other people’s yards trying to catch up and find Zoe, but then I realized it was futile.”

Mr. Maxwell immediately called Toronto Animal Services hoping something could be done to either save Zoe or prevent the coyote from striking again. But staff said that because it was a weekend and there was no supervisor on duty, nothing could be done — though two officers did arrive at Mr. Maxwell’s home to write a report.

“I get that the coyote was just doing what he was naturally born to do, and I’m not out for blood, but I have kids and another dog,” Mr. Maxwell said, adding that his wife is giving a lot of thought to moving out of the neighbourhood where

residents have spotted the coyote since before the Christmas holidays. “My daughters aren’t allowed outside anymore. There’s just no way.”

Mr. Maxwell said he is frustrated that neither the Mayor’s office nor his city councillor has responded to his telephone calls urging them to persuade Animal Services to protect the community from what the agency calls a “nuisance animal.”

Animal Services does provide instructions on its Web site on how to deal with urban coyotes, offering pointers such as, “If you are concerned with the safety of your pets, feed and keep them indoors” while at the same time noting that coyotes are “curious animals who are non-confrontational by nature.”

Mr. Maxwell said the neighbourhood is growing increasingly uneasy, and residents are getting impatient as more and more “missing pet” signs are popping up.

“I just want the city to take this seriously,” he said.

National Post

## TOWNHOUSE FIRES BEING PROBED

### CONSTRUCTION SITES

Latest blaze causes \$1M worth of damage

BY MELISSA LEONG

Investigators are probing several recent fires at construction sites, the latest of which destroyed seven luxury townhouses yesterday and caused about \$1-million worth of damage.

In the past week, five fires have gutted new homes across the Greater Toronto area and investigators are still trying to determine the cause. Police are calling three blazes in Peel region “suspicious.”

“It is strange,” Constable Wayne Patterson with Peel Regional Police said. “We are obviously not ignoring the fact that there are similarities among the three but we have to work with the Fire Marshal’s Office to determine how and why. We don’t have anything yet that would link them together.”

At 3 a.m. last Tuesday, two townhouses under construction were set ablaze, forcing nearby homes near Vodden Street and Lakeridge Drive in Brampton to be evacuated. Damage was estimated to be \$650,000.

A half hour later, seven townhouses being built were burned near Airport Road and Treeline Boulevard, causing \$3.15-million worth of damage.

On Friday, a townhouse development in Burlington was burned and a home being built in Stouffville was gutted yesterday afternoon.

In Mississauga yesterday, just before 2 a.m., residents near Burhamthorpe Road East and Ponytrail Drive, were jolted awake by the sound of apparent explosions.

“My wife woke me up and said there was a big bang,” said Claude Bruno who has lived in the area for 33 years. “We looked out the window and the fire was four storeys high.”

Diane Buckley, 51, who lives across the street from the construction site, thought she heard the crack of thunder.

“I turned over and saw this tremendous yellow light,” she said.

“I grabbed my clothes and ran outside. [All of the] townhouses were up in flames. We could see everything blowing everywhere.”

Suddenly, a second explosion shook the area. “A police man yelled at me: ‘Get inside, metal is flying!’”

Safe inside, she said she heard a third bang and her husband who was standing at a window “could feel the shock wave.”

Neighbours sought temporary refuge in their house; police had asked them to leave because ambers were falling onto their roof.

Firefighters tried to quell the flames and were concerned that the fire might jump to existing homes in the residential neighbourhood, police said.

No injuries were reported.

“The property damage is huge... Not to mention we’re fortunate no one was injured whether it be people in the area or any of the emergency services. There’s always a potential for injury. Let’s not forget the possibility that the fire could have spread to other structures,” Const. Patterson said.

The fire also damaged Rogers cables, which provide Internet service to more than 400 residents.

Service was restored shortly before 2 p.m.

Etobicoke-based Dunpar Homes Inc. is building two- and three-storey brick and stone townhouses on the site as a part of their new Park View Trails community.

The homes damaged yesterday were “just stick at this point,” said Mark Minzter, Dunpar’s vice-president of development.

“It wasn’t a great deal in damage in terms of infrastructure,” he said.

Nothing in the units could have caused the fire, he added; hydro was not connected. Roofers were storing propane tanks in the garages which would explain the explosions that residents heard.

He said police are reviewing the company’s surveillance footage.

“It’s more likely vandalism,” he said.

Occupancy is scheduled for the end of the year; about a month’s work was lost due to the fire, Mr. Minzter estimated. “It’s not going to affect our timeline much.”

National Post, with files from Global News