

Where do they stand?

JENNIFER BILL
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Who would you guess is further to the political left — former Ontario premier David Peterson or rapper Kardinal Offishall?

We asked seven notable Torontonians to take the Political Sentimeter, a values survey launched by the Star last month that places respondents in one of eight political categories. More than 50,000 people have

already used the tool, which is meant to highlight the city's ideological divides and promote a conversation about how to move beyond them. Here they reveal their results and talk about the city's future.

THE **POLITICAL SENTIMETER**
theStar.com/sentimeter



> **ANA BILAO, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEFT**



Bailao was surprised by her result. "I knew I was definitely in the left — I thought I would be closer to Laissez-faire Left. It seems like I'm even more a lefty than I thought," laughed Bailao, 38, city councillor for Ward 18, Davenport. Bailao, who lives in Dovercourt Park, thinks the survey provides a good opportunity to take a look at one's own values and beliefs. "I thought it was interesting, it makes you think," she says. Bailao says bringing social issues to the surface is a good start toward healing Toronto's divisions. "Understanding where everyone is coming from is a good thing. The first step is saying, 'Listen there is a division here, let's understand the reasoning in some of these differences of opinions, and let's respect each other and try to work to a middle ground.'"

> **KAREN STINTZ, HERITAGE RIGHT**



Stintz says her Sentimeter designation fits like a glove. "The write-up said that family is important to me and that I would be more willing than others to suspend civil liberties to ensure security — that's consistent with how I would self-identify." Fifteen per cent of Torontonians are part of this group. Stintz, who ran unsuccessfully for mayor this year, says she found a few questions "bizarre." "How many genders do you think there are?" — how's that supposed to heal the (supposed) divides of the city?" In fact, the former chair of the Toronto Transit Commission says she doesn't believe in "the divided city." "The people that I talked to when I was running for mayor didn't talk about a divided city," says Stintz. "Good transit, parks, housing options, a job — those threads unite Toronto."

Explore the Political Sentimeter tool and see where you fall among the eight ideological clusters at thestar.com/sentimeter.

> **KARDINAL OFFISHALL, FAITH AND FAMILY RIGHT**



> **GORD PERKS, POST-MATERIALIST LEFT**

Gord Perks says his Post-Materialist classification doesn't perfectly capture him. "I was both happy and disappointed with the result," says Perks, city councillor for Ward 14, Parkdale—High Park, who was placed in the leftmost group along with 2 per cent of Torontonians. "There's not one political designation that I think in, and one of my flaws is I am constantly questioning my own politics." Still, he adds, "it feels very settling to have a new perspective in thinking about my own politics." Perks, 51, says residents are at an "important" moment in politics. "People have begun to realize the consensus politics of their mainstream political parties don't serve most Torontonians and Canadians well and they have started to ask deep questions about social in-



justice and environmental issues," says Perks. "Yes, it will create conflict, but it's the process of resolving our conflict that is going to lead us forward."

> **DAVID PETERSON, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEFT**

Peterson, a former Liberal premier of Ontario, thinks the Political Sentimeter missed the mark with him. "I didn't find it really described who I am, my political philosophy," says Peterson, who was premier from 1985 to 1990. "Lots of people are mixtures of all things, one label cannot describe them." Peterson, 70, who practises law on Bay St. and is chair of Cassels, Brock & Blackwell LLP, is also head of the Pan Am organizing committee. The Sentimeter identified him as among the 25 per cent of Torontonians who are part of the Social Democratic Left — a non-radical group characterized by their belief in the power of government to address inequality and injustice. He says he is "thrilled" about the new mayor. "I think John (Tory) is on the right



track. I've got a lot of confidence in John," says Peterson, who called Toronto "kind of the village joke" over the last few years. "We went through a mean period, and then a bumpkin period. Now we're back. I'm feeling enormously optimistic."

> **SOPHIE MILMAN, LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEFT**

Milman describes herself as a "bit of a political junkie." So when her husband showed her the Political Sentimeter, the Juno Award-winning jazz singer took it and tweeted her results. "I found it to be pretty bang on," says Milman, 31. "It read me pretty well." Milman is part of the Laissez-faire Left, a socially progressive, fiscally conservative group that includes 18 per cent of Torontonians. The University of Toronto graduate, who was born in Soviet Russia, lived in Israel and toured regularly across the U.S., stays closer to home these days with her nearly 2-year-old son. Milman says there's "no such thing as a perfect city," but that when it comes to being a multicultural metropolis Toronto is pretty close.



"That's an important issue to me and I think Toronto does multiculturalism pretty well."

> **HANNAH MOSCOVITCH, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEFT**

Moscovitch, playwright-in-residence at Tarragon Theatre, says she had a chuckle when she got her Political Sentimeter result. "I'm pretty clear about where I fall on the political spectrum," says Moscovitch, winner of the 2014 Trillium Book Award, the first playwright ever to win the award. "I did find out I'm more radicalized on some topics than the average Toronto Social Democrat, and more ambivalent about others," says Moscovitch, 36, who splits her time between Toronto and Halifax. The *East of Berlin* author says she is "fascinated" by right-wing thinkers, and wishes she spent more time with people on the right. "My sense is that, no matter where you fall on the spectrum, you want the world to be better. Your politics



are your angle on how to achieve that. The left and the right just have different blueprints for utopia."

The Juno Award-winning rapper says the Political Sentimeter pegged him perfectly. Along with 21 per cent of Torontonians, he is a member of the most moderate of the city's right-leaning groups. "That's exactly how I view myself," he says. "In terms of me, myself and I, what my beliefs are and the things I hold dear, it's pretty damn accurate." Offishall, who joined Universal Music Canada as creative executive director of A&R last year, is hopeful about the city's political future. He says healing Toronto's divides requires that we build on what unites us. "It doesn't matter if it's macro or micro — there's definitely going to be some views and beliefs that are polar opposites. The key is to unify what you do have in common."

The simple act of reaching out can help change lives

HUME from A1

Even worse, 90 per cent of families with kids in low-income apartment towers live in inadequate conditions and are at risk of becoming homeless. Food banks, once unknown in Toronto, are now a fact of life in this and other cities across Canada. For the past six years, food banks here have received more than six million visits annually. In the face of such desperate need, the Star Santa Claus Fund can offer nothing much beyond a gesture of compassion and care. But even though Christmas presents can't raise incomes or lower rents, the simple act of reaching out can change lives. "There's been an outpouring of support from volunteers," says the Toronto Star director of philanthropy and charities, Barb Mrozek. "Nothing is greater than the smile on a child's face when they realize Santa didn't forget them. It's really positive and empowering to help get these gift boxes out to kids. But if we don't get the dollars, we can't make

the deliveries. There are so few days left and we haven't reached our goal of \$1.6 million. A box costs \$35 each; that's pocket change for most Torontonians, a mountain for others." Cities, the cultural, economic, social and intellectual engines that drive our lives, can also create conditions of loneliness, isolation and alienation. For many Torontonians, especially those in the inner-suburban highrise communities, this disconnection begins with the physical circumstances of the towers they inhabit. Cut off from many of the amenities more affluent neighbourhoods take for granted, including decent public transit, the poor are marooned in the city in which they live and are all too easy to forget. Besides, the problem of poverty seems overwhelming, insoluble, eternal. In Toronto, poverty is entrenched, generational. Over the course of decades, an elaborate institutional infrastructure has been established to deal with it. The cost is in the billions. Still it is not enough. Nor is it spent in ways that address causes



ARCHIE PLATT/VISA CANADA

Why is it food banks have become a mainstay for the poor in Toronto? rather than effects. The system we have created, a result of the best of intentions, deals with numbers. It depends on forms, formulas and figures to define and identify need. People are reduced to statistics and poverty becomes a theoretical, almost abstract, concept that can be counted and quantified, measured, like some mathematical equation. The Santa Claus Fund is an occasion to go beyond the policies and prescriptions and see the people, a lot of them young, they are intended to help. The fund reminds us of the human cost of poverty. These kids, we shouldn't forget, are the future. Like it or not, it will be up to them to lead us to the better world we have failed to deliver. No act of kindness goes unnoticed. Neither does something given without expectation of receiving anything back in return, even when unacknowledged. The fund provides not just an opportunity to be generous, but the



GOAL: \$1.6 million
To Date: \$1,511,108
To Donate: For secure online donations, please go to thestar.com/santaclausfund
Visa, AMEX, Discover and MasterCard: Dial 416-869-4847.
Cheques: Please send to The Toronto Star Santa Claus Fund, One Yonge Street, Toronto, ON M5E 1E6. The Star does not allow anyone to solicit on its behalf. Tax receipts will be issued.

chance to extend a hand to a kid and remind him or her that someone does care, someone is paying attention and feels their pain. We shouldn't forget that a society isn't judged by how much wealth it creates but by how many share in that wealth. Christopher Hume can be reached at chume@thestar.ca.