

## From the Editor

When I first moved to Toronto, I couldn't leave my small town of 500 fast enough. I'd already been accepted to college and come fall I was out of there and I was never looking back! I'd had enough of being in the closet and the endless bullying and ridicule for my forward thinking and independent ways. Toronto was everything I could have dreamed of and more.

I am white, male and middle class and while I share the queer feelings of my brothers and sisters from around the world, I can only imagine coming from a social setting where the slurs against me are a precursor to actual violence and death threats are a reality. Canada—Toronto in particular—has come a long way even in the two decades I have lived here and I'm proud of the open-mindedness and inclusivity of our city.

But as we face a new mayor and a surprising majority Conservative government, I'm reminded after reading Scott's article (Page 27) that we aren't perfect. We still have a ways to go for equality and inclusivity, even in our own community. However, community is the key here. Toronto has established itself as the most culturally diverse city in the world. With our legal right to marry whomever we love, we are also well known as a safe haven for queers seeking asylum and a place to live and love freely.

With so many global flavours to sample it's no wonder that our city is a foodie's paradise and Karen does us the pleasure of playing tour guide through some of Toronto's ethnic neighbourhoods, giving us a slice of the international that's but a \$3 ride away on the TTC (Page 12). Expanding on that idea, Melissa shares how food and family are intricately intertwined (Page 19) and whether you are with your family by blood, or the family you've created to support you in life, community starts with those you feel safe around and who love you no matter what.

Much debate has sprung up over the last handful of years around what's next for the Gaybourhood. Is it fading away? Becoming too commercial? Or do we have less need of it now that so much of the city is considered welcoming of queers holding hands and living their everyday lives? Most cities don't have a central spot where gay life is concentrated, where the shops and community centre are expressly our space, where we can completely let down our guard with no worry in the back of our minds of what others will think of us. You're going to call me crazy, but I think Rob Ford and Stephen Harper can teach us a valuable lesson: Never forget what we have so fiercely fought for and won. You only need to stand on the corner of Church and Wellesley to be reminded that this is one place in the big world out there—no matter who we love, no matter what colour our skin, no matter where we have come from—that we are free to be who we are. I'm proud of our city for that.

I'm also proud of our first annual Inspire Awards. I'm thrilled anytime I can be involved in something that supports and honours the people in our community—despite our varied differences—who never lose sight and who continue to work very hard to change the perceptions and prejudices we face around the world, starting in our own backyard. My gratitude runs deep that we live in a place where we are free to celebrate that.

Happy Pride!

**Jeffrey Harrison**

