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# THE AURORED

*Aurora's Community Newspaper*

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Aurora's "Turtle Tias" are helping to save local wildlife one half-shell at a time. They are pictured here with a nesting box on Henderson Drive.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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## Turtle Tias continue lending helping hand to reptile neighbours

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

Nearly 40 nesting cages and several turtles on the move have kept Aurora's Turtle Tias busy since May. The group of five, who call themselves "Turtle Tias", continue to work long, arduous hours with the help of a few other volunteers to ensure the safety of the Snapping Turtles and Painted Turtles that call Aurora home.

"This has been an incredibly busy season so far, with lots of activity and more nests

than we've seen in past years. Our peak month was June, and our goal then was to keep the adult females safe, particularly on the busy roads, and to install nesting cages to stop predators digging up and eating the eggs," said Wendy Kenyon, one of the Tias and Vice President of the Henderson Forest Aurora Ratepayer Association.

Thanks to their efforts, over 30 nesting cages are being monitored along Henderson Drive, close to Salamander Pond, and the wetland area on the north side of the road. Nine other cages are

located along the trail system on the east side of Town and in the Arboretum.

"We're preparing for hatchling season which, due to the extreme heat, could begin any day now. We're regularly monitoring the nesting cages and, once the hatchlings start arriving, we'll be patrolling the nests every couple of hours from dawn until dusk to make sure the hatchlings don't escape onto the road. Our goal is to get the hatchlings safely to the nearest wetland. From that point, they're on their

**Continued on page 14**

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The Aurora Wildlife Reserve has been a passion project for landscape architect David Tomlinson for nearly 30 years – and that passion has not diminished with the passage of time.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

**Community already seeing benefits of upcoming wildlife reserve: advocate**

By Brock Weir

Aurora's long-gestating nature reserve is already paying environmental dividends, according to planner David Tomlinson.

Mr. Tomlinson, who has been working with the Town of Aurora, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Ducks Unlimited, and other stakeholders for more than three decades to make the nature reserve a reality, says work over the last few months

**Continued on page 19**

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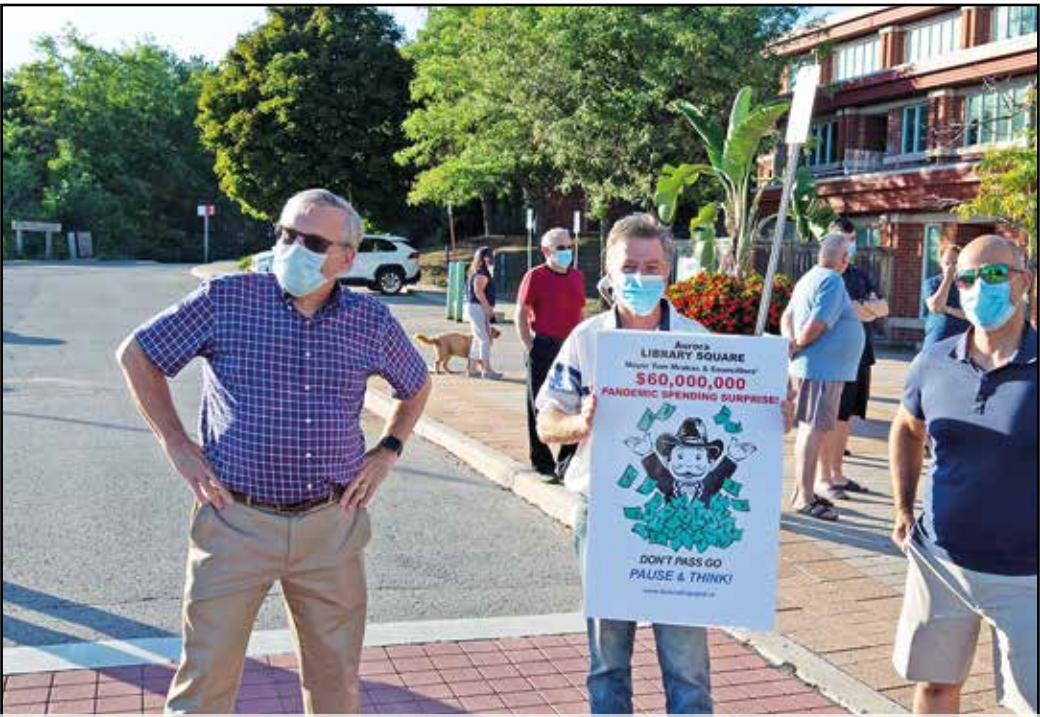
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# Members of the public divided on moving forward with Library Square



Aurora residents, including former councillor and MPP Chris Ballard, pressed Council to hit “pause” on Library Square redevelopment plans last week.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

By Brock Weir

Local lawmakers were greeted outside of Town Hall last Tuesday night by Aurora residents demonstrating against Council moving forward with the redevelopment of Library Square. Whether they were members of a new citizen action group calling themselves Aurora Engage, or community members at large, their message was clear: it was time to pause and ask questions before moving ahead with the downtown revitalization project.

“I am not opposed to Library Square, I am opposed to it going triple over the budget that was discussed,” Beni Cresenzi told The Auroran ahead of the August 25 Special Council meeting which ultimately voted 4 – 3 to move forward. “I am opposed to the add-ons that are \$4.5 million and we bought a piece of property at \$7.5 million, [a decision] we don’t get to debate on.”

Mr. Cresenzi said he was actively involved in the renovations of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex more than six years ago, a project which went over-budget, and this, he said, is a concerning trend. “There is not a single project that has been on track, on budget, met all the criteria, and we just need to pause and debate the issue,” he continued. \$60 million is a budget that belongs to Toronto-level projects. It’s a huge project for asking the citizens of Aurora to fund well into the future without the specifics being debated.”

“We could have bought the golf course,” he added, referring to the former Highland Gate Golf Club, which is now being transformed into a housing development, despite a resident-led push to have the Town purchase the land for a Central Park-style community greenspace. “They never had money for the golf course, but now they have money for a silly

bridge to nowhere.” From his perspective, there were lingering questions about how long the project would take to complete, along with the long-term financial impacts. “This is being rushed way too quickly and citizens haven’t had the chance to discuss in great detail these issues,” he said. “This money is going to be carried right through for several generations. The design plan was done pre-COVID. Every other area in the world, every other institution, every other architectural firm and public firm has revisited their plans going into the future of how to deal with facilities that can be self-sustaining in an environment such as COVID. It is also an environment where we’re going to be working more remotely. These things are not even being considered right now. “Parking has not been addressed properly. I have three children and we use the Library all the time. If we can’t run in and park quickly and access it, it will not be used. There are a lot of fundamental issues with this. I am not opposed to it, it needs to be developed, I get the future of Aurora, but this is being rushed and crammed down our throat and we need complete accountability.” These were sentiments reiterated outside Town Hall by Susan Walmer, a spokesperson for Aurora Engage, who rallied the nearly two-dozen residents with a megaphone in hand. At the start of the meeting, Ms. Walmer was inside Council chamber to echo these issues in a delegation to Council. “How do we take these risks when none of us knows how long the pandemic will last?” she posed to Council members. “How will it ultimately effect the economy? How might we need to change our communities if these things turn out worse than expected? We can reduce the risk and increase our resilience by accepting that we will end up in a new place. We have to take a

deep breath and allow time for things to work out. We need to pause and think. “Many of us share deep concerns with what is happening in the world, Canada, Ontario, and our community of Aurora that we love.” Another cause for a pause and re-think was the decision by the Province of Ontario and the Federal Government not to award more than \$31 million of grant money for the project. “We don’t know the loss of revenues from all Town facilities and programs to date and how COVID will continue to impact it,” she said. “In general, most businesses have experience increased operating costs due to modifications and impact. We don’t know the impact of COVID on business closures yet. Loss of property tax revenues due to applications for property tax relief. The financial report states that the DC charges over the next 10 years will be levied, but COVID may have an impact on new development down the road – retail, industrial and residential. “Arts and culture are really important to Aurora and Aurora residents. We love going to the Cultural Centre and enjoying our parks. Let’s not spend taxpayers’ money on a project that doesn’t best suit the needs of the community now. We need to pause and take a breath, literally. Step back, take stock, anticipate and prioritize.” In a video delegation to Council, however, resident Michelle Boyer provided a different viewpoint. Speaking via Zoom, Ms. Boyer, who serves on Aurora’s Committee of Adjustment, said it is time for Aurora to “take action” and make the community “more livable and enjoyable for the people who live here” – starting with the redevelopment of Library Square. “The time is now to get that first shovel in the ground and to begin the build. We have had many years of

Continued on page 8

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# Cultural partners say yes to Library Square

By Brock Weir

Aurora’s business community and “cultural partners” voiced their support of the redevelopment of Library Square at a Special Council meeting held August 25.

The meeting ultimately saw Council approve a tender of nearly \$52 million to bring the project to fruition.

Once complete, the redevelopment plan will see an expansive addition to the Church Street School, now home to the Aurora Cultural Centre and the Aurora Museum & Archives, and improvements to the Aurora Public Library, including a bridge to connect the two buildings above the public gathering space that is the centrepiece of the build.

As such, representatives from both the Cultural Centre and Aurora Public Library came into Council Chambers to voice their support of forging ahead.

“We saw the benefits of the [Library Square] concept, but we had two major concerns that would have to be resolved before we could be fully supportive; the first one was how does the new facility get designed and constructed in such a way that it can become a magnificent asset which the residents can be proud of? Secondly, how would the new facility be best managed so as to ensure its long-term success?” Eric Acker, President of the Aurora Cultural Centre, told Council

“I want to say clearly that the Board of the Aurora Cultural Centre did not consider how the project would be funded and it did not consider the timing. With respect, we see those areas as the responsibility of those of you here in this room.”

In his delegation, Mr. Acker highlighted the work Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, and her team, put in to making sure this was the path forward they felt comfortable.

“The governance structure of the new facility was of critical importance to the Centre and the Board,” he continued. “At least three models were considered. Suzanne’s experience and knowledge of other governance structures across Canada was very valuable in working with senior Town staff to arrive at a hybrid governance model. That model combines the experience and the expertise of the Cultural Centre staff with that of the Town. The close working relationship of the past two years gave our Board the confidence [this facility would be well managed].”

On her part, Ms. Haines reiterated the Centre’s support for the Library Square project was not contingent on a funding model or timing.

“Our feedback and support comes from the benefits to the community of investing in cultural infrastructure and how that investment impacts the livability and creativity of a community, [and] growth opportunities for artistic and cultural organizations

*Cultural projects also provide hope to a community by building vibrancy, livability and a community voice through future opportunities for creative expression*

and the benefits to businesses in the downtown of having bold and effective cultural infrastructure in their midst” she said. “Not to be tone-deaf to the community conversation, timing appears to be on the forefront of people’s minds given the current global situation. While I am not an expert on costing or construction, history has shown that most cultural infrastructure gets built in times of a depressed economy due to costs of specialized buildings and no other funding sources. Cultural projects also provide hope to a community by building vibrancy, livability and a community voice through future opportunities for creative expression.”

Funding, however, factored into the Aurora Public Library’s decision to support Library Square, with their Board voting to make a commitment of \$5.4 million for the build.

“Our Board saw a real opportunity to enhance Library Square through a more integrated, holistic relationship and through the wisdom of our Board and you all at Council, we now have this remarkable connecting bridge and corridor,” said Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Aurora Public Library. “The Library is all in, we’re ready to go, and now is the time for this fabulous project. It has been planned for a long time and it is time for this project to start. This will be a community destination for activities, gatherings, and events of all kinds for generations to come.

“I have had the good fortune of working on many public infrastructure plans in my career and have experienced firsthand their transformative abilities. This is exactly the opportunity that we have with Library Square. Rarely do you get the opportunity to develop an iconic beacon to our Town where the community can come together under any and all circumstances. Rarely do you see a centre of excellence which includes a Library, Cultural Centre and Town partnership of this magnitude. In fact, we have already begun discussions of working collaboratively together to bring a more fulsome programming experience to the residents of Aurora. Rarely do you have the opportunity to significantly affect the economy of our Town with the ability to host conventions and conferences right in our downtown core.”

In voicing his support, Mr. Gorman said “self-imposed project delays”

damage projects from both a scope and quality perspective and are a “waste of taxpayer money” from increased project costs and currency valuations.

“Please do not delay or diminish this project. Nobody wants a lesser or lower quality Library Square and no one wants one that costs more money unnecessarily. There is no doubt that the coronavirus has been devastating across this planet, but we will emerge victorious sometime. Nobody knows when, but we will. When we do, more than ever, we need a place to come together,” Mr. Gorman concluded.

“For good times and bad, this will be the place your grandchildren take their kids. Hear me when I say this is a legacy, a facility that will change Aurora forever. Now is the time. Library Square will provide remarkable benefits for future generations.”



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Now is not the time on Library Square: Open letter to Council

I am writing to express my views regarding the Library Square Project ... simply, now is not the time.

To keep this note simple, I refer you to the Letter to the Editor in the August 20 edition of The Auroran from Brian and Dianne Harrison; their letter sums up everything I would say so I won't repeat them (extensively)... if you haven't kept yourselves updated, please take time to read it before the next meeting.

I would just like to reiterate and add-to a few of their points: We don't know where COVID is going; will there be a second wave, a third wave, always be here? Jobs are not secure, finances are uncertain, food and shelter are a challenge for some families and individuals; bankruptcy is a more than ever before possibility for many, along with foreclosures; look around you and see the businesses that are closing and consider the ripple impact of that; when will normal return?

Simply, none of you have the answers to these questions of uncertainty but it is (in my opinion) very short-sighted to move ahead with the Library Project at this time; you may be making a poor decision that could further impact a lot of people less fortunate than yourselves, and in particular, at risk and vulnerable citizens of our community who need all the help they can get at this time.

The Library Project should be moved down on the lists of priorities for now and your efforts and thoughts put toward developing plans (both practical and financial) for dealing with the pandemic and its impacts should it rematerialize in an even greater magnitude than at present...so far, I haven't heard about that happening

I am sure that some of you, more than anything, want to see your names on the "brass plaque" at project completion, but consider the optics of what you are doing now...at this time!

I'll share with you with one final thought I was constantly reminded of by my mentors throughout my professional corporate life: You may excel at your work, achieve many things, be a great manager and leader, and have many successes but that only counts for about 1% of how people will see you and your value overall; the other MILLION % of how people perceive you consists of the manner in which you accomplish those things.

Don't cancel the Library Project; Just pause it for six to nine months and take a look at the world around you then and evaluate what changes have taken place. This is not about doing the project or not doing the project, it's a matter of optics and you have a perception issue!

Do the right thing, take your foot off the gas, and coast for a while; you'll long be remembered for demonstrating wisdom in difficult times versus a council that wanted the glory of Library Square and went ahead and rammed it through.

Terry Miller  
Aurora

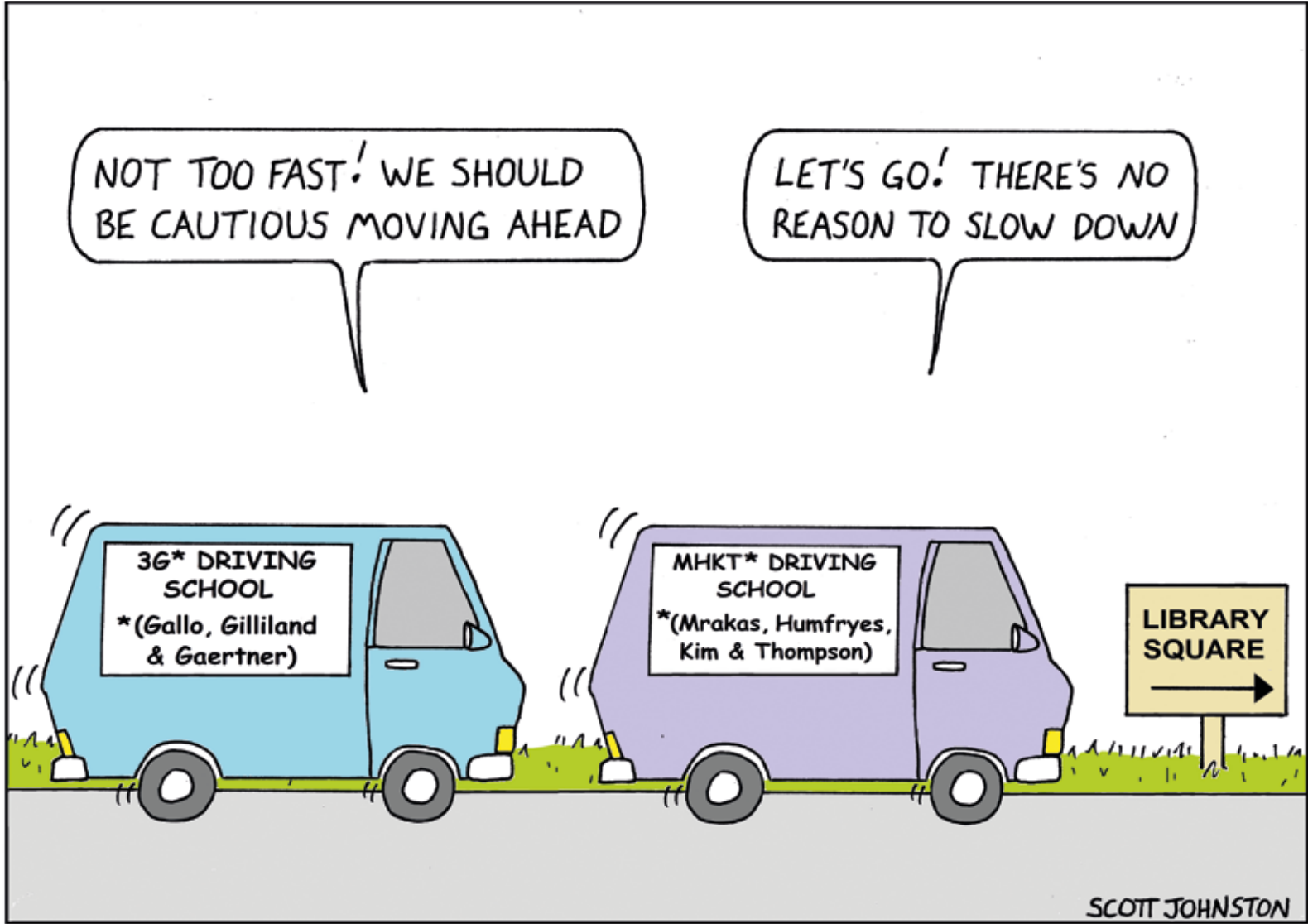
Oak Ridges resident supports Library Square

First, my bona fides ...  
... although I am not a resident of Aurora (I live 3.5 stones' throws south of Bloomington in Oak Ridges), I do all my banking and most of my food shopping in your Town. It's where my daughter, now a lawyer, went to high school, and where my own lawyer has his office. It's where I get my prescriptions (Sparkle Pharmacy). It's where I shop for hardware and building supplies, and much, much else.

In short, although I am not a ratepayer or voter, I am a regular

Continued on page 17

Machell's Corners



Starts – Auspicious and Otherwise



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

It seemed unusual, even by my uninformed standards. It was, after all, my first rodeo.

I wasn't sure what to expect the first time I embarked on elementary school in the public system; for my first couple of years of kindergarten, I was enrolled in a long-since-defunct Montessori school in Newmarket's north end.

My start there was inauspicious.

I guess I was a young man of three on a mission because when my parents took me through for a tour before actually signing the papers and handing over the cheque, I made an almost immediate bee-line to the nearby jungle gym. At the time, this school was in a dark and musty church basement, so the outdoor playground was something of an oasis.

Except for the little girl who was in my way.

I can't remember the exact circumstances, but somehow she got between me and whatever was my main objective, and I summarily pushed her off the play structure and carried on my own merry way. (If you just happen to read this, please accept my sincerest of apologies!)

Parents can be persuasive, I suppose, because despite this little temper tantrum I was accepted into the school, and I was still there when it made the transition into a low-rise office block with an asphalt play area carved out of its rear parking lot and a bowling alley just a stone's throw away to pepper the air with the aroma of stale smoke. This seemed perfectly natural at the time, but in hindsight? Not so much.

But now, just a few weeks away from hitting the grand old age of five, I was out on my own. Public school beckoned and, on the first day of my Grade 1 career, I stood out on my driveway with my fellow neighbours (for some reason our driveway was designated as the bus stop this year) and awaited the bus.

This was destined to be my first

real bus trip – and by myself, no less – and I was jittery not with nerves but excitement. It was a big step for a little guy and I was determined to make the most of it.

Alas, the ride itself was short and uneventful, but it was a personal milestone and I couldn't wait for the ride home.

First day of classes finished, we lined up for dismissal. A member of the school's administrative staff was at our classroom door just ahead of the bell, clipboard in hand, with a few little tidbits of information before we were sent home. We were separated into two groups and members of each group received a printed-out label that was unceremoniously slapped across our chests. Each sticker bore a figure of three numbers which was, we were told, the bus number we had to look for we went outside.

The bell rang, and our chariots awaited.

But something didn't sit right with me. The number, I could see from looking down and flipping the numbers right-side up in my mind's eye, said 672. Remembering back to the excitement of the morning though I clearly remembered the number emblazoned on the side of the bus as 678 – but I trusted the good people in the principal's office. After all, this was not THEIR first rodeo.

The first 20 minutes, I was seeing parts of Newmarket I never before knew existed. After the first 40 minutes, there was one landmark I had seen in my travels. After another 40 minutes, I had no idea where I was – and I was the only one left on the bus, much to the driver's alarm.

And, unbeknownst to me, much to the alarm of my mother at home as well, not to mention the mother across the street, who stuck around to console

mine when her kid didn't get off the bus he left on at the end of his very first day of school.

Another inauspicious start, but thankfully, my very first day of Grade 1 didn't set the tone for the rest of my academic career. Yet it sticks out in my mind as one of the most memorable "firsts" of my elementary and secondary school life.

I always look back on these days fondly. Every year around this time a whole year of firsts awaited one at the end of that first bus ride of the year. Not only were there new things to learn, but there were often new people to meet, new places to explore, new memories to make and new rules of the game to master.

Granted, most of these "new" experiences also had the power to conger up a whole flock of butterflies to infiltrate and set up shop in your tummy, but those nerves were quickly overcome both by excitement and necessity.

One never quite knew what to expect, and that is undoubtedly the same thing many elementary and secondary school students will experience just after Labour Day – but this uncertainty will not be over and done with by that first bus ride home of the year, nor even by the end of the first week or month.

For the foreseeable future, students, regardless of whether their parents opted in for in-class learning or distance learning programs, will not be fully able to settle into a firm and reliable rhythm or have the same opportunities to foster connections in the cafeterias, libraries and hallways.

That is unfortunate but, if the last few months is any indication, this generation – and, really, all residents – are more than ready and capable to rise to the occasion and make the most out of it.

If nothing else, it will certainly be an interesting chapter for your memoirs.

# THE AURORAN

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## The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating

### Summertime Correspondence!

This postcard shows two Radial Railway cars stopped at Bond Lake, which is approximately 3.5 km south of Yonge and Bloomington. The postcard was addressed to a Miss Gertrude Atkinson and sent on September 6, 1917, it reads: “Was delighted to hear from you. Your card was delayed. I had wondered and wondered about the Garden Party but of course the weather explained. When do your holidays commence. R went back to school Tuesday so its “lonesome me” again. Should like to see you. How’s Everton? – Hazel.”



## Welcome to Library Land

By Reccia Mandelcorn

The public library is considered to be an apolitical entity, and so it should be. Most libraries, including the one I work at, have explicit policies to that effect. But that does not mean that libraries should be immune to the complex issues and diverse stories that face their communities.

In advocating for civic engagement and social justice, we can move beyond partisanship with the potential to effect change through the awareness of a greater public good. And libraries do this by the very nature of making ideas available.

During the pandemic, I have been taking a university course on community leadership.

While it’s been a challenge to stay motivated, I have developed a deeper understanding of the power dynamics, marginalization and exclusion of diverse communities and groups. And most important, I have been encouraged by stories of capacity building and engagement strategies through a new dynamic lens.

Much of the course has centered on topics like colonial privilege and responses to systemic racism. At a time when many Indigenous people question Canada’s commitment to reconciliation and when the Black Lives Matter movement is energized on a global scale, there is likely no better time to be immersed in this conversation.

I am not looking forward to taking my final exam, but I am excited about the readings that led me to this course and topics I’ve been exploring. And in true library spirit, here are some books we can read and discuss together - all Canadian; all available at Aurora Public Library.

### A Mind Spread Out on the Ground

by Alicia Elliott

### Seven Fallen Feathers

by Tanya Talaga

### The Skin We’re In

by Desmond Cole

### I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You: a letter to my daughter

by David Chariandy

### Highway of Tears

by Jessica McDiarmid

### Policing Black Lives

by Robyn Maynard

### Until We Are Free edited

by Rodney Diverlus,  
Sandy Hudson and Syrus Marcus Ware.

Reccia Mandelcorn is the Manager, Community Collaboration at Aurora Public Library. The opinions expressed in this column reflect her personal thoughts about the engagement of community with their public library.

## THIS WEEK’S NEW POLL

Are you happy with Council’s decision regarding Library Square?  
**Yes No Unsure**

[www.theauroran.com](http://www.theauroran.com)

RESULTS TO DATE September 1, 2020	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>UNSURE</b>
	<b>45%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>0%</b>

After years of planning and preparation, Council last week approved to move forward with the construction tender and ground-breaking on the historic Library Square project.

In doing so, we will take the exciting last step in a decades-long journey to translate ideas into action and realize a shared vision for the transformation of Aurora’s Downtown core.

We didn’t get here overnight. And we didn’t get here alone. Over the course of many years, thousands of residents, businesses and Council members have directly contributed to this shared vision. And it is stronger for it.

Library Square has been a hot topic for decades and most certainly at every election cycle. Every member sitting around this table has discussed, in length, the revitalization of our downtown core, as have the members of many councils before us.

Why? Because we all recognize its importance, and that our downtown core IS Aurora. It’s the very heart of our Town. It’s been that way for generations – the economic, social and cultural hub of our community.

Unfortunately, over time, our downtown, like many other communities, has been in decline. It has suffered from a lack of investment and we have struggled to bring the long-anticipated vision for Library Square to reality. As a result, today, we have a downtown core that is in vital need of renewal.

Council’s approval is the next step in launching the Library Square project and overcoming the struggles we have had in achieving our Town’s vision.

This project is not just revitalization of our downtown core, it is a reconnection. Re-establishing that connection is the key to rebuilding a



## Getting Things Done

Mayor  
Tom Mrakas

vibrant local economy.

It represents a significant investment in the revitalization of our downtown core, but importantly, in Aurora as a whole, so we can realize Aurora’s potential to be a strong, vibrant, locally supported economy and community.

Building on the investments of the Library, The Armoury and Town Park, Library Square creates a destination for people to gather and businesses to locate and grow.

Library Square will have a complex of larger multi-use spaces and break-out rooms to provide businesses and community organizations a variety of options to hold their programs and annual events, thus providing spaces in our Town that will give our residents a reason to continue to shop locally instead of neighbouring communities and provide our businesses an opportunity to grow and thrive.

We have all seen the power a well-designed public space can have, particularly when it comes to rejuvenating downtown.

Experiences in other communities make a strong financial case for investing in our downtown. Successful downtown revitalizations have triggered as much as \$10 to \$15 of private investment for every \$1 of public investment. So, in our case, our \$51 million investment

## The Return of The Auroran Horoscope

As you may have noticed, Brock has featured a number of articles over the past month looking back at earlier issues of The Auroran.

One column that hasn’t been touched on yet is the horoscope that ran on a monthly basis several years ago.

It’s been a while since this has appeared in the paper, so perhaps it’s time to take a fresh look at what’s in the stars for Aurora residents.

### Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

A new wardrobe will give you a fresh start. After all, sweatpants have been okay for the past few months when lounging around the house and making Zoom calls, but are not as fashionable now that you’re starting to venture outside.

### Libra (September 23 – October 22)

Stress can be overwhelming at this time, so help reduce it by holding off on opening your property tax or water bill.

### Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

You will have elevated levels of altruism towards others in the coming months. Or at least, that’s what you’ll tell people to justify that you’ve already purchased 3 boxes of Halloween candy, one of which is already open.



## INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

### Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

It’s time to venture down new roads, unless you’re a local turtle, in which case a volunteer will probably escort you back into a pond as soon as you try to step off of the curb.

### Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

You will be the centre of attention everywhere you go today. Perhaps it wasn’t a good idea to let your daughter bedazzle your mask.

### Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)

Travel is in your future! That is, if you consider going out for local curbside pickup as travel.

### Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

It’s time to make the most of your living space, especially since you have so

much more room now that you’ve gone through half of the toilet paper you’ve hoarded since March.

### Aries (March 21 – April 19)

Take time for a quiet night at home, just like the past 177 nights since the pandemic started.

### Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

You may feel like you’re just going endlessly in circles, but stay positive – sooner or later you’ll find a parking spot at the GO station.

### Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

Your patience is rewarded, but not until next year when your yellow, sun scorched lawn turns green again.

### Cancer (June 21 – July 22)


It’s a good time to make new friends, so while you’re waiting endlessly in line to get into a shop, feel free to start up a conversation with the people around you.

### Leo (July 23 – August 22)

A relative will leave you a financial windfall that you can use for a pet project (note: for council members, substitute “former council” for “relative”, and “hydro funds” for “a financial windfall”).


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







# Christine Elliott

## MPP - Newmarket-Aurora

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### Help your kids keep themselves and others safe from COVID-19 when returning to school.



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# Housing supply, options key issue in tackling LGBTQ youth homelessness in York Region

By Brock Weir

Blue Door Shelters’ recent announcement they would be opening supportive housing opportunities was particularly welcome – and timely – to Dr. Alex Abramovich.

Abramovich, alongside Nelson Pang, recently released a comprehensive study “Understanding LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in York Region” which not only examined the issue from the root causes, but also made a series of recommendations on how to combat the problem.

Among their recommendations at combatting youth homelessness within York Region was a concerted effort to “support the delivery of population-based housing options” for youth within this demographic.

“Ensuring that there are LGBTQ2S-inclusive housing options that are not segregated by the gender binary, including emergency shelter beds, traditional housing, and supportive housing programs, either through the development of new housing options and/or refinement of existing housing options,” was among the recommendations.

For Abramovich, the move by Blue Door Shelters is a step in the right direction, but the community needs to walk together in order to make a real difference.

“One of the biggest responses [since we released the report] is Blue Door Shelters announced they are going to be opening supportive housing for LGBTQ2S youth probably sometime in the fall and I think they are opening up fairly quickly,” says Abramovich. “It will be the first in York Region. That was the best reaction to get from a study like this. When they released that announcement, they commented on how the findings of such a study led to these types of responses, so programs need this type of research to have the evidence they sometimes require to get funding, or to prove the point why it is necessary.”

Abramovich, Pang and the research team went into the study knowing that “generally speaking the mental health of LGBTQ2S individuals is sort of poorer than the general public” and much of that has to do with stigma and discrimination.

“Oftentimes I think people have the impression that someone hears LGBTQ2S people have higher rates

of mental health issues, I think people will think, ‘That is because they identify as LGBTQ2S.’ I think that comes from so many years of gender and sexual orientation being pathologized historically,” says Abramovich. “People unfortunately still hold onto that notion that if you’re trans, whatever trans means, you have a mental disorder. For me, it is very, very important to really reiterate it is not because of an individual’s identity, but it has everything to do with society’s response and that is why, in the past, other studies have shown us that LGBTQ2S individuals have higher rates of mental health issues and it is due to stigma and discrimination.

“We went into this study knowing that and also knowing from previous research that for a lot of queer and trans youth who are experiencing homelessness, you can only imagine the mental health impact of rejection, stigma and not having a safe place to call home.”

But, there were a few unknown factors. Studies on individuals living in large cities like Toronto are well-documented, but York Region proved to be a different story.

Within the context of the study, “population-based housing” means the complete menu of different housing programs and how they best meet the needs of the community. Emergency shelters are just one type of housing which Abramovich says is more of a “crisis response” when an individual first experiences homelessness and can show up asking for a bed for the night.

“It is very immediate,” says Abramovich.

“Then there are transitional housing programs where you typically would have to apply. You may have to get referred or you can self-refer, but you still have to apply and fill out a form, you may have to come in for an interview, but

you could then get a bed and stay up to a year, sometimes two. That is supposed to be a lot more independent than an emergency shelter. They provide you with services – usually a case worker – and you have other types of life skill workshops and that type of program is meant to help a young person get back on their feet, help them to secure employment or finish up school, but really also provide them with a safe place to live during that time with the hope that when they are complete with the program they can hopefully move into their own apartment.”

Blue Door Shelters’ announcement, says Abramovich, would fall under the umbrella of “supportive housing programs” and affordable housing.

“Typically, you would have to pay a portion of your rent per month,” says Abramovich of how supportive housing programs work. “Usually there isn’t a 24-hour staff member who is there, so it is even more independent.”

Specialized programs in York Region, adds Abramovich, need to be developed through an LGBTQ2S lens “with a very strong understanding of the unique needs and challenges that LGBTQ2S youth experience.”

“It is really just so critical to have that and it really came out in this study for a lot of the youth, speaking about issues they were experiencing and not being able to access housing services because of not feeling safe to disclose their identity... based on previous experiences they have had,” says Abramovich. “It is so important that services understand why we need to have population-based services and these are actually life-saving programs. These are programs that can save young people’s lives and the fact that we don’t have enough of these services right now, we don’t have any of these services in York Region.”

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# Multicultural Festival returns in a new, limited way this month



Performers participating in Aurora’s 2019 Multicultural Festival are pictured at the Town Park Band Shell last year. The Festival is returning to the venue – in a new way – this month.

## Dance and culinary experiences pepper new take on family favourite

By Brock Weir

Over the last few years, Aurora’s Multicultural Festival has become a late summer staple – and the family-favourite is set to return to Town Park once again this month, but in a very different way.

This year, due to public health restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Multicultural Festival will be a mixture of in-person and virtual performances, representing the cultures of Brazil, Spain, Italy, and Hawaii.

In-person performances, limited to 100 people, will take place Saturday, September 12 and Saturday, September 19, with two performances each day from 9 a.m. to 10.15 a.m. and a repeat performance from 11.15 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. While they take place at the same time each week, the

September 12 and 19 performances will offer something different.

Performances will also stream virtually via the Town’s social media channels.

“We have always found the cultural groups so mesmerizing and vibrant,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. “Clearly, it is not something most of us are exposed to on a frequent basis, so that is why it is so captivating.

“New this year, because we know with the successful Multicultural Festivals, there is always rhythm and there is always food; although sampling food and those types of culinary experiences aren’t really possible this year, we have gone to great effort to team up with a variety of chefs, who will be putting together a variety of dishes, all online, step by step, for the entire week. We have designed a menu so families can cook together every evening, try a different dish, and try a different flavour.”

In the lead-up to the Multicultural Festival, the Town will release a list of

ingredients so residents will have everything they need to taste the world – including such staples as risotto and paella.

“When we started working on the Multicultural Festival, it was back in May and we were still in Stage 1 then and it was very hard to look forward with enthusiasm,” says Ms. Ware. “But it was so important to come up with a dynamic program that was safe and accessible.”

In some ways, the Town’s Concerts in the Park summer series has been a litmus test. As will be the case with the Multicultural Festival, space at Town Park for revellers is limited to 100 but hundreds will be able to experience the performances virtually.

“We have been averaging over 1,700 viewers with our concerts, so I am hoping with these cultural performances, which we didn’t do virtually before, people can actually see them again and again,” says Ms. Ware. “I remember last year specifically seeing the Egyptian dancers, I had never seen this type of dancing before; it was indescribable how beautiful it was and, with regret, it wasn’t livestreamed. This year, you have the ability to see it over and over.

“I am grateful we’re in Stage 3 and it has been able to come together in this format, but the part I am really excited about is the at-home virtual experiences. I think a lot of people in this industry it has been a natural pivot to go virtual, but what does virtual mean? It has always been in the forefront of our minds to ensure that our virtual offerings are the best they can be because we don’t want people developing virtual fatigue. We want you to know in Aurora that when we say ‘virtual’ you know it is quality. We are hoping that the different chefs cooking in different kitchens with different recipes, making it possible [to bring in a new] experience we wouldn’t have been able to have in our previous format. I’m also hoping it will stay with us for years to come and these efforts weren’t for a one-time flash in the pan. Hopefully it is going to strengthen our programming from here on out.”

The performances set to be captured virtually won’t be the only elements of the 2020 Multicultural Festival that will live on for years to come; Ms. Ware says she hopes the online cooking demonstrations will inspire people in the community to share their recipes towards the creation of a community cookbook.

“As residents send in recipes, they are sending in the flavour they want to showcase and we’re hoping that as recipes come in we’re able to curate and put it into a package you can literally print from our webpage,” she says. “Maybe it is a recipe you never heard of but seems easy enough that you want to try, but we’re giving the community and opportunity to share their specific culture directly.

“Just stay curious – it’s what we all need to do.”

For more on the 2020 Multicultural Festival, visit [aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival](http://aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival).

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# BUSINESS & FINANCE



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## Chamber of Commerce will “continue monitoring” Library Square financials

By Brock Weir

It was an eleventh-hour decision, but the Aurora Chamber of Commerce has ultimately voiced its support of the redevelopment of Library Square.

It was a decision that was, according to Debra Wilson, Board Chair of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, down to the wire, with questions being posed to municipal CAO Doug Nadorozny as late as the morning of Tuesday, August 25, just hours before Council made the final decision to press on.


“The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is and has always been in support of the development of Library Square,” said Ms. Wilson. “We are a strong advocate for the revitalization



Photo courtesy of the Town of Aurora



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*Featuring local business success stories and an update from Rocco Rossi, President of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce*

The 2019-2020 Audited Financial Statements and year-end reports will be presented, along with a look into the future. Chamber members will have the opportunity to virtually meet the 2020-2021 Board of Directors.

Advance registration is required at [www.aurorachamber.on.ca](http://www.aurorachamber.on.ca)

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of the Downtown Area and a proponent for the activities that foster growth and business success for our members and the business community. The Chamber always acts in the best interests of our members and looks to keep them informed on matters that impact their businesses, especially in today’s economic climate. Today, we know that many of our businesses are struggling, with unknown post-pandemic business realities that may last as long as 2022 and beyond. The Chamber supports Library Square and the revitalization that it would bring to the downtown core.

“There are concerns around the unknown impacts of the pandemic and the resulting increase in taxes from all levels of government, especially in these economic conditions. It is our responsibility to research and analyse any increases in taxes and ask appropriate questions, which we have done at the municipal level,

including having several questions answered by the CAO as late as this morning. These are difficult times and we ask responsible questions on behalf of our members. We make every effort to ensure the business community of Aurora is positioned for success. Decisions made here tonight by Council will impact the entire business community as this is a project with significant scope and financial impact.”

Ms. Wilson said she and the Chamber reviewed the project’s financials and “will continue to serve” members by “monitoring the project and keeping them informed on the fiscal accountability of the project.

“The Aurora Chamber of Commerce has always valued its relationship with the Town and we will continue to strengthen our relationship for the benefit of the business community as we move forward,” she concluded.

## Members of the public divided on moving forward with Library Square

**From page 2**

expert consultation, financial audits for viability and at least three prior terms of Council discussing this topic, almost since the early 2000s. This is an entire generation of kids, including my own, who have now left for university, who have missed on having something as nice as Library Square, but at the end of that time they continue to simply do nothing and leave the topic to the next term of Council to deal with. In my view, this is a waste of time and money. This term of Council is a Council that is finally taking action to improve the Town of Aurora for its residents. They were elected on the platform to move forward with Library Square.

“While I have heard from many on social media that we should use the Hydro Reserve fund on lowering our taxes. This, in the end, gives the Town nothing for the revitalization that is badly needed,” she said. “The Town’s not even permitted to use these funds for operating budget. That was not the intent of that reserve fund and, really, at the end of the day, who is going to remember in 20 years that our taxes were lowered by a few dollars a year?”

“We will remember the enjoyment we get every day by going to Library Square to enjoy an event, go for a skate, have a hot chocolate, have dinner at a great new restaurant, or shop at a great new store that just opened up.”



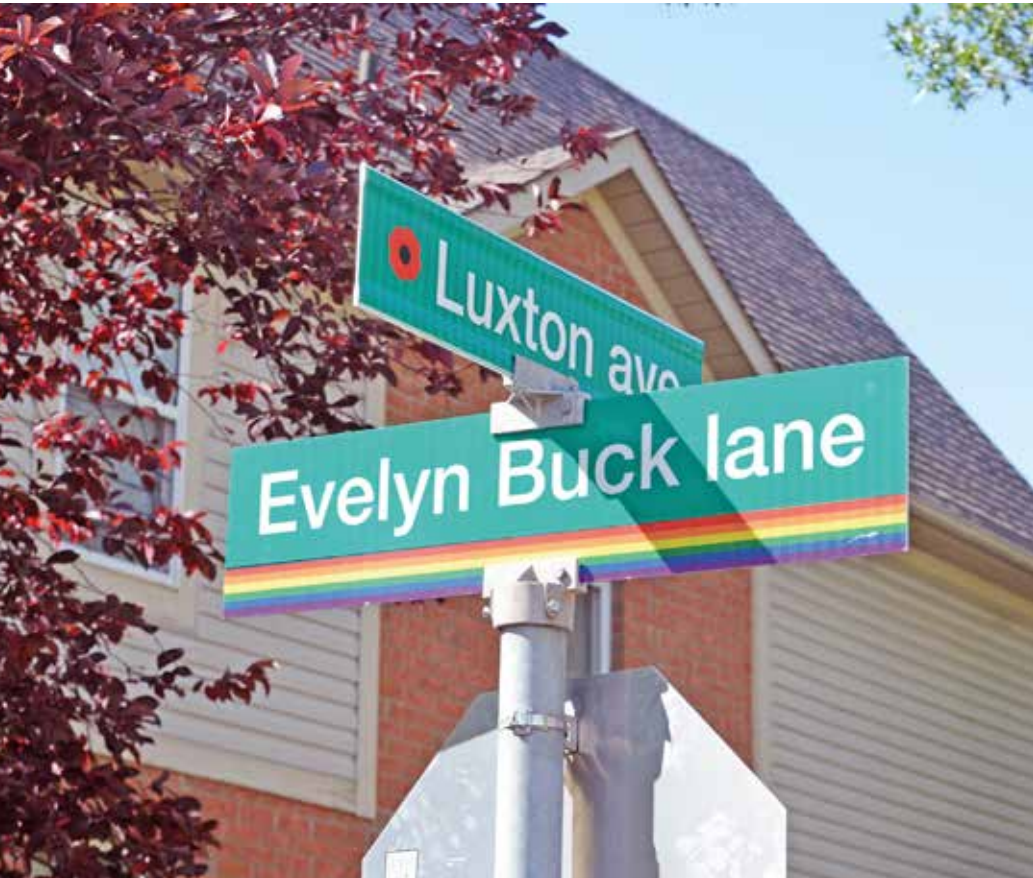
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# New street signs represent inclusivity without name change



**RAINBOW DIRECTIONS** – Street signs on Evelyn Buck Lane were recently replaced with new versions emblazoned with a Pride rainbow, following controversial comments made on social media by former mayor Evelyn Buck. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

By Brock Weir

As far as compromises go, this is a colourful one.

Residents of Evelyn Buck Lane now see all the colours of the rainbow as they enter and exit the residential street following controversial comments made online by the street’s namesake – and former Aurora mayor --- regarding Aurora’s new Rainbow Crosswalk.

The comments made by the 92-year-old Ms. Buck, who served on Council until the fall of 2014, sparked a flurry of debate and sparked calls led by Evelyn Buck Lane couple Luisa Gomez and Maricella Saucedo to

have the name of the street changed.

At this time, there are no formal resolutions before Council to formally have the name of the street changed, but each sign now bears the street’s name on top of a representation of the Pride flag.

“Evelyn Buck Lane has been altered to include a rainbow from a suggestion by a resident. The Town did put up the sign at the request of Mayor Mrakas,” said the Town in a statement. “At this time, there is no motion from Council to change the name of the street. The idea of a name change can only be achieved as a result of an approved Council motion. At this time, staff or the Mayor has not been advised of any pending notices of motion.”

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You may find that your pain or stiffness affects your work, housekeeping, leisure activities, exercise, sports or other activities. You go to the drug store or to your doctor and get pills to help relieve your pain. But you find the pain keeps returning. Alternatively, the doctor may refer you to a specialist who may tell you that surgery is needed or is an option for you.

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.

Also, you may have heard that there are serious health risks associated with chronic use (or overuse) of pain pills or anti-inflammatory drugs that include damage to the liver, kidneys and gut.

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# Local band brings “Soul” to Concerts in the Park

Despite the rain, Town Park was filled with Soul on Wednesday, August 26, as Soul Benefit took over the Band Shell in the penultimate performance in the Town's popular Concerts in the Park Summer Series. (Top, Above, and Below) Led by Steve Falk, Soul Benefit lends their talents to help community organizations and non-profits raise money and awareness for worthy issues and causes. (Bottom Left) Ticket-holders get comfy under threatening skies. (Bottom Right) The evening's concert was emceed by Lori Hoyes, President of the Aurora Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger





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# THE AURORAN

## SECTION B

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## Club Aurora adapts to virtual fitness programs



Brandie Yorg demonstrates chair exercises in online fitness tutorials. **Contributed photo**

By Brock Weir

You don’t need a fancy gym to stay fit if you’re more comfortable staying at home. Sure, it might help, but if you’re looking for the basics from a local instructor, all you really need is an internet connection – and maybe a chair.

Since the early days of the global pandemic, Club Aurora’s Brandie Yorg has been leading the community, with a special emphasis on Aurora seniors, in a series of simple and easy training exercises through the Town’s YouTube channel and Aurora’s Rec at Home program.

The videos started off as just snippets between 20 and 30 seconds, but based on positive feedback from viewers, operations have only expanded.

“Going online was a way we could still interact with the fitness community because Club Aurora has quite a big fitness community,” says Ms. Yorg. “It was received really, really well. Then I was approached about doing some longer videos so people could actually do a class and not have to do it through Zoom. Not everyone, especially at first, was comfortable doing Zoom, so this way you could just do it.”

Videos for general Club Aurora patrons are of higher intensity, but videos tailor-made for members of the Aurora Seniors’ Centre, and older Aurorans at large, are simpler and often incorporate common household items – like a kitchen chair.

“Stretch and Relax are the most popular fitness classes at the Centre,” she says. “I tried to do something that would appeal to everyone. If you wanted to move, you had the ability to do something.”

But, creating videos that were both interactive and engaging was something she describes as a “whole new ballgame.”

“As instructors, we’re used to being able to see people and you know what’s working, you know what they are understanding. I really had to play around with it and use my expertise from the past, the classes I had been previously teaching (prior to COVID-19) and just went from there. I did the things that were most popular and easy to understand, things that didn’t need a lot of cueing and things that anyone can do. I tried to do things you could do the first time out.”

Ms. Yorg began working at Club Aurora, the Town’s fitness centre located at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, six years ago. She began as a fitness instructor there and has since moved over to the Aurora Seniors’ Centre.

Going online presented its own challenges, but Ms. Yorg says she knew that the ultimate goal was connecting with people and that is what drives her – in person and in a virtual realm.

“I miss connecting with people so I tried to use a lot of the same wording that I would use in class as I was doing the videos,” she explains. “I felt people would be watching them and I was going to end up in someone’s living room connecting with them – and I missed that.

“I think these videos will [continue]. People can come back to them on their own schedule, do them on their own time, and there will be a need for them,” she says.

The latest installment, Feet Fitness for Older Adults (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWijn9YEp3o) launched Thursday and has already had hundreds of hits. If you haven’t gone over to try them out, there is no time like the present, says Ms. Yorg.

“Just check out some of the videos and just start moving!”

### CLUB AURORA RE-OPENS FOR WORKOUTS AND FITNESS

Club Aurora’s fitness centre is now back in business.

The gym, based at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) re-opened Monday for scheduled workouts and fitness classes.

Participants are required to pre-register for a time slot for individual workouts and classes. Individual workouts will be booked for 75-minute time slots with a capacity of 15 participants per block and up to 15 participants for group classes. Fitness participants can register now online at aurora.ca/eplay.

New procedures will be in place to provide safe fitness programs and services to the community in accordance with provincial and regional health department regulations. These include controlled access, limited capacity and scheduled

time blocks. As per provincial and regional health department regulations, fitness participants are required to wear face mask or face covering when entering, exiting and travelling throughout the facility. A face mask will not be required during physical activity.

At this time, all regular fitness memberships will remain on hold until full-service levels can resume. When reinstated, all fitness memberships on hold will receive an extension date based on when the facility closed due to COVID-19. All returning members will have the option of purchasing a one-month or three-month fitness

membership at a reduced rate of 25 per cent off current fees, or pay-as-you-go at \$5 per activity. Drop-in services are not available at this time.

The change room amenities, lockers and showers will not be available. Participants are asked to come dressed in workout clothes. Fitness change rooms will be available for washroom use only. Water fountains will not be available for use and Club Aurora encourages participants to bring their own water bottles and refill them at the automated water filling station inside the AFLC. The walking track, squash courts and cycle fit studio classes are still closed at this time.

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# Aurora Tigers land former Boston Bruins NHL player to coaching staff

By Robert Belardi

The Aurora Tigers have brought in former NHL winger for the Boston Bruins and the Toronto Maple Leafs, Greg Johnston, as associate coach. The club announced Johnston's arrival on August 19 via social media. Team Governor Jim Thomson says this is a serious signing. "Greg and I were teammates with the Toronto Marlboros in the OHL. He's a knowledgeable hockey man. The fact that he was available to add to what Jim Wells and Robert Powers are going to be doing, to me, it's a

serious signing to get him," Thomson explained. Thomson adds bringing back General Manager Dermot Anderson to the club was important. He says Anderson is a very hard worker and has put together an exceptional team this offseason. He admires Johnston for playing in the NHL and says he is a great mentor both on and off the ice. Tigers head coach Jim Wells Jr. is also a big admirer for the former NHL player. He says he looks forward to his consistency. "It's one thing me saying something, but he's actually been



Contributed photo

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there. When he speaks, he's actually done it. He has the credibility."

"Our personalities after meeting each other, we're similar but different. I think we really complement each other. It will be easier for us to give us a consistent message," said Wells.

Johnston was drafted by the Boston Bruins 42<sup>nd</sup> overall in the 1983 NHL draft. As an 18-year-old, Johnston first appeared for the Bruins in the 83-84 season, scoring two goals in 15 games.

His most recognized season with the Bruins and of his NHL career came years later in the 1986-87 season. Johnston recorded 27 points in 76 games.

He spent many years flipping in and out of the AHL as a Bruin with the Maine Mariners.

In June 1990, Johnston was traded to the New York Rangers for Chris Nilan, and quickly flipped to the Toronto Maple Leafs for Tie Domi and Mark LaForest.

Johnston spent majority of the 90-91 season with the Newmarket Saints recording 82 points in 72 games. He made one appearance for the Maple Leafs that season.

In 1991-92 Johnston recorded another outstanding year this time with the St. John's Maple Leafs, with 73 points. Unfortunately, he was called up to the Maple Leafs roster for only three games, recording one assist.

From 1994 to 2002, Johnston travelled to Europe and played for the Iserlohn Roosters, Kassel Huskies, Berlin Capitals, MODO Hockey Ornskoldsvik and the Munich Barons.

The Barrie native has coaching experience in the OJHL with the Collingwood Colts. Under Dermot Anderson, Johnston was relieved of his duties in September 2019 and has reunited with Anderson here in Aurora.

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# THE GREAT 2020 HOSPICE ACTIVITY CHALLENGE

The Great 2020 Hospice Activity Challenge has been extended through September 11th. Why not use the Labour Day weekend to get active with your family before the fall routine kicks into action?

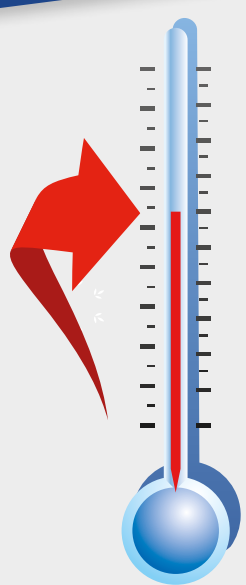
## EXTENDED TO September 11<sup>th</sup>

Our #HospiceActivityChallenge asks community members to set a personal activity challenge while raising funds for hospice. You can:

- swim laps
- do yoga
- dance with your friends, or
- choose anything else that gets you active!

*Get moving and ask your friends and family to support you!*

# GOAL: \$80,000



We are at  
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Funds raised from this event are critical to ensuring our residents have a comfortable home-like setting during their end-of-life care. Without community donations, our hospices wouldn't be able to offer the home-based comforts our residents and clients enjoy, such as freshly baked goods, companionship and respite visits, bereavement sessions, and self-healing through art.

COVID-19 has impacted how we operate, but not how we connect with our residents and families. We have continued to provide critical support to families throughout the pandemic, and need YOUR help to raise the funds to keep these programs available.

*YOU can help by participating in the #HospiceActivityChallenge. Set your goal. Tell your friends. Get active. And most of all, help your hospice.*

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Cynthia's Story  
*Gifts of Hospice*

## In 2008 I was introduced to my very first residential hospice

I was in university in Sudbury and decided to volunteer at Vale Inco Residential Hospice. I was welcomed, trained and given a weekly shift when I would arrive and check in with the spiritual care coordinator to see where she felt my time would be best spent. I volunteered for eight months and it was a valuable experience. As I was preparing myself with formal education to work in the field of spiritual and pastoral care, I was given the gift of seeing the difference I made at the bedside with the client as well as with the families of the dying. Hospice is a place where people are allowed to be dying. Hospice is one of the best kept secrets that we want to get out to all who will listen. My #HospiceActivityChallenge gives a way to have the

conversation and talk about how hospice can serve society and offer a beautiful place to honour someone's dying wishes. If you have never been gifted with spending time in a hospice or the chance to walk the journey with a loved one - let me tell you it is beautiful.

I choose to support hospice because I believe it fosters the chance to befriend our greatest fears. Hospice fosters a relationship with dying in a beautiful, caring way.

*Living fully, with gusto through this #HospiceActivityChallenge brings honour to those who are unable to live.*

The reason I support hospice is to support the dying by living fully and being wholly present to the journey.

Please give, sponsor and support the  
**#HospiceActivityChallenge.**

It is one true way to pay it forward knowing your dollars pave the way to help others grieve.

*Cynthia*



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# Turtle Tias continue lending helping hand to reptile neighbours

**From page 1**

own but at least we’ve given them a head start!” explained Kenyon, who has lived in Aurora for 19 years.

The five Aurora residents – Pippette Eibel, Flo Leava, Rebecca Prins, Maricella Saucedo and Wendy Kenyon – have devoted countless hours of monitoring to keeping the nests safe, in rain and shine, at daytime and in the night. “We’re a small but committed group of five core volunteers, with others we can call upon when extra help is needed. We have one resident, Irene, who offers her services as a ‘turtle taxi’ and is happy to transport turtles in need of medical attention,” said Kenyon. “We are also joined by volunteers like Julian, Sabrina and Eva, who are happy to learn and help out.”

Road traffic is a major threat to turtles so the Tias spend a lot of time trying to keep the adult females safe during nesting season when they’re crossing busy roads to get to their nesting sites. “It takes 59 years and about 1,500 eggs for one adult female to be replaced in the population so every one of these mammas is critical to their survival. Turtles are pre-programmed to return to the same area year after year so, sadly, a busy road like Henderson Drive is no deterrent for a determined female. We carefully monitor the nesting females, making sure they’re not disturbed, and then when they’re finished, we make

sure they return safely to the nearest wetland. Nesting cages are installed as soon as possible to protect the nests from predators,” said Kenyon.

The Turtle Tias also patrol the area to make sure no one is taking any turtles home. Kenyon and her fellow Tias believe it’s all about educating people.

“It’s sad to say but there are a few people who want to take them home as pets. These are wild animals and need to be in their natural habitat from the very beginning to learn about how to survive in their environment. Denying them that critical learning experience can severely compromise their ability to survive. Since Snapping Turtles can live for over a hundred years and grow very large, they are not appropriate pets. Besides, it’s illegal.”

Last year, the Turtle Tias successfully released 140 turtle Snapping Turtle hatchlings. “This year, we’re anticipating more, but so much depends on how well we can continue to protect the nests from predators, even with cages installed. It’s a sad fact that less than 1 per cent of turtle eggs reach adulthood but at least we can increase those odds,” Kenyon pointed out.

With the COVID-19 pandemic taking root earlier this year, matters changed altogether. An upside was that the community became more engaged in the turtles’ well-being.

“They alerted us when turtles were in danger, like when they were attempting to cross a busy road or when they were injured. Far more people have been out walking these past five months and that’s helped us keep a communal eye on our reptilian friends,” said Kenyon, admitting that locals have been uplifted by being part of something positive during these particularly dark times.

With greater interest, there has been a downside too as some people get too close to nesting females. “We realize it’s exciting to watch but what they likely don’t know is how stressful it is for these nesting mammas

when they’re disturbed laying their clutch. In some cases, they’ll abandon the process altogether which can prove fatal. We’re trying to educate as and when we can and most people are very understanding once they know why we’re asking them to keep a certain distance.”

Being a turtle volunteer isn’t a glamorous job – it’s hard work. But it’s rewarding too. As Kenyon points out, “The sight of a tiny hatchling emerging from the ground or a magnificent adult female slowly making her way back to the wetland after successfully laying her clutch makes everything so worthwhile.”

## Briefly

### NEW OUTBREAK AT CHARTWELL AURORA: REGION

An institutional outbreak at Aurora’s Cobblestone Lodge declared by the Region of York last week is now closed, according to the Public Health Unit, but a new week has brought a new outbreak to Chartwell Aurora (formerly Resthaven). The Region declared an outbreak at Cobblestone Lodge, located at Yonge and Kennedy Street on August 25 after a caregiver was confirmed to have COVID-19. The outbreak, however, was deemed over on August 26 with no cases of the virus found among the residential population of 19, and no further cases within its community of caregivers. Cobblestone Lodge was the second institutional outbreak declared in Aurora since the start of the pandemic, following a lengthy outbreak at Chartwell Aurora. But Chartwell Aurora is now experiencing a second outbreak, this time involving one confirmed case within its complement of health care workers. At press time, this was the sole case at Chartwell Aurora, including the resident population. As of Tuesday, September 1, Aurora has 4 active cases of COVID-19 within the community. In total, the Town has seen 147 confirmed cases of the virus with 128 cases now marked as resolved. There have been 15 confirmed deaths related to the pandemic. Of the remaining active cases, all four are attributed to local transmission or close contact. Region-wide, there have been a total of 3,478 cases of COVID-19 as of September 1, with 3,127 cases now marked as recovered and 98 marked as active. 253 cases have proved fatal.

### OVEN DEEMED CAUSE OF ENGELHARD FIRE

A fire in the early hours of Monday morning on Engelhard Drive was caused by an oven, according to Central York Fire Services (CYFS). The CYFS was called to a business at 6.03 a.m. on August 31 and, upon arrival, crews reported smoke visible from the roof and the call was upgraded to a working fire. “The fire in the oven was quickly distinguished,” said the CYFS on Tuesday. “Crews had to evacuate large volumes of smoke and ensure there was no fire extension.” There were no injuries. “CYFS worked in collaboration with York Regional Police, York Paramedic Services and Enbridge. Richmond Hill and East Gwillimbury provided station coverage under the mutual aid agreement.” 31 firefighters attended the scene.

### DRIVE-IN MOVIE FRIDAY

A recent Disney hit featuring York Region talent will now grace the screen at this Friday’s Drive-In Movie, set to be hosted by the Town of Aurora at the Stronach Aurora Recreation complex. Pre-registration for the event is on now through [aurora.ca/eplay](http://aurora.ca/eplay). For more on the event, including the movie selection. Visit [aurora.ca/moviesinthepark](http://aurora.ca/moviesinthepark).



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



By Brock Weir

# The Auroran at 20: A community that is still “wild” at heart

## THAT’S NOT ALL

A lot has changed in Aurora since The Auroran began publishing 20 years ago this fall, but one thing that has not is the dogged determination of local landscape gardener David Tomlinson in making the Aurora Wildlife Reserve a feature of which the community can be proud.

Readers of recent editions will note Mr. Tomlinson is pleased with the progress that has been made in the last year on the nature reserve and hopes that substantial work will be completed within the next twelve months. But, as our May 1, 2001 edition indicates, it has long been a work in progress.

Mr. Tomlinson is seen here at the edge of the property, a swath of land that starts near the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex at Wellington Street East, all the way up to St. John’s Sideroad as its northern boundary.

## THE CAPTION

Aurora’s David Tomlinson surveys the area he is trying to maintain as a provincially significant wetland and will go to an Ontario Municipal Board hearing next week to make his points. Area is located between Bayview and Leslie Streets, north of Wellington, in Aurora’s northeast quadrant. Several development proposals await the outcome of the hearing. Readers express their opinions in the Letters section.

## THE LETTERS

And did they ever answer the call! Here is just one, penned by an individual who left a lasting legacy by using her talents to capture the changing face of Aurora’s built landscape.

In a letter entitled, “Don’t let David stand up alone,” the late acclaimed artist Dorothy Clark-McClure wrote:

One wonders why multi-millionaire developers cannot afford to allow a 120-metre buffer around a ‘provincially significant wetland’ known as the East Aurora Wetland Complex. For more than 15 years, Aurora resident David Tomlinson has extensively studied this area and the McKenzie Marsh, and now he is pitted against these developers and his own town!

His long-time commitment to ecology and “Breeding Birds of the Oak Ridges Moraine” will take him to the Ontario Municipal Board on May 7 to fight for what he believes.

The Town and the developers sought to silence him by requesting the dismissal of this appeal on the basis that it was “vexatious” and for the purpose of delaying development.

Are paid consultants always to be considered more knowledgeable and worthy of belief than a respected citizen with a long, long history of commitment to nature and his community?

Our Mayor and members of council need to know where other Aurora residents stand on this issue.

David Tomlinson needs your encouragement and support against these Goliaths.

He should not have to stand up alone.

the report coming directly to Council without having been considered by the Leisure Services Advisory Committee.

Their motion to refer the report to committee was defeated.

Council approved the terms of reference for the committee and appointed Councillors Ron Wallace, Dave Griffith, John West, and Evelina MacEachern to serve on the committee and to advertise for four citizen appointees.

Their job will be to allocate space in the soon-to-be-five buildings located within the “square.”

Buildings include the new Library, Church Street School, the old library, old fire hall and Victoria Hall.

With the old library, fire hall, and seniors’ centre buildings bulldozed, the Church Street School, Victoria Hall and “new Library” will be joined by a new addition to the School and a bridge linking it to the Library. Four buildings instead of five, but a decision none the less.

Editorial

# Studying Online is a Viable Option for High School Students

Given the risks and uncertainties around back to school plans in Ontario, studying online remains a consistent and viable option for high school students.

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Students have access to caring teachers at all times throughout their course! If students are unsure about concepts or need clarification solving a problem, ASK Online teachers are an email, phone call or Zoom meeting away. We want students to succeed!

Finally, anytime but especially during these uncertain times, online students will not experience gaps in their learning. Online students have access to full course content and are expected to demonstrate achievement of course expectations so there should not be any learning gaps. This is particularly important for students in Grade 12 who are planning to enter university or college in the near future but nonetheless important for all students.

ASK Online Canada is a private, online school, authorized by the Ontario Ministry of Education to grant credits towards the OSSD. ASK Online Canada is a solid choice for high school students. For more information, call 416-735-5547 or email [info@askonlinecanada.ca](mailto:info@askonlinecanada.ca).

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# Local artist collaborates on graphic novel on personal experience with Japanese internment

By Brock Weir

As a grandmother, Lillian Michiko Blakey shares family stories in unique and creative ways.

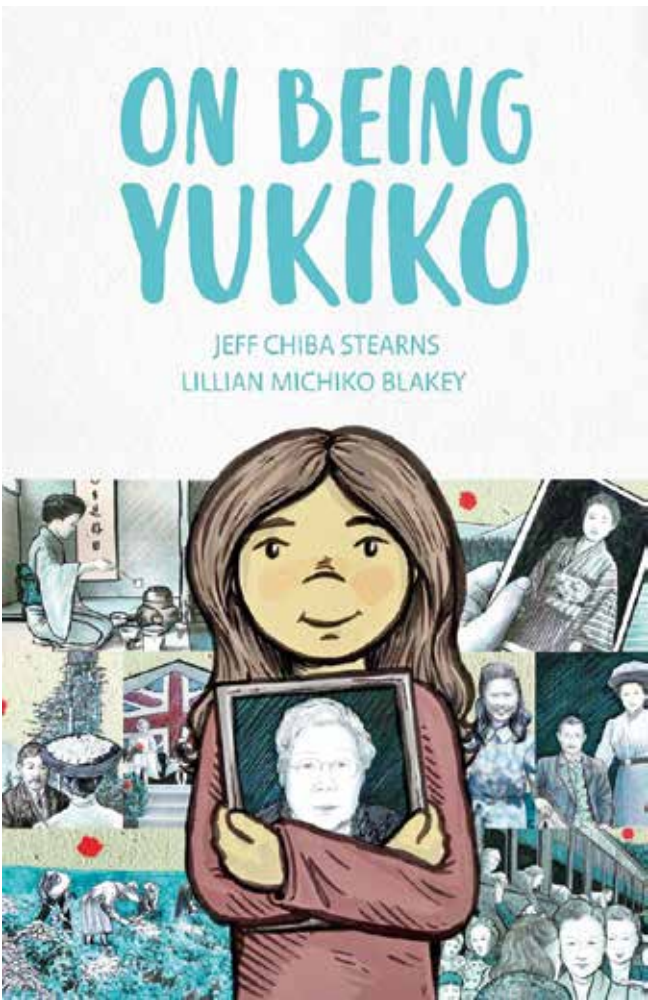
Some are of happy memories, some are memories that might be challenging for young minds to fully process until they are a little bit older – but for Ms. Michiko Blakey, the medium can help convey the message.

As an artist based in York Region, Ms. Michiko Blakey, a third-generation Japanese-Canadian, has shared her family’s very personal story of being interred along with hundreds of other

Japanese Canadians during the Second World War through a very visual lens – including a recent online exhibition and podcast with the Aurora Public Library.

Soon, her moving work, which she has shared at schools throughout York Region, will be reaching new audiences through a graphic novel, a collaboration between herself and Jeff Chiba Stearns, a fourth-generation Japanese-Canadian.

“On Being Yukiko” tells the story of a Japanese-Canadian grandmother sharing her family’s story of internment and forced relocation by the Government of Canada with her mixed-race granddaughter, and,



Contributed photo

through the story, explores issues of identity for young people.

“I have been doing presentations on my mother’s story that is based on her experience of being forced from

home in British Columbia,” she says. “I have been trying to tell this story in my artwork since I first showed in an exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre in 2012. It took me that long to even tell the story from a third-generation Japanese-Canadian. It took me a long time before I could even talk about it.

“I have been trying to tell the story in different ways to try and reach different groups of people. I wanted to educate young people because I was a teacher and really wanted to get this into the curriculum in terms of a part of Canadian history that very few people knew about. I wanted this in the hands of children, so I wanted to turn it into a graphic novel.”

In doing so, she approached Jeff Chiba Stearns, who has racked up an impressive and award-winning resume as an artist and animator. From there, the collaboration morphed into an independently-published graphic novel due out this fall that Ms. Michiko-Blakey acts as a springboard to have this difficult chapter of Canadian history explored more fully in the classrooms.

“My children and grandchildren are all mixed race and that is his particular interest. We decided to do it as a grandmother, me, telling the story of how the family came and what happened to them, to her 12-year-old granddaughter,” she explains. “To add interest, Jeff is adding conversations between the girl and two of her friends at school. By the end, you get into the whole talk about racism and systemic racism and so forth, and identity as a Canadian.

“I don’t know what is going to happen in the schools after the pandemic, but what I would like to see happen is have the graphic novel field-tested in schools because they are being mandated to look at anti-racist education in schools and I have been doing that for 30 years.

“I hope it will be a springboard for discussions on different cultures and try to include their story – telling the story of one group of people can lead us to discussions on how their families came to Canada, what they experienced and so forth. It could be a whole curriculum unit, I hope, because it is part of the social studies curriculum but most teachers didn’t even know the story. They also don’t know what to do with it because there are no resources suggested by the Ministry when they put out the curriculum guide.

“This is the kind of thing that can really turn around racist attitudes when they start to realize all human beings basically want the same things and have the same feelings. When they get to know other kids, the fear is gone. That is what is important for me. I think it is really needed, especially today.”

For more on “On Being Yukiko”, including how to order a copy of your own, visit [meditatingbunny.com/store](http://meditatingbunny.com/store).

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## *Pflag continues look at social media comment*

Last week, I wrote to share a few quotes that were posted online in response to discussions about the rainbow crosswalk coming to Aurora from our former Mayor Evelyn Buck.

Discussion devolved with statements that could be perceived to be bigoted towards the LGBTQ2 community. I encourage you to look up last week's letter if you have not read that yet.

Last week's quotes showed a lack of understanding for why Pride marches are still an important celebration in our community calendars to observe with respect. I highlighted a quick history of recent and past events to provide better context and education.

This week's quotes continue on with a theme and focus on LGBTQ2 folks, but there are also some equally relevant quotes directed towards the black community that I would like to highlight as well.

A little bit about me: I am a gay man

with brown skin and have faced my own fair share of discrimination lately. I also lead a local LGBTQ2 charity, Pflag York Region. I feel it is important to bring this up so readers are aware of the perspective I can lend. Here are just a few of the comments that were made online.

***“Your being gay is your problem, not mine”.***

*“People don’t feel the need to explain themselves. It’s like black people talking about being black. Shutup already. If you don’t keep talking about it no one would even notice...We don’t even see colour so just shut up about it”*

***“I would do nothing to promote your lifestyle, I do not deny your right to live your life as you choose but do not ask me to celebrate it”.***

**Continued on page 18**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

economic consumer. And, as such, I have a special pleading.

Your Library is already one of the main “draws” to Aurora.

I have been a patron for almost over 35 years and look forward to it becoming an ever greater part of my life with the expansion.

The price of \$51,000,000 seems daunting, but it isn't going down. If you put off this investment, it will only increase in cost.

I urge you not to make the same mistake Richmond Hill made when it deferred the building of a new municipal centre at Major Mackenzie and Yonge because it “couldn’t afford it.” Now, the original price seems cheap by comparison, and the use of a better facility over the intervening decades

and, frankly, now a decent “city” centre may never be properly completed.

Now, there may be people in Aurora who disdain culture and the arts and who would never take advantage of a splendid facility like the one proposed. There's nothing I can do to persuade them otherwise.

On the other hand, there should be people on Council who can be convinced that opting for the false economies of – perhaps permanent – deferral is not a good idea.

Your decision should be about whether to create a fine hub for pleasure, utility, and an economic boost...or let the area falter.

Thinking you'll be doing what is fiscally responsible by postponing the project is an illusion.

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The collage features several website mockups:

- Baked Fresh Daily:** A bakery website with a clean, modern design, featuring high-quality images of breads and pastries, a logo, and a navigation menu.
- Sports Lounge:** A website with a vibrant green and blue color scheme, featuring images of people at a bar and a menu.
- Business Directory:** A website with a white background and a grid layout, featuring a search bar, filters, and a list of business listings.
- Other Websites:** Several other website designs are visible in the background, including a business directory, a sports lounge, and a business directory.




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# CROSSWORD

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		63				64				65			

## CLUES ACROSS

1. Chop with an ax
4. Where a bachelor lives
7. Indicates near
10. Doctors' group
11. It's just a number
12. Type of bread
13. Lively ballroom dance
15. Charles S. Dutton TV series
16. A way to use up
19. Singular event
21. Home of Disney World
23. Minerals
24. Most insightful
25. Consult
26. In addition
27. Agents of downfall
30. Organizations
34. Supervises flying
35. Bar bill
36. Alfalfa
41. Dish soap
45. Witnesses
46. Ancient Greek City
47. Newspaper bigwigs
50. Discuss again
54. Small group with shared interests
55. Support
56. Popular sportcoat fabric
57. Take hold of
59. Pre-Mayan civilization
60. Woman (French)
61. Wheeled vehicle
62. Georgia rockers
63. Cold War player (abbr.)
64. Pitching stat
65. Attempt

## CLUES DOWN

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Czech monetary unit                          | 31. When you hope to get there    |
| 2. Arousing intense feeling                     | 32. Angry                         |
| 3. Elks   | 33. One point east of due south   |
| 4. Muscular weaknesses                          | 37. Respects                      |
| 5. Before the present                           | 38. Organize anew                 |
| 6. Figures out                                  | 39. French wine grape             |
| 7. Infinite                                     | 40. Intrinsic nature of something |
| 8. A low wall                                   | 41. Neural structures             |
| 9. Silly  | 42. Brews                         |
| 13. Political organization                      | 43. Where ships take on cargo     |
| 14. Used of a number or amount<br>not specified | 44. Holiday season singer         |
| 17. Divisions of the psyche                     | 47. Shock treatment               |
| 18. Denial                                      | 48. Popular average               |
| 20. Ancient Iranian person                      | 49. Products                      |
| 22. Count on                                    | 51. A type of bear                |
| 27. Popular sports league                       | 52. Utilize                       |
| 28. Water (French)                              | 53. Old world, new                |
| 29. Partner to cheese                           | 58. Swiss river                   |



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 17

The comments highlight another very major problem in the fight for equal and respectful treatment that all marginalized groups face. The problem that it is not seen as everyone’s problem but only their own.

Being gay or LGBTQ2 is not a problem. Talking about being black or continued discussion by the marginalized about their lived experience is not the problem. Bigotry, homophobia, anti-black racism, transphobia, biphobia, antisemitism, all forms of hate and discrimination are the problem.

A lack of care and understanding for others is the problem. Hate and misinformation and misunderstanding is everyone’s lived-experience is the problem and the treatment of LGBTQ2 people and other marginalized groups online is everyone’s problem. They threaten the safety of all community members. Words can be weaponized whether it is your intention or not.

To say something is not your problem implies you bear no responsibility for its solution. When it comes to hate and discrimination, to standing up to people who think you are not their equal, we all have a responsibility to speak up and hold these individuals accountable. To not see colour is to not see the problems and the systemic racism that impacts black communities – even in Aurora.

Being gay, straight, bi, trans, gender-fluid, non-binary, two-spirit, asexual, queer and any other LGBTQ2 inclusive identities are not choices as implied above. I did not choose to be gay no more than you choose to be straight.

I remember when my group of guy friends in elementary school began to share they had crushes on girls in our grade growing up, I began to notice I had those feelings too, but for them. The only things that were imposed on me were the feelings that came from within. They were deep feelings of care and even love. At the same time, these same friends also used the word “gay” and that three letter “f” word fairly often. I knew these related to me but I didn’t quite understand it. But I knew it was different, and I knew these words meant that if I shared my feelings with them I would be shunned, made fun of, or worse, attacked.

I was further harassed and bullied in high school until I found a group of friends that accepted me for me. Even then, that group acceptance then came at the expense of remarks being made behind my back from others outside my circle. I had people to support me and others wouldn’t dare say it to my face – the power of allyship at play. Especially after my mom showed up to my high school and threatened a group of kids who once made threats against me. The power of a parent whose love knows no bounds.

I ask you, what child would chose that for themselves? What parent would want that for their kids? Being LGBTQ2 is no more of a choice than ones’ decision to be born straight. To reiterate, it’s for these reasons that hate and discrimination’s everyone’s problem.

You also don’t need to exactly “celebrate” pride to affirm LGBTQ2 lived experiences. My friends didn’t in high school, but they made me feel accepted in other ways. A lot of the traits of just being a good decent person were tied to

that experience and I am so grateful for that time with them. I am also grateful for the support of my mom, my immediate family, co-workers and companies past and present, and my friends’ past and present. In the absence of support systems like that, LGBTQ2 people are far more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicide.

My first boyfriend died by suicide after losing his battle with depression just shy of his 24th birthday, even despite having access to similar support systems like mine with his own affirming friends and family.

To do nothing, to think hate is not your problem and to not work at supporting

and affirming the lived experiences of the marginalized in any way you can is a form of further promoting the systemic phobias and racism that continue to exist in our communities both culturally and institutionally.

That goes for all forms of hate from those directed towards the LGBTQ2 community, to anti-black racism, antisemitism and Islamophobia to name a few. The choice to be silent when you have the means to speak up for others is a choice to promote the status quo, one that is not affirming to the marginalized.

Tristan Coolman  
Pflag York Region

Getting Things Done

From page 5

longer we delay, the longer it will be before this critical element of our downtown revitalization plan can have a positive impact on our local economy.

Investment inspires investment. Pausing doesn’t stimulate the economy – it risks stagnating it.

Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to speak directly to hundreds of residents and business owners and can say confidently that there is overwhelming support for this historic project

However, as is the case with any large-scale community project. The support is overwhelming but not unanimous.

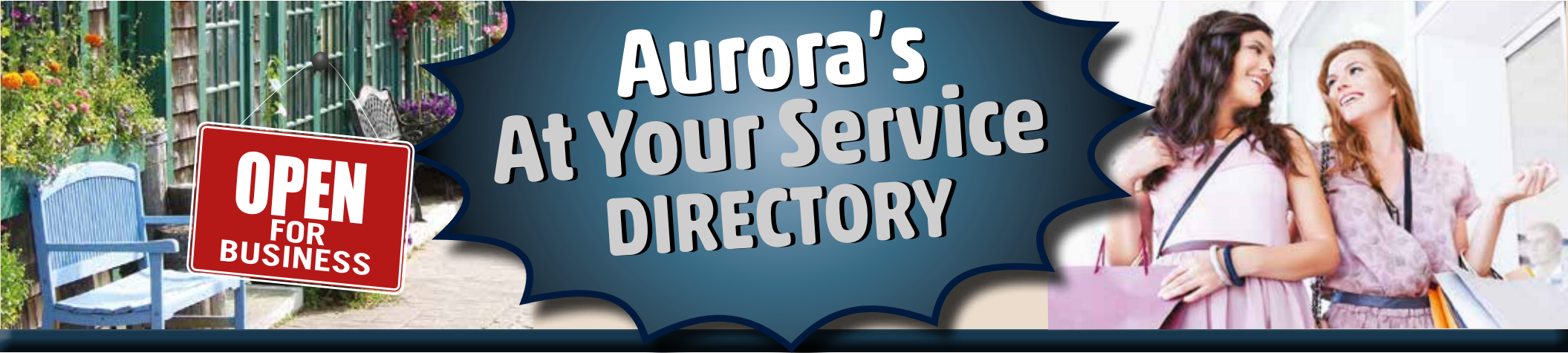
I have listened to the views of those who say we should go slow or go smaller and acknowledge these sentiments.

However, I firmly believe now is not the time for a “smaller” vision for aurora. We need to do this right the first time and take progressive action for a brighter future.

I am proud of the work the previous Council started and this Council has finished by taking the historic next step to making the long-term vision for our downtown core a reality.

Library Square is a community building project that will bring community and economy together. Our downtown core will return to being a destination for residents, businesses and visitors alike and our commitment to its revitalization will be fulfilled.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “The future depends on what we do in the present.”



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# Community already seeing benefits of upcoming wildlife reserve: advocate

**From page 1**  
has been swift and could be “pretty well done” in another year.  
Trail construction within the expansive nature reserve, which runs from St. John’s Sideroad in the north to Wellington Street East, just west of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) in the south, is currently underway and Mr. Tomlinson says he is encouraged by the progress.

“It is progressing faster than ever because they need to,” he says. “People are beginning to wander all over it and the way that is stopped is by having trails. They’re now starting to fence the areas, so it is beginning to take shape now. In another year or so, it should be pretty well finished. The big problem is how much money. During WWthe virus, if we can save money, we should. We need the money for other things.”

A chief way the Town can save money on steering the wildlife reserve to completion is the installation of time-tested drop-board dams to manage the water levels within on-site wetlands.

This has been a perennially thorny issue between proponents of the reserve and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), which has the final word on the issue. Mr. Tomlinson says that drop-board dams and associated berms are the most cost-effective way of achieving these goals, despite LSRCA policy.

The opposition to drop-board dams stems from concerns about the management of migrating cold

water fish and the potential for such management systems to raise water temperatures.

“Even though we now have stormwater ponds that clean the water up, it is not the heat of the water that is the problem but the pollution and the salt,” says Mr. Tomlinson. “Their basic policy is you can’t put fill [for berms] in the river valley and you can’t use drop-board dams. First of all, they widened Wellington Street, which put thousands of tonnes of fill into the East Holland River. Then, they widened St. John’s Sideroad, which put a few more thousand cubic feet of fill in, then they built Hartwell Way, which put even more fill into it – because it suited our economy and transportation, that wasn’t a problem, but it is a problem if you want to provide habitat for wildlife and build a berm across.

“It is simpler, more efficient, cheaper to run, but it doesn’t match Lake Simcoe’s policy. I think the LSRCA needs to modify their policy. I don’t disagree with it with prestige areas across the Oak Ridges Moraine. It is a sound policy in rural areas, but it does not work in highly polluted urban areas.”

The LSRCA confirms they are not in favour of either new online ponds or new dams, as outlined in their watershed development guidelines.

According to Susan Jagminas of the LSRCA, there are policies in place that relate to existing dams and dykes.

“Our guidelines do allow for alterations and maintenance as per

the conditions outlined in that section (9.2.5),” she said. “We issued a permit for the repair of the existing dam near Hartwell (per our guidelines), but have not received any permit applications for the eco park.

“Our Guidelines do not speak specifically to new dams. However, Section 9.2.2 provides that LSRCA would not support the creation of instream ponds and Section 9.2.4 speaks to the enclosure of a watercourse (a dam would qualify as creating an enclosure or online pond). In simple terms, LSRCA is not in favour of either new online ponds or new dams.”

Nevertheless, the protection and management work that has been carried out thus far has already reaped environmental rewards, Mr. Tomlinson says.

Birds that used to be abundant in this area, but have been rare to spot in recent decades – such as the pie-billed grebe, the least bittern, and the marsh wren – have shown signs of rebounding with multiple nesting pairs spotted this year and one of the contributing factors is on-site water management, he says.

“This year, we had the highest number of birds nesting,” he says. “We have nearly 100 young tree swallows, another threatened species, right in the bird boxes of the nature reserves and [the reserve] is beginning to show signs of what it is supposed to do. The right thing about a nature reserve is it has a really good selection of habitats in it; examples of all the mains like

sedge mash, cattail marsh, open water, deciduous woodland, pine woodland and grassland.”

Mr. Tomlinson praises the efforts of former mayor Phyllis Morris for securing a “substantial chunk of grassland” for the reserve which has, in turn, lent itself to soon become Aurora’s only looped trail system.

“That is a great improvement from a trails point of view,” he says of being able to walk a figure-eight rather than reaching the end of a trail and having to double back. “With habitat improvement, we should be able to have a really educational [environment] with different species. Access to the public is really restricted, so that is a great thing. You’re not allowed to just wander off where you like; you can only view the wildlife from either the trails or fixed viewing points so wildlife has minimal disturbance, which is probably why the grebes and the least bittern is there because there is no public access on the site where the bittern is nesting. It doesn’t matter how many people you have through if the wildlife can’t see them. The nature reserves in England are all designed like that and they can have five or six, or 8,000 people a day go around but wildlife just couldn’t care less because they never see them.”

Based on a typical European model, Mr. Tomlinson says he believes, once completed, Aurora’s wildlife reserve, will be a template for the rest of the country.

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