

## A Hockey Hero's Welcome



**By Jake Courtepatte**

Lord Stanley's Cup made an appearance at Machell Park on Monday, alongside newly-minted NHL champion Robert Thomas.

It was a spectacle for the hundreds of well-wishers and fans lined up around the bandstand: pulling up in an orange convertible with the most coveted trophy in hockey.

Yet, the humble Thomas, upon taking to the stage alongside Mayor Tom Mrakas, had plenty of thanks and praise for those who helped him along his incredible journey.

"I just have a lot of people to thank for a moment like this," said Thomas. "Obviously, Mayor Mrakas, everyone from the town, I couldn't thank them enough. And thank you to all you guys for showing up, it's a pretty special day for me."

"To be able to share it with the Aurora community, let's make this a fun day."

"It's been amazing to have you back in the town of Aurora," said Mrakas. "I just want to give you a huge thank you for allowing us to share in this special moment."

Thomas, who posted six points in the St. Louis Blues' playoff run and finally got his day with the Cup after it made a number of stops in York Region, just turned 20 years old this month.

“The Cup goes all around Europe and North America over the summer, and every one of the team's members only gets one day with it, so for Robbie to spend some time with us on his special day is incredible,” said Mayor Mrakas, who hosted a question and answer period with Thomas on stage.

Mrakas listed off all of Thomas' achievements at his young age.

“You won gold at the World Juniors, you were the OHL playoff's MVP last year, and now you've capped an amazing season with a Stanley Cup win,” said Mrakas. “But it started with seven years with the York-Simcoe Express, as well as two years playing with St. Andrew's College U-16 team.”

Thomas also played volleyball, soccer, lacrosse, and baseball in the area growing up.

“I tried to play as many sports as I could,” said Thomas. “I would try to get as much involved in the Aurora community as I could. I think around fifteen, sixteen was when I started focusing mainly on hockey. That's kind of when it took over.”

He recalled how the Thomas family had an ice rink in the backyard growing up, something he called “very important” in helping achieve his dreams.

“My family has definitely been huge,” said Thomas. “I definitely wouldn't be here without their support. My dad built me a backyard rink right from when I was four years old, to two years after I left the house, which was seventeen, eighteen. So, he was building it for a while. It was great, all the neighbours, all my friends I played hockey with, would always come over and play shinny. So, yeah, the support that they have given me has definitely helped me to get to where I am today.”

An ice cream lover, Thomas and the Cup made a quick stop at Dairy Queen after the event, where he enjoyed a Blizzard out of the Mug.