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# THE AURORED

*Aurora's Community Newspaper*

Vol. 20 No. 42 905-727-3300 *TheAuroran.com* **FREE** Week of August 6, 2020 



**ARTS & CULTURE IS "STILL KICKING"** – Singer George St. Kitts and pianist Chris Rolko have lent their talents to a new initiative highlighting the local arts scene as the sector works to get up on their feet after being all-but-shut down due to COVID-19. Their music video, filmed at St. Andrew's College, above, sends a message of moving forward together. For more, see Page 10.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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## Downtown buildings purchased as part of Library Square plan

By Brock Weir

Aurora's vision for Library Square is moving northward.

The Town has acquired the two Yonge Street commercial buildings north of the Aurora Public Library to the southeast corner of Yonge and Mosley Streets as part of an overall vision for Library Square within the Town's historic Downtown Core.

Mayor Tom Mrakas announced the purchase on Friday.

The buildings, which are currently

occupied by restaurants, professional services and other tenants have been purchased by the Town for \$7.5 million, excluding taxes.

The intention of the purchase, says Mayor Mrakas, is "not to hold onto the property" but "make sure it gets redeveloped maintaining the character and the historic value of the area" and that it is redeveloped in a way that dovetails with Library Square.

The money to purchase the buildings has come from the sale of other lands and from municipal reserves, excluding

Aurora's Hydro Funds, he noted.

The Town's acquisition has been considered as part of the overall vision for the Library Square redevelopment since the last term of Council.

A conditional sale was reached in June of 2019 but the deal was closed this week, says Mayor Mrakas.

"We have always looked at this as a complementary piece to the overall location," he said. "Obviously, the area would eventually, over time, be redeveloped and part of that strategic goal is to ensure

**Continued on page 8**

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**BACK TO SCHOOL** – Education Minister Stephen Lecce, accompanied by Premier Doug Ford, outlined the Province's back-to-school plan last week. **Photo courtesy of the Premier's Office**

## Students set to return to classrooms in September

By Brock Weir

Students at publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools across Ontario will be hitting the books in classrooms once again this September, the Province announced Thursday.

Last week, Premier Doug Ford and Education Minister Stephen Lecce outlined new measures to keep students safe this fall while resuming classes.

**Continued on page 2**

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# Students set to return to classrooms in September

From page 1

The plan, developed in consultation with medical experts, including Toronto’s SickKids Hospital will see elementary schools open across Ontario with in-class instruction five days a week.

The reopening of secondary schools, however, will be markedly different. High schools with lower risk will re-open with a normal daily schedule five days a week, but most of Ontario’s secondary schools will take a more phased-in approach.

This involves part-time attendance with class cohorts of 15 students alternating between in-person classes and online learning programs.

Students from Grades 4 – 12, along with school staff, will also be required to wear masks for in-class instruction.

“During this pandemic, keeping our kids healthy and safe has been my top priority,” said Premier Ford at a press conference held July 30. “We were the first province that made the difficult but necessary decision to close schools back in March. This decision put strain on families, but now looking back, I know that we made the right choice. Since then, our most senior health officials, our best experts, the top doctors in Ontario and Canada, including world-class experts at Sick Kids Hospital, have been working around the clock on a plan that will ensure a return to classrooms this fall in the safest way possible. When it comes to keeping our kids safe, I won’t take any unnecessary risks, and that is why the plan we’re announcing today is backed by the latest science and the best health advice available to us.

“As Sick Kids has pointed out, we need to weigh the risks of COVID-19 against the harm of school closures. We need to consider the toll it is taking on the physical and mental health and personal development of our kids. We know isolation is being extremely hard on them, not being able to see or play

with their friends. We also know our children, especially the younger ones and those with special needs, need the benefit, guidance and routine of in-class instruction from their teachers. The fact is we know more about this virus than we did when we first closed our schools and we know what to do to stop the spread.”

In this new normal, parents will have the option to enroll their kids in remote learning programs which the Province says will “Respect their fundamental role in making the final determination of whether they feel safe with their children returning to school.”

Getting kids back into classrooms safely, however, comes at a cost, and last Thursday’s announcement came with over \$300 million-worth of new measures, including \$60 million for medical and cloth masks for students and staff, and \$30 million for more teacher staffing to support supervision and to “keep class sizes small.”

A further \$50 million is allocated for the hiring of up to 500 more “school-focused nurses in public health units to provide rapid response support to schools and boards in facilitating public health and preventative measures, including screening, testing, tracing and mitigation strategies.”

Increasing testing capacity at schools will run \$23 million, while \$75 million is earmarked for the hiring of more than 900 more school custodians and to purchase associated cleaning supplies.

“This plan was developed by the top health experts in Ontario and it is a plan that will ensure students get the best education possible,” said the Premier. “Teachers, we’re looking out for you as well. We’ll make sure you have the masks, supplies and protocols you need to teach safely and protect your students.

“We’re taking every step and every precaution [to prepare] for September. While we’re facing an unprecedented

situation, we’re prepared for anything – armed with the best medical advice available – to protect your child at school. With these measures in place, our classrooms will be as safe as we can make them, because when it comes down to it, our children belong in school.”

Added Minister Lecce: “We know the last few months have not been easy for everyone, but I want to take a moment to acknowledge [the impact on children]. We have heard loud and clear from pediatric experts that COVID-19 has had profound mental health impacts on our kids and now more than ever reopening schools is crucial to the social and emotional development of Ontario students. It is also crucial to

allow parents to return to work and support Ontario’s economic recovery.

“We’re being cautious. We’re taking extra health and safety measures. We’re putting in the necessary dollars and we’re supporting parents through this process, because the Premier, the Deputy Premier and I have said all along we will do whatever it takes to keep your child and our staff safe in this province. I know it is important for parents to know what the child’s school and class will look like once they return.

“We have pulled out all the stops for the 2 million students in this Province. Our students deserve nothing less. Our plan will evolve based on the evolution of COVID-19 and the risk to communities across the Province.”

*Briefly*

## POLICE CONTINUE APPEAL FOR INFORMATION REGARDING MISSING WOMAN

York Regional Police continues to seek community assistance to locate a 61-year-old Aurora woman.

Helen Sedo was last seen in the late evening on Wednesday, July 29, when she left her residence on Treegrove Circle near St. John’s Sideroad and Bathurst.

She was driving a 2012 silver Acura RDX with the license plate CBDY 015.

She has not been heard from and her friends and family have not been able to get in contact with her.

Police and family members



are growing increasingly concerned for her wellbeing.

She is described as white, 5’1, with dark brown shoulder-length hair and wears glasses. She was last seen carrying a red and olive-coloured duffel

bag.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 1-866-876-5423 x7141, or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS or [www.1800222tips.com](http://www.1800222tips.com).

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# Details of school re-openings “anxiously awaited,” says YCDSB

By Brock Weir

Schools have been closed since March and looking ahead to an uncertain fall start, school boards across Ontario were tasked with planning for three possible models for September.

The first was a full-time return to in-person learning, with appropriate measures outlined by Boards of Public Health, the second an “adaptive model” combining in-person and distanced learning, and the third, “distance learning” for all with schools remaining closed.

On Thursday, the Province announced plans to move forward with the first model for elementary schools and the second for most Ontario secondary schools. Now, York Region’s two school boards are left to flesh out the fine details.

“The Minister of Education announced that elementary schools in Ontario will re-open in September following the full-time return to in-person learning model,” said Ab Falcone, Director of Education for the York Catholic District School Board, on Friday. “Included in the Education Minister’s announcement were a number of directions and requirements that school boards need to incorporate as they finalize their school reopening plans. We are also working closely with our partners at York Region Public Health to ensure that all necessary precautions and protocols are in place.

“Rest assured that the team at the York Catholic District School Board is working diligently to finalize our plans so that we can share the details with our school communities. We know everyone is anxiously waiting to learn what to expect in September and [we] will share full

details very soon.”

While further details are still outstanding, the YCDSB confirmed that students in Grades 4 – 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth masks while in schools, with exceptions for those with medical conditions, that students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 will be “encouraged but not required” to wear masks in common areas. Students with “a high level of special education needs will be able to partake in daily attendance and instruction” and that child care centres will open at full capacity starting September 1.

On the part of the York Region District School Board (YRDSB), their re-opening plan will be guided by 10 key principles: “Prioritizing student and staff safety”, “Well-Being” of students families and staff, “Continued Commitment to Equity” looking at “the needs and interests of students and families who are marginalized or vulnerable as we plan and deliver learning in this new context, “Flexibility and Adaptability”, “Continued Professional Learning” for teachers to adapt to the new normal, “Trust Teachers” in their judgements regarding students’ needs, prior learning, strengths, etc., “Communication”, “Collaboration”, “Fiscal Responsibility”, and “High Expectations.”

“Our Board has been working on developing plans to support the safe reopening of schools for our students and staff members,” said the YRDSB in a statement. “We appreciate that these are uncertain times and you will have questions and concerns about the process for reopening. We will continue to prioritize health and safety and take measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 through the reopening of schools.”

## COVID Alert app now available for download

By Brock Weir

A new app that will alert Ontario residents of potential exposure to COVID-19 is now ready to download.

Last week, the Provincial Government launched the COVID Alert system, an app developed in association with the Federal Government and volunteers from Shopify, to alert users if they may have been exposed to the virus.

Initially announced in July to both fanfare and concern over privacy from members of the public, the Government says the app is voluntary and “safe to use” – and the “more people who have the app, the more effective” it will be in helping to stop the spread.

“COVID Alert is a new tool that Ontarians can install for free on their device to protect themselves, their loved ones and their community, as the government continues to carefully reopen the province,” said



Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott demonstrates the app on Tuesday.

Photo by Dawn Gallagher Murphy

Elliott. “This privacy-first, made-in-Ontario app is a key part of the province’s contact management strategy to help the province to quickly test, trace and isolate cases of

Continued on page 13

Families, they said, will receive a pre-registration form this week asking their “intentions” for students to participate “in person” or through remote learning.

“For those eligible for transportation,

the form will also include the ability to opt-out of this service. Where possible, parents are asked to arrange their own transportation to and from school for their children.”

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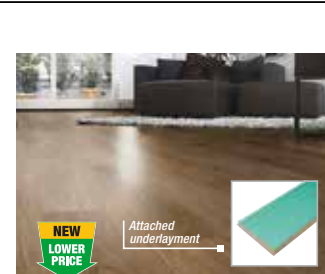
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Square has evolved into “financial liability,” reader

In the July 23 issue of the Auroran, there were four letters from citizens, each repeating the same common thread that I personally agree with: the tremendous cost of Library Square at a time when the world in general is in such chaos as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If my memory serves me correctly, this project started out with a simple concept of bringing together the residents to a square between the Aurora Public Library and the Cultural Centre; a Square that would have a fountain, trees and benches, where the citizens could gather and then it would be converted to a skating rink in the winter.

Then came the idea of an auditorium, which could be added to the Cultural Centre to provide seating for approximately 250 persons. And lastly, a bridge to connect the Library to the Cultural Centre. A simple Square has now become an astronomical financial liability with a price tag of approximately \$52 million dollars!

I have heard about funding coming from both the Federal and Provincial levels of Government and the use of the Hydro Funds.

Both of these levels of Government are having to deal with trying to stave off an eventual collapse of our economy, not to forget the absolute need for funds to be plowed into the health care system, especially into the long-term care facilities where so many of our elderly Canadian citizens have passed away in deplorable conditions over the last six months. I would be very surprised if funds will be forthcoming from either of these bodies.

Another issue of great concern to me is parking.

Many residents have mobility issues and I count myself among them. I will not walk from Town Park to the Cultural Centre, particularly in the winter time to attend a nighttime concert. The Library is usually open until 9 p.m. and Trinity Anglican occasionally has nighttime events. All of these factors will place an unnecessary impediment to adequate, convenient parking.

While I understand the need to build infrastructure with a view to the future, it is my humble opinion that Aurora Town Council should seriously consider the financial implications and inevitable burden this project would place on its citizens for many years to come.

Some businesses have been forced to close and others are struggling to keep their doors open. Some residents are unable to meet the demands of daily living and have had to revert to food banks and government handouts.

Perhaps it is time to reconsider a less grandiose scheme.

Rosalyn Gonsalves  
Aurora

“Struggling to understand” anonymous donation for Rainbow Crosswalk

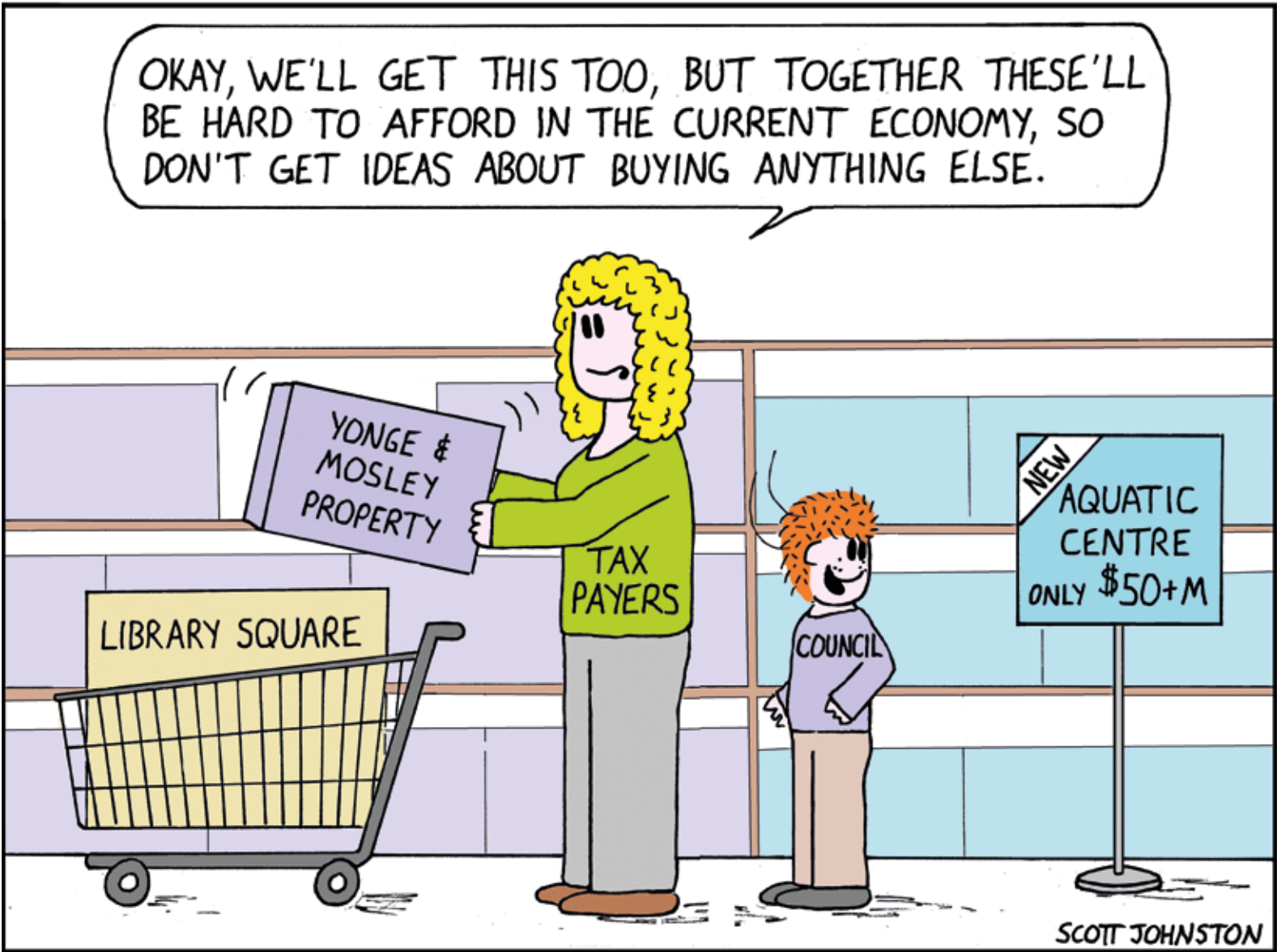
In my seemingly unending and evolving need to process the rainbow crosswalk, I am here again, writing to the paper to express my thoughts.

By now, we understand the project has been funded mostly through the generosity of a \$10,000 anonymous donation. According to the Mayor, one of the conditions of the gift was not to have knowledge of the donation until the vote was taken.

It does not seem reasonable that he

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Machell’s Corners



Redefining “The Breakfast Club”

It was another sign of a return to a strange, but recognizable normal.

Mask firmly in place, I made myself comfortable on a hard wooden bench underneath the shade offered by a mature, leafy tree.

It was a beautiful afternoon as I caught up with a local couple.

Had this been a year with any semblance of normalcy, it would have almost been a routine stop – after all, this is a couple that has given back much to this community and their continued efforts to make the Town a better place have already filled considerable column inches.

But, as we know, this is anything but a regular year, and with their regular activities necessarily pushed to the backburner it was a long-overdue reunion.

As the conversation turned to things that have made them tick together for nearly 60 years, I couldn’t help but marvel at their generation.

Having come of age in the late 1940s and early 1950s in the United Kingdom, their formative years were spent as the world began rebuilding after the Second World War. Although they were too young to play an active part in the war effort, they were not immune to its effects.

From my observation, they have always been forward-thinking. Resourceful before it was cool and slightly ahead of the curve in many ways, they seem to operate on a live-and-let-live philosophy that is just as evident today as it has ever been.

Maybe the seeds of this outlook on life were sewn at a time when a world weary of war was looking towards an uncertain, but bright future, one which entailed continual sacrifice in order to come fully out into the sun – punctuated by hope above all else and brimming with ideas on how to foster the new world in which they wanted to live.

My grandparents came from the previous generation.

They were largely raised during the interwar years, time enough to allow them to have living memories of the hardships that had to be endured during the Great Depression as well as being of age to take an active part in the war effort, losing many of their peers in the conflict.

Although I was not born until 30 years after war’s end, the memories of both experiences were still close at hand and readily shared. The more I learned



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

about these unique times in our history, the clearer it became why they left traces that remained potent so many years down the road.

In most instances, they very much lived a “waste not, want not” life day to day. They wanted things that were built to last and, if something went awry, they had no qualms in picking up the needle for a patch job or taking an item unfixable with the materials they already had “into the shop” for a professional once-over.

There was no time for subtlety as they followed us around the house to make sure we turned off the lights in our wake – and, in the case of my paternal grandparents, still revelled in the simple pleasures of their early married life in the Regina of the 1940s by tucking into a thick slab of fried bologna for dinner every once in a while. That was a taste developed in trying times, but once they made good, sense memory was still a powerful force.

They were products of the times in which they grew up, and I’m sure I am as well – and it is certain the students now set to return to school in September will be too.

Having grown up in an age of significant technological advancement, not to mention the proliferation of new and different ways of communicating, perhaps the hallmark of my generation will be, if not one of shorter attention spans, of relatively instant gratification and seeking it out in our personal and professional lives.

As patience has never been one of my stronger virtues, this might be a double-edged sword, and things seem to be taking a step back. We’ve become used to not being able to interact with people, whether it is meeting up with friends or even while out shopping, as we once had, and for students who had their in-class school years end abruptly in March, their return in September

will be markedly different.

For incoming new elementary students, the adjustment will be relatively simple. For those who had a taste of what once was, it will undoubtedly be a very difficult and formative change.

Peers with whom they shared classes in the late winter might not be in the same cohort come the fall, friend circles within schools will likely be diminished, as will be their opportunities to apply what they have learned in the wider community.

Secondary students beginning Grade 9 this fall might never have a high school life free of social distancing measures, where the student body was an all-in rather than cohorted affair with experiences shared almost uniformly across the board, where everyone was expected to be in place at their desks ready to crack open a book rather than having an option to fire up a computer, tablet or phone for the luxury of working at home.

They might not have the chance to fully settle into a firm routine and form close bonds with their peers, knowing that any blip on the viral radar can upend the rules of the game.

Like the rest of us, their worlds all but ground to a halt in March, but students today are an adaptable bunch and ready to roll with the punches.

They are a generation that is more interconnected than any other and, despite naysayers who criticize them for having their eyes affixed to screens for long periods of time, are more in touch with the world around them than any generation previously.

As such, what will be the life-lessons that are going to stick with them in the decades ahead and become defining aspects of their lives?

Will it be a generation defined by instability, or will they come to redefine what “stable” is?

Will we find attention spans broaden once again as they are forced to learn new ways to adapt?

Will they – and us – find ourselves living more in the moment, conscious of the impacts of our actions, knowing that further lockdowns could be on the horizon with any future waves to come?

When ready to take leadership positions, how will these experiences come to define the world they want to shape?

Amidst the uncertainty that has come to define this year, I am cautiously interested in finding out.

# THE AURORAN

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Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.





# The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating...

International Cat Day! (August 8, 2020)

The artwork on this postcard was created by Helena J. Maguire (1860-1909), a watercolourist whose most popular subject were children, cats and dogs. Her anthropomorphic cats were reproduced as postcards during the late 1800s and early 1900s. This postcard was sent to Aurora resident Mrs. Fricker.



## Getting Things Done

Mayor  
Tom Mrakas

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all of us. Specifically, many Aurora businesses and residents have been hit hard financially. This is why we acted quickly in putting the task force and action teams in place to help those in our community who need it most. As a result, during this time, we were able to secure close to \$100k in donations from individuals and businesses who have stepped up to help our community.

Despite the support we have received from donors, it is understandable there are concerns about the finances of our Town and what impact this will have on the taxpayers moving forward. What will our next budget look like? Will our taxes go up?

These questions weigh heavy on our community. So, I am providing an update on the current state of our Town finances and an outlook on our financial position going forward. The Town is in a very good position as, over the last five years, we have developed budget principles – a tax rate increase of inflation plus 1% for infrastructure reserves. This principle has allowed us to be financially responsible while continuing to provide the great level of service that all residents have become accustomed to and deserve. So, where does this leave us next year and the following year? This Council approved the first multi-year budget using these principles to set the tax rate for the entire term, 2021 – 3.4%, 2022 – 2.9%.... and as a result of our prudent financial management, the tax rate set by this Council will not change due to the pandemic.

Furthermore, we will be able to continue to invest in our community through infrastructure projects like Library Square and road improvements. We currently have \$84 million of active capital projects underway and our capital budget will continue to invest in improvements to our community over the next 10 years. And we are able to do this because of the fiscally responsible approach this Council has taken. And while we are always accepting of funding from the Federal and Provincial governments, we are proud to be one of the few municipalities in the GTHA that did not need to be bailed out. Now we will receive our share, as will every municipality, but we will utilize these funds to ensure they contribute to the benefit of our community through growth, infrastructure and increased services.

It has been my commitment, and the commitment of Council, to continue to move forward and get things done and we are pleased to report that the pandemic we continue to face has only strengthened our commitment to do the right things for our community.

That's all for this week. As always, if you would like to get into contact with me please feel free to do so anytime by phone 905-727-3123 ext. 4746 or by email [tmrakas@aurora.ca](mailto:tmrakas@aurora.ca) and if you would like to sign up for more newsletters and Council updates, please let me know and I will add you to the growing list of Aurorans that are staying informed. I am here for you.

### THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Should students  
return to classrooms  
this September?

**Yes No Unsure**  
[www.theauroran.com](http://www.theauroran.com)

RESULTS TO DATE August 4, 2020	YES	NO	UNSURE
	43%	29%	28%



## Parsa's Perspective

Michael Parsa, MPP  
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

residential landlords, the majority of people have put their personal interests aside and come together to work in unity towards a greater good. However, with that said, I want to mention that although the majority of people in this province have picked up the mantle of community cooperation and selflessness during these tough times, there are a number of individuals, and corporate actors, that have not.

I fully understand that the last several months have been profoundly difficult for all Ontarians, including the aforementioned individuals and corporate actors; however, there have been a number of cases, specifically with commercial landlords, of parties not coming to the table in good faith, to cooperate and opt-into the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (OCECRA).

As an elected Member of the Ontario

Legislative Assembly, and as a small business owner, I do not understand the reasoning as to why such individuals and corporate actors would put short-term self-interest ahead of long-term commercial relationships.

I fail to see how squeezing out tenants would benefit these landlords, especially with today's current circumstances. With that said, I implore all commercial landlords to reconsider, and to opt into the OCECRA program, not just for the benefit of the respective communities the small businesses service, but for the sake of each landlord's own commercial reputation. Ontarians will remember who was there for them in their time of need!

As we progress towards subduing the threat of COVID-19 and returning to a more normalized state of affairs, it is important to note that the effects of this chapter in Ontario's history will continue for some time.

We have yet to close the book on this pandemic, and how we treat each other during these difficult times defines who we are and want to be as a society. With that said, please treat each other kindly and know that my staff and I are here to serve you. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my office with any inquiries you may have; we are here for you!

## COVID Chronicle – Part 6

Some continued personal and local observations regarding the ongoing COVID-19 situation, picking up where I left off last time.

### July 5

Another patio outing to a local restaurant. It appears as if 90 per cent of the patios in Town face either south or west. While this orientation may be delightful in the spring or fall, it is not necessarily the exposure you want on a concrete surface on these incredibly sunny summer days when the humidex is pushing 40C, and any umbrellas only manage to shade less than half of the people seated at a table.

### July 12

Another sign that stores are returning to normal; a visit to the local bulk food place shows they are no longer having their staff package things up for you, and customers are now free once again to rummage around in the bins to scoop out their own bulk items.

### July 17

Fortunately, most people have been wearing masks indoors in Town, but as of today it's now officially regional policy to do so. Exceptions are allowed for small children and those with medical issues. Since proof of the latter is not required, this allows a loophole for anyone who just doesn't want to wear a mask.

### July 22

Found out one way to avoid the overly-sunny-patio conundrum. Sitting outside on a mostly deserted patio, and with the manager's permission, I was able to scoop the umbrella from



## INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

the adjacent table to double our shade coverage.

### July 24

This is a big day in Aurora with respect to re-opening. Along with the Region, the Town is now in Stage 3, with larger indoor and outdoor gatherings allowed, restaurants able to serve food indoors, and a number of other previously closed services now open to the public, all with social distancing restrictions.

To the delight of parents with small children, playgrounds in Aurora have also re-opened. It's nice to see the remaining tattered bits of caution tape around the Town's swings and slides removed.

Today also marks the revival of Aurora's popular movie and concert series, with a COVID twist. Tonight, a drive-in movie is featured in the SARC parking lot. Concerts in the Park will return starting August 5. Reservations are required, and numbers restricted, for both of these activities.

### July 27

Had my first in-person medical appointment since pre-COVID times. My doctor entered wearing a hospital gown, face mask, goggles, face shield, and gloves, and looking like she'd just come here directly from a biolevel 4 containment lab in one of the more restricted wings at the Centre for Disease Control. Seemed like extreme precautions for an eye exam, but these are strange times.

### July 28

My first trip to a large indoor mall since the beginning of the pandemic was an interesting experience. According to their website, they opened at 9.30 a.m. but I soon discovered that while the doors to the mall itself were unlocked at that time, 95% of the stores inside it didn't open until 11 a.m.

Following much aimless wandering, I joined the growing lineup outside the clothing store I wanted to visit. When it finally opened I found that all of the fitting rooms were closed. Not wanting to spend another trip to the mall returning anything that I purchased that didn't fit after I got it home, I left empty-handed.

While I realize the challenges and costs to stores of extra cleaning, our clothing funds that day, including several months of deferred purchases for three people, ended up going elsewhere.

But at least we're slowly getting back to the way things were pre-COVID.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at:  
[machellscorners@gmail.com](mailto:machellscorners@gmail.com)



# Fiddlestix wants to spread some optimism with Celtic show

By Brock Weir

The ink was barely dry on the liner notes of their latest album when COVID-19 scuttled the bulk of their performances, but the dynamic Celtic band Fiddlestix is back in action and looking to spark optimism and positivity when they hit Town Park next week as part of Aurora’s Concerts in the Park summer series.

Set to take over the bandshell next

Wednesday, August 12, the GTA-based group has been entertaining audiences with their fiddle-rock show for more than 10 years, performing hundreds of shows here and all around the world.

But, like most things, the pandemic changed the game.

“We have had very few shows since all this happened in March,” says vocalist and guitarist Nancy Cipollone. “We have had a couple of outdoor shows since then, but not



Fiddlestix will take the stage at Town Park next Wednesday as part of Aurora’s Concerts in the Park series.

Contributed photo

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very many. It’s been hard times, so we’re very excited to get back. It has been such a while since the whole band performed together.”

That is not to say the band has been letting the grass grow under their respective feet. Instead, online shows were devised to not only keep them in tune but reach new audiences.

“We kept the shows going for eleven weeks after the shut-down on March 17 and did 11 virtual shows on Facebook Live with members of our team,” says electric violinist and vocalist Steve Bowen. “That kind of got us through it and kept people visiting our sites. We learned there was a really big audience. You have to reach out through multiple platforms and that really increased the visibility of our performances online. We grabbed a great, big fanbase across the country doing that and it really broadened our audiences.”

Since establishing themselves more than a decade ago, Fiddlestix has developed a distinctive style.

With roots in a Celtic rock band in Hamilton, Fiddlestix is a continuation for many members of that original group.

“We brought on a lot of original fiddle songs with a big rock beat behind them,” says Steve. “Now, we’re playing Celtic rock, country rock, pop rock, folk rock, and we do some jazz, blues and modern dance as well. Our style keeps evolving and we like a lot of music between the six of us, so we keep bringing in different styles, different themes, and have kind of grown that way over the years.”

Over those same years, they have achieved many career milestones, including sharing a stage with Gord

*We’re bringing in a mix of our best music, touching on our most requested Celtic songs, our most requested country songs, and we want to keep people tapping their toes as much as possible, but not dancing or singing too loudly, I guess!*

Downie when the Olympic Torch came through Toronto in 2010, as well as performing at festivals alongside Great Big Sea, Leahy and Carly Rae Jepsen.

Now, their high-energy brand of music, one which always gets audiences up on their feet, is coming to Aurora – but, due to health and safety restrictions, you’ll have to resist the urge to dance.

“We’re bringing in a mix of our best music, touching on our most requested Celtic songs, our most requested country songs, and we want to keep people tapping their toes as much as possible, but not dancing or singing too loudly, I guess! It’s a show for all ages.

“We want to cheer everybody up and show them optimism for the future. It’s only around the corner now until things get back on their feet and hopefully they will walk away singing our songs, tapping their feet, and feeling really good about the evening.”

For more information about Aurora’s Concerts in the Park series, including how to reserve your spot at Town Park, visit [aurora.ca/summerconcerts](http://aurora.ca/summerconcerts).

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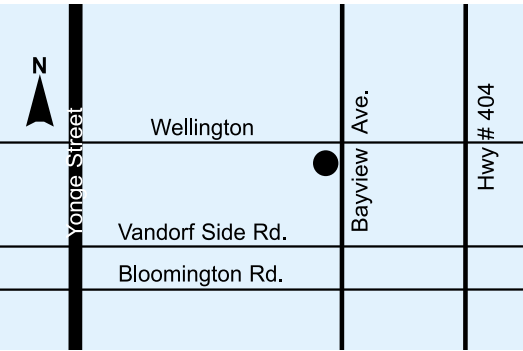
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# BUSINESS & FINANCE



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## \$7.5M property deal part of larger Library Square plan: Mayor

**From page 1**

that it does get redeveloped in a way that...complements the redevelopment of Library Square as a total project.”

This redevelopment vision, he says, includes multi-use mixed residential on the upper floors and commercial components, such as cafes and restaurants complete with Library Square-facing patios, on the ground floors.

“We would also look at alleviating some of the parking issues,” he adds, referring to concerns raised by nearby residents about the lack of parking in Aurora’s Downtown Core, spaces which are already challenged by regular patrons of the Aurora Public Library and Aurora Cultural Centre, and parking by GO commuters. “We always believed there was enough parking in the surrounding area, but we always want to increase that parking. This is something that is going to allow us to work with a partner who comes in, or turn the property owner and sell it, but they come in and develop it under our terms, which would have to meet certain requirements, providing a certain amount of parking, making sure it maintains a height restriction and utilizes the fact we would like to see housing in there with commercial.

“The idea of purchasing the property is all about making sure it gets redeveloped, maintaining the character and historic value of the area, the look and feel, and making sure it gets redeveloped in a way that complements the actual Square and what the actual overall vision is.

“Without us moving in this direction, we wouldn’t have that control over the site and someone can come in – as we have seen with many other applications – and pretty much do what they like. We felt the best way to go about making sure that our overall vision is maintained and it will actually come to fruition is if we purchased this property and then either partner with the development community or sell it to them with an understanding that these are the requirements to redevelop it.”

There are no plans to evict current tenants, he adds.

Voting against this matter outside of Closed Session, however, was Councillor John Gallo, and he tells The Auroran he remains firm in his opposition to the purchase.

“I voted against it [coming out of the meeting] and some information has come out, obviously, like the purchase and the amount, but I am going to be asking that the full report from the Closed Session be released because I think the public should be aware of the details around that purchase,” says Councillor Gallo. “Not unlike the [Rainbow Crosswalk], it might be a good idea, but the timing sucks.

“It’s not the right time to be doing this kind of thing.”

A Special Council meeting on Library Square is slated for sometime in August but, at press time, had yet to be formally scheduled. Mayor Mrakas says the tender for Library Square has come back under



The Town has acquired the two buildings just north of the Aurora Public Library, up to the corner of Yonge and Mosley, as part of its overall vision for Library Square.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

the approved budget and this, along with the status of potential grants from the Province, are expected to form the heart of the discussion.

Councillor Gallo, however, says he will ask for the full report on the latest purchase to be brought out into the public at the first opportunity.

### York Region is “ready when you are”

By Brock Weir

York Region has a lot to offer – and it’s “ready when you are.”

This is the message of a new tourism marketing campaign from the Region, Experience York Region, and the York Region Arts Council, in conjunction with Regional municipalities, to encourage people to explore York Region once again and build consumer confidence in a world informed by COVID-19.

Launching this month, the campaign will highlight attractions, destinations, restaurants, arts and culture opportunities, and more, that have been draws to and from within York Region, and underscore the fact that in Stage 3 (and beyond) businesses are ready to welcome guests and patrons back.

Ready When You Are (#ReadyWhenYR) is an initiative that was born out of a task force launched by Regional partners in the spring to address the pandemic. Their aim was to determine how to best respond and advise the Region on recovery efforts, with a particular focus on arts, culture and tourism.

“Through this task force, an idea was born based on some of our research about declining consumer confidence, declining interest to engage with businesses and a lot of these institutions and partners,” says Sergei Petrov, Executive Director of the York Region Arts Council (YRAC). “We thought we could do something as a group at Experience York Region and YRAC and build a campaign that brings back some of their best moments, reminders, and supporting mechanisms to allow businesses to engage with their clients.”

The arts, he says, was one of the first sectors they looked at, tasking businesses to consider whether they were ready to tell customers they were ready – and to take a step back and ask themselves, “Am I actually ready?”

“What we wanted to do was simplify the process as much as possible for businesses to sign up and participate,” says Mr. Petrov of the campaign. “We

kept in mind that the campaign is geared to hyper-local businesses, especially smaller businesses who sometimes lack the knowledge, tools or [resources] for broader engagement with other stakeholders. We built a page that is geared towards businesses, operators and events that are welcoming customers and clients.”

Signing up and using this tool to help spread the word is a two-step process, he explains.

The first step is to “RSVP” by going to their website to provide information about your business, including location, website, social media channels, hours and any relevant dates.

The second step is accessing a specially-created media toolkit which provides engagement resources for businesses.

The third step is collaboration between the businesses and the Campaign on communications.

“Our first step is more of a soft launch because it is only engaging businesses, cultural tourism, hospitality partners, events and organizations, but I think the idea we’re landing on we want to make sure consumers are also able to access some of the resources [for] businesses that have RSVP’d and are participating,” says Mr. Petrov. “The next step for us as we gear towards launching the campaign is to develop a consumer-facing page that will allow them outside of social media and other marketing initiatives to go through the lists of local businesses.

“As the campaign gets ready to launch, in the next few weeks we will have a better understanding of what else we need to do. It’s hectic in a way because we’re making it live and adjusting it while it is live, but it allows us to be very fluid and responsive to some of the feedback and that is great because it allows us to bring in a lot of new partners and ideas and filter them through and bring them into the public-facing campaign.”

As they look forward to a wider-ranging launch, Mr. Petrov says a key measure of success will not only be how many businesses answer the call but the understanding of how it has helped

Continued on page 12



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**READY**

**WHEN YOU ARE**



# Five-case COVID-19 spike all from same household: Region

By Brock Weir

A five-case spike of COVID-19 cases in Aurora last Tuesday were all from the same household, according to the Region of York.

Last week, the Town saw a significant spike in cases of the virus after the number of active cases within the community plateaued in the high single digits for multiple days.

“All five cases reported in Aurora on July 28 were from the same household,” said Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications, for the Region of York, on Thursday after the cases were investigated. “These cases were also from the same household in which we reported two cases on July 26.”

As of Tuesday, August 4, Aurora is grappling with 14 active cases of COVID-19.

To date, the community has seen a total of 141 confirmed cases of the virus, 15 of which have proved fatal. 112 cases are now marked as recovered.

13 of the 14 active cases are related to local transmission and close contact with the remaining case attributed to an institutional outbreak outside Aurora.

There are now 237 active cases across York Region.

From the start of the pandemic, the Region has seen a total of 3,306 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 252 of which have resulted in death.

2,817 cases have recovered.

Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region’s Medical Officer of Health, reminded residents in his weekly update that despite encouraging statistics, it is important to remember that

COVID-19 is “still here.”

“While Stage 3 permits larger gatherings, we urge you to stick to your local circles and keep the social gatherings small,” he said. “It is important that as we navigate Stage 3 that we understand that COVID-19 is still around and given the greater human interactions is more likely to spread. Therefore, please physically distance, wear masks when in indoor public spaces or on transit, and wash your hands frequently, disinfect commonly-used surfaces and stay home if you’re not well.”

As of this Friday, August 7, face masks will be required in the common areas of condominiums, apartment buildings and multi-residential across York Region.

Additionally, the Province of Ontario has also amended regulations to require restaurant and bar patrons to have their contact information taken for the purposes of contract tracing.

“[Patrons] will also be required to remain seated most of the time, with exceptions for limited tasks,” said Dr. Kurji before turning his attentions to the younger crowd. “It is nice to be able to take the children to playgrounds as the summer is here with us and I would urge you not to do so if you the children are not well or, for that matter, if you find the playgrounds are crowded. In any case, make sure they physically distance and wash their hands before and after and don’t touch their faces.

“Remember, there is COVID-19 testing available through the three assessment centres at the three hospitals and they are open seven days a week. Please stay vigilant and please stay safe.”

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However, many people are hesitant to have surgery given its invasive nature. It is important to know that although surgery is sometimes necessary, it is considered a last resort in most cases.

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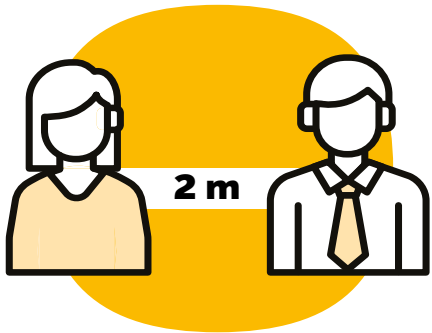
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## As more businesses and services reopen, we must all continue our efforts to protect each other.



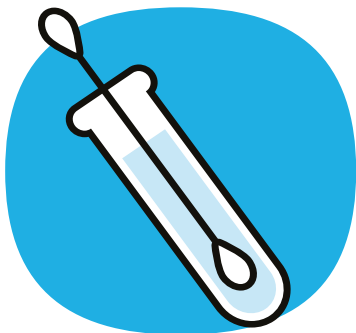
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# “Music is still alive and kicking”

Local musicians unite to help struggling arts and culture community


By Brock Weir

The lights may have been turned off at museums and galleries, and theatres may have gone cold, but the local arts and culture community is still alive and kicking – and needs the community’s



Participating in the Arts & Culture group, and the resulting music video, are, from left, Councillor Rachel Gilliland, George St. Kitts, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Chris Rolko, Janet Marsh, and Councillor Sandra Humfries, among others.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir



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support as we settle into a new normal. This is the message being sent out to the world through the healing power of music by the Town of Aurora’s Arts & Culture Virtual Roundtable, a group formed by Council to look at the unique needs of a unique industry at what is inarguably a very unique time. This week, the Roundtable has launched One For Aurora, a music video showcasing Aurora’s arts and culture sector to U2’s “One”, here voiced by singers George St. Kitts and

Robyn Black, and backed by pianist Chris Rolko and guitarist Lorne Feld. Their message is simple: everything will be okay if we move forward as “One.” “Collectively, we came up with this idea that it would be fun to have an inspirational video that would raise awareness of arts and culture groups and activities in Aurora,” says Mr. Rolko, who, along with partner Janet Marsh, laid the groundwork for the video, including securing St. Andrew’s College as a filming location. “We wanted to inspire people and get them feeling good about life again, and there’s probably, in my opinion, no better way of doing that than through music. One is about togetherness and supporting one another and we thought that was a nice message.” Now available on YouTube, the video showcases such cultural mainstays as the Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre, Theatre Aurora, Marquee Theatrical Productions, the Aurora Historical Society and Hillary House, and the York Region Arts Council, among others.

almost nil as there are few venues that will allow them to take place while maintaining social distancing rules, says Councillor Humfries. The group, she says, was formed to see what they can do to lend a hand while these challenges are being worked out. “Aurora is arts and culture; it is the heart and soul of our Town and not having that was really difficult,” she says. “We’re hoping this committee brought back a little bit of hope that it is still here, we’re going to come through it strong and better than ever – and I really think that video can pave the way. It is going to happen and hopefully we will all hang in there and do what the arts and culture community does differently to ultimately get to where we were even better than before.” But there is still a lot to do to get to that point, and while the group is on hiatus for the summer, Councillor Gilliland says she hopes they can play an active role in new programs and initiatives this fall. “Personally, I am looking forward to getting out into the community and being in-person and socially involved, being open and creative to the arts and culture in general,” says Councillor Gilliland. “The [sector] brings various levels of change. They contribute to the development of the community’s creative learning, create healthy communities capable of action, they help people express values and build bridges between cultures, and to be a part of that, I think, is so very rewarding. They really [make a contribution] to the overall health and wellbeing of the community. “I hope we can bring that collaboration to Aurora and all other municipalities within York Region to promote one another and engage.” For Mr. St. Kitts, that is very much why he wanted to lend his talent to the video. “This will definitely give the industry and community a boost,” he says. “A lot of people showcased are from the great Town of Aurora and we want to let the artists know they haven’t been forgotten. Music is still alive and well, it’s still kicking, we’ll get back to doing it the way we want to do it, but, for now, the video and doing it social-distanced was really fun. “The arts are still alive and well in Aurora.”

Council members belonging to the Arts & Culture Roundtable say the sector was one of the first to shut down at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and, given Ontario’s phased-in plan to re-open the Province, will likely be the last one to get back up to speed. “They say arts and culture is the canary in the coalmine and will be one of the last to get back up,” said Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who serves on the Roundtable with Councillors John Gallo and Sandra Humfries. “I wanted to have a focused group in that area to engage with one other and support and collaborate on ideas together to help us through these hard times. As we’re evolving, we don’t necessarily have all those guidelines in place and we want to make sure we’re able to talk about ideas and give each other hope, and hopefully support one another moving forward – economically and emotionally.” Added Councillor Humfries: “At our very first meeting, we challenged this talented group to come up with something that would inspire and help Aurora know that we’re in it together. Janet and Chris came up with this idea to do a music video to showcase talent and they came up with a tremendous video that really did uplift the residents of Aurora. They made it happen when it was tough to make anything happen.” Since COVID-19 took root in Canada, live performances have been



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Week of August 6, 2020



## York9 add a few more players before the Island Games begins



New signing Alvaro Rivero is a photographer outside of football. He pledges to dedicate his spare time to learning English and, while on the pitch, he is excited to improve as a young player in a competitive league.

Contributed photo

By Robert Belardi

York9 FC has added two more attacking options to their fore.

The Nine Stripes added 23-year-old Spanish International Alvaro Rivero and 16-year-old Brampton native Lowell Wright. The club confirmed last week via Twitter, upon a request of release on compassionate grounds, Brazilian forward Jaco's contract was terminated mutually.

Born in Madrid, Rivero joined Real Madrid's academy, playing for the Los Blancos at a young age. Rivero played alongside one of Inter Milan's latest signings, Achraf Hakimi and Zinedine Zidane's son Luca.

"For me it is the club of my life, it is the one that has given me everything and thanks to Real Madrid I am who I am at the moment. I was 11 years old when I first joined 'La Casa Blanca' and I still have amazing, lifelong friends from that time. It is the best club in the world," Rivero told The Auroran.

He stayed with the academy until U-19. He joined Rayo Vallecano B in 2016.

Since then, Rivero has been a part of Inter De Madrid, Las Palmas, Getafe

CF B, and, just recently, CD Leganes.

Over the course of four years in the Spanish second division, the 5'7 forward has yet to score a goal.

Last season for CD Leganes he recorded 12 appearances.

He is excited to join a very competitive league and build up his career.

"The level of competition is very high. You can see it in the games, and in the intensity between rivals."

"My goals are simple: win the season, for the team to get as high as possible, score the highest goals possible and enjoy this beautiful experience."

Managing Consultant Angus McNab said in a statement that discussions began with Alvaro in January.

Rivero, at the time, chose to remain in Spain to finish the season, before negotiations escalated and his signature landed on the last page of the contract.

"There's a sense of professionalism here that started from when we start discussions, and that's continued since I got here. They have a long-term project view and I'm excited to be part of that."

A photographer and follower of fashion outside of football, he will dedicate all of his spare time to learning English.

Simultaneously, in January, the

club was chasing Woodbridge Strikers forward Lowell Wright.

According to McNab, Wright's signing in January was going to complicate international signing Brian Lopez's spot on the roster.

"This means we can take the opportunity to bring Lowell into the squad six months early and gives him a phenomenal development opportunity," McNab said.

The former Woodbridge Strikers, Sigma FC and TFC Academy forward told the club he has always wanted to play professional football.

"Playing professional football has

been a lifelong dream of mine and I'm happy to have achieved that at such an early age here at home. I'm excited to get to work with the coaching staff and the rest of the team. This is a great opportunity and I plan on repaying the club's faith in me with hard work and a strong commitment to the club's plans."

Wright will have the longest contract signed with York9 FC with club options heading as far into the future as 2024.

The club confirmed that, absent of any injuries, Wright is the final signing to complete the 23-man roster heading into the Island Games tournament set to begin on August 13.

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# Teen gets crafty with jewellery business for a cause

**By Kinjal Dagli Shah**

In the midst of a pandemic, Daniel Carbone took to making bead jewelry to put his entrepreneurial skills to use and to raise money for SickKids Hospital.

The 13-year-old Aurora resident has always been crafty.

“I’ve always wanted chains and beads for as long as I can remember. My mom makes her own wristbands, so I’ve picked up how to make bracelets and necklaces from her,” said the Grade 8 student of Hartman Public School.

“I wanted to start a business that I can run from home and enjoy, so I decided to make bracelets and necklaces. It’s fun to put everything together and it makes me happy.

Daniel made an initial “investment” to purchase beads, fish hooks and pendants for his budding business.

“I run an Instagram page and post photos of the jewelry I make. The glass bead bracelets cost \$20 and the wooden ones cost \$15. I market my business through social media and have made a few sales in my neighbourhood and through my Instagram handle.”

The teen wishes to donate 10 per cent of his earning to Sick Kids Hospital. He was deeply moved when a close friend’s little cousin lost his life to cancer.

“I’m a kid and I want every kid to be healthy and to have fun. I felt sad for my friend and his little cousin and wanted to do something to help. I am going to donate online to SickKids and want to raise at least \$100 but hopefully more.”

Daniel believes every little bit counts, especially at this time.

He spends an hour each day making the jewelry, and sometimes getting feedback from his friends, especially girls.

“The jewelry I make is unisex so anyone can buy and wear them but I do like to ask my friends who are girls for their opinion. They think it’s cool and follow me on Instagram,” he added. “My personal favourite bracelet is one with black and blue beads, and my favourite necklace is silver with a stone pendant.”

In his free time, Daniel likes to watch Shark Tank to sharpen his entrepreneurial skills. He also plays hockey and basketball.

“I want to have a good financial start to when I am older, and hope this could lead to me opening more



Daniel Carbone is pictured with some of his creations.

Contributed photo

businesses in the future.”

To follow Daniel’s Instagram page or to purchase from him, go to [www.instagram.com/dnny\\_co/](http://www.instagram.com/dnny_co/).



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## Play in the Park gets kids outside with new workshops

By Brock Weir

It’s the start of a new month – and it’s the start of a new municipal program designed to get toddlers, kids and youth outside and getting active.

On Monday, the Town of Aurora will launch the Play in the Park Series.

Play in the Park will feature a series of outdoor 45-minute workshops at Lambert Willson Park, just behind the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) on Industrial Parkway North, from August 10 through September 4.

According to the Town, it is “an opportunity for participants to spend time playing outdoors and engaging in group interaction through a variety of recreation-focused games and activities that encourage play while maintaining social distancing.”

“This is a great opportunity to encourage children of all age groups to participate in outdoor play with their peers, stay physically active and feel connected to the community,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “It is important that we support the mental, physical and emotional health of our children during these challenging times and we are proud to have created the Play in the Park series that will support that.”

The programs will be held in the morning, afternoon and evening for three different age groups: preschool up to the age of five, kids ages six to 12, and youth from the ages of 12 to 17. Programs for youngsters up to the age of 12 will require a parent or guardian to participate alongside them or to remain on site for all times.

Workshops will feature sports, arts and crafts, science, and movement – from the creation of nature crafts to the basics of soccer.

Registration for the Play in the Park workshops is open now through the Town’s ePlay platform at [aurora.ca/eplay](http://aurora.ca/eplay).

For more information, including required social and physical distancing requirements and other health protocols, visit [aurora.ca/playinthepark](http://aurora.ca/playinthepark).

## York Region is “ready when you are”

From page 8

stimulate economic growth in York Region.

They want consumers to engage with both the businesses and the campaign itself so they know what businesses consumers are enjoying, whether it is a local shop in Georgina or a gallery in Vaughan.

In time, they are also exploring ways to incentivize participation.

“We are hoping this campaign allows us to celebrate all it has to offer in York Region and a lot of community partners – a lot of great individuals and local businesses, medium-sized businesses,” he says.

For more on #ReadyWhenYR campaign, visit [www.experiencenyorkregion.com/ready-when-yr](http://www.experiencenyorkregion.com/ready-when-yr)

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# Virtual college fair helps students make the right choices for their future

By Brock Weir

It is a challenging time for students to visit colleges to learn more about the programs that might be a key stepping stone to their future, but the Aurora Public Library is stepping up to the plate this week to help make these tough choices a bit easier. Starting Thursday, August 6, the Aurora Public Library will host a series of Virtual College Fairs for up to 98 students at a time from across the community.

Held over Zoom, these sessions, which will run on select dates and times through August 19, will feature representatives from 13 Ontario colleges highlighting the interesting and exciting programs their schools have to offer for the students of today and tomorrow.

“We just want to give the students the chance to meet recruiters to find out more about the programs, learn more about the colleges they have had offers from, and consider which ones they are looking at because all schools have different offerings,” says coordinator Tim Neale, Adult Librarian for the Aurora Public Library. “A lot of students

in Grade 10 and Grade 11 are also thinking about what they are going to do and this gives them an idea of what courses are available, what career options they can think about, and what high school credits they need to get accepted into the program they really want to do.”

The Virtual College Fair is also a good opportunity for people who are “scrambling to find a new way forward” with their careers in rapidly changing and evolving environments.

“Most recruiters agreed that some of the programs they would talk about would be second career-type options where the future is pretty bright in being able to find something going forward,” says Neale.

Sheridan College kicks off the Virtual College Fair series on August 6, with a session from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Humber College takes centre stage on August 7 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., followed that morning by Durham College from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sessions continue on August 11 with Conestoga College from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., and Canadore College from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Presentations the following day

kick off from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. with Algonquin College and from 3 – 5 p.m. with Niagara College.

On August 13, Seneca College presents from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., with Lambton College that afternoon from 3 – 5 p.m.

Centennial College takes over Zoom on August 14 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. before the program concludes the following week with Loyalist College on August 18 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

“All of these colleges have different strengths and this is really a chance for colleges to tell potential students what is available and what programs they have that should interest them – and convince them to go to that school!” says Neale. “This is a way for them to get a sense of what is out there, what they might want to do, and some of these colleges

have strong connections to universities as well, so it is a way to find out what is happening.”

This is not the first time the Aurora Public Library has held college and university fairs, but the current pandemic has promoted the Library to re-think how the program is delivered. If this month’s program proves a success, Neale says he hopes more opportunities will come down the line.

“I want to expand it to include universities around Christmas or sometime in February (around Family Day) because right now it is hard for students to get that kind of information up front,” he says.

To register for any or all of the sessions, contact Adult Librarian Tim Neale at [neale@aurorapl.ca](mailto:neale@aurorapl.ca) or at 905-727-9494 x290.

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### COVID Alert app now available for download

From page 3

COVID-19. I encourage all Ontarians to download and use the app, as the more people who use the app, the more it will help to stop the spread of COVID-19.”

The app supports the efforts of public health units, allowing the province to quickly test, trace and isolate cases of COVID-19 to stop the spread of the virus and prepare for any potential outbreaks - without sharing any personal information.

If an app user receives a message from COVID Alert that they may

have been exposed to the virus, they should follow the public health advice given on the app and get tested. To notify other people if an app user has tested positive for COVID-19, they can enter their one-time key from Ontario’s test results website ([Ontario.ca/covidresults](https://Ontario.ca/covidresults)) into the app. A message will then be sent to other app users who have been within two metres of them for at least 15 minutes within the past 14 days, without sending any information that identifies the user, or the time and place of exposure.



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By Olga Sopoci

Many people in end of life condition, don't know what to expect when they come to Margaret Bahen Hospice in Newmarket. But when you come to a place where people are caring and very loving and giving you their all just to make you happy, comfortable, and relaxed, this is the best feeling anyone could have. I don't know what I would do without all these beautiful nurses and all the beautiful people in this place.

I have all the support I need. Whoever is in the same position likemyself, where you are debating whether to go to a hospice, don't be scared because you are going to the place I call *"my little Heaven before I go to Heaven"*.

I appreciate everyone here as much as I can and I hope that everybody will do the same because all these workers give so much, they are just so lovable that you think that you have found the right place for sure because *"they all have a heart of gold"*.

The team here are little angels to all of the residents. I love everyone in here, how they talk to me, how they comfort me, and how they tell me about the things they do in their daily lives. Since I have been here, I have a different view of everything. Just to see how people do things for others with so many things happening in this world is so touching. I am 87 years old and in my life I went through so much, but this is the best feeling I have now, so much appreciation.

*I just wish I could find a different way to say:  
Thank you with all my heart that you all are taking care of us, me and lots and lots of people before me.*

*Thank you for having me here.  
With love,  
Olga*

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# The Auroran: Past the post and still going in our 20<sup>th</sup> year

By Brock Weir

The Auroran marks its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary serving the Aurora community this October.

To mark the occasion, over the next few weeks, we will be sharing some content from our earliest days, some of our favourite community stories, and revisiting issues that have had a positive impact on our community.

Founded by Ron Wallace with the simple guiding principle of “if it concerns Aurora, it concerns us,” The Auroran was established as a hyper-local publication focusing on the issues that matter most to residents.

This week, we highlight our very first issue, published the week of October 16, 2000.

## THE TOP STORY

Our launch coincided with the official kick-off of the 2000 Municipal Election campaign, one which ultimately secured another term for Tim Jones. Six years later, in a rematch, 2000 challenger Phyllis Morris was swept to the Town’s top job.

*The contenders are at the post, and the race is about to begin.*

*And it should be some race, given the fact that as recently as a week ago, only incumbent Mayor Tim Jones and five candidates, all newcomers, had registered for the November 13 municipal election, with eight Council seats available.*

*But that’s all changed today and Aurora voters are now assured of an election as there are four in the race for mayor and 12 candidates for council.*

*Registration deadline was 5 p.m. Friday.*

*Sitting Councillors Bill Hogg and Phyllis Morris and newcomer Gary Sinjakewisch are challenging Jones for the mayor’s seat.*

*Council candidates include only two incumbents, Dave Griffith and Deputy Mayor John West.*

*Also in the race for council are former mayor George Timpson and former councillors Ron Wallace and Betty Pedersen with seven newcomers.*

*Four members of the current council are retiring: Peter Healy, Herb McKenzie, Steve Hinder and Bob Hartwell.*

*Also running for council are Paul Downey, Mike Evans, Nigel Kean, Evelina MacEachern, Walter Mesrinaro, Damir Vrancic and Al Wilson.*

*The municipal election is slated for Monday, November 3.*

Our launch also coincided with the imminent arrival of State Farm to Aurora’s business community.

Here, the economic benefits of the incoming business are outlined by company principals, while residents sounded off about potential impacts of its development.

Fast forward 20 years, and accounting for a name change, Desjardins Insurance is still a significant employer in Aurora:

AURORA TO BE CANADIAN HQ FOR STATE FARM

*Robert Cooke returned to his native Aurora last week, and brought with him, a little gift.*

*The Wells Street Public School graduate, now a resident of Sharon, addressed a small press conference at the Aurora Town Hall and announced plans to build the State Farm Insurance Canadian head office here.*

*Cooke, a State Farm vice-president, and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian operations, said the project would see 1,000 jobs coming to Aurora, in a building that may be as high as 10 storeys, covering up to 500,000 square feet.*

*The structure would be located on Wellington Street East at Highway 404.*

*Construction, he said, would begin in 2003 with occupancy no later than 2006.*

*Currently, State Farm’s Canadian Headquarters is located at Highway 401 and McCowan Avenue in Scarborough and employs 900 people.*

*“Our present location is serving us well today, but this new building will carry us forward well into the 21st century,” Cooke Said.*

*State Farm’s new home will be in an office-commercial-retail park to be named the Aurora Gateway Business Park, a 94-acre development bounded by Wellington, Leslie and the 404.*

*But at least one Leslie Street resident isn’t that keen on the idea.*

*Ralph Brunner told The Auroran he heard of the project by reading about it in the newspapers.*

*“There are many issues still to be answered,” he said, noting the 10-storey building possibility was “bringing the city to Aurora.”*

*Neighbours have filed an objection with the Ontario Municipal Board and he said they will continue with it if their concerns are not addressed.*

*“Aurora has a bylaw for this property that allows for everything,” he said. “We’re concerned about potential industry with toxic waste, because that land is higher than ours and there could be runoff.”*

*Brunner did say the company was listening to his concerns, and some problems have already been resolved.*

## Celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> Year!

### HYDRO QUESTIONS

In 2000, the Council of the day had just agreed to sell Aurora Hydro. In 2020, the Council of the day is still determining just how the sale’s proceeds will be spent – including the redevelopment of Library Square.

*Apparently, as long as the lights work, no one really seems interested in how.*

*Aurorans had a chance to speak their mind about the future of Aurora Hydro, at a recent public meeting, but no one showed up.*

*As a result, Aurora Council agreed to the terms of amalgamation of its hydro*

*utility with Markham, Vaughan and Newmarket.*

*Richmond Hill had previously agreed to sell its utility to the private sector.*

*In exchange for Aurora’s inclusion of its hydro assets and debts in the amalgamation, the town’s holding company will receive shares. It will also share in the debt. Based on 1999 figures, Aurora’s share is currently estimated at 7.11 per cent of the outstanding shares and debt. The board of directors of the amalgamated company will be composed of 14 members with Aurora having two members to be appointed by the incoming Council.*

### RON’S FIRST WORD

In the beginning, Ron Wallace hadn’t settled into a name for his regular column. It would take assuming the role of columnist Dick Illingworth and his “Poor Richard” column to settle on “Poor Ronnie” for things to solidify, but in this first entry, Ron kept it brief... with good reason:

*Ever since The Crier was “deep sixed” Wednesday, August 2, after eight years of service to the Aurora and Newmarket area, I have been looking for a place to peddle this column.*

*It has landed on the pages of The Auroran, and I’m delighted. Except; Before I even get started, I must stop writing it.*

*Since I submitted the papers to seek a seat on Aurora Council, it is unfair to have this ‘forum’ available to me, when other candidates don’t have a similar opportunity.*

*So, au revoir, and win, lose or draw, we’ll meet back here right after the November 13 municipal election.*

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

would enter a debate withholding this type of information I would hope that anyone giving a gift with such a caveat would understand that my expressing doubt is justifiable without damaging the cause, nor undermining my appreciation.

In a perverse way, I am curious about the donor’s intentions in spite of the respect I have for the privacy they desire and hopefully by extension, their altruism.

I ponder why it was so important to keep the revelation of the \$10K funding until the end of the meeting?

Since we don’t know who the donor is, I respectfully ask if using this donation as a political weapon for the sake of posturing was anticipated? If the intention was to keep financing out of the political debate, are they satisfied that the conditions of their philanthropy have become the subject of political debate? Do they accept that responsibility?

I also have to ask what other possible strings could be attached to this gesture? The notion that prior knowledge of anonymous funding would politicize a debate is a red herring. Anyone suggesting this clearly doesn’t understand politics, is willfully blind, or blatantly cavalier as to how the political arena operates.

Perhaps they could have been better advised.

Personally, I am uncomfortable that there is the possibility of only one person out of seven at that table knowing the origins of this money going forward.

I would hope that the community at large and the donor could realize that anyone who questioned the financing or practicality of this venture should be allowed to do so without having their integrity debated by those who showed full support.

Creating a distraction is a detriment to the cause of a “vulnerable group” left to bear witness and wonder who in this Town supports them and who doesn’t.

That is where I found myself at points in this process and that is the larger issue here.

In my lifetime, I have witnessed and experienced first-hand the LGBTQ2+ struggle for recognition

and access to the same rights enjoyed by others under our Charter. We have faced inaction, persecution, and attack by our own families, religious organizations, governments, law enforcement and employers – groups who have blocked access to life-saving drugs to treat the AIDS epidemic and people who have actively attacked us for who we are and how we love.

For many, the road has been fraught and paved with tragedy. We have struggled against abuse, racism, and hatred within our own community. We have arrived in 2020 stronger and united as a result of our fight over the last century.

To watch a leader say, “this is the right thing to do” should feel good. The message, though vague, but well intentioned, is lost when it appears nothing more than a political strategy.

Anonymity itself plays a part in the LGBTQ2+ community’s darkest moments, the result of centuries of oppression, the need for anonymous encounters, clandestine gatherings, and anonymous HIV testing.

There continue to be legitimate reasons to remain unnamed. We, ourselves, have learned how destructive “the closet” can be to our own advances in modern society and

the power that coming out of that closet holds.

To be frank, I acknowledge some privilege that by adding my name to this letter, I open myself up to judgement of my words but hopefully not persecution for who I am. This is where we are in society, rainbow crosswalk or not.

So, again, was the plan to divide

N. Asselin  
Aurora

CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Opposite of on  
4. Creator  
10. No seats available  
11. About springtime  
12. Flagship ESPN show (abbr.)  
14. Automobile  
15. A matchup  
16. Porous volcanic rock  
18. Utter repeatedly  
22. Not written in any key  
23. Revolved  
24. Archrival  
26. Within  
27. Smoker’s accessory  
28. Disfigure  
30. Primordial matter  
31. Thrust horse power (abbr.)  
34. Kisses
36. Some is iced  
37. A way to derive  
39. Unaccompanied by others  
40. Discontinued Google app  
41. Tony B. left his heart there  
42. Condiment  
48. Ancient Italian city  
50. One who distributes  
    payoff money  
51. Guarantees  
52. Highly decorative  
53. A hair on top of the eye  
54. Pie \_\_\_ mode  
55. Spanish be  
56. Glued  
58. A way to drench  
59. Part of the body  
60. Changes the color

CLUES DOWN

1. Passerine birds  
2. Noisy quarrel  
3. The front arm or leg of  
    an animal  
4. Early multimedia  
5. Golden years  
6. Large mollusk  
7. Small arm of the sea  
8. Persian jurisdiction  
9. Atomic #81  
12. From end to end  
13. Adorable  
17. Ma  
19. Nearly falling  
20. Portable conical tent  
21. Excessive fluid accumulation  
    in tissues
25. Fish with high dorsal fins  
29. Equal (prefix)  
31. Aquatic plant genus  
32. Choppers  
33. Hand parts  
35. Region bordering the sea  
38. Well-liked  
41. Nap  
43. It’s used to make beer  
44. Related on the father’s side  
45. Senior officer  
46. Delicacy (archaic)  
47. Figures  
49. A way to take away  
56. Beloved sandwich \_\_\_&J  
57. Symptom typical of  
    withdrawal (abbr.)

PUZZLE SOLUTION

			O	F	F		A	R	T	I	S	T		
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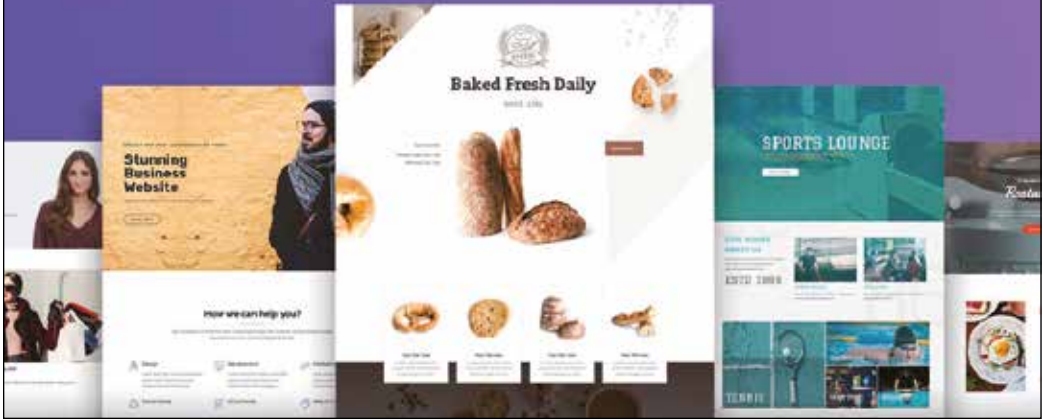
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# Merlin’s Hollow prepares for 40th anniversary in 2021

By Brock Weir

When they honeymooned on a small, sparsely populated island nearly 60 years ago, David and Dierdre Tomlinson marvelled at the beauty of a nearby garden.

“I love gardens,” Deirdre recalls saying to her new husband. “And he said, ‘When we have a house of our own, I will build a great garden for you.’”

“I wish I never said that!” says David, sitting on a bench in their Centre Crescent back yard, with a laugh.

But, if you’re a garden lover, you’ll be hard-pressed to find anyone else who wishes he hadn’t.

This spring, their famed Merlin’s Hollow garden – really, a garden within a garden within two more gardens – was ready to welcome visitors for its 39<sup>th</sup> season of four open days from May through August.

Since they first opened their gate in 1981, the gardens – a labour of love for the couple – have welcomed more than a thousand visitors each year.

But this year has been season like no other.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the couple have not been able to conduct their garden tour and welcome friends new and old to such features as their alpine garden and thyme walk.

“It was very disappointing,” says Diedre, whom David describes as the people person in this coupling.

Yet, on the flipside of the coin, it has allowed the couple a private paradise to spend quarantine.

“It is a very beautiful prison, that’s what it really amounts to,” says David, 85. “It has

been a great year for the garden. Diedre and I are getting older now and I can’t do the maintenance I used to, so the plants are taking over. I don’t control them any longer and they decide where they want to grow, so it has become a great garden for insects. I think we have had at least seven or eight species of butterflies and sometimes as many as five different species flying around at the same time.

“It is interesting seeing what plants can hack it. We didn’t necessarily put them there, but that is where they have decided to grow and it is running on its own steam now.”

Much of the day-to-day maintenance is carried out by Dierdre, 79.

For her, maintaining Merlin’s Hollow is not only a reflection of her love for plants and flowers, but also for the community she loves to call home.

“When we first started doing this, on certain days we had high hundreds or 1,000 people come through,” she says. “Last year on one of our open days, families came with their children, well-behaved. A little boy came up to David and said, ‘I need to use the toilet’ and he pointed him to behind the workshop and said, ‘Go on!’”

David picks up the thread: “Then, he came back out, and said, ‘I need to wash my hands.’ I said, go and lie down on the bridge over the stream, stick your hands in the water and you’ll be fine.’ His mother took pictures of him doing it.”

Despite saying that his wife is really the person who thrives on this day-to-day interaction with visitors, David admits it has been the most meaningful part of their nearly 40-years letting the public in on their private secret garden.

“It is the people,” he says. “With me,



Dierdre and David Tomlinson are pictured in their Merlin’s Hollow garden last Thursday.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

when people ask my favourite plant, my answer is the plant I am growing now and have never seen before. That has always been my highlight, but Dierdre’s highlight, I think, has always been the people.”

While their 39<sup>th</sup> season has been limited to themselves and a few handfuls of specially-invited guests, both are looking forward to celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Merlin’s Hollow with the public next year.

How many more seasons they might have there, however, is the question of the day.

Nearby properties, he said, have been snapped up for redevelopment, including houses just across the street, slated for condominiums and apartments designed to be within walking distance to the nearby GO Station.

“It makes sense – five minutes to the

railway station, you don’t need a car,” says David, adding they are only looking ahead to the next two or three years of gardening. “Eventually, this will be built on. It’s inevitable and I don’t mind – it has served its purpose. We’re going to have to move [at some point] because we can’t manage it. Gardens are very individualistic. If it was taken over by another group, it wouldn’t be the same garden. Dierdre spends an enormous amount of time in the garden, but I have lost interest in gardening; I have been there, done that and got the t-shirt.”

“I don’t understand that, David. You can do more than 20- or 30-year-olds,” interjects Dierdre. “I shall be very sad when we have to go.”

But, the good news is they’re not going yet. They are still looking forward to their 40<sup>th</sup> garden season next year – and, indeed, their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

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Merlin's Hollow might have had to cancel their four open days this spring and summer due to COVID-19, but they invited The Auroran through their gate last week to offer readers a virtual tour.  
Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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