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# THE AUROREDAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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TheAuroran.com

FREE

Week of April 2, 2020



## Schools will remain closed through to May 4

By Brock Weir

Publicly funded schools across Ontario will remain closed to students through at least May 4, the Province announced Tuesday afternoon.

Students were supposed to return to school this Monday after the Province announced its initial school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Tuesday's announcement came with new measures to help students continue to learn at home, under the guidance of teachers, until the closure can be ultimately lifted.

"Our medical experts are telling us that the next two weeks are absolutely critical for Ontario. What we do today will determine what we face tomorrow," said Premier Doug Ford. "Effective immediately, we have extended the order to close publicly funded schools until at least May 1 for teachers and May 4 for students. We have also extended the closure of private schools and child care centres for another two weeks. The situation continues to change day by day, hour by hour. In order to protect our children, I am prepared to extend these closures even further if we have

Continued on page 17

## Over-70s told to stay home amid COVID-19 fight

Town closes all public spaces for help flatten the curve

By Brock Weir

People 70 and over are being told to stay home as the fight against COVID-19 continues.

This was the message delivered by both Premier Doug Ford and Dr.

Continued on page 16



## Community Heroes



As we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and stay home to help "flatten the curve" people from across the community are taking the time to salute and pay tribute to our frontline community heroes who are fighting the pandemic every day. Here are just a few of them from Southlake Regional Health Centre, our local assessment centre. (Top Right and Bottom Left) John and Bonnie are hard at work, while (inset centre) staff come together to send out a very important message for our community. For more on our community's tributes to healthcare workers, see Page 2.

Photos by David Weingarten

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# Residents tie blue ribbons to thank frontline heroes



**TIE A BLUE RIBBON** – Inspired partly by the iconic Tony Orlando song, Brian and Dianne Harrison are tying blue ribbons around trees on Brookland Avenue in tribute to our frontline workers.  
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

By Brock Weir

Residents along Brookland Avenue have a message for our frontline health care workers: Thank you.

Drivers along Brookland may have noticed a series of blue ribbons tied along the stately trees that line the street's approach to Yonge Street, some emblazoned with matching hearts, others with the contrasting red and white of our national flag.

Each one of them has been put in place by Dianne and Brian Harrison who were looking for a way to thank our frontline workers in this time of crisis.

"You know that song, 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree?' We thought, why not tie blue ribbons around and remember all the people out there – our emergency service workers, our frontline workers,

everyone out there keeping us safe, our healthcare workers, everyone out there going the extra mile?" They are not alone in their efforts as scores of roadside signs have popped up along Kennedy Street West and the surrounding area thanking healthcare workers while, at the same time, encouraging everyone passing by to stay home in an effort to flatten the curve.

The Harrisons say they have always been guided by wise words imparted to the world by Fred Rogers, best known as the children's television host Mr. Rogers: "When I was a boy, and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

During this crisis, it is heartening to know that we don't have to look too hard to find the helpers – now,

the question is, just how can we say thank you?

"Right now, we're finding there's a lot of helpers out there," says Dianne. "I just want everyone to be

safe. Just think of others, keep your social distance, keep in touch, if you can, by telephoning people and make everyone know that we are a caring country."



Signs thanking healthcare workers for their continued efforts, while encouraging individuals to stay home, have started to dot Kennedy Street West.  
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

## Briefly

### ANOTHER TOW TRUCK FIRE

Investigators with the #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau are seeking witnesses following a suspicious vehicle fire that occurred in Aurora. On Monday, March 30, shortly before midnight, York Regional Police were called to Bell Drive for a report of a vehicle on fire. When officers arrived, they found a tow truck on fire that was parked at the end of the street. The fire was extinguished by Central York Fire Services. There were no injuries. Investigators believe that the fire was intentionally set. The investigation is ongoing and anyone who may have witnessed anything suspicious is asked to come forward. Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 7142, or call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-tips, or leave an anonymous tip online at [www.1800222tips.com](http://www.1800222tips.com).

# TOWN OF AURORA COVID-19 UPDATE

## CLOSURES

The following facilities and public open spaces are closed:

- Aurora Town Hall
- Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex
- Parks
- Tennis courts
- Joint Operations Centre (JOC)
- Aurora Community Centre
- Playgrounds
- Basketball courts
- Aurora Seniors' Centre
- Aurora Family Leisure Complex
- Sports fields
- Skateboard parks
- Aurora Public Library
- Aurora Museum and Cultural Centre
- Baseball diamonds
- Dog park

### Have a question or issue?

If you have a question related to municipal matters in the Town of Aurora, please visit the [Report an Issue](http://aurora.ca/covid19) page through [aurora.ca/covid19](http://aurora.ca/covid19). If you have a general inquiry, call 905-727-1375 or email [info@aurora.ca](mailto:info@aurora.ca).



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**PROTECT YOURSELF**

### TEXTILE RECYCLING PROGRAM TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

We ask that you hold on to all materials at this time.



### HELP STOP THE SPREAD



Medical masks and gloves should be disposed of in garbage bags only. Place all tissues and napkins in a closed bag to ensure safety of collection workers and help reduce the spread of Covid-19.

For the latest updates on Town cancellations, closures and FAQs:

[aurora.ca/covid19](http://aurora.ca/covid19)  @Town\_of\_Aurora  @townofaurora  @townofaurora



# Province's COVID-19 measures welcomed by MPP

By Brock Weir

Ontario's Action Plan offering supports for both employees and employers impacted by the COVID-19 have been welcomed by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott.

Ms. Elliott, who also serves as Ontario's Minister of Health and has been at the Premier's side in near-daily updates on the situation, tells *The Auroran* that it has been a priority to support individuals and businesses who have been hit economically by shut-downs and business closures.

"The Minister [of Finance Rod Phillips] concentrated on, I think, the things that are most important to the people of Newmarket-Aurora as well as the people in Ontario in general, which is putting support into our health care system -- \$3.3 billion-worth of support there -- and then support for people and businesses for people who are suffering economically because they may have lost their jobs as a result of our Essential Services ruling. They are going to need financial support as well as health support, and I am very pleased the plan concentrated on those two areas which are so vitally important to everyone."

The action plan was released March 25 and is seen as a "first step" for the Provincial government.

A \$17 billion response is a "critical first step to ensure our health care system, communities and economy are positioned to weather the challenges ahead," said the Province.

The plan includes a dedicated \$1 billion COVID-19 contingency fund for emerging needs related to the outbreak; an investment of \$935 million into the hospital sector, including nearly \$600 million to speed up progress on the government's commitment to address hospital capacity issues, and \$341 million for an additional 1,000 acute care and 500 critical care beds and additional assessment centres. A further investment of \$75 million is earmarked to supply personal protective equipment (PPEs) and critical medical supplies to frontline staff.

On the economic side of things, the Province announced a one-time payment of \$200 per child up to the age of 12 and \$250 for children with special needs to cover extra costs associated with school and daycare closures, doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for low-income seniors for the next six months, cost-relief for electricity bills, a tax cut of \$355 million for approximately 57,000 employers through a proposed temporary increase to the Employer Health Tax, as well as relief measures for renters who might be feeling pressure to choose between putting food on



Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health) participates in an electronic town hall with local businesses last week.

Contributed photo

the table or having a roof over their heads.

"The Premier indicated that if people have lost their jobs or they find it very difficult right now for reasons of the slowdown in our economy to both pay rent and put food on the table, they should be putting food on the table and they won't be evicted for non-payment of rent," said Ms. Elliott. "But he also stressed that he doesn't want people to take advantage of that and if you are able to pay rent you should be doing that. We want to make sure that we can protect those most vulnerable people who have had economic uncertainty and difficulties at this time to be protected, to continue, of course, to have a place to live, but everyone else should be paying their rent."

In her role as Minister of Health, Ms. Elliott has been working to address the needs of all front-line professionals in the COVID-19 fight. With an investment of \$75 million for new PPEs and other critical medical equipment, the Province is "making sure that our frontline healthcare workers -- our nurses, our doctors, personal support workers, as well as paramedics and our first responders, all have the appropriate...equipment to wear for themselves, for their families, and ultimately for the people they are interacting with."

"That is what we're hearing, but we're also hearing that we need more money for our hospitals," Ms. Elliott continues. "We have put almost \$1 billion into supporting our hospitals to allow for them to have the supports they need in order to do the cleaning and so on that they need, and also to expand their capacity. In some cases, that is opening some beds that may not be in full use right now, so there will be work that will be needed...in order to bring those forward."

"In some cases, we're working with hotels and retirement homes in order to clear out some parts of the hospital for people who are an alternate level of care who don't necessarily need to be in the hospital, but are awaiting a placement in long-term care homes. We are working with hospitals in order to help decant some of those patients into more appropriate, safe accommodations with all of the health measures in place that they need. We want to make sure that we create that capacity for what we expect is going to be an influx of COVID-19 patients, unfortunately."

"We are really asking everyone

and I would ask everyone in Newmarket-Aurora in particular to please follow the rules about physical distancing. It is vitally important right now to slow down the transmission of COVID-19. It will save lives if people do that, so I am really urgently asking everyone to please, please follow the rules, stay at home if you can, don't go out in groups, and make sure that even if you need to go to a grocery store, maybe just go by yourself and follow the rules with respect to physical distancing there. It is really important for everyone's health and safety."

## 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

### What you need to know to help you and your family stay healthy.

- Only visit an assessment centre if you have been referred by a health care professional.
- Avoid non-essential travel.
- Monitor for symptoms after travel.
- Avoid large gatherings.
- Be prepared, but avoid panic stocking.
- Caring for those who are ill? Take precautions.
- Clean high-touch surfaces regularly.
- Order your prescription medication.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette in transit.

If you have symptoms, take the self-assessment at [ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus). Or call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007) or your public health unit.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Reader agrees with assessment of public engagement**

(Re: You don't have to solve engagement puzzle, March 12)

Based on delegations and meetings with past and current Council and staff, it is no wonder that the public are reluctant to become involved with the Official Plan review.

During previous public engagement on the Stable Neighbourhood issue, Council and staff ignored guidelines and Town policies.

Consultant's reports based on extremely questionable formulas and data were endorsed and rushed through by the majority of Council.

Public input by hundreds who attended seven meetings during 18 months was discounted and discredited.

The bottom line is that Council and staff did not listen before and there is no guarantee that they will now.

We do not fully trust Council to honestly work on our behalf and follow plans.

Peter Smith  
Aurora

**Residents celebrated anniversary while supporting local business**

During this crazy world of doom and gloom and being at home isolated, I thought I would share my recent experience with you.

My wife and I celebrated our 32<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary last week.

We would normally go out for a nice dinner, but in this day and age, that is not possible.

We ordered a few nice items from a menu on the Locale Aurora website by phone. Frank, who took the order, was very friendly, helpful and knowledgeable.

The driver (former waiter) texted us as he dropped the order off at our front door exactly on time, he waited in his car until he saw me open the door and wave to him.

Food was fantastic, the experience over the top. We enjoyed a fabulous dinner at our home...thank you Locale! We will be doing that again real soon.

Pete & Diane Roell  
Aurora

**Province moving to protect seniors in response to pandemic**

The Ontario government is working with businesses, volunteer organizations and non-profits to make it easier for Ontario's seniors to self-isolate and practice physical distancing during this unprecedented time by ensuring they can receive the support they need to stay safe and healthy.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health is strongly urging those over the age of 70 or those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical conditions to stay at home.

The government is investing \$10 million to help community organizations with the coordination of subsidized deliveries of meals, medicines and other necessities to seniors. This investment doubles the government's initial commitment in Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19. The government is also working with grocers and pharmacists to prioritize seniors' delivery orders and establish senior-

Continued on page 5

**Machell's Corners**



**Staying in touch with yourself and others**

A lot can change in the span of a week – doubly so as we face a common, invisible threat as we are now.

The landscape of the fight can evolve to become almost unrecognizable than was the case just a few days before. Efforts of our respective governments in tacking the issue can change on a dime, as can our own personal day-to-day goals in trying to maintain some sort of normalcy – or, at the very least, a grounding force in the face of so much uncertainty.

Here, my job is to impart as much information as possible, using this medium to keep the public informed of these rapid changes, new rules in the “new normal”, and new restrictions – albeit temporary – on the small things that were once inextricably part of our day-to-day lives.

I know it can be overwhelming to have page after page of COVID-19 coverage, much of which is probably being consumed through a lens that is slightly more negative than unusual, so I feel it is important to find a balance between the vital (and sometimes daunting) information that we must hold close to our hearts with the wonderful human stories that are coming out of this crisis.

Thankfully, there is no shortage of positive stories to go around, and being able to convey them plays a powerful part in helping me, as editor, retain balance myself.

But, as I said, a lot can change in the span of seven days.

In this space last week, I wrote with my tongue firmly planted in my cheek that I had a slight edge on this whole social distancing thing because I had the good-or-bad fortune for being born anything but a hugger. Admittedly, they provide comfort but this simple act is, for whatever reason, outside of my natural comfort zone. Well, not quite – I'm a good one-arm hugger, but two arms? I've always felt that was more of a special occasion thing.

As soon as we went to press last Tuesday, fate conspired to change my mind on the matter and offered an opportunity for a little personal introspection.

In this job, we're trained to report the news as it is, and that is exactly how it should be.

In an ideal world, we're supposed to conduct ourselves in a manner that might be seen engaged but, to some extent, detached from the matter, focusing on our readers, delivering the facts, and, once that is done, delving deeper into the



**BROCK'S BANTER**

Brock Weir

issue or the next subject that needs to be tackled.

It is a good model for any editor, reporter or writer, but these are extraordinary circumstances.

For those who have not been involved in the publishing of a newspaper, magazine or online medium, production days can be stressful times. Our current crisis has only served to treble that feeling. Stories need to be written and re-written to reflect the most up-to-date information, written pieces might need to be re-prioritized to best reflect what is most important on that day to the community, province and country, and there is very little room to pause and think how these very real stories are impacting you.

Yet in this time of social distancing, there is a little bit more time for those thoughts to creep in – even on a production day, which happened last week.

I can't recall which government announcement was the proverbial straw

that broke the camel's back, but, by about 3 p.m. that afternoon, I felt my own steely façade – or, at least the façade I hoped was suitably tough – start to crack just a little bit. After stepping out my back door for a breath of fresh air, I found myself in the midst of what I can only describe from my own vantage point as a bit a meltdown.

I realised at that point that I have been reporting on the crisis for weeks but hadn't yet taken the time to take off my press hat and allow myself to feel.

Suddenly, I wanted that elusive hug and I was lucky enough to get one. (Don't worry, they have been quarantining with me as well)

I also realized that, for whatever reason, I had been telling myself it was somehow a weakness to moments like those, but the stark reality is that it is more than okay, and, in fact, letting out the emotions you are feeling is probably one of the healthiest things you can do in this trying situation.

After the “meltdown” I felt much better and was able to get on with the workday, and throughout the rest of the work week, I have felt much more balanced.

In our fast-paced world, I think some of us have lost sight of how important it is to be in touch with your feelings or to “feel your feels” in social media parlance. If you're looking for something to do at home, or perhaps learning a new skill, checking in with yourself might be a good place to start. I know that's what I'll be doing.



**ANOTHER WEEK** – Another week, another edition of The Auroran coming to you out of our respective home offices. In between working on the paper, a long-awaited dent is finally being made in the bookshelf behind me as we all work together to stay home and help flatten the curve. Stay well!! – Brock

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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to [letters@auroran.com](mailto:letters@auroran.com).  
Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

## From page 4

only shopping hours.

“We take seriously the advice of Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, and we’re working to put an iron ring of protection around our seniors from COVID-19,” said Premier Doug Ford. “I know asking our seniors to stay at home will not be easy as it will mean inconvenience, isolation and significant change in routine. That’s why we are encouraging everyone to reach out and support them, whether it’s delivering their prescriptions or picking up the phone and giving them a call. It will all make a positive difference to our most vulnerable citizens.”

The government is also working with province-wide organizations including Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) and Older Adults Centres’ Association of Ontario (OACAO) to identify and mobilize potential volunteer supports and expand the use of innovative technologies in the community to address social isolation and support daily living assistance.

“Our seniors have dedicated their lives to making Ontario the great province it is today. During this very difficult period, we need to take every step possible to protect them and ensure they stay healthy both physically and mentally,” said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. “I encourage everyone to stay in regular contact with a parent, grandparent or neighbour to make sure they have everything they need.”

This \$10 million delivery coordination program for seniors living at home is in addition to the \$20 million over two years the province has invested to protect seniors in retirement homes through increased infection control and active screening procedures and \$243 million for long-term care homes to support 24/7 screening, additional staffing, enhanced cleaning and sanitation, and additional surge capacity.

“We must do everything in our power to care for and support Ontario’s most vulnerable population,” said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care. “I want to assure you that we are working around the clock to assist and care for Ontario’s seniors, especially those in long-term care, during this unprecedented time.”

The government is implementing a new emergency order to ensure that staffing and resources are available to help care for and protect long-term care residents, providing further flexibility and allowing homes to redirect their staffing and financial resources to essential tasks. This is in addition to implementing a new approach to redeploying highly qualified inspectors to support long-term care homes on the ground through staff supply, care coordination, and helping homes prevent and contain infections.

“It’s never been more important that all Ontarians heed the advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health by staying home and practicing physical distancing,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “This is especially true because it’s the only way to protect our seniors and the most vulnerable people in our province. All of us need to do our part to stop the spread of this virus.”

## THIS WEEK’S POLL

Have you or a loved one lost work as a result of COVID-19?

Yes No

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

RESULTS TO DATE  
March 31, 2020

YES  
86%

NO  
14%

## The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating...

The Aurora British Consols!  
(1939)

On March 31, 1939, the Aurora British Consols won the OHA Junior C Championship! The following month, a celebratory banquet and dance was held in the high school auditorium. Members of the team were gifted with watches, windbreakers and a medal from the OHA (Ontario Hockey Association, which is pictured here. (987.52.1)



## Business Task Force

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented human and economic impact. Canada is facing one of its most daunting health challenges ever and will soon be faced with the challenge of stimulating our economy.

The Federal and Provincial governments have acted quickly to support small businesses and individuals impacted. Many initiatives and programs have already been announced to support those that find themselves out of work, and the many businesses that face difficult circumstances for the foreseeable future.

The Town of Aurora is also acting where we can within our local authority. We have announced tax and water bill deferral programs to ease demands on residents and businesses in our community. But there is more to do! There is more we must do. This pandemic will be impacting us for months, and our business community needs our support



### Getting Things Done

Mayor  
Tom Mrakas

through this uncharted territory. That’s why I am announcing, with the support of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, a task force of business and community leaders to focus on our local economy because local businesses are the backbone of our economy. The Aurora Business Continuity Task Force will bring together people with local, national and global experience to help us assist our small and medium business community. As a group, we will be looking for creative and innovate ways to support our local businesses through these challenging times.

We have invited representatives of the manufacturing, financial services, and land development industries to join with community leaders and small and medium business representatives from the Chamber and the BIA. Details of the members of the Aurora Business Continuity Task Force will be released soon. The first meeting will occur later this week and we anticipate meeting on a regular basis until the impact of this pandemic starts to fade. Every idea is worth considering, no matter how small or large the potential impact is. Working together, we all play a role in making sure we do everything we can to get through this pandemic. I commit to keeping you informed of the ongoing progress of this task force. In the meantime, please follow the advice of our healthcare professionals and stay home, practice physical distancing, and wash your hands. Do your part to help us flatten the curve. Together, we will get through this.

## A Few Bright Spots

Although the situation is far from over, COVID-19 certainly made last month one that we’re all glad to see in the rearview mirror.

It seemed that every day we were besieged with all manner negative stories; people seriously ill and dying, medical staff overworked in overcrowded facilities, selfish people ridiculously and unnecessarily hoarding goods, schools, public institutions and businesses closed, public events and programs canceled, many people being laid off, the stock market and economy being hit hard...

You get the idea.

But somehow amongst all of this gloom and doom we were able to see a few bright spots here in Aurora.

### Being Good Neighbours

There were many stories of neighbours helping each other out. When some were at the store, they picked up food and supplies for those who were self-isolating or who otherwise couldn’t get out. Others shared what supplies they had, most notably those increasingly, and baffling in the case of the latter, rare bottles of hand sanitizer and rolls of toilet paper. Some residents checked in on elderly neighbours to ensure they were okay, and didn’t need anything. Even children were involved, chalking messages of encouragement on sidewalks.

Basically, Aurorans demonstrated the positive community spirit we associate with this Town.

### Supporting Local Businesses

Even with most stores shut down, Aurorans have been continuing to support our local businesses, by doing

such things as buying gift cards and shopping on-line.

Most notably, people have been frequenting local restaurants through drive-through, take-out or delivery. Based on social media comments, many have been pleasantly surprised with just how many different food options there are out there that can be enjoyed at home.

In turn, some restaurants offered their own support to the community by donating excess food to local charitable groups who could distribute it to those who needed it.

### Dedicated Seniors Hours

With many shops experiencing lineups and shortages, a number of grocery stores, pharmacies and other institutions have dedicated an hour at the beginning of the day to seniors and others who may require assistance. Often accompanied with discounts, this gives these folks time to run their errands while shelves are still relatively well stocked, and with small crowds.

### Local Financial Help

While the deeper pocketed federal and provincial governments have committed hundreds millions of dollars to help workers and businesses,



## INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

the Town is pitching in, too, to ease the burden on taxpayers. Payments for property taxes this month have been deferred, and penalties removed for late payment of water bills.

True, the money will have to be paid eventually, but these bills are no longer an immediate financial pressure for residents during this difficult time. Every bit helps.

### Being Healthy

With many people quarantined or at least self-isolating, there seem to be a lot more folks out and about these days. True, the warmer weather may be a factor, but compared to other years at this time, there is a notable increase in people walking their dogs, jogging and working in their yards.

While most are probably just trying to avoid going stir crazy by getting out of the house for a few minutes, some fresh air and exercise (not to mention less screen time) is good for all of us both physically and emotionally.

With all the closures and resulting opportunities for face-to-face interaction minimized these days, being outdoors also provides one a chance to interact with your neighbours – even if for now it is at an appropriate self-isolating distance.

Of course, the overall COVID-19 situation remains both serious and alarming, and there is likely much more bad news to come before we get through it. But during these dark times, there are at least a few small positive rays of sunshine.

We’ll gladly take what we can get.

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



# Christine Elliott

## MPP - Newmarket-Aurora

### THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ONTARIANS IS THE GOVERNMENT'S TOP PRIORITY

**Please only visit an assessment centre if you have been referred by a health care professional.**

Take the interactive self-assessment tool if you're experiencing symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19:

[covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment)

#### PROTECTING ONTARIO WORKERS AND FAMILIES

Since we first learned of COVID-19 as an emerging public health issue, Ontario has been diligently monitoring the developing situation to protect the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

The government is taking action to ensure readiness and respond to a range of outbreak scenarios.

They will continue to work with partners at every level to ensure the health and safety of Ontarians remains the top priority.

#### Information is changing daily, even hourly.

You can access up to date information on COVID-19 and take a self assessment at [ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus)

## ontario.ca/coronavirus

### PREVENTION HOW BEST TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY



**Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**



**Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue. Dispose of tissue immediately and wash your hands.**



**Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**



**Keep surfaces clean and disinfected.**



**Only visit an assessment centre if referred by a health care professional.**



**Stay home and avoid contact with others.**

#### How does the virus spread?

Coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, for example, in a household, workplace or health care centre. There is no vaccine available at the moment to protect against the 2019 novel coronavirus.

#### What are the symptoms?

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, use our self-assessment tool before you call **Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000**, contact your primary care provider, or **York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653** (TTY: **1-866-512-6228** for the deaf or hard of hearing).

In the meantime, practice social distancing by staying at home and wash your hands often and thoroughly.

Regular local updates are posted to [york.ca/COVID19](https://york.ca/COVID19) as information changes; confirmed cases updated twice daily: 10:45 a.m. and 5:45 p.m.

*My constituency office is closed to in-person meetings; however, my staff are available for your phone calls and emails. Please reach out if you have any questions*

16635 Yonge Street, Unit 22, Newmarket, ON L3X 1V6

905-853-9889 1-800-211-1881 905-853-6115 Christine.Elliottco@pc.ola.org www.christineelliottmpp.ca

# CHATS takes caregiver support groups to virtual world

## Essential services continue at Community & Home Assistance to Seniors

By Brock Weir

Home visits, group support, and meals on wheels are just some of the vital services that have been provided by Community & Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS) to some of the most vulnerable residents of York Region and South Simcoe.

But, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CHATS is changing the way they are delivering the most essential services to those who need them most.

“Early on, we recognized the need to suspend some of our group-related activities, our group wellness programs, our diversity programs, and some of our caregiver support groups, mainly because they were held in larger groups and in public spaces,” says CHATS CEO Christina Bisanz of early brainstorming sessions. “Then, of course, public spaces became less and less available as things were being shut down, whether by municipalities or other public organizations. It just made sense we weren’t trying to run a group program so immediately we started to think, how do we make sure we maintain connectivity with those clients for whom those group activities, whether they were socially isolated seniors or for family caregivers who really appreciated the opportunity to have some support groups and education sessions – it was very important for us to identify how we can make sure that we still maintain connectivity and outreach for those people.”

The obvious answer was exploring how they could employ technologies like Skype and putting increased emphasis on their telephone reassurance programs

to involve seniors who might not have previously been part of the reassurance program, but might now fall under that umbrella due to self-isolation measures.

“We started our trying to be as nimble and flexible as possible, to be looking at different ways of delivering our programs while people were in social isolation and keeping that social distance,” Ms. Bisanz continues. “From there, we identified programs that were, for us, classified as essential programs, which included our in-home supports such as assisted living, personal care and other supports that we provide to older adults through our PSWs, transportation services, which includes drives for life-saving medical treatments like kidney dialysis and grocery and pharmacy delivery, and our Meals on Wheels program, which is really about food security.”

They suspended their personal social and wellness programs, face-to-face visits and caregiver support groups, as well as most of their adult day programs. CHATS currently runs seven programs, all of which are suspended, but they are maintaining a program in Aurora for clients who are at higher risk by staying home alone during the day, albeit with significantly lower numbers in order to maintain social distancing.

“One of the areas that we recognized that we needed to respond to very quickly was how we could not only deliver our meals on wheels, but also look at providing access to grocery shopping or picking up grocery orders and pharmacy deliveries,” says Ms. Bisanz. “We have enhanced our Meals on Wheels programs to include a variety of other options. At this point, we’re focusing on older adults who are on their own and don’t have any other support, whether it is family members living at home, or access to the neighbours. For those older adults, we’re providing local grocery shopping in one of three ways. We can either take them to and from the store where the driver will drop them off and pick them up when they are done shopping, or if the

driver is needed to help with picking up groceries, the driver will go into the store with the older adult. If the senior orders online, we will pick up the food and deliver it. For those who are truly unable to go out or order online, we will take their list and shop and deliver the groceries or pharmacy pickup for them.”

This presents its own challenges for the CHATS team and the volunteers who make their programs possible. At the start of the crisis, CHATS suspended volunteer activities where volunteers would have any direct contact with clients.

They are instead relying on their paid drivers for deliveries and pickups where they would normally have volunteers.

Now, as CHATS moves their services to the digital world, they are going back to their volunteers as needs change to see who would like to still be involved, including possibly helming a desk for their telephone reassurance calls.

For volunteers who would still like to drive, CHATS is still looking at how to make that possible while also ensuring driver safety.

“We have received a number of very kind requests for the public for people in the community to volunteer and at this point we have more volunteers than we have people who are requesting delivery, but we know that the longer this lasts and people start to run out of supplies at home, that that will change,” says Ms. Bisanz. “If anybody is interested in volunteering, then we just like them to contact the CHATS office and our volunteer coordinator will take them through an intake process and then when they are needed, we will contact them.”

“We’re hoping that through our other ways of reaching our senior clients through our telephone and virtual social and group support programming that we will continue to be able to help people feel that CHATS is still here, they are still very much a part of what we do and that we’re thinking of them.”

For more on CHATS services, including how to contribute to their ongoing Emergency Appeal for donations to enable them to keep services flowing, visit [chats.on.ca](http://chats.on.ca).



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### Combating COVID-19

As COVID-19 rapidly changes each day, it continues to have a significant impact on the daily lives of Canadians and people around the world. It is essential that we do our part to ensure that we stop the spread as soon as possible.

As your Member of Parliament and Shadow Cabinet Minister for Foreign Affairs, my office will be closed for in-person visits, but we are pleased to provide assistance by phone at **905-773-8358** or by email at [Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca).

#### **Know the Symptoms:**

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

#### **Stop the Spread:**

- Wash your hands
- Avoid touching your mouth & eyes
- Social Distancing
- Cough in your sleeve
- Stay home if you feel sick



#### **Canadians Abroad:**

Canadians abroad must register online with Global Affairs Canada: [travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration](http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration), email [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca) or call **613-996-8885**



#### **Financial Support:**

For Information on what financial assistance you or your business qualify for visit: [canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan](http://canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan)

I am continuing to work with the Government and Canadians to ensure that we stop the spread of COVID-19 and provide support for individuals and businesses facing financial hardship during this pandemic.

A sincere thanks to all those on the front lines and to each of you who are doing what you can to support others.

For more information, I encourage you to visit [Canada.ca/coronavirus](http://Canada.ca/coronavirus) or my website at [LeonaAlleslevmp.ca](http://LeonaAlleslevmp.ca)

**Email:** [Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca) **Telephone:** 905-773-8358

**Constituency Office:** 12820 Yonge Street, Suite 202  
Richmond Hill, ON L4E 4H1 **Website:** [LeonaAlleslevMP.ca](http://LeonaAlleslevMP.ca)

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## “Relationship” is key focus for local small business owners

By Brock Weir

In a time of crisis, it can't all be about dollars and cents; maintaining relationships is of the utmost importance.

So says Deb Clark, owner of Oakridge Fashions, the popular boutique in the Aurora Shopping Centre at Yonge Street and Murray Drive.

Ms. Clark is just one of countless small business owners across York Region who have been grappling with the new normal that COVID-19 has imposed upon us for the time being, while also looking at creative ways of continuing to serve customers while keeping revenue coming in.

“Relationship” is the key word,” she says. “At a time like this, it can't all be about dollars and cents, but, at the same time, our small businesses are under attack in a way by this very virus. One of the things I determined very quickly was that while we could no longer have a face-to-face experience with our customers, we could use technology to reach out to them and let them know, first and foremost, that we are thinking of them. I have three messages I keep giving to my customers: I am thinking of you, I miss you, and I hope that you will remember me as one of your

favourite small businesses at this time.”

It is important for small businesses, she says, to “be sensitive” to the fact that at this moment, individuals are being necessarily cautious about their spending and the question to customers should be, “How can I serve you?”

“At the end of the day, every business is measured by its ability to serve its customers,” she says. “I think that one of the differences that has always been true of small businesses versus large conglomerates has always been about the extra service. That is the difference-maker and that is the reason so many Aurorans love their favourite small businesses: because they have come to know when they walk through these doors, they are a known entity with a name, a face, and a record of business together.”

While it can't be said that Oakridge is running “business as usual”, they are moving forward in a different manner. Ms. Clark has been in the store just about every day working on orders that have come in through their website, personally making deliveries to local customers wherever possible to maintain those all-important relationships, and taking to social media platforms like Instagram to stay in touch with customers.

Instagram videos, for instance, take



Deb Clark, owner of Oakridge Fashions, is pictured in the store with her furry friends tending to online orders.

Contributed photo

customers step by step through the online ordering process while introducing new lines of product specifically chosen to meet the needs coming out of COVID-19.

“Our feeling is this is not the time for high fashion: this is a time for pieces that are comfortable, affordable, and that make sense for at home,” says Ms. Clark. “Another thing we are doing differently is we recognize that people may have birthday gifts to buy for someone, or special occasion gifts to purchase for a woman, but with no store open to go to. We are trying to draw attention to those kinds of items on our website that may be purchased online that do not have an issue about fit. For example, we have a video to draw attention to a brand-new collection of lightweight spring ponchos and the idea there is that it is one size fits all. The idea also is that it is a lovely, comfortable little treat to perhaps give to yourself if you're at home. It certainly is a comforting thing, it brightens your day, and if you're looking at wanting to make a purchase to support my small business, this is one way a woman can do so without worrying about the question online of ‘Will it fit?’

“Then, the next thing we are going to do is put a whole bunch of beautiful spring accessories together in the video for those same reasons. What can you get for a gift that you need to buy that has not got an issue around fit? What can you purchase for yourself to brighten your day? We're mindful it is about the right things to suggest to our customers who really do want to support their favourite local

businesses.”

Since this significant gear shift in business operations, Ms. Clark says feedback has been nothing but positive and she is “extremely grateful” that long-time customers are staying in touch.

“The message is, ‘How can I brighten your day, and how can I serve you at this time? And how can you support me?’ I do like to give my customers some ideas I feel have integrity, that have really good, common sense behind them because I have had customers who have said, ‘How can I support you? I have never shopped online before.’ We have put together a tutorial video that they can just watch, which shows me putting an order through from start to finish.

“Some people just need a little extra help. We're at the end of the phone helping our customers and we're also at the end of emails. We're everywhere, but the response back from that initial video that I put out greeting my customers last weekend was so heartwarming. At a time when I, like every other small business person, is nervous, anxious and worried, to receive orders coming in right after that, onto our online system, was absolutely encouraging. It reminded me that our customers are there and they care. I think it is just a matter of reaching out to them and reminding them that you're here, telling them that you care, that you're thinking about them, and that you're here to serve them.”

For more, visit [oakridgefashions.com](http://oakridgefashions.com) or follow them on Instagram @oakridgefashions.

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## LUNCH BREAK

Aurora's Pita Pit stopped by Southlake Regional Health Centre last week to deliver 15 meals to emergency room workers. These lunches have been sponsored by the community and you too can help donate a meal to a frontline worker by emailing [Ca340@mypitapit.ca](mailto:Ca340@mypitapit.ca).

Contributed photo

# Business measures, protection for vulnerable top concerns in COVID-19 Town Hall

By Brock Weir

Eric has been an Aurora business owner for more than 25 years.

A resident of the community since 1988, his business is a small operation and currently has just one employee on the payroll.

They're not an essential service, but recent moves by the Federal and Provincial government to support businesses like theirs have left many questions. And they are not alone. Last week, Eric was among the nearly two dozen participants in a telephone town hall convened by Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Markham-Stouffville MP Dr. Helena Jaczek and Federal Minister of Small Business Mary Ng to discuss the very real economic and social impacts of the virus outbreak.

"I want you and the business owners of York Region to know that we are going to do everything possible to support your business and help you keep your employees during this period of time," said Minister Ng. "We're asking Canadians to do something very extraordinary, which is to help all of us deal with COVID-19 and to try to come out of this. In this regard, we have put a number of measures in place. The legislation, of course, passed today (March 25) in Parliament, which really means that we are able to provide [businesses] temporary liquidity.

"I talk to businesses all the time and they say one of the things that would really be helpful to them is to make sure that they have the funds to be able to weather this period of time, which is why we have raised liquidity, if you will, available through all the major banks in our country, and I encourage businesses to go there. I also encourage businesses to sign up for our Workers Support Program which [will help] small businesses manage the downturn, but also in an effort to keep their employees during this time period."

Another business-owner, Merrick, phoned in with questions on how new measures will impact his enterprise: a hotel, which relies on staff to run operations.

"Unfortunately, none of my employees can do it remotely. Over the last few days with the avalanche of media and politicians speaking all the time, some of my employees got scared and said they will not come to work because they are scared," he told the MPs. "Unfortunately, none of my employees can do it remotely."

Mr. Van Bynen said he agreed with

these concerns, noting that grocery store and restaurants employees "aren't second line at all and are just as important as other individuals who need to be there to make sure we get the services that are essential."

Responding to the caller's claims that more "moderate" messaging from the government would be warranted, Dr. Jaczek said she disagreed, but said keeping perspective is very important.

"While we know COVID-19 can be extremely serious in some people, the whole effort of government is to prevent those potential deaths. This is why the messaging is strong in terms of staying home and protecting others and so on," she said, underscoring then-current figures of how many COVID-19 tests had been carried out and how many positive cases had been identified. "It is scary because we obviously can't see the virus, it can kill people, and that is scary, and we know that we can prevent it. Having said all that, we do need to go about our daily lives in relation to essential services. Cleaning and disinfecting is very important and perhaps suddenly we are becoming much more aware of a number of jobs that we never really valued as much as we probably should have done, and that is very much in our minds as we go forward."

But what if these essential frontline workers are coming home each day to a household with a family member considered part of a "vulnerable" demographic when it comes to contracting COVID-19? This was top of mind for Judy, who asked, "What does an essential service – and we struggle with this – do when you know you're coming home and there are people who are vulnerable?"

First to tackle this weighty question

was Dr. Jaczek who admitted it is a "tough question and a tough situation" for essential workers.

"Certainly, in the health care piece of it, those workers who are working in the hospitals in the assessment clinics, in public health, the paramedics and so on, they have obviously the use of personal protective equipment to prevent the infection in the first place," she said. "It is very important that those supplies are there for all of them and everything is being done. Again, it is a multi-level government, all three levels of government are involved in ensuring that those workers are protected so, of course, they will not be bringing the virus home to potentially vulnerable family members. The same is happening in many other sectors that I am aware of. As an example, grocery stores are doing everything they can to keep cleaning, disinfection of all the premises, the carts, the tools, pads that you use to input your pin number when you pay – everything is being disinfected regularly. I believe they are putting up Plexiglas screens at a number of places. In other

words, everyone is working as hard as they can following Public Health directives to keep workers safe."

Added Mr. Van Bynen: "There is a responsibility for the employers to ensure the workspace is safe and I see a lot of examples of what people are doing. One example is I was at a grocery store and they have tapes on tiles to ensure that individuals are staying within their six-foot range. In fact, I went to the Legion in Aurora to donate blood on Monday and I had to be turned away because they didn't have the capacity to keep people far enough apart and to make that safe for what you're doing.

"There is a need for us to help essential service workers available but there is equally a responsibility by the employers and by the customers to make sure that their workspace is safe. I am sure they are [undergoing] a tremendous amount of mental strain given what they are dealing with and the concerns they have about the potential to infect their families, but I think first and foremost there has to be a safe workplace and the guidelines we have outlined... need to be followed."





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## Here's How

### COVID-19: WHAT WE ARE DOING

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HERE IS HOW WE ARE CHANGING WITH COVID-19 TO SERVE YOU:

- IN ORDER TO PROTECT CUSTOMERS AND STAFF, WE ARE LIMITING ACCESS TO OUR STORE.
- NEW STORE HOURS ARE MONDAY TO FRIDAY 7:00AM TO 6:00PM  
SAT 8:00AM - 5:00PM SUNDAY 10:00AM TO 4:00PM
- WE ENCOURAGE CUSTOMERS TO PLACE ORDERS FOR PICKUP IN THE STORE PARKING LOT OR DELIVERY TO YOUR JOB SITES. DELIVERIES WILL BE MODIFIED TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING.
- WE ARE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING RETURNS OF PREVIOUSLY PURCHASED PRODUCTS.
- WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE AS WE CONTINUE TO WORK THROUGH THESE DIFFICULT TIMES.
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# Artsy Baker brings sweet smiles – and a few chuckles – at challenging time

By Brock Weir

Can you spare a square?

Toilet paper is a hot commodity these days as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, but, during these challenging times, one local bakery is rolling out some tongue-in-cheek creations to bring a smile to your face.

Aurora's Artsy Baker, the popular Industrial Parkway South-based bakery which has become renowned for their exceptional and detailed creations, have taken Instagram by storm with a series of cakes inspired by the current crisis.

Can't find a bottle of hand sanitizer? Well, they have one in cake form just for you. Waxing sentimental over what a toilet roll looks like? Their "Spare A Square" cake might be a balm for the soul – and all are available from the bakery for home delivery.

"We're tapping into an area where there are a lot of items that people are really sad about not being able to find them and we figured we'd take those items and turn them into a cake," says Antonella Cellini, founder of Artsy Baker. "We'll supply them with something they can't find on the store shelves.

"I know it is a really hard time for everybody, and we're all suffering from this unforeseen situation, but I really think it is important to try and make light of the situation as best we can because everywhere you look, everything you hear, it is just negative, negative, negative. It is a

really scary time, but we figured we might as well try and put a smile on people's faces when they get up in the morning.

"We have been getting such a great response with people thanking us and saying they look forward to our posts every day just to brighten up their day. When you hear things like that, it just helps all of us – and it encourages me, too, because I am also a mom and having a business to run at this time is very scary for all of us. At the end of the day, how you make people feel is how they will remember you, so as long as I can make people feel good and happy I feel like I have done my job. And that is really what this business is about."

Like many small business owners, Ms. Cellini has had to develop new ways of keeping the business open during these present difficulties. They are still open for takeout and delivery, with their special "Decked Out Donuts" providing to be especially popular with customers. They're a comfort food, she says, and something the whole family can enjoy.

"We have had to set certain measures under the circumstances, so we're taking the necessary precautions and a lot of our customers, instead of going out, we're really encouraging everyone to stay home just so we can have this under control," she says. "We're doing our part by allowing them to stay home and get our desserts to them.

"We hope people can continue to support local business because I know a lot of us are going through some



Can you spare a square? This toilet paper-themed cake is just one of the many timely creations offered by Artsy Baker for pickup and delivery. **Contributed photo**

seriously trying times right now. I know a lot of parents at home with their kids, it is hard to keep these guys occupied, so we're doing our best to just brighten people's days. We're also offering cookie-decorating kits that we will be launching in the next couple of days. This will give parents and kids just a little craft to do

and occupy the kids' time, just before the Easter holiday. It is just an extra little craft for kids to do."

For more on Artsy Baker, which also offers kosher, gluten free and vegan options, visit [artsybaker.com](http://artsybaker.com). To follow their creations inspired by our current situation, follow them on Instagram @artsybaker.

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Week of April 2, 2020



## Aurora Barbarians men's team welcomes back Tom McLeod

By Robert Belardi

The Aurora Barbarians senior men's team has welcomed back former senior men's player, and current head coach of Trent University, Tom McLeod as head coach this season.

McLeod has been playing rugby since the summer of Grade Eight and found an interest in coaching while playing in high school. McLeod says he officially switched his focus to coaching five years ago.

Recently, McLeod led Trent University to a fourth-place finish in the Ontario University League; the best finish in school history.

Now, he looks to command the Barbarians ship in the right direction and bring the Barbarians back where they once were.

From 2006 to 2010, the Barbarians senior men's team were crowned Provincial League Champions and won three consecutive McCormick Cups in the process.

Three of those players currently play for the Major League Rugby team Toronto Arrows. Hookers Andrew Quattrin, Jack McRogers and Lock, Paul Ciulini are three notable names that have come through the organization in Aurora and were a part of the historic championship run.

The last time the Barbarians appeared

in the finals of the McCormick Cup was in 2013. McLeod was on the roster and senior women's head coach, Khalil Ajram was on the sidelines.

The Barbarians fell to the Markham Irish 8-3 in what Ajram described as a mud bath.

With a prestigious history far away in the rear-view mirror, the Barbarians will look to reclaim glory sooner rather than later.

And it all starts with numbers. After a 1-13 record last year, Ajram says his focus this year is numbers and leaders on the field.

"What you can hope for and what we've had in the past is we've had those leaders on the field to make their adjustments in [their] game. Last year we had a 1-13 record, but there were six games where we lost by five points," explained Ajram.

"The other issue that the men's team had last year, which is a big reason for that record is we had a lack of numbers. We were struggling to get thirty guys available."

McLeod has set his sights on this goal and hopes to keep the numbers up.

"My biggest goal is getting the numbers up. What that means for me is making sure training is engaging," McLeod explained.

"I want to get away from telling the guys what they need [and] serve them as a leader so they know what they want practice to look like and we make it somewhere where they want to be."



Photo by Khalil Ajram

The current roster is fielding a lot of up and coming players. Ajram says the team does not have many players between the ages of 25 and 30. That particular age group, is essential for any rugby roster. It's the core group of players.

For now, the work has gone into rebuilding the senior men's team and it begins with the talented junior players that will emerge on to the senior scene.

Ajram expects Laurier student and U18 Canada 7s rugby talent Dylan Di Girolamo to be a leader. Di Girolamo is currently training with the Toronto Arrows Academy earning some credible experience along with the Laurier rugby team.

Other players, such as Max Goodwin (Guelph) and Justin and Brandon Filice

(Ryerson) are also expected to make significant impacts on the roster.

Although COVID-19 has delayed the start of the season, the Barbarians must wait until April 16 to be informed of any updates. The board will determine if it is safe to begin preparations for the upcoming season at that time.

McLeod has a message for his players for the next few weeks.

"I just want them to stay positive and stay healthy. I don't think there's anything where we are expecting anybody to go above and beyond to do. As long as you're keeping yourself in shape and looking forward to the season that's about all we can ask," McLeod said.

For now, everyone is at a standstill and awaits further direction this month.

## Alexiya Falconi ready for Taekwondo Championships this year



Alexiya Falconi celebrates her bronze medals with the Canadian banner in the Netherlands.

Contributed photo

By Robert Belardi

Alexiya Falconi is preparing herself for the Taekwondo World Championships in the fall of this year.

Alexiya, sister of St. Andrew's College football star Nathan Falconi, has been training all year while away

in her first year of university at Wilfrid Laurier studying for a Bachelor of Business Administration degree.

"When I'm at school I usually just go to the gym and do weight training and cardio. Whenever I am home, I usually just practice my kicking and my sparring techniques and just go over my

Continued on page 17

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# Aurora's Robert Thomas having great season on ice

By Robert Belardi

Before the season was halted due to COVID-19, Aurora native and centreman for the St. Louis Blues Robert Thomas was showing signs of improvement in his second season in the NHL.

The Stanley Cup Champion recorded eight points in his last 10 games, including an 11-point month in February alone.

His lone goal in that spell came against the Chicago Blackhawks at home, back on February 25 to bring the Blues within one goal in the second period. A cross-ice pass from David Perron found Thomas alone in front of goal and the 20-year-old roofed the puck short side.

In total this year, Thomas has

recorded 10 goals and 32 assists, along with a plus-minus rating of nine.

He recorded nine goals and 24 assists in his rookie season last year.

He's a quick skater, an agile forward with a nose for the puck and vision like a hawk down the ice.

According to SB Nation writer Dan Buffa, written on March 6, Thomas belongs in St. Louis for a long time.

In fact, Thomas was almost traded from St. Louis in exchange for Ryan O'Reilly to Buffalo on July 1, 2018. How different the roster would have been if he left.

Thankfully, the Blues valued him more than that.

The 20<sup>th</sup> overall draft pick in 2017 adds depth in the centre position that has O'Reilly and Brayden Schenn in the second and first line above him.

He is the third-line centre with Zach



Robert Thomas is pictured with the Stanley Cup during his Aurora tour last summer.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Sanford and Jordan Kyrou, as per Daily Faceoff, and is suiting that role exceptionally well for head coach Craig Berube.

There's a reason why he helped team Canada lift the gold medal in the IIHF World Junior Championships in 2018. There's a reason why he is playing well in the NHL now.

As for the Blues, the defending Stanley Cup champions are first overall in the Western Conference and in the Central division.

The Colorado Avalanche stand two points behind the Blues for the top spot.

The team also ranks first in the League for most goals scored by defencemen for the second time in the 52-year history with 45 goals. Only the Philadelphia Flyers and the New York Rangers are one goal behind the Blues for the top spot in that regard.

You know what they say: Defence wins championships.

The Blues rank in 5<sup>th</sup> for goals allowed, 4<sup>th</sup> in shots against and 6<sup>th</sup> in penalties. Behind the back line of captain and King City native Alex Pietrangolo, Justin Faulk, Colton Parayko and Marco Scandella is great goaltending from Jordan Binnington.

The Richmond Hill native is 30-13-7 with 2.56 goals against average and a .912 save percentage.

Also, in his second year in the league, Binnington has not shown signs of slowing down either, ever since being awarded the starting position for the team last year.

There will be a longer wait to see if and/or when the NHL year resumes. Until then, Thomas and the Blues have had an exceptional year thus far in their title defence.

In these challenging times, my aim is to be a part of the solution. Let's work together to find a path that works for you and your family.

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# Food bank implements door-to-car door service for community members

By Brock Weir

The Aurora Food Pantry has instituted door-to-car-door service in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The good news is, for the most part, the local food bank is doing well in responding to community needs in this time of crisis.

Since the outbreak began to transform our lives in March, the Aurora Food Pantry, which is based on Industrial Parkway South, has been looking at ways to meet community demand while, at the same time, maintaining the health and wellbeing of its volunteers, the lifeblood of the organization.

“We started with the premise that we want to be able to continue serving our community. Period.” says Allison Stuart, Board Chair of the Aurora Food Pantry. “Falling out of that was the need to protect our clients, our staff, and volunteers. Somehow we had to make those puzzle pieces come together while also recognizing the set-up that we had and the limitations that entailed.”

The biggest question, she says, was whether or not the Food Pantry would be able to provide personalized service for its many underprivileged clients.

Before COVID-19 and social distancing became our new normal for an indefinite period of time, clients would be able to go “shopping” in the food bank for what they needed, accompanied by a volunteer to help assist in this process. It soon became clear that that model would have to be suspended in the interests of everyone’s safety.

Now, volunteers are the ones doing the shopping throughout their vast warehouse, guided by parameters such as family makeup and dietary



restrictions supplied by clients.

“We started this process probably earlier than we needed to, but it was our best way of approaching it,” says Ms. Stuart. “The clients are appreciative that we’re open and we probably get ten calls a day asking if we’re still open. They are appreciative that we’re looking out for their safety by letting them wait in their individual cars rather than coming in and snuggling together in a rather small waiting area. It is more difficult for those who come by either transit or walk to the Food Pantry and there is really nothing much we can do to accommodate that because if we let one client in, it is going to be too challenging to manage all the clients. Most of our clients have arranged rides and so on, so that works out quite well.”

Ms. Stuart admits that while the new protocols have made for a process that is slower than usual, there have been no complaints from clients.

Despite their new delivery model, it is full steam ahead at the Aurora Food Pantry.

While they are well stocked for today, tomorrow is always a question.

“We started off with our shelves full and able to pretty well give our clients what they needed,” says Ms. Stuart. “However, when we went to stock up on those things that we were running on, we couldn’t get some of those replaced at the grocery store, the same as everyone else – standard stuff like toilet paper. Produce was very low, along with flour and those

current clients more frequently than usual, but...that people’s personal ability to manage with challenging circumstances, as they get more and more limited, we’re anticipating there will be an increase in activity at the Food Pantry and even more new registrations. We’re looking not only to today but also to make sure we’re still able to serve them as this continues and the hardship for people increases.

“The community’s generosity is fantastic and we can assure the community today and tomorrow that we can look after our clients. We appreciate their continued support so that into the future we can continue to say that because we’re anticipating it is going to get worse before it gets better. People’s initial energy will diminish. It is kind of a balancing act: we don’t want to take more than our due in terms of people’s generosity and yet we also want to make sure that we’re not having to modify what we can do for our clients too much because their needs continue whether we modify what we can do in response or not.”

For more information on the Aurora Food Pantry, visit [www.aurorafoodpantry.ca](http://www.aurorafoodpantry.ca) or call 905-841-1577. Services are currently offered at select times on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

*We appreciate their continued support so that into the future we can continue to say that because we’re anticipating it is going to get worse before it gets better*

kinds of things, but we’ve got systems in place and we’re doing quite well with meeting our commitments to our clients. That, in large part, is due to the incredible, over-the-top generosity of the community.

“We have had people phoning every day of the week asking where they could drop stuff off and we have been supported financially by the community with donations and this is really important now – and it is also really important for the future because what we anticipate over the next little while is, yes, we will be seeing our

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# Social distancing proving a challenge to Yellow Brick House: Shelter is still committed to helping women and children fleeing violence

By Brock Weir

Social isolation and physical distancing are necessary to address COVID-19 but, at the same time, can be “absolutely detrimental” to the health and wellbeing of women and children trying to flee domestic violence.

This, according to Lorris Herenda, Executive Director of Yellow Brick House, the Aurora-based shelter for women and children.

But the organization is rising to the occasion, deploying some out-of-the-box thinking to continue providing shelter services while, at the same time, reassuring the public of their commitment to lend a hand to those looking to get to safety.

“For women who find themselves in this situation, and I know they are listening to the news and feeling like

they have nowhere to go even more, but we are encouraging women to reach out to our crisis line,” she says. “That might be more challenging if their partner is always home with them, but, if possible, if they have a moment to make a call or text our crisis line, we can get them out and into a hotel.

“We are making contingency plans for these women, but we have already had a 25 per cent increase in our crisis calls because women are experiencing the negative effects of self-isolation.”

Being in a situation like this is always stressful, she says, but Yellow Brick House staff have been spearheading “new and innovative ways” to help ease the stress by keeping women in shelters busy. It is about providing a routine, she says, and this can be as simple as getting dressed, setting goals, and accessing online resources for physical and creative activities.

“Our staff are available to speak to them, which is a very crucial part of the daily checking on, counselling sessions that are ongoing, both with women and children, and the message that we’re all in this together. Because women and children in shelters are surrounded by such strong support from our staff, I think they are actually feeling very... It is kind of getting through this as a team.”

Yellow Brick House operates two shelters in York Region, the first of which is in Aurora.

The Aurora shelter is not a purpose-built facility and this has led to some challenges that Yellow Brick House is looking to solve. The building has only seven bedrooms yet, at press time, nine women and twelve children were sheltering in place.

“You can’t assign a bedroom per family and they have to share it, which is a challenge,” says Ms. Herenda. “All of our common living areas such as the kitchen and the living room give structure to a home, but they’re small, so we do try to instruct women to be one family at a time in the kitchen preparing the meal, so to speak, but there is always overlap, especially when you have, out of twelve children, six under the age of four. It is very difficult to contain little ones in a tiny room.”

To help address this problem, Yellow Brick House is moving a “sufficient number” of women and children to hotel rooms so some can remain at the shelter as they are now, maintaining social and physical distancing, while others will be practicing the same in their hotel rooms.

“Looking at the logistics of that,

there is an additional cost to a not-for-profit in implementing that,” says Ms. Herenda. “That is why we are looking at a very detailed plan on how that is going to be possible. All intakes in the last three weeks have already been placed in hotels. We have not brought new intakes into our shelters. The plan was they remain in hotel for 14 days and then they can be [re-located] to the shelter once the self-isolation period is over.

“As we are moving families into hotels...we are reaching out to local restaurants to see if they are willing in the short term to donate a hot meal, or even a cold meal, for the women and children who are in the shelters or in hotels. We’re managing now with grocery deliveries and all of that, so getting help from local businesses in terms of food preparation will be fantastic. We’re also looking for some supplies and donations that some people might have extra of at home, such as toilet paper, which has disappeared, paper towels, hand sanitizer, cleaning products, milk, sanitary pads, diapers and everything physical because shelters are in a high mode of continuous assurance that all surfaces are cleaned at least four times a day. We are extremely grateful for everything that our community can do for us and for the women and children who find themselves in this unfortunate situation.”

*To get in touch with Yellow Brick House for non-emergencies such as fundraising and general inquiries, call 1-800-263-2231 or visit yellowbrickhouse.org. If you’re in crisis, the 24-Hour Crisis Line can be reached at 1-800-236-3247.*



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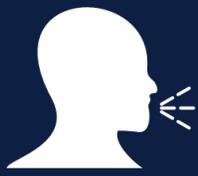
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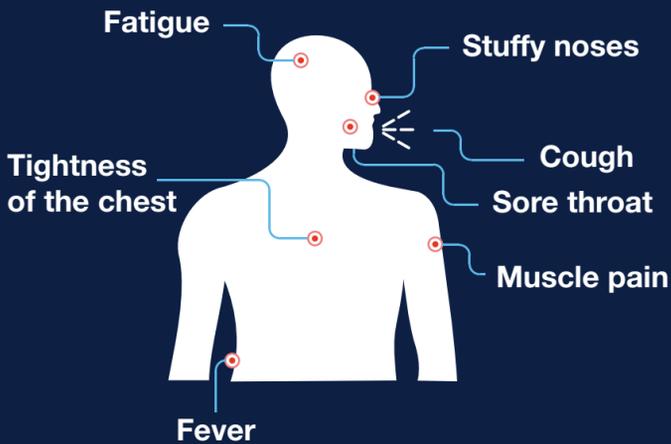


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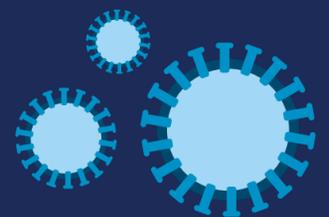
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# COVID-19

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# Aurora closes public spaces to flatten curve

From page 1

Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, at the start of the week, as positive cases in York Region sailed past 200 over the weekend.

As of March 31, eleven cases of more than 230 across York Region were pinned down to Aurora.

Six of the Aurora cases are travel-related, one is a case of close contact, one is confirmed as a local transmission, one is related to an institutional outbreak, and two remain under investigation.

"We have had 237 cases so far, with twelve in healthcare workers," Dr. Kurji told media in a virtual press conference on Monday afternoon. "We have had two long-term care homes and we have one group home for the developmentally challenged that have been affected."

Both of the long-term care homes impacted are located in Markham, with the group home situated in Richmond Hill.

Dr. Kurji noted that the York Region Health Unit is looking at two clusters in Vaughan – Body Barre and the gym at the Al Palladini Community Centre. He encourages anyone who was at Body Barre between March 9 and March 15, and the Al Palladini Community Centre between March 7 and March 15 to contact York Region Public Health.

"We keep on being vigilant with respect to intelligence on any other

clusters that may have developed," he said.

Presently, new travel-related cases are "probably declining", said Dr. Kurji on the most current data, but "this isn't totally evident."

"When we look at the local transmission cases through there is a mixed picture here," he said. "We want to especially emphasize to the community to continue with the physical distancing, which is very important because together we will get over this. The advice here would be anyone over the age of 70, please stay home. Only go out if it is essential. Try and do your shopping over the internet or over the phone, and try to get friends, family and neighbours to assist you, but make sure you keep two metres away from anyone who comes to your home. We are asking that we be a little careful and mindful of keeping our physical distances from our [grandparents] as well and for the general public, we're asking that you stay home as much as you possibly can and only go out for essential things.

"Essential things mean health service or health care needs, going to the pharmacist, picking up shopping, but otherwise stay home. If you do go out for a walk, be very sure that you're keeping two metres away from everybody else. In addition, at this time of the year, folks have colds, sometimes flu, and sometimes

you don't know if you have COVID-19 or not. We are asking those with mild symptoms to self-isolate at home, make sure that close contacts, which are usually household contacts, also self-isolate for 14 days, and then work through the people you might have had close contact with two days prior to the onset of your symptoms and get them to self-isolate as well. If medical conditions deteriorate, seek medical care."

The Region of York is taking a three-pronged approach to tackling the pandemic.

The first is case and contact follow-up and case identification.

"This is the bread and butter piece for public health and it is a time-tested strategy, what we call the containment strategy," said Dr. Kurji. "The second strategy is one of testing: the more people that we test, the more we are able to shift scarce resources onto those that need our attention in terms of putting rings around them and avoiding community exposures. The third strategy is the whole of society approach, which is the physical distancing, the closure of certain businesses, etc., and hopefully we don't come down to this one, but lockdowns. We need the public's assistance in continuing to break these chains of transmission. There is no reason why we cannot fight this virus and why we cannot win. The data seems to give us the impression that we are getting there, so please continue with these measures."

## AURORA CLOSES PUBLIC SPACES

On Friday, the Town of Aurora announced the closure of all public open spaces in an effort to help flatten the curve.

The closure was effective immediately and pertains to parks, tennis courts, skateboard parks, sports fields, baseball diamonds, basketball courts, playgrounds and the leash-free dog park on Industrial Parkway North.

"I would like to strongly encourage residents to adhere to the closure of public open spaces in Aurora," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "We need to flatten the COVID-19 curve, and we can only do this with a global commitment from everyone to practice social distancing and refrain from social gatherings."

Trails in Aurora are still open to the public although the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has closed Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area. If you decide to use the public trails system in Aurora, you are strongly encouraged to practice social distancing.

The Town encourages residents to "report violations of the public open spaces closure instead of approaching the groups themselves" by sending an email with the day, time and location to [bdepartment@aurora.ca](mailto:bdepartment@aurora.ca), or leaving a voicemail at 905-727-3123 x4240.

All complaints will be investigated and fines of up to \$5,000 may be levied.

## Top 11 Questions

I hope this finds you well under these challenging circumstances. We are facing an unprecedented time in our province's history, and the health and wellbeing of every Ontarian is our number one priority.

Since March 17 when Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, outlined a series of recommendations aimed at slowing the further spread of COVID-19 resulting in our Government of Ontario declaring a state of emergency, my constituency office has been at full alert working to support the hundreds of phone calls and thousands of emails coming into my office. We closed for in-person meetings on March 17; however, my team continues to receive your phone calls and emails. Given my role as Minister of Health, my team has been working hard to support you, the great people of Newmarket-Aurora, in addition to Ontarians from across the province.

My office is always available to ensure you have the most up to date information related to the province's response to COVID-19 as information is changing daily or even hourly.

Here are the top 11 questions that you have posed to my team along with the responses our government has provided:

### I recently returned from a trip abroad.

#### What should I do?

You are at high risk of spreading COVID-19. As a result, by law you are required to self-isolate for 14 days. In fact, everyone should stay home as much as they can. If you need to leave, please stay two meters (or six feet) away from others.

To contain COVID-19, we all need to help. Please do your part by staying apart.

### My loved one is coming home from abroad.

#### Will the government waive the 3-month OHIP wait period?

On March 20, Ontario announced an expansion of coverage for care. To ensure that anyone in need of care can receive it, Ontario waived the three-month waiting period for Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage. Additionally, the province will cover the cost of COVID-19 services for uninsured people who do not meet the criteria for OHIP coverage. Together, these measures will ensure that no one will be discouraged from seeking screening or treatment for COVID-19 for financial reasons.

### I am a small business.

#### I am concerned that I will not be able to pay my rent next month.

#### What will happen to my business?

On March 25, the Minister of Finance issued Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19. This plan is making \$17 billion of resources available to combat the pandemic. Specifically by providing:

- \$3.3 billion to support the healthcare system.
- \$3.7 billion in direct support for people and jobs.
- \$10 billion available to ensure that businesses have cash flow during this difficult time.

To support businesses during this crisis, the government is proposing to double the Employer Health Tax (EHT) exemption in 2020. Through this change, about 57,000 private-sector employers would pay less EHT in 2020, including about 30,000 more who would not pay EHT this year. This amounts to a tax cut of \$355 million.

We are providing flexibility to businesses in Ontario that find it challenging to meet their tax obligations during this crisis. The period between April 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020 will be interest and penalty-free for businesses who are unable to file and make payments on time for select provincially administered taxes. We expect this action to free up as much as \$6 billion in cash flow for about 100,000 businesses.

In addition, we are freeing up over \$1.8 billion by deferring the upcoming June 30 quarterly municipal remittance of education property tax to school boards by 90 days, which will provide municipalities the flexibility to, in turn, provide property tax deferrals to residents and businesses, while ensuring school boards continue to receive their funding.

In addition, we anticipate that property owners will work with their tenants during this extraordinary circumstance to make rent payment arrangements.

### Why are the DriveTest centres open?

DriveTest Examiners are in a precarious position, as they are unable to practise physical distancing.

On March 22, all full-time DriveTest Centres and part-time Travel Point locations closed. The closures took effect March 23, 2020 until further notice. The decision to close was the result of a mutual agreement between the government and services provider. Ontarians can rest assured they will not lose their current driver's licences due to this decision and no driver's licence applicants will lose test fees because of the closures. We have a responsibility to Ontarians to ensure that we take every possible step to enable social distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### Why are ServiceOntario centres open?

To help ensure the safety of ServiceOntario staff and customers, we have urged Ontarians not to visit a ServiceOntario centre unless completely necessary. We will be introducing measures that will enable ServiceOntario offices to enhance their cleaning routines, ensure screening of clients, and allow for social distancing, without disrupting the delivery of essential services.

The government has extended the validity period of driver, vehicle, carrier products and services as well as health cards. These changes reduce the need for in-person visits to ServiceOntario during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also want to reiterate that Ontarians who have expired health cards and are sick should not be coming into a Service Ontario for a renewal. They should instead follow the advice outlined on [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus).

With more than 40 services already available online, we encourage people to complete transactions online at [ServiceOntario.ca/services](http://ServiceOntario.ca/services) or use the extended validation period.

### Can businesses assist to help manufacture and supply the emergency medical protective equipment that is so urgently required?

To ensure our government has access to the supplies and services necessary to combat COVID-19, the province is launching a new portal, Ontario Together, which will allow Ontario companies to submit their proposals for the government to procure in-demand goods and services in an accelerated timeline.

This access will help ensure our healthcare system and frontline workers such as police officers, correctional officers, social workers and others are equipped to protect the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. Ontario is home to some of the most innovative industries across Canada and around the globe. Through Ontario Together, we can hear directly from our business community on how we can solve some of the complex challenges posed by COVID-19 quickly and efficiently.

Ontario Together will remove barriers for businesses to submit their solutions and proposals for in-demand products and services; ensuring government delivery is simpler and faster. Ontario Together will shorten the timeline for identifying and addressing challenges to acquiring the goods needed to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

We are looking for innovative ideas that provide the greatest benefit to the people of Ontario, your input will help us address the rapidly evolving challenges we face in communities across the province.

Please visit: [www.ontario.ca/ontariotogether](http://www.ontario.ca/ontariotogether)

For assistance, please call: 1-888-777-0554

### Is my business an 'Essential' business? Why is that business 'Essential'?

The decision to close non-essential businesses was a tough but necessary decision. The businesses reflected on the essential services list are necessary to ensure the health and wellbeing of all Ontarians, while supporting Ontario's strong economy in a way that is safe and appropriate for today's reality.



## CHRISTINE'S CHRONICLES

Christine Elliott, MPP  
Newmarket-Aurora

We are calling on all businesses to join us in our fight to stop the spread of COVID-19. If you are a business that can work from home, we encourage you to continue your operations. Any business that can work remotely over the phone, online or via post should continue to operate.

For businesses who are essential to ensuring the health and well-being of all Ontarians, we need to work with you to ensure, your employees are working

in a safe environment. These businesses should be working quickly to develop a plan that will ensure physical distancing and regular handwashing hygiene.

Any employee who does not feel safe at their place of work should leave.

As the situation evolves, our government is prepared to take further action. The Premier has been clear that every option is on the table.

The province has launched a toll-free line to provide support to Ontario businesses who have questions about the province's recent emergency order to close at-risk workplaces following recommendations by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Businesses who have questions about closures of at-risk workplaces or how emergency measures affects their business or employment can call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line at 1-888-444-3659. A complete list of essential services is available on the Government of Ontario's website.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>

### I am concerned about my health and safety at my place of work. What can I do?

Employees can refuse work if they believe their health and safety is at risk. If that is the case, the worker should raise their concerns with their supervisor, employer and health and safety rep if they have one.

If their concerns persist, call Ontario's health and safety hotline at 1-877-202-0008.

### I cannot afford to pay my rent next month. I am no longer working.

On March 27, Minister of Municipal Affairs stated that we would ensure renters could stay in their homes during this challenging time. Tenants who can pay their rent must do so, to the best of their abilities. The Government of Ontario has been clear; you cannot be forced to leave your home if you cannot pay your rent on April 1. The Minister called on landlords to be as flexible as possible when it comes to collecting rent, starting with April, at a time when many people are struggling. The same goes for any planned rent increases landlords are contemplating, whether already approved by the Landlord and Tenant Board or not.

Of course, some landlords are also facing challenges, especially small landlords. While mortgage deferrals are available, some of you are waiting for news from your bank. Everyone needs to do their part right now.

To the tenants out there who are having challenges paying rent, please speak to your landlord about whether it can be postponed or if other payment arrangements can be agreed to. In addition, landlords, please be as flexible as you can. We need to come together as Ontarians and support each other.

### Why can't I visit my loved one who is in a Nursing Home? Why self-isolate and conduct physical distancing?

All actions we have taken to date have been based on the advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health. That includes encouraging social distancing by requiring the closure of schools and daycares, requiring restaurants and bars to maintain delivery or drive-through services only and closing non-essential businesses.

We have passed legislation to provide job-protected leave for workers and families and have

ensured families can buy the essentials they need by enabling businesses to receive deliveries 24/7 to keep their shelves stocked.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a memo on March 13 strongly recommending that long-term care homes to limit access to only essential visitors. Essential visitors are those who have a resident who is dying or very ill. No other visitors will be permitted to enter the premises and will be asked to keep in touch with loved ones by phone or other technologies, as available.

We have instructed long-term care homes to begin active screening of staff, essential visitors, residents moving into a long-term care home and residents returning to a long-term care home. These same instructions have been given to retirement homes.

### If I have to stay at home, why can't we be paying off-peak hydro rates so I can do my laundry when I want?

On March 24, to support Ontarians through the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation, the Government of Ontario provided electricity rate relief for families, small businesses and farms paying time-of-use (TOU) rates.

For a 45-day period, the government is working to suspend time-of-use electricity rates, holding electricity prices to the off peak rate of 10.1 cents-per kilowatt-hour. This reduced price will be available 24 hours per day, seven days a week to all time-of-use customers, who make up the majority of electricity consumers in the province. By switching to a fixed off-peak rate, time-of-use customers will see rate reductions of over 50 per cent compared to on-peak rates.

This discount applies automatically to electricity bills without the need for customers to fill out an application form.

### How do I get my groceries?

I am a senior and I do not want to be out with everyone else as I am at higher risk with this coronavirus.

Thank you to our local Newmarket-Aurora Grocers for being flexible with your Store Hours for seniors. If you are a senior and you do not have anyone to assist you with your groceries, please note the following grocers who have special shopping hours for seniors ONLY:

#### Superstore Aurora

15900 Bayview Ave  
905-726-9533  
Monday to Sunday  
7 am - 8 am  
Tues & Thurs employees can shop with seniors from 7am to 8am

#### No Frills Newmarket and Aurora

17255 Leslie St & 50 Davis Drive  
14800 Yonge St Aurora  
866-987-6453  
Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 am – 8 am

#### Metro Newmarket and Aurora

16640 Yonge St  
905-853-5100  
&  
111 Davis Drive  
905-853-5355  
&  
1 Henderson Drive  
905-727-0185  
Open for seniors from 7 am to 8 am

#### Longo's Aurora

650 Wellington St. East  
905-726-7928  
Open for seniors from 8 am to 9 am.

Our government will continue to heed the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and keep Ontarians informed with updates as they develop. Please, reach out to my constituency office by telephone or email, we are here to support you as information is changing daily, even hourly. Call 905-853-9889 or email, [christine.elliottco@pc.ola.org](mailto:christine.elliottco@pc.ola.org).



# Restaurants change menus, service to stay open for pick-up amid COVID-19

By Brock Weir

When they opened up their new restaurant in Aurora's downtown core last year, Romy and Natasha Jolly were pleased to bring a new culinary experience to the community with Romy's Restaurant & Lounge.

But, when COVID-19 became our new normal for the time being, it upended their business plans, along with those of countless other restaurants in the community. And, like many of those struggling to stay afloat at this difficult time, they have deployed some creative thinking to stay open and continue satisfying local taste buds.

They have had to let go all but a skeleton staff and shut down their dining room and now they are focused on a takeout service with curbside delivery.

"The whole thing has been a challenge," says Natasha. "We're not letting anyone else into the building, so when we're doing curbside, I will bring out the food and put it directly into their cars. Our customers are very pleased."

Within every challenge is a silver lining and since they put a sign outside of their Yonge Street frontage to promote their new takeout and curbside options, they have brought in a few new customers. Natasha also says the public has been especially friendly and accommodating as they try to stay afloat in the crisis.

"Everybody has been very nice and supportive," she says. "They are trying to help us and there has been really good feedback from everyone."

"I see a change in attitude – these people were probably nice anyway, but sometimes the general public is in a rush, they want everything right away,

*We're just trying to stay positive and if they can support locally it makes a difference in someone's livelihood in the future*

and we're not hearing that anymore," she adds with a slight chuckle.

That chuckle fades to a cracked voice, however, when asked what she would say to potential customers who might want to try something new and support local business but, at the same time, are mindful of recommendations to stay indoors unless absolutely

necessary.

"Without the help of the community, I think some of the businesses might not be able to open again, so if you can help out and you feel comfortable, it is a great thing to do for your community," she says. "The food industry is a hard business and if you can help out, it is helping put food on the table for families with a small mom-and-pop shop, to at least help pay their bills as they get through this."

"We are going to hang in for as long as we can. We want to be open again and we don't want to give up. We're just trying to stay positive and if they can support locally it makes a difference in someone's livelihood in the future."

To access Romy's takeout menu, visit romys.ca. For more restaurant options offering pickup and delivery service, visit shopfromhomeaurora.ca and safefood.delivery.



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# A whole digital world to explore at Aurora Public Library

## APL launches digital library card program

By Brock Weir

If you've explored every last inch of your home during this time of self-isolation, there's a whole digital world to explore via the Aurora Public Library.

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and closures of public spaces across Ontario, the Aurora Public Library (APL) has launched a digital library card service to enable more residents than ever before to access the myriad online services they continue to provide.

Membership at the APL is free to all who live, work, attend school or own property in any York Region municipality, and by heading over to the APL's website at [aurorapl.ca](http://aurorapl.ca) and filling out a brief form, you will be able to access all online programming within 72 hours.

"One of the things we have done in the short-term is bringing forward the

ability for people who don't already have a library card to go online and get temporary digital cards," explains Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Aurora Public Library. "You can use that card to take advantage of any of our online services right then and there."

These online services are not limited simply to e-books and audio books; through a wide variety of programs and services, holders of digital library cards can stream movies, access public services, and even take online courses to acquire new skills – or brush up on some dustier ones – in this time of isolation.

"It's a great place to spend quality time while we're all at home and doing the right thing by staying at home," says Gorman. "It is a great way to spend some time with yourself learning, or your kids too. There's lots of opportunity for the public to spend some time at the Aurora Public Library at home."

Before COVID-19 began gaining a foothold in Ontario, the Library was already well-positioned in the realm of digital services. As the situation rapidly developed, Library staffers knew that

strengthening their online outreach would be critical.

Resources include the APL's Cloud Library, which offers hundreds of thousands of e-books and audio books, Hoopla, which streams countless movies and TV shows, Tumblebooks – a collection of animated online kids' books, language learning through Little Pim and Mango, and LinkedIn learning courses.

"It is a great opportunity," says Gorman. "I have heard this quite a bit in recent days...people talking about how to spend their time doing different things and trying out different things, and this is a neat opportunity to try something new. Through LinkedIn learning, there are over 14,000 online courses you can take, things like software development, leadership and business courses, and these are all free through the Aurora Public Library. Once this has subsided and we come back to some normalcy, you'll have a new skill."

"I have been taking advantage of some of the leadership courses to hone my skills and I know some of our other staff have

been taking unique courses that are maybe not something they would normally take, or take a different spin on something, look at something they wouldn't normally look like. Everyone at the Library, we have access to these programs and our staff take advantage of them."

Since ramping up their digital library card program last week, Gorman says there has been a positive uptake from the community and registration numbers continue to rise.

"Once you're exposed to our wonderful digital world, you will have a whole host of new opportunities to look at it," he says. "I would encourage everyone to go and if you don't have a card, please come to our website and we will give you a digital card in just a day or so – and explore all these great learning opportunities."

"As we are all attempting to do our best by staying home as much as possible, please leave your library books at home with you. You don't have to return them and we will be waiving any fines or fees, so stay home, stay safe with your family, and open up the Aurora Public Library's digital world to you and your family."

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- Will be paid on a freelance/contract basis per project/story
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### QUALIFICATIONS:

- Diploma in journalism preferred
- Candidates should have experience working on the editorial side of the newspaper industry
- Excellent writing, editing and photography skills
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**Let's Talk.**

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What has changed is that because of the COVID-19 virus we have had to postpone one of our major fundraising events for the year, Hike for Hospice! In the past we have relied on our community for supporting us in raising 50% of our hospice budget, and now we are asking for your support again, now more than ever.

The health and wellbeing of our hospice family is our top priority and we want to continue offering these services, free of charge, safely to our residents, clients, caregivers and staff, but...

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