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THE AU 20 YEARS RAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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FREE

Week of October 29, 2020




PASSION PROJECT – Aurora's Nature Reserve has been a passion project for local landscape architect David Tomlinson, pictured here with wife Dierdre. After decades of work, the upcoming green space, which is designed to be a haven for wildlife, now bears his name – as unveiled by Mayor and Council on Friday afternoon. For more, see page 9.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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LAWN Party
by UrbanPark Playland

York Region averaging 90 new COVID cases per day

Thanksgiving eyed as a factor in spike

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

York Region is currently experiencing a record high of new COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, but these numbers could need to come down by more than half before communities like Aurora can come out of a modified Stage 2, according to Regional officials.

Last week, the Region of York sought

additional guidance from the Province on new measures coming out of a “modified Stage 2” of the Province’s plan to re-open Ontario.

This guidance included further information on indoor spaces that need to close their doors until numbers improve, as well as what criteria need to be in place before an “improvement” is determined.

Between October 14 and October 20, York Region saw a seven-day average of

90 daily cases, seven new hospitalizations, and a positivity rate of 4.3 per cent.

Positivity rates in this case refer to the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests among all individuals being tested for COVID-19.

“Per cent positivity helps to determine recent disease activity and trends as daily testing numbers fluctuate,” said Patrick Casey, Director of Communications

Continued on page 22

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HAUNTED GREENHOUSES – Local families are making “treasured” Hallowe'en memories by flocking (socially distanced, of course) to the Town's Joint Operations Centre for Aurora's Haunted Greenhouses, a new spin on the Aurora's Haunted Forest tradition. Here, Rob the Pirate opens up his treasure chest for Kate, Bryson, Lucy and Everly. For more, see Page 20.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Covid-19 update

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Police released this image of the vehicle, found in a quarry near Huntsville.

Contributed photo

Vehicle connected to missing Helen Sedo found burnt out in Huntsville

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A vehicle wanted in connection to the disappearance of Aurora resident Helen Sedo, 61, has been found burnt out near Huntsville, according to York Regional Police.

Investigators looking into the disappearance of the Treegrove Circle resident, who Police believe is now deceased, recovered the vehicle in a quarry near Williamsport Road, northeast of Huntsville, on October 13.

Police expanded their investigation to Huntsville and the surrounding area near the end of August.

“On October 12, investigators recovered the vehicle belonging to Helen Sedo in a quarry near Williamsport Road, which is northeast of the Town

of Huntsville, after it had been located by hunters in the area,” say Police. “The vehicle had been completely burned. Investigators are appealing to anyone who may have seen the vehicle or a fire between August and September at the location to please come forward. We are also appealing to anyone who may have trail cameras in the area that captured anything suspicious.”

Helen Sedo was first reported missing in late July after last being seen at her home near Bathurst Street and St. John’s Sideroad on Wednesday, July 29.

York Regional Police first asked for the public’s assistance in finding Helen Sedo on Sunday, August 2.

At the time, Police said Ms. Sedo was last seen leaving her home that evening and was carrying a red and white olive-coloured duffel bag and driving a 2012 silver Acura RDX with the licence plate

CDBY 015.

By September 14, however, the investigation shifted with Police announcing the Homicide & Missing Person Unit, along with the Search and Rescue Unit were conducting searches in the Huntsville area.

On Wednesday, September 23, Helen’s husband, John Sedo, also 61, was arrested and charged. He now faces charges of second-degree murder.

He made his second appearance in court via video link on Thursday.

The charges have not been proven.

The investigation continues.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Homicide Unit Tip line at 1-866-287-5025, or email the Homicide Unit at homicide@yrp.ca, or call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at www.1800222tips.com.

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Local families get creative to make Halloween memorable for kids and young-at-heart



The Eliesen family takes Hallowe'en very seriously but, with trick-or-treating throughout their neighbourhood on ice, they are getting crafty with their plans, including working on their (pictured) "cabinet of curiosities". **Contributed photo**

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

The COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed a surge of creativity among parents, who, despite restrictions, are hoping to make Halloween memorable for their children and communities.

Unlike every year, October 31 will not be following a set tradition of trick-or-treating and getting together with friends.

While some aren't ready to completely give up trick-or-treating and are hoping to follow safety precautions, others are staying home or within their bubble and coming up with creative plans.

Barbra Kwolek, an Aurora resident of 15 years, has an only child and that makes Halloween a social event her son really looks forward to every year.

"The highlight of trick-or-treating for him is always being with friends or family. He's not disappointed that we won't be going door-to-door, but he is disappointed he won't be seeing anyone else," admits Kwolek, who came up with a plan to salvage the situation.

"We decided to do something engaging and challenging to take up the evening and distract him from the fact that it's just the three of us. I found an escape room kit on Etsy (from LockPaperEscape). You print off these clues and solve them together. Now my son is really looking forward to it and doesn't seem to be upset that we aren't trick-or-treating at all," she said.

It's not just the parents putting their brains to use. Kathleen Veltri's 8-year-old thought of an ingenious plan that mimics the original.

"My 8-year-old actually came up with the idea of trick-or-treating within the house. The parents stand behind bedroom doors as they knock. I thought it was clever and we may give it a go," she said.

Kayla Eliesen's is another local family that takes Halloween very seriously.

"We decorate a lot. We recently made

bottles for our cabinet of curiosity, and our three kids and us parents were busy for about two hours! We will do more crafts on Halloween," she said, adding that they are still doing a mini version of trick-or-treating.

"We have about five neighbors who are expecting us for trick-or-treating. We are collecting candy from those five houses with a lacrosse stick to maintain distancing. We got our favorite candy to eat that night while we do our annual monster mash dance party and watch Halloween episodes or a movie. We are still dressing up as a vampire family."

For residents who like to hand out candy, the pandemic has made things challenging.

But some, like Lisa Bruce, are getting creative.

"I am decking up my house from outside, I've got a pop-up table that I plan to decorate with pre-made goodie bags that kids can grab and go as they walk along the sidewalk. The table will be on my front lawn so nobody is coming up to our door," she said.

Like a lot of other celebrations this year, Halloween too, has taken a virtual turn for some.

Andreean Grassby and her family will be attending a virtual drop-in Halloween Costume Party.

"We will 'gather' to celebrate Halloween wherever we are. There will be a costume contest, and fun categories like scariest costume, best homemade costume, funniest costume, best age 2 and under costume, 90s pop culture reference costume and so on. We will take screenshots and vote afterwards," said Grassby, noting that it is crucial for our kids that we show resilience and kindness.

"Safety is the number one value in my family. People are getting sick and the pandemic is very serious. It doesn't mean we can't have fun and do special things. Halloween will be different, but really I think it is affecting us grown-ups more than the kids. They are just happy to dress up and eat candy,

whatever form this takes," said the mother of two.

After all, it's the spirit of Halloween that matters.

TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

AURORA

NOTICE OF PASSING OF BY-LAW

TAKE NOTICE THAT on September 29th, 2020 Aurora Town Council passed By-law 6218-20 to designate the following property to be of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest:

Poplar Villa (The Chateau)
15074 Yonge Street,
Lot 1, 2 and 3, Plan 39, Town of Aurora, Regional Municipality of York,
being all of PIN 03653-0079 (LT)

A copy of this By-law is available by contacting the Town Clerk upon request.

DATED at Aurora this 29th day of October, 2020.

Town of Aurora 100 John West Way, Aurora, ON, L4G 6J1
 aurora.ca/publicnotices • 905-727-1375

TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

AURORA

NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION

The Town of Aurora is in receipt of the following Complete Application under the Planning Act.

APPLICATION: A Proposed Zoning By-law Amendment application to rezone the property to permit the development of a four (4) storey apartment building with 26 units which will be connected to the existing three (3) storey apartment building on the subject lands. Overall, the proposed and existing buildings will be 3,917 square metres (42,162 square feet) in total gross floor area (GFA), and will contain 34 units and a total of 42 parking spaces across one level of underground parking.

PROPERTY: 25 and 29 George Street
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Plan 246, Pt Lot 27
APPLICANTS: 2300485 Ontario Inc. and 2333564 Ontario Inc.
FILE NUMBERS: ZBA-2020-06
RELATED APPLICATIONS: N/A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
 The Town Hall is currently closed to the public and additional information and material regarding the proposed Applications may be requested by contacting the Planner for this file, Matthew Peverini of the Planning and Development Services Department, at 905-727-3123 extension 4350 or at MPeverini@aurora.ca.
 Should you wish to provide comments, they may be provided by mail to the Planning and Development Services Department at the address below, by fax to 905-726-4736 or by email to planning@aurora.ca. Please quote the File Name and Number.
 A Statutory Public Meeting to obtain input on the proposal will be scheduled in the future. Notice of the Public Meeting will be provided in accordance with the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13.

INFORMATION ABOUT PRESERVING YOUR APPEAL RIGHTS:
Zoning Bylaw
 If a person or public body would otherwise have an ability to appeal the decision of the Council of the Town of Aurora to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal but the person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Town of Aurora before the proposed By-law is adopted, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision.
 If a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Town of Aurora before the proposed By-law is passed, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to do so.
 If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Council of the Town of Aurora on the proposed By-law, you must make a written request to the Town of Aurora to the attention of the Director of Planning and Development Services.

PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTION NOTICE
 The Town of Aurora collects personal information in communications or presentations made to Town Council and/or its Committees under the legal authority of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter c.P.13, as amended. Pursuant to Section 27 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56, as amended, (the "Act") public feedback to planning proposals is considered to be public record and may be disclosed to any individual upon request in accordance with the Act. If you are submitting letters, faxes, emails, presentations or other communications to the Town, you should be aware that your name and the fact that you communicated with the Town will become part of the public record and will appear on the Town's website. The Town will also make your communication and any personal information in it, such as your address and postal code or email address available to the public unless you expressly request the Town to remove it. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Town Clerk, Town of Aurora, 100 John West Way, Box 1000, Aurora ON L4G 6J1 905-727-3123.

DATED at the Town of Aurora, this 29th day of October, 2020.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Future uncertain for the Henderson Drive turtles: ratepayers

The future of the Henderson Drive turtle population is hanging in the balance, as the application to destroy much of its valleyland habitat goes before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) on November 24.

As a turtle volunteer, I'm struggling to understand why the development of this vibrant Species at Risk habitat has met with such a dismal lack of resistance, particularly from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) which officially recognizes this area as a wildlife "hotspot."

We've seen no evidence to suggest that LSRCA has ever examined how these turtles are expected to migrate safely through this wildlife corridor when it becomes a construction site for two large estate homes or how the movement of heavy construction traffic along this extremely busy nesting area will affect not only the Snapping Turtles but also the Midland Painted Turtles which use these lands.

Any reputable biologist will tell you that turtles can't be forced to move out of their known habitat, they're not "wired" that way, and when developers start tearing up that habitat the population's very survival can be compromised.

Since Snapping Turtles have such a late maturity age (15-20) and considering the loss of one adult takes almost 60 years to replace in a population, it's not difficult to see why the future is looking so bleak for this local Species at Risk.

The LPAT hearing is due to begin on November 24 at 10 a.m. by video and is scheduled to last nine days. Please take the time to watch this critical environmental case. Importantly, you'll get the chance to see the movers and shakers, particularly those involved in other significant planning decisions around Aurora these days.

The Henderson Drive applications will make for a poignant, albeit so far depressing case study of why we need to scrutinize the actions of those who claim to be protectors of the environment. From where I stand, it's very evident as to why Ontario's wildlife is in such peril.

Wendy Kenyon
Vice-President
Henderson Forest Aurora Ratepayer Association

We need to think beyond the "suburban dream," says reader

The final phase of the Stable Neighbourhood protection fiasco is out and ready to be finalized. At one time I thought this was an important issue as decent modest housing in this Town is being felled and replaced with newer out of scale homes.

The first two prongs of the Mayor's "3-Pronged Approach" have done little to change that situation. In fact, we have now enshrined in our comprehensive zoning bylaw package the right to build out to 4,000 sq. feet on any lot in these three areas. An idea that was sure to delight and disappoint builders all in one go. Reason being, they apparently had the most to lose in this type of reform. I mean seriously, the lot sizes lend themselves to bigger homes and this is the future. So, council decided that this is fair.

Fair to whom?

Unfortunately, I see little of the future in the ideas they have been purporting throughout this process. What I do see is an increase in accessibility for housing at a scale that is further out of reach for the average working-class homebuyer, forget the renters, downsizers or anyone at the lower end of the spectrum.

Oh, but the Promenade Plan will take

Continued on page 23

Machell's Corners



SCOTT JOHNSTON

Everything old is "new" again

Living as a student in Ottawa for the lion's share of the first decade of this relatively new century was a boon for someone like me who once described himself as a "political junkie." The fact that I worked on Parliament Hill in between classes only served to make that boon feel like a jackpot.

Through my job, I was able to attend the House of Commons if the space and ticket allocation was there, and I took advantage of this at every opportunity.

I took a seat in the gallery when issues particularly close to my heart came up, made the short walk to the Senate to watch the Governor General of the day give Royal Assent in person, and had the great good fortune to watch Question Period from the left-hand side of the House while the same chair on the opposite side was occupied by iconic primatologist Jane Goodall. (Needless to say, watching Dr. Goodall watch the proceedings from just over the aisle was far more interesting than what was happening on the floor. I mean, presumably; my attentions were definitely elsewhere) Additionally, if there was a feeling of change in the air, I watched intently from my seat if there was a promise of a government rising or falling at the whim of elected members.

One such vote that fell into this latter category was a debate associated with the Gomery Commission in November 2005. This resulted in a no confidence vote against the Paul Martin government and a subsequent – and unusual – winter election which ultimately saw Martin's defeat and the rise of a Conservative minority government under the leadership of Stephen Harper.

As many of us remember, as soon as victory was sealed, Harper began a serious mission of rebranding government services. Just about everything that rolled out from Ottawa over the duration of this minority government dripped in blue and was branded as an initiative of "Canada's New Government."

Granted, they were indeed a "New Government" after more than a decade of Liberal rule, but how long can a government be considered "new"? This was a question many Canadians began to ask after the first year, and continued to do so as the less-than-new government endured.

Eventually, the "new" brand gave way to something less ephemeral, something a little more stable and solid – and this continued to be the case after Harper's



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

minority became a majority government a couple of years later.

Recently, I considered just how long something outside of governments can be called "new" when the novelty value wears off in the face of persistent staying power; namely this "new normal."

My colleague Scott Johnston, after reading a recent column, suggested this phrase no longer needed to be placed within quotation marks as we had been at this for more than seven months and this "normal" – new or otherwise – showed no signs of giving way to anything else.

Despite the challenges it throws up each and every day, we're becoming used to this new – er, present normal. Going into an indoor establishment without our masks is, for many of us, almost anathema. Going out the door to shop for anything, whether it is a run for essential groceries or even a little well-earned pick-me-up, requires no small degree of strategy. A simple "How are you?" is nowadays anything but. And on and on it goes.

When we're no longer braced for a grave answer when we utter that simple greeting, are able to run back to the store for a forgotten carton of eggs without having to buckle up your veritable Bat Utility Belt weighed down by just about every piece of portable PPE yet devised, and being free enough to go out your front door without having to make sure a mask is to hand, will, again, be a "new normal" to grapple with.

But whether we like it or not, we are once again living in a "new normal", although this time it's a "normal" that isn't entirely novel. We saw evidence of this last Tuesday and Wednesday when the sabre rattling in our nation's capital became louder than it has been in quite some time.

Apparently feeling the heat from a Conservative motion to strike a parliamentary committee that would

have oversight on both government spending related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Liberal Government's place within the still percolating ethics controversy on the WE charity, the Prime Minister took the unusual and unwelcome step of making a vote on the matter a confidence motion.

Had the Conservative motion been passed by the House of Commons, we would now be in the heat of a Federal Election campaign in the middle of a worldwide pandemic.

If this scenario sounds familiar, that is because it is. This is the second time in as many months that Canadians have had to face a new layer of uncertainty: not only the prospect of facing the polls in a time where we should be doing everything we can to foster social distancing but whether a change in government would disrupt any measures put in place to help struggling Canadians navigate these uncharted waters.

This is the last thing we need on our minds at the present moment, but it regrettably seems to be firmly on the front burner in Ottawa.

"COVID cases are rising. People are worried about their jobs, their kids, and the health of their loved ones in long-term care," said NDP leader Jagmeet Singh last week as he once again found the eyes of the country trained on him as he pondered whether his party would be the deciding factor on a matter of confidence. "But Justin Trudeau is putting the interest of his party ahead of the needs of people across Canada."

"We think that the threat to call an election over an opposition day motion to set up a committee is ridiculous and out-of-touch with what Canadians are facing. The Prime Minister always has the power to call an election. It's clear that he wants an election to hold onto power, before the pandemic gets worse. Instead of hiding behind a vote about a committee, he should have the courage to tell Canadians that he thinks there should be an election now."

Few things, however, are clear in politics, particularly during a pandemic, and certainly political motive is near the bottom of the list. But what is clear, at least from my perspective, is that the concerns outlined by the NDP leader are uppermost in the minds of Canadians and should, for the time being, be prioritized above all else.

Table the sabres, we can get back to those later. One "new normal" at a time is more than enough.

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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@lpcmedia.ca
Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.



The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating...

Halloween! (October 31)

It's true, Halloween will certainly look and feel quite different this year. Although one thing remains true: if you look hard enough you'll be able to find something spooky! From all of us at the Aurora Museum & Archives, including those who are forever captured in our archival photos, we wish you a safe and Happy Halloween.



Parsa's Perspective

Michael Parsa, MPP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

As always, it is with great pleasure to connect with all of you once again.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the community for the resilience you have shown during this global pandemic. Since the very start of this pandemic, the efforts and sacrifices you have all made to protect the most vulnerable and stand in solidarity with our health care workers is truly commendable. We must not only recognize the essential and frontline workers for their efforts but also the contributions of the people of this community as a whole.

Although we may all face the same restrictions, the impacts of the pandemic may affect each of us differently. The Ontario Government is tirelessly working on improving rapid methods of protecting Ontarians against this virus. Small businesses are truly the backbone of our province's economy, and that is why we have created the Main Street Recovery Plan. Ontario is dedicated to providing \$300 million to help offset fixed costs such as property taxes, hydro, and natural gas bills.

As some of you may know, I too come from a small business background. Therefore, I am able to relate to some of the challenges and appreciate the importance of these businesses to our community. The changes that have been forced upon us since the beginning of the pandemic have not only affected the businesses and their staff, but also their families. The Main Street Recovery plan allows businesses to receive grants for personal protective equipment, and most importantly provides mental health support for owners and staff of

these businesses during these difficult times.

The mental health and well-being of the residents of our community is of high priority. The pandemic presented many challenges, one of which was forcing many into isolation. We understand the difficulties that many families across Ontario have faced during these difficult times, especially those living with mental health and addiction challenges. Despite the difficulties imposed on us all, you followed public health recommendations in order to protect our communities from the spread of the virus. The Ontario Government is dedicated to ensuring that mental health support is provided to all Ontarians. An additional investment of \$176 million has been made in our Mental Health and Addiction Services. This will ensure that additional hospital in-patient beds are available, and that there is an improvement in the access of new supports and programs.

Improving the quality of life for Ontarians is one of the core values of our government. Our message has always been very clear, that we would

continue to make our province a place where growth is possible.

Skilled workers are one of the biggest assets to the growth of our province. Which is why we are investing \$286 million over the next two years to assist apprentices in the skilled labour sector to continue with their advancement. Additionally, we are working diligently to reduce Ontario auto insurance rates and we are calling on all insurance companies to provide relief to Ontarians who are facing hardship during this unprecedented time. Drivers are now eligible to receive nearly \$1 billion in relief in response to the pandemic, which is \$300 million more in savings from earlier this year.

The introduction of these investments will assist Ontarians through these challenging times and help our businesses as we continue to fight this virus. As your representative in the Ontario Legislature, I will continue my part to ensure that our government's efforts are always aligned with the best interest and well-being of the residents of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

As a final note, I would like to reiterate the importance of continuing to follow the guidelines provided by our Chief Medical Officer of Health and our public health officials. We must all do our part to slow the spread of the virus and assist each other through these unprecedented times.

My staff and I are here to assist you. If you are a resident of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill and require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Halloween in Two Metre Increments

As you're no doubt aware, since Aurora's in a modified Stage 2, local medical experts are recommending that kids not partake in house-to-house trick or treating this Hallowe'en.

Note that this isn't an outright ban, so although fewer in numbers, I still expect we'll see some children on Saturday night.

While normally I love to see kids dressed up in their costumes, I fear the scariest thing at our door this year won't be zombies, werewolves, or mini Donald Trumps, but a complete lack of social distancing.

I don't know how things normally go at your place, but kids seem to arrive at our house in a crush of bodies all jostling to get into the prime real estate on the doormat to get their treats first before their friends get there and grab all the good chocolate.

Sometimes, kids have even tried to push into the house to see what else we may be offering (yes, really). Obviously, decorum can take a backseat when one may have missed out on hoarded peanut butter cups.

This has gotten me thinking of ways one can distribute goodies safely this Saturday in these days of COVID-19, short of donning full biohazard containment gear more appropriate for one of the deeper sublevels at the Centre for Disease Control.

The easiest option is to just leave all of the goodies in a big bowl on the porch. Kids can help themselves, and you can enjoy looking at all the costumes safely



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

from inside through a window.

Unfortunately, there's no guarantee the kids will form an orderly spaced queue, and it's also possible that the first one there will take the whole bowl and clean you out, although that would allow you to turn off the porch light and make an early and guilt-free night of it.

Another option is to create some sort of impenetrable barrier 2 metres from your porch. From the safety of your door you can lob treats to the kids. There's a decided loss of dignity with this method – more like feeding time at the zoo – but at least you maintain your distance.

You could spice it up by lobbing the candy in an original way, for example, with a mini trebuchet. But based on experience, even small ones tend to catapult things seven dozen metres, so it would be better for scaring off the critters eating all the pumpkins in our neighbourhood than for dispensing treats to children.

I read somewhere about handing candy out on the blade of a hockey

stick. While that allows the appropriate distancing, I'm not sure that I have the dexterity, or that kids will have the necessary patience to wait while like a game show contestant I attempt to maneuver a mini Mars bar to within their reach without dropping it.

Some folks are opting to install hollow tubes atop a downward railing. Simply drop a treat in one end, and gravity will dispense it from the other, right into a waiting treat bag.

If you have the materials, and the appropriate porch elevation, that may work, although you run the risk of incurring both a logjam of sweets should they get wedged inside, and the resultant wrath of impatient trick or treaters.

You could hide the candy around your front yard, kind of like an October version of an Easter egg hunt. There's certainly no end of fallen leaves to conceal them.

That would keep kids both away from you and apart from each other, but again, without any checks and balances, one or two kids early on might scoop up the entire evening's hoard. Or conversely, you could spend the next week raking up masses of leaves glued together with melted undiscovered chocolate.

If the warning for children to stay indoors is heeded, this all may be a bit of a moot point. In either case, I know one thing; this will definitely be a scary Hallowe'en.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at:
machellscorners@gmail.com



Getting Things Done

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

Regional Update

This month at Regional Council, members had before us a motion for Council to request the Province to develop a process allowing municipalities to access site-specific, strategically located employment lands – for employment use – only along the 400-series highways.

The focus of the motion – more employment lands – is a worthwhile, arguably necessary objective, certainly in affected municipalities. It would foster employment growth, bringing more jobs to the region. And it would generate more taxes, thus relieving some of the burden on the residential tax base.

There is a problem, however, with the proposed action: these lands are part of the Greenbelt and as such they are protected.

I have never supported opening-up the Greenbelt – even in such a targeted way as proposed. In my opinion, if you open the door just a little bit, it will be tough to keep it closed.

Do I believe that we need to look at ways that we can reduce residential tax rates? Absolutely, especially in the smaller municipalities, but I don't support opening-up the Greenbelt as the way of doing that. I believe that all levels of government need to work together to identify workable solutions to the municipal infrastructure funding crisis.

While collecting only nine cents out of every tax dollar, municipalities are responsible for 60 per cent of infrastructure costs. As a consequence, right now, municipalities across the country are facing a \$150 billion infrastructure deficit.

Do we need do something? Do we need to figure out how to address this disconnect between infrastructure costs and tax revenues? Yes! But paving over our environmentally protected Greenbelt lands is not the answer.

We need to continue to ensure that our Greenbelt lands stay protected.

I was very happy to hear Minister Clark stand up in the Legislature and say that, "I can tell the members of the House and every head of Council and every councillor in every community across Ontario that if you're going to give us a request to develop property within the Greenbelt, we have one short answer: No."

It is unfortunate that the motion passed 15-5 (with Mayors Quirk, Taylor and myself, and Regional Councillors Hamilton and Heath opposed).

I will keep everyone informed as to how this issue progresses.

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

CLARIFICATION

Last week's article, "Magna land development raises residents' concerns", referred to the land as such as it was once part of Magna's vision for its global headquarters, as noted. The lands, previously owned by The Stronach Group, were subsequently sold to TACC, Paradise, and Fieldgate Homes.

THIS WEEK'S POLL

Will York Region's
modified Stage 2
last beyond 28 days?

Yes No Unsure

www.theauroran.com

RESULTS
TO DATE
October 27, 2020

YES
80%

NO
0%

UNSURE
20%



Christine Elliott
MPP - Newmarket-Aurora

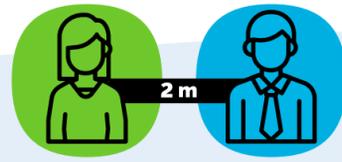
905-853-9889 1-800-211-1881
Christine.Elliottco@pc.ola.org
www.christineelliottmpp.ca



Wear a face covering in indoor public spaces and when physical distancing is a challenge.



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



If you must leave the house, practise physical distancing – stay 2 metres away from others.



A new patient assessment room, part of Southlake Regional Health Centre's investment in mental health resources. **Contributed photo**



Common room **Contributed photo**



Southlake Snapshot

By Dr. Mahdi Memarpour,
Chief of Psychiatry,
Southlake Regional Health Centre

Mental health needs more than medicine. For these patients, space is as important a tool as an MRI is to screen for tumours. I see the importance of space every day in the work I do at Southlake Regional Health Centre, and how desperately it's needed to provide better support for patients in our communities.

That's why Southlake Foundation has launched our \$7.5 million Better Begins Today campaign to transform mental health care at Southlake. Our mental health spaces are undergoing drastic and urgently-needed changes – and they're already making a difference.

The recently-opened Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit has six private assessment rooms with beds, windows and televisions, where patients can see a psychiatrist and begin treatment immediately until inpatient beds are available. And a new 12-bed Adult Inpatient Unit will boost Southlake's total inpatient mental health capacity from 24 beds to 36, along with new indoor and outdoor common spaces for social interaction, recreation and treatment.

But it's not about the space itself – it's about *who* that space is helping.

On average, 17 patients come into our Emergency Department every day experiencing a mental health crisis. With the new Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit, they will be able to start their treatment from the moment they come through our doors, rather than waiting up to 5 days in our Emergency Department before being admitted. They now have a more peaceful and healing environment with space to move and important natural light, and will be treated with the dignity they deserve thanks to enhanced privacy features. The new 12-bed Adult Inpatient Unit will allow us to care for 400 more patients each year.

Families will be able to be more involved in the care journey, making them better equipped to provide support at home and minimizing stress knowing their loved ones are in a positive environment.

We'll support our hospital overall by alleviating the pressure on our already stretched Emergency Department to enable more timely access to critical care.

And the benefits for staff are undeniable. By eliminating space as a barrier to the best patient outcomes, we'll have a healing environment where my colleagues and I can do our best work for the patients who depend on us. With the right space as a tool, our compassionate team can provide leading edge care and best results for our patients.

Mental illness is a crisis shared by our entire community, made more apparent than ever through the prolonged stress and isolation of the pandemic. In fact, we're already seeing increased numbers of patients who are suffering from acute mental illness for the first time as a direct result of COVID-19. That includes more people suffering from severe anxiety and stress, and more people willing to reach out and ask for help.

But we don't just get better. We build it together. With your support, better can begin right here in your community at Southlake.

To learn more about how the Better begins today Campaign will transform mental health care at our hospital, visit southlake.ca/better.

Dr. Mahdi Memarpour is Chief of Psychiatry at Southlake Regional Health Centre, a full-service hospital with a regional, clinically advanced focus providing care right from birth to end of life, and leading-edge services such as cardiac and cancer care across York Region and Simcoe-Muskoka.

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Celebrate Hallowe'en with virtual "HalloKween!" Drag Storytime

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Hallowe'en arrives on Saturday, and although present health restrictions encourage quiet celebrations, the Aurora Public Library and Pflag York Region are sashaying virtually right into the spirit of the things with HalloKween! Drag Storytime.

Hosted by Miss Eva Lasting, a mainstay of the Aurora Public Library's (APL) in-person Drag Queen Story Hours, kids and grown-ups are encouraged to dress in their very best costumes as she leads songs, stories and a celebration of all things Hallowe'e between 2 and 2.30 p.m.

HalloKween! was developed by Pflag, in conjunction with the APL after Pflag President Tristan Coolman received an email from a parent encouraging the organization to come up with a fun event where kids could dress freely in the costumes of their choosing.

"It stemmed from a family with a son who wanted to dress as a princess," explains Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration for the APL. "The family talked him out of it because they felt the school and his classmates might not be too accepting of the costume. They reached out to Tristan and he thought about having a Drag Storytime."

Pflag had the idea, and APL had the experience of hosting three similar events in the past, and Eva Lasting pleased to join in from British Columbia.

"Miss Eva's mandate is to celebrate who you are, but it is not just a performance: all events we have with them are family-

friendly, they promote social justice and community development and literacy," says Ms. Mandelcorn. "With Hallowe'en this year, with Public Health and the direction to not have children going door to door for Halloween, I think there is going to be a lot more at-home Halloween parties with families. The HalloKween! story time is not just for preschoolers, it is for older kids, teens,

for adults with a sense of fun, and I think if there are more parties happening, it will actually open the event up to more people as opposed to our regular pre-school story times – and it is a nice add-on for a different kind of Hallowe'en celebration this year.

"Drag Queen story hour events are happening all over the world, they are happening in libraries, schools, bookstores, and all kinds of community spaces. These events are so important to everyone in the community because they teach individuality, they teach empathy, they teach acceptance and they let our kids know that it is okay to be yourself and to love who you are – and for all kids, it teaches them to welcome the diversity of everyone in their lives and their communities. I hope that everyone in the community will come out, people who are already participating, who want to have fun, who want to show off their costumes...even those who are just curious. If you are curious it is a way to open up a new way of thinking and a new experience. If you have never come to one before, come to this one. It is going to be so much fun!"

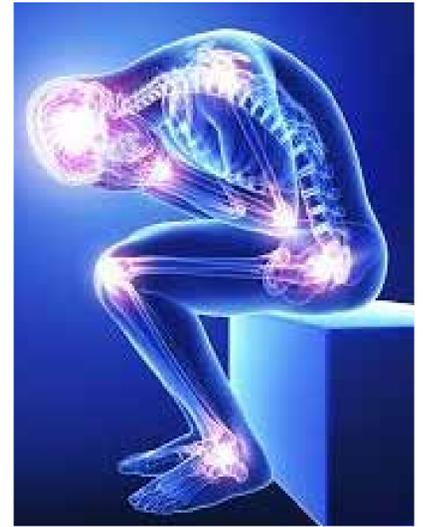
To register for HalloKween! with Miss Eva Lasting on Saturday, October 31 from 2 – 2.30 p.m., visit bit.ly/3kg4wIx. The virtual event will be presented over Zoom.



Drag Queen Miss Eva Lasting is getting into the Hallowe'en Spirit with Pflag York Region and the Aurora Public Library. Contributed photo

Advertisorial

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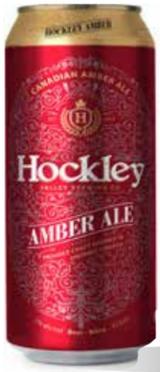
The Holiday Feast: A History of Special Foods with Lianne Harris WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4 | 2:30 PM

Join Lianne Harris as she looks at the symbolic foods around the holiday times: Passover, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We ask: what are these holidays, why do we eat certain foods, and why is it special that we are to celebrate them? Make your favourite holiday drink and put on your fanciest holiday outfit while we go through each holiday in depth! **Call to RSVP.**



Holiday Wreath-Making Event WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 | 2:30 PM

There is always something about the scent of cinnamon and fresh pine that makes everyone feel so cozy during the holiday season. It's the most wonderful time of the year! Traditions are what make this season so special, as are the memories we make. Please join Disiree and Brooke online for this fun holiday event. We will provide the supplies as we make our own holiday wreath. **Call 905-770-4704 to RSVP.**



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Pandemic continues to have "significant" impact on Town's finances

Going back into Stage 2 could cause further challenges: Treasurer

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The continued uncertainty swirling around the global pandemic continues to have a "significant" impact on the Town's finances and it will be a challenge to rise to the occasion.

In a report due for further discussion at Council this week, the short-term – and potential long-term – impacts of COVID-19 on the municipality's finances

are beginning to come into focus.

Lost revenues from Town programs, water revenues, and other factors related to the pandemic are estimated to clock in at \$5,011,200, according to a report by Tracy Evans, Financial Management Advisor for the Town of Aurora.

"The magnitude of the impact of COVID-19 on the Town of Aurora remains unclear, but the existing physical distancing measures and economic shut-down impacts have already been significant," says Evans.

"To date, the Town has already initiated several measures in an effort to mitigate its COVID-19 financial impacts, such as the temporary release of over 280 part-time and contract staff, the pulling of all ice pads and the draining of all recreation facility pools."

Mitigation measures such as the release of part-time and contract staff, saving from the closure of municipal facilities, salary savings from delaying recruitment of new staff, and lower levels of maintenance in the parks department, have resulted in a savings of \$5,141,000.

"COVID-19 has had the most profound impact on the Town's facility and community program functions," says Evans. "The financial performance of these functions will hinge on the timing of the Province's relaxation of the present pandemic measures. To date, overall the Town has found sufficient mitigating savings to offset the significant COVID-19-driven deficits that it has been subject to."

"There is little opportunity for the mitigation of COVID-19 financial impacts within the Town's user rate-funded operations budget other than through direct wholesale cost savings as a majority of its costs are driven by clean drinking water legislation or a requirement to maintain the Town's underground infrastructure at the Town's desired level of service."

"However, with this in mind, staff have examined its operations for possible financial mitigation opportunities."

Such possibilities include the reduction of administrative expenses and refocusing any resources on operations and maintenance.

Council reviewed the forecast at the Committee level last week.

While they thanked staff for their work, they questioned how Federal funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will help ease any shortfalls and help smooth out any tax implications going forward.

Councillor Harold Kim, for instance, raised the issue of the nearly \$1.3 million cash infusion and wondered how that money might be split amongst areas where there are financial shortfalls versus other areas that still have healthy reserves.

"If one bucket was negatively impacted by COVID but because of surpluses at an operating level in other buckets and it smooths out, does that mean we cannot use the COVID funding for that one particular bucket?" he asked. "Is the COVID funding for the overall net deficit of the corporation, or can it be used from a tactical perspective?"

Town Treasurer Rachel Wainwright-

Van Kessel said the \$1,298,500 grant was calculated on a per-household basis rather than specific needs or specific applications.

"From this type of funding, we're allowed to use it to offset some of the impacts of COVID, whether it be revenue losses or whether it be additional costs that we need to accommodate our workspace for COVID as well," she said. "We can use it in either operating or capital. The other way we can also use it is we can contribute some of that money to reserve and use it next year. One of the things we would see in the budget that comes forward next week is we are planning to contribute some of that funding to reserve to offset some of those COVID pressures we're expecting for 2021. We will be preserving some of that while also using it against some of the costs we have had so far."

"Luckily, a lot of the COVID expenses we were able to save during the complete shutdown through reducing staffing, removing ice, removing water from the pools, but now as we move into this modified Stage 2, it is a little bit of a different situation so we will see how things go. This forecast reflects the stage we were at before we moved to modified Stage 2 so there could be some potential for further deficits...from the situation we're in now. We will be very strategic in how we use it [so we can conserve] some of the money for next year to deal with some of those pressures that continue into 2021."

Aurora's share of the COVID recovery funding could be used to "right size" community services, she added, but the Town needs to be a "little bit more strategic" going into 2021 looking at how additional funds can be used to manage ongoing impacts of the pandemic and make sure Aurora is prepared for the future.

"As we move into 2021, we do not know what the funding requirements or how it will be allocated out based on what happens next year," she said. "I am just thinking for the Town we should be prudent and make sure that we protect ourselves for what we know we may have as impacts next year while at the same time ensuring that we do not end up in a deficit situation this year."

A further update on the financial implications of York Region heading back into Stage 2 could come as early as December, she said.

"As we have seen in the report, the reduction of revenue to the tune of \$5 million is significant and the fact they were able to work collectively to try and mitigate the impact of this loss in revenue and end up with a small surplus, I think that is better than we could have thought of three months ago," said Councillor Michael Thompson on the work of staff. "Certainly, while I don't know how the other municipalities in York Region are faring, I have to think we have weathered the storm better than most and so I just want to express my appreciation and acknowledge their efforts."

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: "I think they did an incredible job throughout the first seven months of the pandemic and they put us in a position to make us well-established as we moved forward."

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Wildlife Reserve dedicated in honour of tireless advocate



The Tomlinsons were joined at the Friday afternoon's unveiling near the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex by Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councillors Sandra Humfryes, Michael Thompson, John Gallo, Harold Kim, Wendy Gaertner and Rachel Gilliland. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

For nearly three decades, Aurora resident David Tomlinson has been a tireless advocate for the creation of a local wildlife park that will serve as an example to the nation.

Now, as work to make Phase 1 wildlife park in northeast Aurora moves into the home stretch this November, the large swath of land stretching from the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) on Wellington Street in the South to St. John's Sideroad in the north, will now bear his name.

On Friday afternoon, Mayor Tom Mrakas and members of Council joined Mr. Tomlinson and his wife Dierdre at the SARC for the dedication of the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve.

"In 2020, Aurora Town Council decided to name the Wildlife Park as the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve after Mr. Tomlinson, a local resident, landscape architect and environmentalist, who has been studying wildlife in Aurora since the early 80s," said the Town in a statement. "The Wildlife Park is based on a proposal developed by Mr. Tomlinson, who was instrumental in the success of the Wildlife Park being designated as a Provincially

Significant Wetland."

Speaking to The Auroran just before the dedication, Mr. Tomlinson said he was a reluctant honouree but honoured just the same.

"I always tried to resist it being named after me," said Mr. Tomlinson who has always referred to the land in question as the Ivy Jay Nature Reserve, noting the name given to the area by former landowner Jim Spring, who originally turned the wetlands and surrounding areas over to Ducks Unlimited. "I have mixed feelings about it, but I am very pleased they have done it. Dierdre is very pleased about it, my family is pleased about it, and my family in England is, too. They know I have been working on it for years."

Mr. Tomlinson has been a passionate and long-time advocate for the environment.

As a landscape architect in the United Kingdom, he worked his way up the ladder and, after moving to Canada with his family in the late 1970s, that passion was only amplified.

Here, he was a key player in the establishment of the Aurora Community Arboretum and Nature Aurora, and, closer to home, in the creation of Merlin's Hollow, the renowned garden he created with his wife Dierdre in their Centre Crescent backyard which has welcomed visitors for

nearly 40 years.

In more recent years, however, the development of what is now the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve has been his primary passion.

"I have not been around the Nature Reserve in about nine months since the COVID virus started, but I went around a couple of days ago and they are making a really good job with it," said Mr. Tomlinson. "The northern part is coming along well, the trails are located well, all the natural areas are protected from human activity. It is a very protected wetland and you get a really good view when you go into the blinds. The platforms are in, the

blinds haven't been properly built yet, but from there you get a really good view of the ponds; from the blinds, if they are done properly, it will be the first view of the ponds you get when you walk in the trails. The way I have intended the blinds, the birds can't see you and you can't see the birds until you get to the blind. They don't know anyone is looking at them and they are just completely undisturbed, which is how it should be."

Over the last few years, particularly in the last few months, there has been every sign the Nature Reserve has been working as its new namesake has intended. Now-rare birds, once common sights in Aurora, are now regular nesters in the area, and other forms of wildlife are also flourishing.

"I am very pleased with the way it is coming along," said Mr. Tomlinson. "In the end, I think it is going to become a national example of how you create a nature reserve in an urban area and I think it is really going to set the standard.

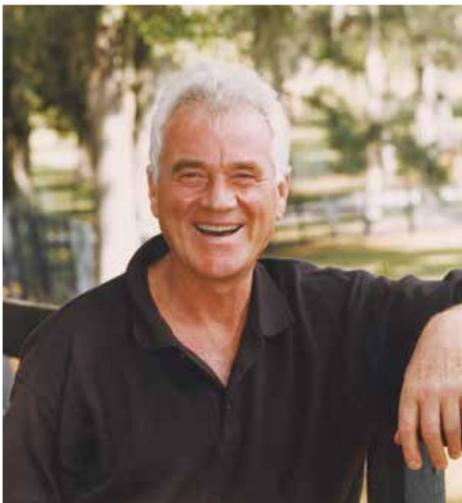
"We know already there are rare scarce birds nesting on it this year. If it works well and the public keeps to the trails and not try to walk all over the place, I think it will end up being an eco-tourist thing. It is not just people from Aurora who will travel to see it, it is people from our Town, once it gets known. I think it is going to be an eco-tourist destination, which is my view, you never know what is going to be on the ponds or in the woods. Birds will change from season to season."



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Remembrance Day goes virtual this year in Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

This was shaping up to be an extra-poignant Remembrance Day in Aurora.

2020 not only marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War but also, closer to home, the 70th anniversary of the Altar of Sacrifice, a moving monument added to the Aurora Cenotaph to remember the local lives lost during the 1939-1945 conflict.

Poignancy will still be in the air at the Cenotaph this November 11, but the Aurora Peace Park will be much quieter as members of the public are encouraged to stay home and watch a live-stream of the scaled-back Remembrance Day service in accordance to health measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have been directed by Command not to have a parade,” says Lori Hoyes, President of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. “Our normal Sunday-before-Remembrance Day parade is not happening, but we’re having a small service on Remembrance Day itself at 10.45 a.m. It will just be myself and a few other people, those who are invites-only to the Cenotaph. We have partnered with

the Town of Aurora, who will be hosting a livestream on their Facebook page and YouTube channel and also on the Aurora Legion’s Facebook page.

“The service will be streamed from the Cenotaph and it will be somewhat of a normal service: less flags, there won’t be a bagpiper; there won’t be any of the troops, no audience, no cadets, just a few wreaths being laid, but most of them will be pre-laid.”

Ahead of this very unusual but necessary service, barriers will be put up where the Peace Park meets Yonge Street, an area that is usually overflowing with people, including classes from nearby schools, paying tribute to Canada’s war dead.

The Aurora Legion concedes that people might show up on the day itself, but implore people to not attend and watch from home or their office.

Although the general public will not be able to attend this year’s ceremony, there are other ways they can take part above and beyond clicking on the livestream.

Wreaths from individuals, businesses and community organizations will be pre-laid by the Legion ahead of the ceremony, but there is still a chance to purchase wreaths that can be laid on your behalf. A limited number are available from the Legion at a price point of \$120.



Last year, Aurora’s Cenotaph was the focal point of local Remembrance Day services, but ceremonies will be minimal this year with the public being encouraged to watch the community’s scaled-down commemoration via live stream.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

“Other than buying a wreath, if stores wanted to buy one and put them into their windows, that is an option as well,” says Rick Preston of the Legion’s Ontario Command, which is also based on Industrial Parkway North just behind the Aurora Branch. “When 11 o’clock comes around, have your two minutes of silence,

and that is the big thing.”

Adds Ms. Hoyes: “Also continue to donate to the Poppy Fund, whether it is through a store and putting money into a box, or we will always take cheques, if they wanted to send money directly to us, marked as a donation to the ‘Poppy Fund.’”

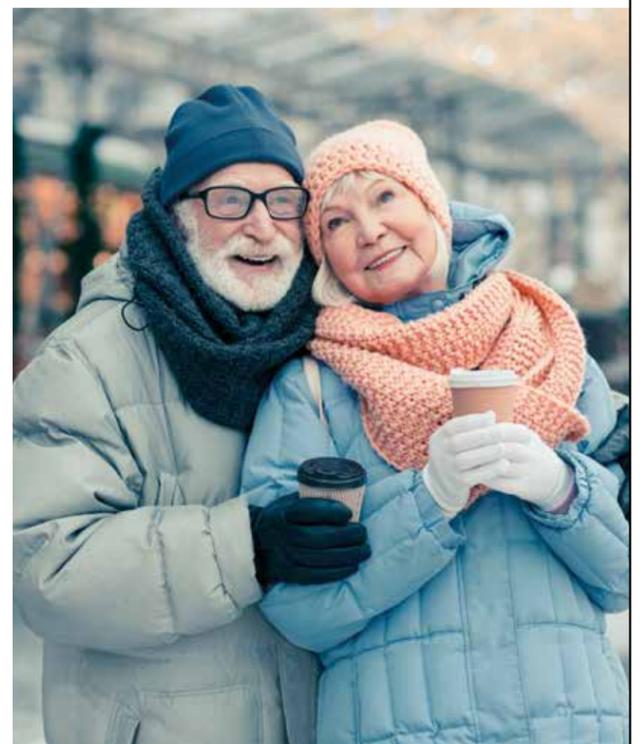
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Aurora should be focused on long-term impacts of Climate Change: Gaertner

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As Aurora, like most of the world, moves forward towards an uncertain future, renewed focus should be placed on the long-term impacts of Climate Change, says Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

The environment has always been an issue close to Councillor Gaertner's heart, particularly since first elected to Council nearly two decades ago, and it is as important now than ever before.

"One of my main goals was protecting the environment and working furiously to mitigate the impacts of climate change," she says.

Long-predicted severe storms will likely put Aurora at risk of flooding, but it will take approximately 25 years before measures outlined in flood protection plans are fully in place due to budgetary constraints, she contends.

"That is concerning to me. After being the lone voice plugging away at protecting the environment, I am really pleased to see that Council is taking Climate Change seriously," she says when asked on what she thought were some of the key wins of the first six months of decisions made by Council this year. "We have put several studies in place in the 2020 Budget, but we need money to activate the recommendations.

"When I asked at the table where we were going to get this money from, after a long pause the answer was that we may have to look at our service levels and that was kind of a 'wow' to me."

It also, in her view, underscored a missed opportunity; namely the Town's investment in the nearly \$52 million redevelopment of Library Square.

Councillor Gaertner was one of the three Council members who voted against moving ahead with the plan this past August.

This significant investment, she says, would have been better used on initiatives addressing climate change protection as "that is going to be the biggest quality of life issue we face in the next 20 years."

But, in regards to Library Square, Councillor Gaertner says she respects the majority decision of Council and, going forward, it is important that the downtown revitalization project is done well for the sake of residents.

"We made a democratic decision and we want this decision to work," she says. "Council has to do their best and there is a commitment that [a task force] is going to be watching the financing. We have to be doing the best we can to make sure this is a success. Library Square is the largest capital infrastructure project in Aurora's history. Because of the financial uncertainty and the hardships that residents and businesses have experienced and will probably continue to experience, I wanted Council to take a step back. We can't know what is going to happen with COVID. I think we were hoping for better than we're getting and it may be with us for a long time. We can't know the financial reality it is going to create. For me, it would have been most fiscally appropriate to step back and concentrate on funding the most pressing community needs.

"I think we need to be very careful not to place a future burden on our taxpayers. In my opinion, we don't know what that is going to look like. At the very least, I would have liked to have seen a comprehensive business plan reflecting the reality of COVID."

Addressing the day-to-day realities of COVID, however, is one of the big wins Councillor Gaertner says will be a hallmark of the first half of this unusual year.

As a member of one of the action teams set up by the Town at the start of the global pandemic to identify community needs and ways the Town as a whole could help vulnerable and at-risk residents, Councillor Gaertner says she was proud to be a part of a group that examined a cross-section of important issues, including food security and access to affordable housing.

"COVID really brought all that into the fore," she says, noting these were issues that have persisted for decades, including her time running the youth drop-in program Hot Spot. "We had everybody [at Hot Spot] from the kids who were in estate homes to kids who were living in basement apartments. I know from that experience there are many people in Aurora who are vulnerable. I think COVID really exposed



Councillor Wendy Gaertner

that, but I think it also exposed how precarious many people are in general. We used to be known as one of the richest communities per capita in Canada and that is what many people still have in their minds. We're a community that has every income range and a lot more seniors."

She says she takes particular pride in the Committee's efforts to develop a comprehensive list of resources available in Aurora and surrounding communities that are on hand to serve those in need, including meal programs in both Aurora and Newmarket that, when looked at as a whole, offer at least one good square meal for just about every day of the week.

"That is something many people in this community take for granted," she says. "This document will be updated over the years and serve as a great template for people who need a helping hand. I am afraid there will be more and more of these people in the community because of COVID and [its eventual] aftermath – and it can't really be 'aftermath' because we don't know when COVID is going to be over. It is really going to be the financial hardships imposed by COVID."

In addressing these needs from the municipal perspective, communication will be key, she says. Councillor Gaertner says she is proud of the Town's latest communications policy as having "easy access to clear, complete facts" as Council decisions are made was a key plank in her election platform.

That being said, however, Council's decision to forge ahead with a ward system of governance in time for the 2022 Municipal Election was one of the areas in which she says the Town fell short.

Many residents, she says, felt they were not given enough opportunity to weigh in on the ward decision and cited the fact that a "no ward" option was not part of the last round of public consultation on the subject.

"At the end of the day there were a lot of residents who didn't want to change to wards and they didn't have any voice in that," she contends. "I had to support those residents. We're here to listen to the public and sometimes there are so many voices it makes it difficult. Certainly, if the majority of the people wanted a ward system than that is what they want and that is what we provide."

Looking ahead to the latter half of fall and the beginning of winter, Councillor Gaertner says she will continue watching the Library Square project to ensure its success while also pushing for initiatives related to environmental protection and improving accessibility.

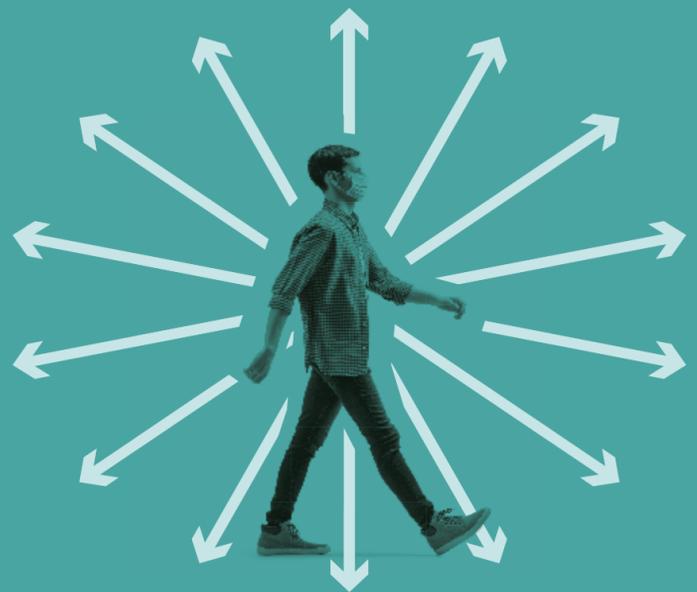
Everything needs to be examined through a lens of needs versus wants, she says, and that includes the ongoing development of the Town's renewed official plan.

"We need more attention on future development," she says. "We have the tools in place to ensure that a development on the Oak Ridges Moraine is protective of its environmental function. We have tools to ensure that developers put affordable housing into their developments and we have a lot more work to do on protecting our heritage.

"We have a population that is aging and Aurora has a larger population than most. Seniors are going to be able to have easy access to services and easy access to parking. It is not just people who have the official designation and the permit, it is also seniors who are having more mobility issues. That is one thing I am worried about with Library Square. The library portion is so important to our seniors and I don't believe we have enough easy access parking for the seniors."

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Regency Acres residents frustrated with ongoing road construction issues

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
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Town staff will be working with residents living on several streets within Aurora's Regency Acres community after the latter expressed frustrations with ongoing – and delayed – road reconstructions.

Last week, area resident Rebecca Beaton made a delegation to Councillors to outline a number of concerns on Holman, Johnson and Browning stemming not only from the road reconstruction projects themselves but the parking tickets incurred by residents to accommodate the work.

"We were advised late on Friday, October 16, that we were not to

I believe engineering held an open house before construction began and did present this information. Until the work is actually done and it is hard to visualize some of the impact to the driveways, but we have identified six that need to be remediated and we'll do our best to do that

use our driveways and that effective Monday, October 19, for 72 hours, we were to park on Glass and Child," Ms. Beaton told Councillors, who were sitting at the Committee level last week. "Will the Town waive all parking tickets for residents who have parked on those streets with regards to this construction?"

Parking tickets weren't the only concerns Ms. Beaton underlined for local lawmakers.

"At the October 2019 meeting with staff at Town Hall to go over this construction project, residents asked repeatedly whether the grade of the roadway would be changed and they were repeatedly told no," she continued. "The grading was in fact changed and it is now, for some residents, created a steep slant of 1 – 2 inches at the end of their driveways. Will the Town be making repairs to these driveways so there is a gentle slope from the driveway to the road once this project is finished?"

"According to the Town, this project is due to be completed by the end of October and with less than two weeks remaining, the road paving and landscaping... have not been completed and will this project be completed on time? Several residents have notified your legal department of damages as a result of this road reconstruction and have not received an acknowledgement or correspondence regarding their claims. At least one claim goes back to June. What other departments should residents be notifying the Town of such claims?"

Although Council and staff were unable to answer Ms. Beaton's delegation directly due to the Town's Procedural Bylaw governing

meetings, Council raised her issues with staff during New Business near the end of the session.

"Our bylaw services division can work with engineering to understand the timelines of when the residents were requested to park on Glass Drive and we will not issue parking tickets during that time unless it is with respect to a safety concern, such as parking in front of a fire hydrant or too close to an intersection creating sight line issues," responded Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Corporate Services. "I do think that we should likely notify the residents on Glass Drive as well as they may see an increase in parking on their road during construction to accommodate that construction. We will work with engineering to resolve that."

Further issues on parking were raised by Councillor Wendy Gaertner who cited an instance of an area crossing guard looking for a place to park while serving two nearby schools receiving a ticket as well.

Ms. van Leeuwen said this was an issue her department could review.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland also tackled the parking issue, suggesting parking around nearby Confederation Park could be a solution – a solution that Operations Director Al Downey said was doable.

It was left to Town Planner David Waters to address the issues of driveway grading after they were brought to the table by Councillor Gaertner.

"That is a huge grade on the driveways," she pressed. "That is something that would have been anticipated through engineering before this work was done. It seems to me it would have had to have been. From what Ms. Beaton said, it sounds like it was a surprise to the residents. If we know this is going to be happening beforehand, it would be a good idea to put the residents in the loop."

Mr. Waters said he appreciated the residents' perspective.

"I believe engineering held an open house before construction began and did present this information. Until the work is actually done and it is hard to visualize some of the impact to the driveways, but we have identified six that need to be remediated and we'll do our best to do that," he said.

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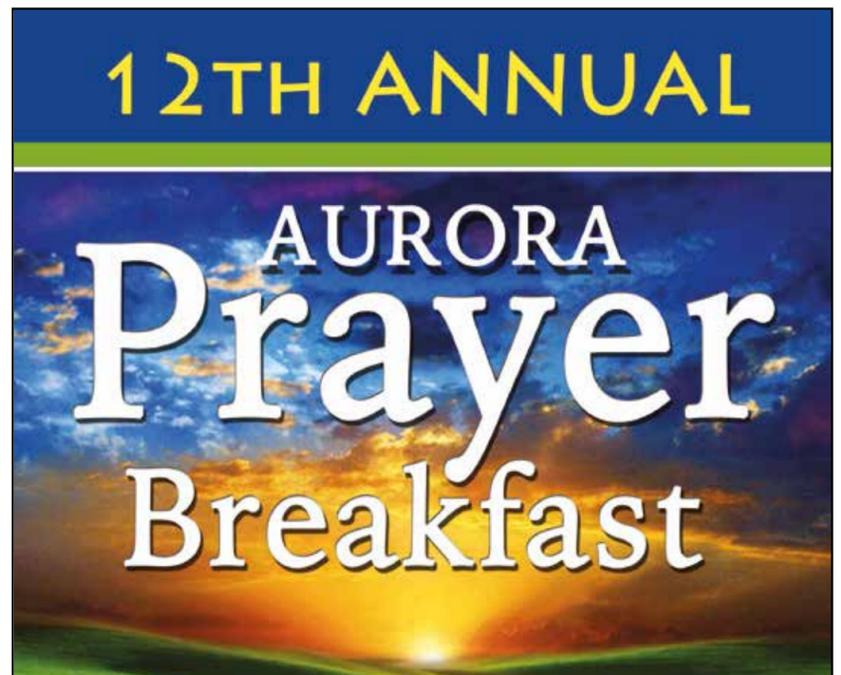
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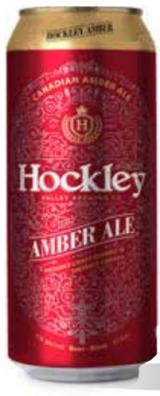
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Week of October 29, 2020



Former Barbarian begins first pro rugby season with the Exeter Chiefs



McKinley Hunt (following the second regular season loss against Bristol) is enjoying her new pro-rugby life in Exeter, England with three other Canadians on the roster. **Contributed photo**

By Robert Belardi

McKinley Hunt didn't quite know what to expect when she went to the national rugby tournament in her first high school year at The Country Day School. There weren't very many "niners" that tagged along, but she was one of the fortunate ones to get the nod to start.

It was the first game and her first ever rugby match. It was a league filled with a veteran presence on both ends. Her head coach at the time, Dean Sherman, pulled Hunt aside and offered simple, straight-forward advice for the young, inside-centre.

"If you have the ball, run forward, if you don't have the ball, tackle the person who has it," Hunt reiterated.

On her first touch, she ran, sprinting and juking past every defender lost in the wind. She scored a try. It was one of her fondest memories as a player, but one she could say immediately piqued her interest in further pursuing the sport.

The next year, Hunt went into club rugby. She joined Barrie RFC between Grades 10 and 11. Against the Brampton Beavers, her game-changing tackle solidified a love for this game.

"I got up from the tackle. It was this light bulb moment where 'wow, I really love this sport.' The sisterhood, the inclusivity, the physicality, the athleticism and I just didn't want to leave the pitch," Hunt said.

Her aptitude for this game never went unnoticed. In fact, back in June, Hunt signed her first professional contract with the newly-formed Exeter Chiefs women's rugby club. The Chiefs will be playing in the Allianz Premier's 15s this year.

"Definitely a dream come true," she says. "As a female athlete to play rugby and to do that as your job, it's great."

Looking back on her young career, it was the move to the Aurora Barbarians RFC, following three quality seasons in Barrie, that taught Hunt the most. She said the club established a competitive senior women's team with a stellar coaching staff.

She knew if she played for them she could go further – and she did.

As a player for the Barbarians in 2016, Team Canada came calling. She made the provincial team and then was bumped up to the U-20 national team.

In 2017, Hunt was promoted to the senior women's national team. For her first cap, she suited up to face England. Off to Wembley!

She had moved to her new position in the second row as well as an inside centre while at Queen's University. Time to put that all to the test against one of the world's most celebrated rugby nations.

"I think as soon as the whistle went, it's just a rugby game. I kind of flipped that switch. It wasn't that different, but definitely, before the beginning of the game you're staring up at all these people and you're wondering, 'what am I doing?'" she laughed.

She brought power, speed, and a vision on how to handle the open field when the opportunity arose. Hunt crafted her own combination to be an excellent player for her country, as opposed to scrawling her way through a system of names and praying the opportunity was there.

That's when Canadian forwards coach Duncan McNaughton sent some film over to Exeter in April. In June, Hunt signed for the Exeter Chiefs along with a trio of Canadian compatriots: Taylor Black, Emily Tuttosi and Olivia DeMerchant.

"To know that it started with me, as her first high school coach and now she's gone on to play professionally, it does make me proud. I'm happy for her and I'm happy for the program as well and my co-coaches and all the girls that supported her," Sherman said.

All four will further enhance their game under former England international coaches Susie Appleby and Amy Garnet.

Hunt says Appleby and Garnet have been incredible in welcoming her and the new players to the team. The players have been welcoming and the city, a rugby-passionate town, has been more than welcoming, aiding all the players on the roster.

The league kicked off three weeks ago. In Hunt's first ever pro match, the Exeter Chiefs lost to Gloucester-Hartpury 34-14. Although a lop-sided victory, Hunt says the group improved in training. Unfortunately, the club would lose the next two matches against the Bristol Bears and Harlequins.

She is settling into the city of Exeter comfortably. Black is living with her in her accommodation from the club. Hunt says Exeter is a nice-sized city, with extremely passionate supporters. They'll do anything for pro players in the rugby club.

For her first time living in the United Kingdom, everything has been running smoothly. Hunt's grandfather was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and she has family scattered across England.

She hopes to win a premiership title with Exeter while also securing a World Cup title with the national team next year in New Zealand.

One try in rugby, one tackle, to now, many trys and many significant tackles later and here she is on the grandest stage of women's rugby and, again on the grandest stage, representing Team Canada.

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ABKA elite team program won't run in 2021

By Robert Belardi

It was supposed to be a historic year for Aurora-King Baseball Association.

The AKBA organization was set to field their very first 15U elite baseball team set to be held in the Elite Baseball League of Ontario (EBLO). Higher than select. Higher than rep.

This year, the club was supposed to travel to Cincinnati. Designed to expose young, talented Canadian baseball players to prolific players in the United States rated at the same level or potentially even higher, it would have given kids here an incredible

opportunity to play in front of scouts.

Elite baseball fields players between the ages of 15 and 18, and most of these highly-talented athletes had to endure what we have all had to endure: COVID-19. Shutdown. Uncertainty. The whole nine-yards.

From March until July, crickets were the only presence on a baseball diamond.

Sadly, AKBA will have to wait to properly field their Elite team.

Elite baseball head coach Jordan Keon tells The Aurora that under EBLO rules teams moving up an age group to 16U must have a second team at the 15U level.

"AKBA had plans to build a 15U program for 2021, but COVID-19 put all those plans on hold. So, AKBA, won't field an elite team in 2021, but the association has plans to start up the elite program in 2022 and beyond."

Just like other local leagues, luckily the kids had the weight lifted off their shoulders when the time came to play baseball again. Limited of course, but it didn't matter.

"Starting in late-July, AKBA teams were able to start practicing with stage two restrictions which meant only 10 on the field at a time," Keon said.

"In early August with stage three, teams were able to resume full team practices. All of the leagues were cancelled, but teams were able to start playing exhibition games in a three-four team 'bubbles' with modified playing rules to limit contact."

The 15U elite team specifically competed in 10 exhibition games against Newmarket and Vaughan. Keon said it was great to get out on the diamond and put on display the results of all the hard work these children have put in.

Some teams continued to play "fall ball" exhibition games in September as long as the weather permitted. And how could you blame them? If Major League Baseball salvaged their fall-baseball postseason it's good the kids can do the same.

But the battle is far from over. Indoor training restrictions could be the next impediment should public health deem indoor meetings unsafe.

All school gym permits have been cancelled until at least February.

AKBA will recover in 2022 and hopefully, the future potential careers from the Elite baseball program will not be in jeopardy. Sadly, nobody has the answer to that right now.

York9 FC re-sign Spanish striker

By Robert Belardi

When Alvaro Rivero recently spoke to The Auroran, his mind was fixed on a few simple goals he wanted to accomplish.

"Win the season, for the team to get as high as possible, score the highest goals possible and enjoy this beautiful experience," he said.

And those goals may just remain the same for every year he remains with York9 FC. The former Real Madrid Academy forward has resigned with the club for the 2021 season with an option for 2022 and 2023.

Rivero made all seven appearances in the Island Games this year, most notably rifling a rocket top-shelf against Pacific FC; flashing what this forward is particularly capable of ahead of the New Year.

"I'm very happy that we managed to get this deal with Alvaro agreed and signed," said Managing Consultant Angus McNab in a statement.

He was pleased with Rivero's performances in the Island Games tournament and hopes to provide a lot more opportunity for forwards with the club in a particularly important offseason for the Nine Stripes.

His signing also comes in the same month Y9 acquired German forward Julian Ulbricht from Hamburg SV.

Ulbricht comes from the Regionalliga Nord, the fourth tier in German football.

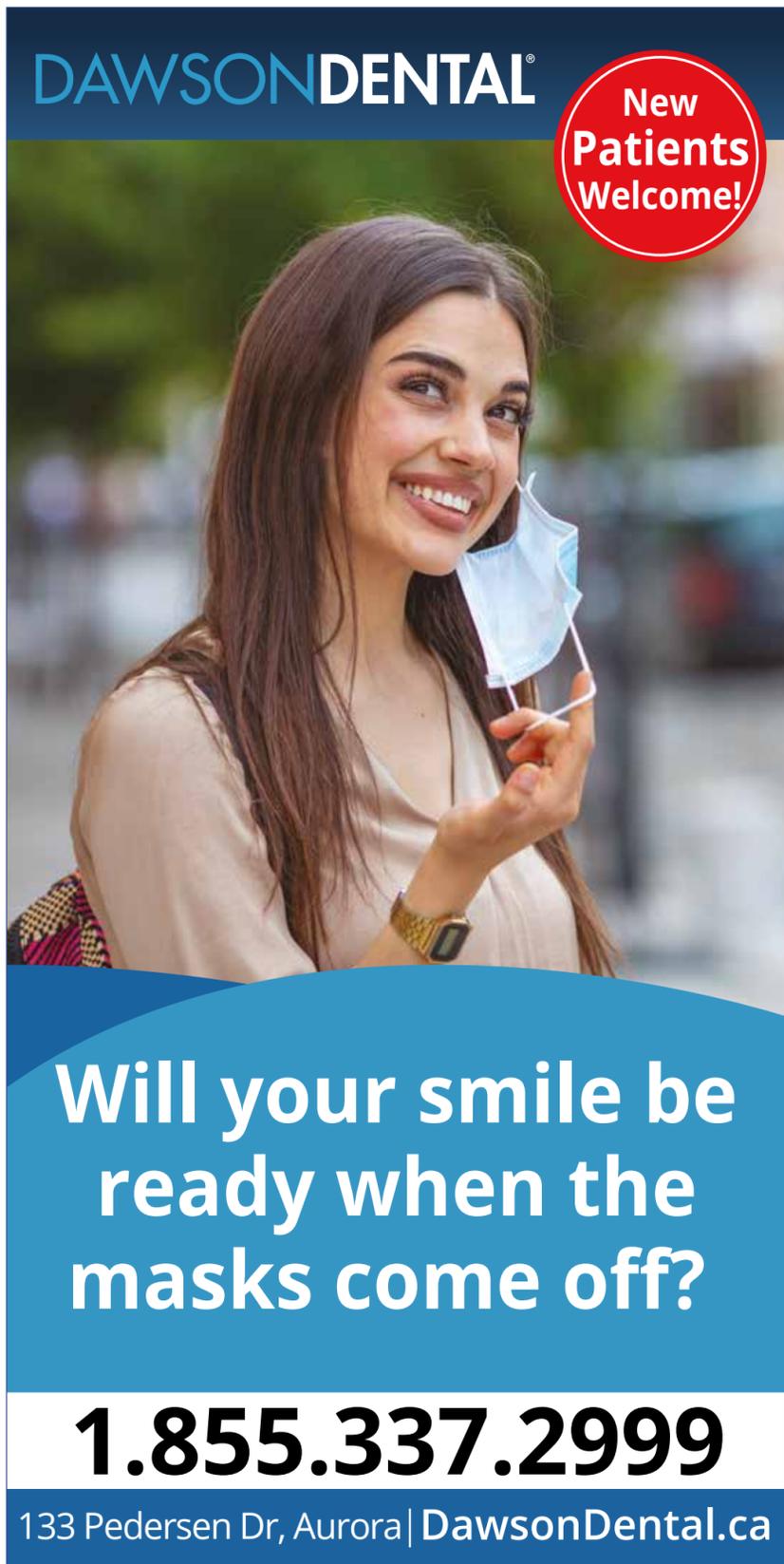
The 21-year-old has agreed on a deal through the 2021 season with an option in 2022.

Ulbricht is the first German player to sign for York9 FC and with two players recently leaving for the United Kingdom on loan options, York9 FC is attracting foreign players to the Canadian Premier League while also building foreign relationships with other clubs around the globe.

With both of these young stars and Gabriel Vasconcelos, Lowell Wright and Ryan Telfer up front, the Nine Stripes will have a diversity of attacking options, unlike many other clubs in the league.

When the Canadian Premier League restarts their new year next year in whichever capacity is the safest, the Nine Stripes look to redeem themselves.

This past year, the club was expected to reach the final four and even the finals of the competition. The club failed to make it past the first round by one point, finishing with a 2-4-1 record.



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We hope to see you back in person next year!

Boo-tiful greenhouses transformed into spooky spectacle



Unable to host its award-winning Haunted Forest Hallowe'en event this year due to ongoing health restrictions related to the global pandemic, the Town of Aurora got crafty with an alternative and transformed the greenhouses at the Joint Operations Centre into a "Haunted Greenhouse" experience. (Top Row) Volunteers get ready to greet visitors. Adam, Loga, Talin, Mary and Kinan are joined by Frankenstein's monster as a welcoming party. (Second Row) Greenhouses offered a socially distanced experience with both scary (left) and (right) family-friendly options. Erin (centre) helped people find their way. (Third Row) Alice in Wonderland settles in for some refreshments. Darcy, Michelle and Henry took the spookier route. (Fourth Row) The Mad Hatter pours some tea for Mayor Tom Mrakas. Pennywise took over an outdoor hut. (Fifth Row) Mark, Elliott, Emma, Liam, and Stephanie found a bemasked mermaid in the tub! (Sixth Row) Benjamin, Cheryl, Jake and Presley, meet Stephanie behind bars. (Seventh & Eighth Rows) Volunteers worked tirelessly to get every Hallowe'en detail just right.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



THINGS You Ought To Know

OCTOBER 2 – OCTOBER 31

The York Region Zombie Hunt in support of St. John's Ambulance will take place across the community. For more information on how to sign up and how funds raised will be used, visit yrczombiehunt.com.

OCTOBER 24 – 30

Get ready for Aurora's Haunted Greenhouse, presented by Healthy Planet! Come out for six nights of thrills and chills at the greenhouses at Aurora's Joint Operations Centre. The greenhouses are transformed for some spookacular fun. The first two greenhouses will be family friendly, followed by the third greenhouse for those looking for a good scare and dare to enter. Pre-registration for \$3 per person is required online through the Town of Aurora's ePLAY system. Each of the six nights will have two time slots to choose from, 5.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. or 7.30 p.m. to 9 p.m. For registration details, visit aurora.ca/hauntedgreenhouse.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

Towns of York Toastmasters will hold a Zoom meeting this evening from 7 – 9 p.m. Towns of York Toastmasters is an Inclusive, Supportive, Welcoming and Fun Toastmasters Club with a track record of Distinguished Club Achievements and Award-Winning Members. We foster Leadership and Public Speaking skills which build confidence and success. We meet on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Wednesday of the Month from 7 – 9 p.m. Visiting a club is the exciting first step to building a better you and you can still visit us from the comfort of your own home! Guests are always welcome to attend. If you are interested, please contact us to plan your first online visit by emailing our VP of Membership Kevin Grellette at vpm@townsofnyork.org. By providing your email address, we can send a link that will allow you to join our meeting.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31

It's spooky season and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust is ready! Book your appointment for a self-guided Halloween hike on our private Nature Reserve in Schomberg. Discover spooky nature stations along the trail, where you can trick, treat and learn about nature. Don't forget to show up in your best costume for a chance to win our online costume contest! This event is fun for all ages, the exact address will be provided upon registration. For more information, visit oakridgesmoraine.org/workshop-events or email outreach@oakridgesmoraine.org.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

The Alzheimer Society of York Region will host a virtual Forget-Me-Not Breakfast today from 10 – 11.30 a.m. The virtual Forget-Me-Not Breakfast features Prof. June Andrews who will talk about caring for people living with dementia during the time of COVID-19. Prof. Andrews will talk about an hour and it will be followed by a Q&A. People can email Carol Dowell, events coordinator, to register and receive a Zoom link. Space is limited to 300 participants. For more information, contact Lisa Day at 647-204-5761.

Nine outbreaks in Aurora now resolved

From page 1

for the Region of York. "Although a Provincial/Regional threshold for per cent positivity is still under review, a positivity rate of 3 per cent has been an internationally-recognized benchmark.

"In terms of the incidence rate, the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health would like all Regions to be below 25 per 100,000 population and ideally at 10 per 100,000 population. York Region would need to average 40 daily cases to get a rate of around 25 cases per 100,000 population and an average 15 daily count to get to a rate of 10 cases per 100,000 population."

In his weekly update, Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, underscored both the rate of new cases of COVID-19 throughout the Region as well as urgency to be mindful of how we can work as individuals to help flatten the curve.

"Our cases are at an all-time high," said Dr. Kurji. "The numbers of outbreaks in institutions has been increasing. We have lots of outbreaks in our workplaces, and the numbers of schools under surveillance is around 50. The average number of cases a day is over 90 and our positivity rate is over 4 per cent. Since an individual who tests positive for COVID-19 is infectious for about two days prior to the onset of symptoms, it is important for us to consider anyone outside of our own households to be potentially infectious. This means then we ought to be limiting severely the numbers of contacts we have outside our own households. Do not socialize with people outside your own household. We understand there may be some exceptional situations, but remember every such situation results in the potential of infection-spreading"

Recent Thanksgiving observances are likely a contributing factor to a spike in new infections, he added.

"Remember, even if you have mild symptoms do not mingle with other individuals. The most

important thing that you can do is to maintain a distance of 2 metres or more from other individuals outside your household. When you're asked to self-isolate, you have to use your own room, your own washroom, keep your distance from other members of the family, and keep sanitizing the different areas that are commonly touched. It is important that we restrict the transmission to the rest of the family."

LOCAL NUMBERS

On Friday, October 23, York Region Public Health determined a recent outbreak at Chartwell Aurora, formerly Resthaven, was now resolved. First declared October 5, the outbreak lasted for 18 days and involved a single case amongst the long-term care residence's healthcare worker population. A further outbreak, this time at Magic Tree Child Care Centre, was deemed closed Tuesday afternoon.

Two Aurora schools are presently under surveillance for COVID-19, including St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School and Wellington Public School. Schools under surveillance are those with a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19 among staff, students or visitors "where there is currently no evidence of transmission within the school."

By October 27, Aurora had seen a total of 247 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, with 20 of these cases remaining active. 212 cases are now deemed as recovered. There have been 15 deaths in Aurora attributed to the virus.

Of the 20 active cases, 18 are attributed to local transmission/close contact, with the balance sourced to workplace outbreaks.

2 Aurora residents are hospitalized with the virus in a non-ICU setting at press time.

York Region has seen a total of 6,452 cases of COVID-19 since March, with 848 cases remaining active. There have been 268 confirmed deaths and 5,336 recoveries.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

care of that. When? How?

After everyone has bickered over shadowing, height restrictions, small town charm, crime increases and any other types of boogeymen that follow along the intensification discussions in this Town?

Let's not forget the idea that if you want to live at a smaller scale, you must do so on a noisy, major artery with few trees, vehicle exhaust and little to offer in terms of pedestrian safety. All to protect the 4,000 sq. ft. single-family dwelling.

President Trump captured this best:

"I am happy to inform all of the people living their suburban lifestyle dream that you will no longer be bothered or

financially hurt by having low income housing built in your neighbourhood."

It is the same way of thinking

The perceived threat to the single-family home is the main driver in most planning discussions around housing. Somehow anyone who cannot afford the new \$2.5 million plus housing model that is currently on offer must look to the regional roads, the brownfields and the floodplains because we don't subdivide lots, combine lots or reimagine anything that would threaten the single-family zoning.

If anyone had a soul and a sense of imagination, they would maybe see that if you are against expanding development over the greenbelt, EP land or moraine

we need to open our hearts and minds beyond the 1950s suburban dream. It's irresponsible to do otherwise.

The Official Plan rewrite is on the horizon. My hope is that someone who gives a fig about the average person can see that if 4,000 sq. ft. of house is acceptable, why can't two 2000 sq. ft. houses on the same land or semis or a multi-unit be acceptable. This is a softer form of density that creates a mix of housing on our "sacrosanct" neighbourhood streets that are "under threat". This, along with development on the promenade, is a fair and diverse planning strategy.

Ultimately, the design guidelines

fetishize the idea of housing in order to appease the neighbours that their gables are acceptable while justifying an inequity in housing that prevents your kids from living close by, for example. Unless of course they too belong to the "Millionaires' Club."

I live in one of the best areas, near Town Park, the GO, and Yonge. I have neighbours who rent out secondary units and believe me, there are no boogeymen and no increase in crime. Instead, there is a vibrant sense of life on the street. It's wonderful and no one should be excluded from that experience.

Neil Asselin
Aurora

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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
 - Valid driver's license and a reliable vehicle
 - Reporting experience an asset
 - An interest in local issues is a necessity, as the majority of the writing for this role will be local



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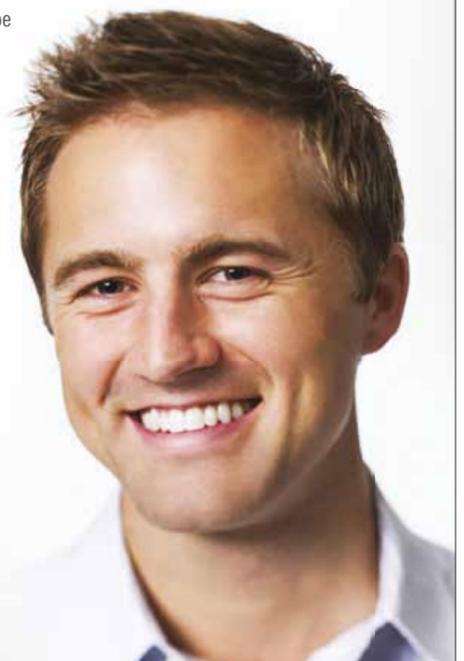
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