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THE AU 20 YEARS RAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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FREE

TheAuroran.com

Week of February 4, 2021



STEERING BLACK HISTORY – Keenan Hull, Tricia Wright, Phiona Durrant and Mae Khamissa, citizen members of Aurora's Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Task Force, are looking forward to lending their voice and their lived experiences to make Black History Month more inclusive and better than ever in 2022. Other members of the Task Force include Noor El-Dassouki, Mark Lewis, and Council representative Councillor Harold Kim.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Black History is for the entire community: Task Force collaborates to highlight the history around us

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It hasn't even been a year since members of Aurora's Anti-Racism and Anti-Black Racism came together at a very poignant time in our collective history.

As the first formal committee established by the Town to address systemic racism within and beyond

the community, they have made history of their own. Now, they are bringing their voices and experiences together to make next year's Black History Month one of extra-special importance.

February is Black History Month, an observance celebrated around the world.

Last month, the Town issued a proclamation recognizing Black History Month, shining a light on "the

contribution that People of African and Caribbean descent have made to Canada, shaping its identity."

"Black History Month continues to provide the Town of Aurora with the opportunity to celebrate the contributions and vital role that Canadians of African descent have made to strengthen the social and cultural mosaic of our community, province and the country," said

Continued on page 18

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PRESERVING THE ENVIRONMENT – Henderson Forest Ratepayers Association members George Skoulikas, Wendy Kenyon, and Maricella Saucedo are pictured on Henderson Drive on Monday afternoon following LPAT's decision to preserve environmental features on what has become known as the "Henderson Forest."

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Protection of "Henderson Forest" lands maintained by LPAT

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Environmentally sensitive wooded lands near Henderson Drive will remain protected, following a decision by the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (LPAT) last week.

On Tuesday, LPAT released its

Continued on page 15

1000s of Lighting ideas from **THE LIGHT SPOT**
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TOWN OF AURORA Notice Board



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Tuesday, February 9	5:45 p.m.	Video conference	Finance Advisory Committee
Tuesday, February 9	7 p.m.	Video conference	Public Planning
Wednesday, February 10	7 p.m.	Video conference	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Wednesday, February 10	7 p.m.	Video conference	Aurora Cultural Centre Board
Thursday, February 11	7 p.m.	Video conference	Committee of Adjustment

*Meetings can be viewed online by visiting aurora.ca/livecouncilmeeting

What's Happening



Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition Artist: Manuela Moldovan

Aurora's Online Skylight Gallery is featuring a variety of mixed media collage paintings by artist Manuela Moldovan. Her exhibition, "From Reality to Fantasy" depicts her continuous search for flourishing and prosperous life, dynamism, and movement. As a result through these efforts, she hopes to inspire the viewer. The artist has a profound connection to nature, with its incredible energy and vibration. Organic materials are a favorite addition to use and are incorporated into the artist's works. Manuela has developed a strong connection with mixed media due to its effects on depth, texture, volume, and dimension. Lately, she has been experimenting with collage using alcohol ink, Japanese paper, and prints of previous pictures or artworks; she adores to build images and lavish layers.

View this online gallery at aurora.ca/skylightgallery.

Town services affected by second state of emergency and stay-at-home orders

On **January 12, 2021**, the Ontario Government declared a second state of emergency. Effective **January 14, 2021** at 12:01 a.m., stay-at-home orders are in effect for at least 28 days to help stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

This stay-at-home order will require all Ontario residents to remain at home and only leave their homes for essential trips such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, to exercise or access health-care services or essential work. Subject to limited exceptions, employees who are able to work from home are required to work from home.

All non-essential retailers, including stores currently offering curbside pick-up, will be required to adjust their operating hours and must not open earlier than 7 a.m. and close no later than 8 p.m. These restrictions do not apply to grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, gas stations, other stores that primarily sell food and restaurants operating takeout or delivery. Non-essential construction will also be restricted, including below-grade construction.

In addition, schools in York Region will not return to in-person learning until at least **February 10**. Outdoor organized public gatherings and social gatherings have been further restricted from 10 people down to five.

All municipal facilities are still closed to the public under provincial orders.

Updates on the status of our municipal operations, cancellations and disruptions will be posted on aurora.ca/covid19 as the situation changes. For information on what is open or closed in Aurora, please visit aurora.ca/reopen.

Outdoor skating rinks in Aurora

As of **Friday, January 22**, the Town of Aurora has opened six outdoor rinks, weather and rink conditions permitting. Pre-registration is required. Register online at **e-PLAY**.

The following locations below contain outdoor rinks:

- **Town Park - Two rinks**
- **Ada Johnson Park - Two rinks**
- **James Lloyd Park - One rink**
- **Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park - One rink**

In the current provincial State of Emergency, maximum capacity for all rinks is 25 people, except at James Lloyd Park where the maximum capacity is 10 people. Use of the outdoor rinks will be limited to Aurora residents only. We ask that residents use the rink for a maximum of 45 minutes per person to allow others to enjoy the outdoor activity. Ice rinks will be available for use from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m. by registration only. Please note, James Lloyd Park rink closes at 10 p.m. nightly.

Residents are asked to follow all Public Health recommendations and ask that you wear a mask and maintain a distance of 6 feet from others while using the rink. No shinny, hockey games or other sports will be allowed (no sticks and no pucks) and helmets are recommended for all participants. Town security will be on-site to ensure that all COVID-19 protocols are in place and that residents are compliant.

We ask that residents only use the Town constructed ice rinks and that everyone stay off large bodies of water, ponds and storm sewer ponds as water levels can quickly change underneath the ice and the unpredictable weather can pose a danger to those who use it.

For full registration and participation details, please visit aurora.ca/outdoorrinks.

What's Happening

Recreation at Home

It's easy to stay actively engaged at home with more than 200 online resources available on our Recreation at Home webpage. There are activities for all ages.

Please visit aurora.ca/recathome for more details.

Club Aurora Virtual Group Fitness classes

Join us for a Group Fitness Class in the comfort of your own home by pre-registering for one of our exciting virtual classes.

Learn about our virtual programs and view the schedule online at aurora.ca/fitness.

Seniors' Centre Without Walls (S.C.W.W.)

Seniors' Centre Without Walls (S.C.W.W.) is a free program, providing community outreach to seniors and adults via telephone and Zoom.

Check out the monthly schedule online at aurora.ca/scww.



Town of Aurora has created a variety of exciting and interactive Take Home Kits to enjoy in the comfort and safety of your own home. From preschool to children, youth to adults, we have something for everyone. Kits must be purchased online.

For more details, please visit aurora.ca/takehomekits.



Geocaching activity for the family

Geocaching is a great outdoor activity and adventure that you can safely do with your family. The Town of Aurora will launch a new geocache weekly.

Please visit aurora.ca/geocaching for more information.

THREE BAG OR CONTAINER LIMIT

DID YOU KNOW?

Town of Aurora residents can place up to three (3) bags or containers out for pickup every other week on regularly scheduled collection days.

All garbage should be placed in a Town approved container or black plastic bag.



No more than 133 litres or 50 pounds maximum. No loose material, all items must be bagged and tied.

Effective January 2021, bags will not be collected beyond the limit.

Additional waste will have a non-compliant sticker placed on it and will be left behind.

Additional waste can be kept until the next waste collection week or dropped off at the closest waste depot transfer station.

As outlined in **Bylaw #5590-14** section 4.16, the number of items put out for collection from any premise on any collection day shall not exceed a total of three (3) garbage bags and shall not exceed a total of five (5) bulky items.

For more information, please visit:
aurora.ca/wasteandrecycling
905-727-1375 • info@aurora.ca



What's Happening

AURORA'S 2021 ARCTIC ADVENTURE

Celebrate Family Day with a weekend full of adventures for the whole family!

Friday, February 12 to Monday, February 15

Distance & Virtual Experiences

- Geocaching Adventures
- Keeping Active Adventures
- Virtual Family Zumba classes and Paint sessions
- "Taste of Winter" Cooking Demos
- Community Zone - Interactive activities
- Ice Sculptures
- Intriguing Family Adventures with Science, Magicians and more!

aurora.ca/arcticadventure

905-726-4762 • #AuroraArcticAdventure

Please note, we reserve the right to cancel, amend or change activities.

Additional funding provided by Ontario, Municipality of the Year, and AURORA.

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Artist videos
Virtual gallery tour

Artwork, installed at the Aurora Town Hall, is available for viewing online at AuroraCulturalCentre.ca

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All cases of COVID-19 to be tested for UK variant

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

All cases of COVID-19 will be tested for the UK variant this week, according to Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health.

As of Monday, February 1, York Region Public Health has confirmed 39 cases of the new variant within the community in 24 households.

The City of Vaughan had the highest number of cases at the start of this week with 12. Case counts were followed in the City of Markham with 11, Richmond Hill with 5, King and Georgina both with 4, and Newmarket with 3.

"Many jurisdictions where the variant has appeared have had explosive and exponential growth," said Dr. Kurji. "Some of the experts in the U.S. believe that the variant will become the dominant form of COVID-19 virus by the end of March. In York Region, we now have 39 confirmed cases of the variant. We have broken these down into different households and there are 24 households. Out of these 24 households, six of them have had it introduced from abroad, which then means the majority of households have acquired it locally. We do know that the variant is present in virtually all age groups and at least six of the nine municipalities in York Region. In other words, it is circulating amongst our residents and is probably here to grow."

In his weekly update on Monday, Dr. Kurji praised the Federal and Provincial governments for new measures that came into effect on February 1 on increased screenings at airports. It is hoped, he

said, that this will "reduce the cases of COVID-19 coming into the country and, with them cases of the variant."

"[The variant] goes to higher peaks and it lasts longer, so this translates into it having short incubation periods and being transmissible very fast," said Dr. Kurji. "The Province, through the Public Health labs will be testing all specimens of COVID-19 beginning this week. So, we expected to be finding more cases of the variant. However, the actions the Provincial and Federal governments have been taking at the borders, both at the airports and hopefully at the land borders, will assist us in reducing the number of COVID-19 cases and, with them, a reduction in the numbers of variants coming into Ontario.

"In addition to that, we have established a COVID-19 variant unit that aggressively follows up on the cases and identifies the close contacts quickly and ensures that they are self-isolated appropriately. In addition, the Regional Municipality of York, in association with the Province and many other partners, have established a voluntary isolation centre where we are urging some of the new cases of the variants to go and self-isolate.

"The strategy then is to slow down the spread of the variant to a point where we could potentially be immunizing the whole of the population. Now this is going to be difficult, as you can imagine. However, the good news is the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccines seem to be effective against the variant. The other good piece of news is of the 39 confirmed cases, only 10 are active at this point. It is much too early to say that the variant is not causing any issues in York Region, so time will tell. It is important to

follow the stay-at-home order."

By Tuesday, February 2, Aurora has seen a total of 38 deaths related to the virus.

On Friday, January 29, the Region reported the death of an 87-year-old woman, which took place on January 25. The woman's exposure was related to an institutional outbreak at Southlake Regional Health Centre where she died. An 83-year-old man who succumbed to the virus on January 21 was reported by York Region Public Health on January 30. A case of local transmission, he first experienced symptoms on December 20 before receiving a positive diagnosis on January 5.

A further death, this time related to the ongoing outbreak at Willow Estates Long Term Care, was a 97-year-old woman who died on January 28. Asymptomatic, she tested positive on January 15 and lost her battle on January 28.

Two additional deaths, both related to an ongoing institutional outbreak at Willows Estate, were reported on February 2. The first, 70-year-old male, succumbed on Monday, February 1, after first testing positive on January 10, two days after experiencing his first symptoms. The second, an 82-year-old female, also lost her fight on Monday after testing positive on January 27, again two days after experiencing her first symptoms.

A second institutional outbreak at Kingsway Place Retirement Residence is now closed.

To date, Aurora has seen a total of 861 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. 775 cases are now marked as recovered and 48 cases remain active. Of the active cases, 32 are related to local transmission or close contact, 11 are related to institutional outbreak, 4 to a workplace cluster, and 1 to travel.

Person of interest wanted in relation to December shooting

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A person of interest has been identified by York Regional Police following a drive-by shooting near Bayview and St. John's Sideroad on December 16.

Last week, the YRP's #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau released images of the unidentified person of interest. The person is described as male, medium to heavy build, wearing a dark hoodie, dark pants, and dark running shoes with white soles. The suspect vehicle is a white Honda CRV.

"On Wednesday, December 16, shortly after 8.30 a.m., York Regional Police were called to Major Crescent for a report of shots fired," said Constable Laura Nicolle. "When officers arrived, they found a burgundy sport utility vehicle on the roadway damaged with bullet holes. The driver of the vehicle, a 56-year-old woman from the Town of Aurora was not physically injured but taken to hospital as a precaution. Officers



Image courtesy of the York Regional Police

located several shell casings, as well as bullet holes in nearby houses.

"Investigators continue to appeal for any witnesses who may not yet spoken with police to come forward, as well as anyone with residential video surveillance or dashcam footage from the area at the time."

Anyone with information is asked to contact the YRP #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 1-866-876-5423 x7141 or anonymously through Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS or 1800222TIPS.com.

AURORA'S 2021

ARCTIC ADVENTURE

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Virtual Family Zumba classes and Paint sessions
- "Taste of Winter" Cooking demos
- Community Zone - Interactive activities
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Centre Street area resident frustrated by lack of traffic enforcement

We are so frustrated with this one-way installed by Council but monitored by no one. The police haven't been in this area for at least two years and it is only a matter of time until someone is seriously injured due to traffic racing the wrong way on this approximately 200 feet of road. We have a lot of pedestrian traffic in this area.

It seems council can spend \$57M on a stupid Library Square (sorry, personal opinion) that they think is going to bring businesses back to the downtown (probably what they thought the over-priced "Cultural Centre" was going to do - again, personal opinion), but all we want is to have speed bumps installed to help alleviate the racing wrong-way traffic, at a cost of maybe \$2k.

They were willing to spend \$12,000 on a rainbow crosswalk, but heaven forbid they spend money on safety in the community.

That wouldn't leave a legacy, right?

Laura Giffen
Aurora

Voltaire and Free Speech

This is in response to the Letter to the Editor "Voltaire vs. the Epitaph" published on January 21 by Sonny Henie.

The Voltaire quote, "To the living we owe respect, but to the dead we owe only the truth" was used by the writer to support labeling Ms. Buck's opinion on complaints voiced by the LGBTQ+ community, as homophobic.

The writer also chastised anyone who supported Ms. Buck's right to free speech.

To put the quote into perspective, Voltaire spent his life advocating for free speech for everyone.

His free speech quotes include, "I might disagree with your opinion, but I am willing to give my life for your right to express it" and "The right to free speech is more important than the content of the speech."

I doubt that Voltaire would support public sanctioning of a person for their opinion, even if offensive, under the guise of truth.

Shelley Wister
Aurora

Biden right about Keystone: Reader

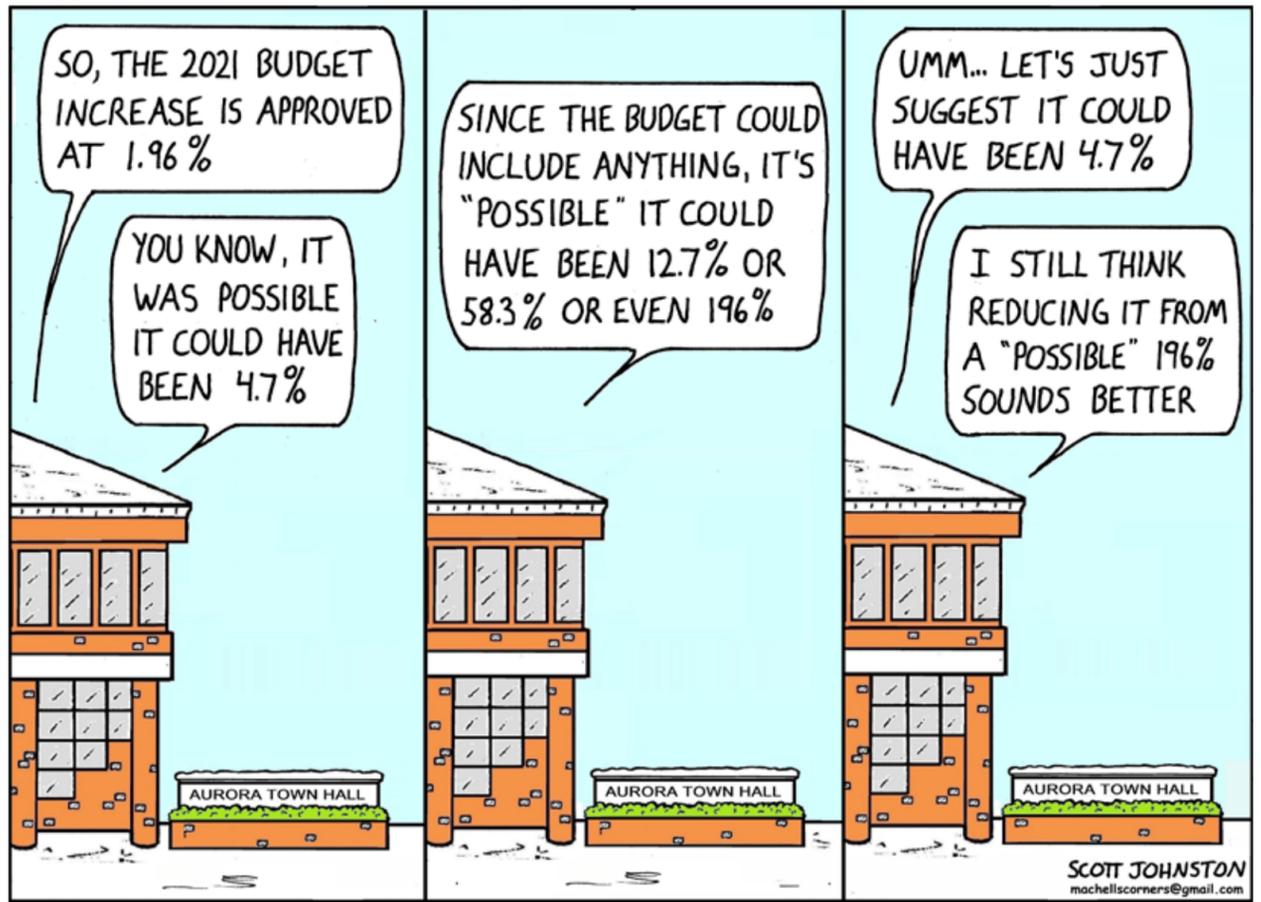
US President Biden just greenlit a sweeping push for bold climate action with a series of executive orders. Biden's orders included freezing new oil and gas leases on public lands, doubling offshore wind-produced energy by 2030, and cutting fossil fuel subsidies. But that's not even the best part.

Biden is using a climate emergency mobilization as a way to spur job creation. His orders called for the creation of a Civilian Climate Corps Initiative that he says would "put a new generation of Americans to work conserving and restoring public lands and waters."

This kind of action should embarrass Prime Minister Trudeau. Instead of mourning Keystone XL and pushing pipelines like Trans Mountain, maybe Trudeau can follow Biden's climate leadership. It's about time Canada created millions of new climate jobs. Trudeau must deliver the Just Transition Act he promised in 2019.

Andrew Slonetsky
Newmarket

Machell's Corners



SCOTT JOHNSTON
machellscorners@gmail.com

Stuck in another period of twilight

Working from home can be a mixed blessing.

Speaking purely from the standpoint of a guy with no kids, my adjustment has been easier than most. But, in all honesty, it wasn't entirely smooth sailing.

One of the biggest difficulties in those early days, as I have mentioned once or twice in this space before, was not being able to come home after leaving the day's work behind at the office. Work was always present, sometimes calling me back to the screen, and the simple act of closing the door to my appointed workspace just didn't do the trick.

Given the fact that I was one of the lucky ones who still had a job all those many months ago, however, I snapped back to reality with gratitude for my situation and got on with the day. After all, what alternative was there?

The weeks and months that we have all been through have made it easier. A few days before we had our first stay-at-home orders last March, I figured what was about to come was all but inevitable and brought whatever necessities home on the Friday before. I didn't think everything though and, bit by bit, the situation has been rectified.

First, a week or two after our first health restrictions were handed down, there was a trip back to the office to collect the electric pencil sharpener. You might be scoffing at what seems like an inessential piece of office equipment, but trust me on this one. Next up was lugging home significant portions of our archives from before the days when digitization was all but a reflex. Last week, it was time for my office chair to come home - the last 10 months having wreaked havoc on my in-home swivel that has served me well since high school but has now succumbed to wear and tear the likes of which it had never seen before.

As I reacquainted myself with the far firmer office chair to begin work on this week's paper, it suddenly became almost oppressively quiet in the house. Some background music was in order. With no particular hankering, a YouTube playlist was picked at random. Such was its randomness that I wasn't paying any particular attention to what was coming out of the makeshift jukebox, until one song all but hit me between the eyes.

Last January and February, I harboured a double-barrelled



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

earworm. Perhaps a bit too late to the party, they were two songs that were receiving particular airplay at the time: "Gaslighter" by The Chicks and one of the latest from Alanis Morissette, "Reasons I Drink."

There was no special affinity for these songs, other than the simple fact they were, in my opinion, great returns to form and I admittedly listened to them far too often - until I stopped.

The last time I remember listening to them in earnest was one cold night almost exactly a year ago. Headed into Toronto for a performance by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the GO Bus hit some traffic on the way to the city, so out come the earbuds in a bid to pass the time.

I guess I vanquished the earworm that night because those songs were out of mind - until they popped up again last week. When that first one poured out of the speaker I could feel the hair on arms stand just slightly on end. Why? The songs were still great, but I was feeling something different. Nerves? Trepidation? Dread? Each a slightly different spin on the same family of "feels." Then, it struck.

If seasons could have an anthem, those two could have been top contenders for last winter, when we knew something was in the air and the world as we knew it was about to change.

The more I thought about what I was hearing - and, admittedly, I had to pause once or twice to give myself a break, I realized that these two tracks, at least to my mind, evoked that strange twilight we were all experiencing one year ago this month when we knew an enemy was knocking on our door and it was only a matter of time before it burrowed its way through.

It was an odd, if disconcerting sensation to relive those feelings of nerves, trepidation and dread, along

with the feeling of determination of just getting on with it until we were unable to do so without some very serious and significant adjustments. But, the more I thought about it, this trio of unfortunate emotions was tempered with a one-two punch of satisfaction and hope.

Over the last 12 months, we have collectively displayed an adaptability we have not had to roll out perhaps since the headiest days of the Second World War. Despite some difficult starts and stops, we have, out of sheer necessity, recreated our lives to get by and stay safe.

All levels of government in this country - albeit, alas, temporarily - put aside partisan differences to address the immediate needs of every day Canadians, issues that transcended allegiance to any party.

We have not only redefined how we conduct business - in ways which were previously dismissed outright before necessity forced some hands - but how we stay connected and help other, less tech-savvy friends and family navigate what might seem a brave new world.

Most of us have discovered stores of patience we never realized we had, found new appreciation for people in any number of jobs that were, perhaps, previously simply just part of our everyday lives, and even picked up some new skills along the way.

Now, despite a few unfortunate hiccups in the distribution process, there is hope on the horizon with vaccinations and an increasing number of approved inoculation suppliers.

By now, we probably all know someone who has received at least their first dose of vaccine. Indeed, every photo we see on social media of beaming friends and family exhaling in relief as they proudly point to the band-aids on their arms, is just one more brick on the road to whatever our new "new normal" has in store for us and I, for one, am not only looking forward to its arrival but seeing what we make of it.

If the last year has taught us anything, we need to make the most of the world we have. Whatever is on the horizon, is up to us to take this opportunity, in what might be another twilight period, to define in advance what we want to achieve on the other side.

I just know, as far as music goes, I'm not going to pick any of my faves as the backdrop just in case!

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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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Founder: Ron Wallace | Publisher Emeritus: Rosemary Schumaker

Subscriptions available within Canada and U.S.
email: administration@auroran.com

EDITOR
Brock Weir
brock@lpcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Zach Shoub
zach@lpcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Doug Sherritt
doug@lpcmedia.ca

GENERAL MANAGER
Zach Shoub
zach@lpcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Diane Buchanan
diane@auroran.com

ADVERTISING
Rachael Magee
rachael@lpcmedia.ca

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Cynthia Proctor
cynthiap@lpcmedia.ca

TODAYS NEW HOMES
Zach Shoub
zach@lpcmedia.ca

MOTORING
Heather Erwin
heather@caledoncitizen.com

CLASSIFIEDS
905-727-3300 ex.102
cynthiap@lpcmedia.ca

PHOTOGRAPHY
Glenn Rodger
grodger@rogers.com

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada



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 encouraging... Exercise at Home!



With much of the world locked down at home, getting in some meaningful physical exercise can be hard. There have been many attempts over the years to develop new exercise technologies to make working out more accessible. Swinging these heavy wooden Indian Clubs (76.12.101a,b) was a fitness fad in the late 19th century brought to the West by British travellers to India. The clubs originated as wooden weapons, which were swung around the body for training, and they have more than 2,000 years of proven exercise gains on the Indian subcontinent. The fad may have passed, but modern variants are still available today. Do you think you could incorporate some club-swinging into your exercise regimen?

Share your views on how to grow Canada's economy

Our economic recovery is focused on investing in training and skills, creating an action plan for women in the economy, creating opportunities for youth, fighting systemic racism and building up our communities. These measures are the basis of how our government's stimulus package will make smart investments that create genuine, sustained value for many years to come.

Last week, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Minister Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Finance Minister Mona Fortier launched pre-budget consultations for Budget 2021.

We want to hear the best ideas from individuals and experts across sectors and across the country on how Budget 2021 can support Canadians through the pandemic and help us build back better. We invite you to fill out a questionnaire that will provide valuable insights on stimulating job creation, strengthening and growing the middle class, and setting the stage for a robust recovery. I encourage you to visit letstalkbudget2021.ca to join the conversation.

Indeed, this pandemic has been a setback for our economy. Once the coronavirus is under control, it will be time to rebuild. When our economy is ready to absorb it, we will inject targeted stimulus funding to jump-start new economic growth. The timing will be critical, and we want to do it right.

This is why the work of identifying investments begins now. Our growth plan will create good jobs for the middle class by investing between \$70- and \$100-billion, or roughly 3 to 4 per cent of GDP, over three years. These pre-budget consultations will help inform our planning, and the measures and investments that will make up Budget 2021.



Tony Van Bynen, MP
Newmarket - Aurora

MP'S REPORT

Vaccine Update

Currently, Health Canada has authorized the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Three other vaccine candidates, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Novavax have submitted applications for regulatory authorization. We are confident in our quarterly timelines for vaccine deliveries and will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure every Canadian who wants a vaccine will be able to do so by the end of September this year.

Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program

Last week, Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade announced the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program (HASCAP) to provide much needed relief to hardest-hit businesses and support to workers and their families.

Through HASCAP, the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) will work with participating Canadian financial institutions to offer government-guaranteed, low-interest loans from \$25,000 up to \$1 million. These low-interest loans are for businesses that have seen their revenue decrease by 50 per cent or more as a result of COVID-19. Hard-hit businesses, like a chain of hotels or restaurants with multiple locations under one related entity, could be eligible for up

to \$6.25 million.

HASCAP will help businesses with their day-to-day operating costs during the COVID-19 crisis and enable them to invest in their longer-term prosperity. Applications for the program opened February 1, 2021.

Black History Month

This year marks the 25th anniversary since the Honourable Jean Augustine, the first Black woman elected to the House of Commons, introduced a motion to designate every February as Black History Month. This year also marks the 75th anniversary of Viola Desmond resisting racial segregation in Nova Scotia.

Every February, we are invited to honour the legacy and achievements of Black Canadians and their communities who have helped shape our country. We celebrate their contributions, along with recognizing of their resilience and strength. It is also a time to learn more about the systemic barriers and inequalities facing Black communities and many visible minorities to this day.

Our government has pledged to address anti-Black and systemic racism, and has committed to do so in a way that is informed by their lived experiences. Together, we can reflect on the beauty of diversity and multiculturalism while working towards a fairer, more inclusive future for all in Canada.

Our commitment to do whatever it takes to keep Canadians safe, healthy and solvent through the COVID-19 pandemic has always been at the heart of our plan. And we'll do it for as long as Canadians need.

Together, we can do this. If you are seeking information or require assistance with Federal programs and services, please reach out to my team by e-mail at Tony.VanBynen@parl.gc.ca or by calling 905-953-7515



Time Travellers Diary

By Jeremy Hood
Museum Assistant, Aurora Museum & Archives

The OG (Original Groundhog)

When nature-watching, this time traveler has found that visiting prehistory, without its complicating humanity, allows for the richest animal watching experience.

It was during one of these temporal sojourns that I found myself watching the fascinating *Marmota monax*, the common groundhog, or woodchuck, nervously pop in and out of its burrow in the Neolithic sun.

Feeling a bit hungry, I went back to into my time machine to grab a modern bite, but somehow pasted the word "groundhog" from my Research Terminal into the Synchronous Rationalizer and with a jolt, the machine whisked me off to a wintry early February day in Aurora, 79 years ago.

As I sat down to have a weak war-time coffee, I noticed a clipping on the wall from the local paper the prior spring, a short article about the history of folk weather prognostication. Seeing this set my resolve to discover the origins of the bizarre tradition of giving credence to a sooth-squeaking rodent every February: Groundhog Day.

The ancient pagan festival of Imbolc celebrated the traditional start to spring, and was adopted as Candlemas by Christians, held on the 2nd of February.

Both have long been associated with weather predictions, as seen in the Italian festival of Candelora, where it is believed that if the feast day is clear and bright, winter will continue unabated for a time.

This may seem counter-intuitive, but only a bright day can produce the shadow necessary to frighten a furry forecasting fellow.

The auspicious animal in question was originally a bear in Germanic tradition, emerging from its hibernation on the 2nd, and either venturing forth into the spring or retreating. The belief changed with time to be associated with the badger or a hedgehog, and this idea is what German settlers to North America brought with them, and what would later change to incorporate our indigenous groundhog.

It seems that by 1941, the popularity of the groundhog variant of the tradition was not yet firmly established in the minds of Aurorans, as that clipping in the diner had placed the rodent firmly in second place behind its bear predecessor.

The OG in North America is Punxsutawney Phil, although named in 1961, represents the "hog who has been put to the test every year since 1887."

Most other Groundhog Day celebrations have been observed just since the 1970s and 80s, but the greatest boon to the tradition came from the success of the 1993 film of the same name. It's a strange feature of the modern world that we now recognize such traditions more than ever, but believe in them less and less.

Winter Musings 2021

Before this column returns to the local themes of people, politics and public affairs, below are some unconnected, stream-of-conscious and (most likely) incoherent musings and observations regarding the winter season in Aurora.

First, the Toronto Maple Leafs are looking pretty good in the early going.

It is weird to watch them play back-to-back games in this modified Canadian division. Next week, the Buds play three in a row against Vancouver. It seems almost like a mini playoff series.

The other oddity is that the Leafs played Montreal on opening night and will play them six times in the last month of the regular season.

The one nice thing due to the season-long Canadian format is that the Leafs won't be defeated by the Bruins, Tampa Bay or the Capitals in a first-round play-off match up!

Second, the only positive aspect of the lockdown associated with the pandemic is that I have been able to spend a lot of "quality" time with my wife and son. The reason for the quotations around the word quality is that I am not sure if my son would agree with my assessment.

I have to admit that I have been humbled quite a lot during our family games of Trivial Pursuit! I don't think your scribe will be attempting to get on the Jeopardy television show any time soon!

Third, as loyal readers will know, one of my favourite past times is making electoral predictions. Most



FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE

Stephen Somerville

of the time I don't get it right!

Like my 1993 forecast when I very confidently predicted that PC Leader Kim Campbell would win one hundred seats! As you may recall, the party won just two seats!

Based on my record in predicting elections, I won't be headed for Las Vegas, or Casino Rama any time soon.

There is, without a doubt, a betting theorem now being developed by a PhD mathematics student somewhere in the bowels of academia called the Somerville co-efficient.

It is very straightforward – "Bet in opposition to the actions of Stephen Somerville and, 99.6 percent of the time, you will be successful." The dissertation should be a best seller!

Now for my prediction.

We will not have a federal election this spring or summer; the election will instead take place this fall. The reason for this prediction is two-fold.

The governing Liberals will want to ensure that the vaccine program is working. The Prime Minister has

routinely stated that all Canadians who want a vaccine shot should have one by September.

Further, there are a large number of Liberal MPs who were first elected in 2015 and they need six years of service to get their federal pension, which points to an election anytime from October onward.

Fourth, there will be lots to debate by the party leaders during the actual forthcoming campaign; COVID planning and response, deficits and debts and how to stimulate economic growth.

We also need to have a serious discussion about a sleeper issue which is a ticking time bomb – that of unfunded corporate pension liabilities.

Fifth, I can't believe that I am actually typing this on the keyboard, but I do miss watching the local Council sessions on Rogers TV.

I would never watch the entire session but when there was an issue of particular interest, I would watch. I also miss some of the local shows that highlighted various aspects of our community.

Lastly, Monday, March 1 is still some time away. For me, this is one of the best days of the year. Even if there is five feet of snow on the ground, I know that it will begin to recede and that spring (at some point) will be upon us.

In the meantime, enjoy the shoveling!

Stephen can be contacted at stephengsomerville@yahoo.com

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Should Council consider a backyard hen program for Aurora?

Yes No Unsure

www.theauroran.com

RESULTS TO DATE	YES	NO	UNSURE
February 2, 2021	20%	80%	0%

Yonge Street sinkhole repairs expected to be complete by fall

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Efforts to repair a sinkhole on Yonge Street near Industrial Parkway South have limited traffic for months, but it will still be a few months before the road is fully reopened, according to engineers.

Last week, engineers behind the sinkhole repair project provided a status update to Council.

The sinkhole is a result of a natural dip in Yonge Street meeting a high water table.

Engineers said they experienced multiple “unavoidable” delays in the project and now expect the project to be complete by this fall

— just in time for Metrolinx to replace the nearby railway bridge for double-tracking.

“This project is a little bit like fixing a leaky bathtub when the bathtub is still filled with water,” said engineer Mark Nykoluk. “Because of all the water collecting at this location, sinkholes have been forming here for over a decade.”

The work being carried out at the busy intersection includes restructuring and expanding an “infiltration gallery” under Yonge Street. This entails a series of underground pipes with perforations to “whisk away the underground water.”

“The water collected in the...pipes will flow by gravity into the adjacent storm sewers and then into Tannery Creek,” said

Mr. Nykoluk.

Once complete, the pipes will be buried beneath a layer of sand, with a layer of concrete on top of that before the asphalt is laid down on top for the roadway.

The project was initially supposed to be completed by the end of last spring, but work hit a snag shortly after work began.

“We discovered underground conditions were not as expected,” said the engineer. “This meant that one of our permits (for pumping water with the Province) needed revision. With the COVID situation, this permit revision took a little bit longer than typical, but did arrive in the fall of 2020, which allowed the work to continue. Once the work resumed, however, another challenge arose. More thought had to go into the dewatering plan and more dewatering wells were installed. The additional wells have been installed down the centre of Yonge Street. Pumping has now resumed and is planned to continue during the winter months to minimize project duration and impacts to pedestrians, cyclists and the travelling public.

“We’re also concerned with the impacts Yonge Street lane restrictions are having with the travelling public. If we have to draw down more water than presently allowed though, the second permit may need to be revised and that could take time. But we factor this into our decision-making since we know we need to complete the project in 2021 to make room for Metrolinx’s new bridge coming in 2022.”

Following Mr. Nykoluk’s presentation, however, some Councillors expressed a degree of frustration around the ongoing delays.

“In my 25-year history in the Town, this is not the first time we’re doing this repair,” said Councillor Gallo, asking what confidence the Region had that this will ultimately fix the problem.

The Region’s engineers pointed to similar work they carried out last year on Bayview Avenue, in this case between Elgin Mills Road and 19th Avenue, which

not only achieved objectives but garnered awards along the way.

Councillor Wendy Gartner added this is the third time this issue has arisen since she was first elected to Council and questioned how things “just went so badly wrong.”

“We didn’t go wrong,” countered Mr. Nykoluk. “What happened was we installed one well to check the composition of the water and to calculate the quality. It was during the construction that the composition of the water was different from what we had determined during our design. When there is a high ground water table, sometimes it is a little difficult to put a lot of wells into the ground, but we did do a number of geotechnical boreholes and we looked at the composition of the soils, but it was actually the water itself that caused us a bit of a problem and that was the change condition. We found zinc in the water that wasn’t there in any of the testing before and it was through the Ministry of The Environment... they determined that we could proceed with the project, but we did need to revise that permit.”

On the part of Councillor Rachel Gilliland, she asked the representatives for their worst case scenario. Things, she said, would be worse with water as spring approaches, snow and ice melts and the water table rises again.

“We’re all familiar with rising levels due to climate change that is going on,” she said. “I am not fully confident we’re not going to need to go back and pump more water.”

This is an eventually the engineers said they were prepared for.

“The surface water isn’t the problem,” said Mr. Nykoluk. “It’s the water that is underground. That really shouldn’t...be a problem in the spring. What is flowing underneath should be pretty similar to what we have experienced so far. In terms of our liaising with the Ministry of the Environment, we have a great reputation and a great resource with them. We have built that into our timelines should we need to go back and have a further permit.”

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Cormaggi Group gives back to community with **YELLOW BRICK HOUSE** donation

Integrity, ethics and faith are the cornerstones of Frank and Laura Cormaggi’s real estate business. The husband-wife duo are veteran realtors, having over three decades of experience servicing communities in York Region, specifically in the Aurora-Richmond Hill-Newmarket areas.

Frank and Laura, Lisa Pandell and all members of their team, are dedicated realtors cohesively working in synergy together, ensuring client care is at it’s finest. “We truly strive to provide our clients with an exceptional consumer experience before, during and well after the sale closing. Our goal is to make the entire process smooth and seamless, whether our clients are buying or selling,” said Laura.

Their Mission Statement ‘*always Expect More*’ stems from shared core values of Trust, Integrity, Respect and Unsurpassed Quality of Service, while providing unconditional guidance by listening to and understanding each clients’ individual needs. With 5-star google reviews and glowing testimonials, The Cormaggi Group offers *numerous concierge services that sets them apart* from other realtors in the industry.

One of their clients, Sue Kennedy, wrote about them, “*Laura, Frank and Lisa helped us sell our family home*

in Aurora so quickly and efficiently. Everything went so smoothly due to your wonderful communication skills, your honesty and professionalism. We truly appreciate everything you all did to make our lives less stressful in the sale of our home. We will highly recommend The Cormaggi Group to our family and friends.” Another client, Bessie Greco, says of them, “*This is the power couple you want by your side when making one of the biggest decisions in your life. Frank and Laura make you feel as if a family member or dear friend is helping and giving you the most truthful advice. You won’t find another team truly dedicated to working for your best interest.*”

Professionalism aside, collectively the Cormaggi Group believes in giving back to communities where they live and serve. Donating to numerous shelters yearly, particularly placing an importance to women and children, this holiday season Laura reached out to the Yellow Brick House to better understand the needs and wants of the residents that were presently there.

“Helping our local women and children is our expression of gratitude, while also giving hope to both the residents and ourselves, for a better future. We wanted to make them feel cared for and thought of.

We reached out personally and intentionally to help make this holiday special for the kids, as well as their moms. We shopped for gifts, focusing on their specific ages and genders, and included a handwritten positive message note with each gift,” said Laura, radiating positivity, with empathetic emotion.

Reinvesting in herself, Laura has earned several designations, including SRES (Senior Real Estate Specialist) to better serve clientele that is entering golden retirement years,

wanting to ‘right size’ into a home. The Cormaggi Group are proud award recipients of the Royal LePage National Chairman’s Club, ranking in the Top 1% nationally in Canada.*

As Laura pointed out,

“It is our faith that has driven us towards these accomplishments.”



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*[Royal LePage National Chairman’s Club 2016, 2017, 2019]

Council calls on new strategy to locate new leash-free dog parks

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Leash-free dog parks are a great way to get outside with your four-legged family member and meet fellow dog-lovers as your pets socialize amongst themselves.

For many, it's an ideal, but for some homeowners it is something that should be more of a destination rather than just over the back fence.

This has been a perennial issue for the Town in finding suitable locations for off-leash dog parks, but efforts are set to ramp up following a request from Council.

Last week, Council approved a new non-programmed park for Hartwell Way.

A naturalized space, the park will feature several neighbourhood amenities, including raised community garden beds.

The proposal for community garden spaces was warmly received by residents. A similar proposal to include an off-leash area, however, received significantly more push-back, resulting in Council voting to remove it from the final design last week.

But, in doing so, they also tasked staff with drafting a report on possible dog park locations in non-residential areas.

"We haven't really identified...the best solution for a dog park in Aurora and in the report we were given it did identify we have a deficit and there is a need for dog parks," said Councillor Rachel Gilliland. "It is no secret that especially during the pandemic I think so many new puppies are in the area and the demand is only going to be more. I...feel that we would still want to have some sort of direction to staff to at least find some alternative areas moving forward to put a dog park. If it is not this park, maybe it needs to be somewhere else, but I feel we're in this merry-go-round suggesting some places...to only have us shelve all the hard work that we're doing."

Councillor Gilliland requested the report come forward to Council this month, a request that Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Operations, said would not be possible due to time constraints. He did say, however, that if the Town looks at the issue of dog parks again it will be looked at through a non-residential lens.

"One of the challenges we had with putting [dog parks] into new parks as directed by Council is once we have a public survey, everyone seems to like a dog park [but] they just don't like a dog park near their home," said Mr. Downey, noting staff are still working on a report on dog waste. "We are working diligently on that report as well, so it would be nice to get the two of them to coincide to some degree. I will work as diligently as possible, but I cannot make the next cycle."

While Councillor Gilliland welcomed the report, she said she was not opposed to the report looking at residential areas as well.

"I do think there is a lot of advantage to having a dog park in a residential area like the fact you can walk down the street or around the corner, meet a neighbour, and it is promoting active transportation," she said. "You're not forcing someone to get into a car and go somewhere, but maybe we haven't found the most appropriate spot."

Less enthusiastic was Councillor Wendy Gaertner who said residents might not only object to possible odours from a nearby dog park, but also the noise.

"It is a very noisy endeavour," she said. "Inserting it into a residential community that is already built. If we do have one future community that is going to be built, at least one, then if you have a dog park already in the subdivision plan then people are aware it is going to be there. I think that is why we have trouble with this. This is the second time we have



Residents of the two- and four-legged varieties practice social distancing at Canine Commons, Aurora's only leash-free dog park on Industrial Parkway North and St. John's Sideroad at the beginning of the pandemic last year. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

had trouble inserting a park into a neighbourhood.

"I have a feeling we have to find an industrial commercial area."

A different perspective was offered by Councillor Sandra Humfries.

Rather than solely investigating a traditional off-leash dog park, it is, she said, worthwhile to consider off-leash dog trails wherever possible.

"Maybe residents have said they don't really want to go and drive to

a park, but they want to walk," she said. "Instead of finding areas that are non-residential, maybe we can have sections of leash-free dog walking on our trails. Lots of residents would love that where they can walk their dogs."

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Business owner calls for level playing field in retail

BY BROCK WEIR
 EDITOR
 LOCAL JOURNALISM
 INITIATIVE REPORTER

Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have given it a second thought, but when local business owner Mike Rathke walked into a pharmacy a couple of weeks ago and saw three women standing together spritzing perfume into the air to find their perfect scent, he saw red.

He wasn't averse to the perfume, nor was his primary concern the fact they weren't practicing social distancing. Rather, it was the fact he lost a sale just a few hours before due to COVID-19 protocols and other, larger, businesses were carrying on almost...well, almost business as usual.

It was frustration; frustration over the simple reality that "big box" stores are allowed to operate while small retailers like him have had to close their doors.

It is not a new concern. It was a reality most small businesses navigated through the first wave. But their concerns are the same. There is a playing field that needs to be levelled and it needs to be levelled to ensure the survival of small businesses across all sectors.

"The funny thing is at the beginning of December, sales were awesome for me. It was almost like normal business. Then, of course, we had the shutdown and I lost everything I was doing so well on," says Mr. Rathke, owner of MR Menswear, a clothing store located on Yonge Street at

Church Street. "It is a store that the traffic flow, even at Christmastime, the max would be a total of four people plus myself. It is a store that is a destination, not like one of those big shopping mall stores. Of course, in January, we haven't been open, and [the shutdown] has been extended to February 11, and it is frustrating to see the amount of people in these big stores and all within a couple of feet of each other when people coming in here could have the whole store to themselves."

Before he made that fateful trip to the pharmacy, he received a call from a customer who was looking to get a pair of dress pants received over the holidays adjusted for size. Due to COVID-related restrictions, Mr. Rathke was, of course, unable to welcome the customer into the store. They arranged instead for him to bring in a pair of fitted pants to the store, hand it off through the window of his car, and be on his way.

But the customer also needed a few pairs of pants and a couple of new shirts for his wardrobe.

"I said, 'Great, but the only thing is I will have to bring them out to your car and show you what is available,'" recalls Mr. Rathke, noting that after a moment's hesitation the customer agreed to the setup. "By the time I got out to his car, it had started with a bit of snow and freezing rain and it was uncomfortable for him. He said, 'I'll just deal with the Christmas gift and when you re-open I will add to the wardrobe then.' I lost a sale. He would have been the only



MR Menswear owner Mike Rathke is one of several area business owners who have pointed out inequities between small business and big box stores during the Provincial lockdown and associated stay-at-home orders.
 Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

person in here.

"Then, I go to the pharmacy and there all three of them were, plus the rep, all within four feet. Here I lose a sale and they're allowed to do that."

Despite a loyal and passionate customer base, that can only sustain a business for so long in the middle of a pandemic when coming in to shop and spend money is all but impossible. Mr. Rathke said without government support to businesses like his, he would have had to shut his doors permanently in the fall.

"Formal clothing is not a necessity right now," he says. "No one is wearing suits [working from home] and that is not selling because everyone is wearing loungewear, sweatpants, jeans, t-shirts, and that sort of thing. People are saying, 'Hang in there!'

but I would be shutting down if it wasn't for the Government's assistance. There is no way I could have made it."

If only the government would step up and say small businesses can re-open with a limited number of people, he adds.

"I can't thank my customers enough. I am in a lot better shape than a lot of people and that is thanks to me being one of the only men's clothing stores [in Aurora]. I had customers coming in in October and November not in need of anything, but just to support me, keep me up, and keep me open. I am thrilled and fortunate and I can't thank this Town enough. I am fortunate to have that backup from the Government, but, at the same time, I just want to open up and speak to human beings again instead of my mannequins!"

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Last week at Council, the Region provided an update concerning their ongoing sinkhole construction at Yonge and Industrial Parkway.

As a Regional Road, this is their responsibility. This sinkhole has been a recurring issue for over a decade since this is a natural low point in the road, and while there have been numerous short-term fixes, ultimately none successfully solved the problem.

In spring 2020, the Region began reconstructing and expanding an infiltration gallery to continually move the water and stop the road from collapsing.

The road will also be supported by a concrete slab adding much needed stability. As work began on the expanded infiltration gallery crews needed to draw down the water and, unfortunately, the ground conditions were not as expected.

While everyone recognized the water table is high in this area (which is the underlying cause of the issue), the high level of zinc in the water was unexpected. Therefore, this required a new permit from the Ministry to dump it properly and safely.

Since even government projects require permits before work can be done, obtaining a new permit resulted in delays. Like any construction project, while you investigate and test, you truly don't know what to expect until you begin. I am sure many have experienced similar unexpected discoveries with home renovations.

Some residents have expressed concern that during construction no left turns are allowed onto Industrial travelling southbound on Yonge. Unfortunately, there is not enough road space to allow for the turn lane to be active while construction is happening.

The good news is work is back underway and this longstanding issue will finally be fixed.

Regional staff have also reassured us that completion of this project is expected before fall 2021.

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.

Getting Things Done

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Aurora receives \$1.2 million for infrastructure funding

Long-term care receives boost in prevention

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora has received just under \$1.2 million from the Province of Ontario for infrastructure projects.

Last Monday, MPPs Christine Elliott and Michael Parsa announced allocations through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF). Aurora was on the receiving end of \$1,196,719 and Newmarket \$1,592,136.

“As your MPP, I am upholding my commitment to support our local municipalities by creating jobs, attracting economic growth and investment, and making our community the best place to live and grow,” said Ms. Elliott in a statement. “This funding will help build and repair roads, bridges, water and wastewater infrastructure in our community.”

Added Mr. Parsa: “Our government understands the importance of investing in our communities in order to help them grow, live and prosper. If we want to attract economic investment and create jobs in Aurora, we need to continue building and repairing our roads, bridges and other infrastructure. With this investment, we can focus on our local infrastructure needs and continue bringing stability and growth to our Town.

Last week also brought additional funding for long-term care homes in Aurora.

Chartwell Aurora on Mill Street will receive an additional \$406,900 towards prevention and containment support. Since the start of the pandemic, including this top-up, the residence has received \$1,494,900.

Willows Estate, which has seen a significant outbreak in recent weeks, will receive an additional infusion of \$143,000 for prevention and containment support as well. The residence has seen a total Provincial investment of \$525,500.

“This is great news for the residents and staff at our long-term care homes in Aurora and Richmond Hill,” said Mr. Parsa. “With these additional funds, we can ensure that our homes have the resources required to protect the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable population.”

The government, added Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care, will continue to do “everything we can to stop the spread of this virus and protect our most vulnerable and the staff who have been working tirelessly to keep them safe.”

Region advocates for long-term housing solutions to address homelessness

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Region of York is examining longer-term housing solutions to address the problem of homelessness.

The move comes after the Region received more than \$8.2 million in Social Services Relief Funding to address the needs of “vulnerable populations.”

“Most of this funding will support the continuation of York Region’s Self-Isolation Shelter and Transitional Shelter,” said the Region. “Funding will also support individuals and households at risk of homelessness through the Homelessness Prevention Program, Housing Stability Program, or through new short-term Temporary Rent Benefit Program.

“An additional \$8.1 million in anticipated Social Services Relief Funding, announced December 15, will be directed to further support vulnerable populations by mitigating ongoing COVID-19 risks, encouraging longer-term housing-based solutions and enhancing rent assistance to vulnerable households.”

The funding was touched upon at Aurora Council last week with Council members seeking updates on Regional relief efforts.

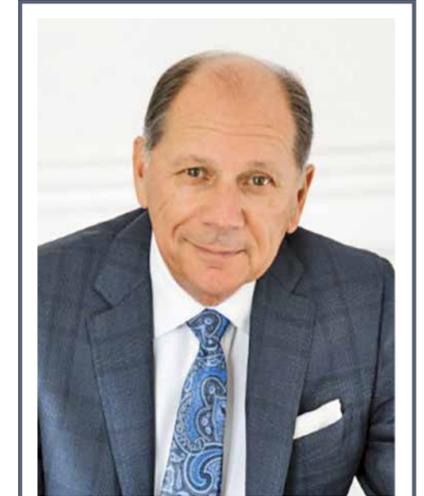
“The funding has been approved,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas, Aurora’s representative at the Regional table. “It is coming and based on that funding allocation there are three things that are going to happen: staff are going to look at mitigating ongoing risks for vulnerable people and especially in congregate care settings; we’re going to encourage longer-term housing-based solutions to homelessness post COVID-19; and they are also going to look at rent assistance provided to households in rent arrears during COVID-19. Those are three of the main things they are going to be looking at doing with the allocated funds that are coming.”

Another measure that is being taken at the Regional level is the creation of a Pandemic Management Reserve to ensure a smooth recovery from the global pandemic.

At last week’s Council meeting, Councillor Michael Thompson asked whether such a measure is being

considered at the municipal level.

“What we are doing is rather than creating a separate reserve, we’re going to hold that money in our tax stabilization reserve,” said Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel, Director of Finance and Treasurer for the Town. “Normally, our surplus management policy would identify a threshold for that, so we will be going above that with respect to the amount of money we would be using...from the Safe Restart funding and putting it in that reserve rather than creating a reserve for a temporary basis. We’re just going to manage it within one of our existing ones.”



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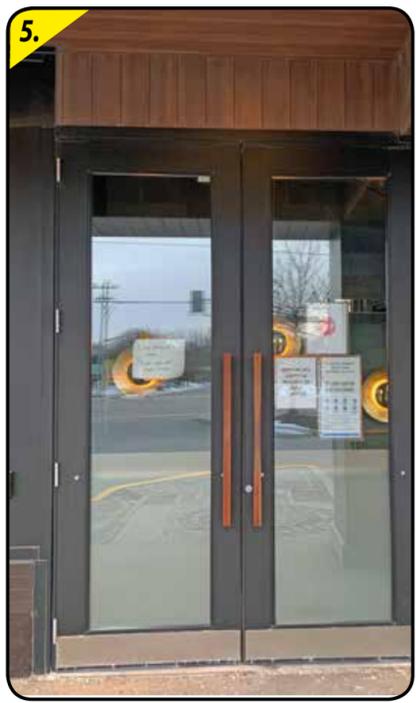
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2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 12. _____
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 13. _____
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 14. _____
5. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 15. _____
6. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 16. _____
7. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 17. _____
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#yrStayConnected campaign helps shake the winter blues and foster human ties

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Has the present situation left you feeling more isolated this winter than ever before? Are the seasonal blues getting you down? Reach out and make a connection – safely and virtually.

This is the message rolling out from the Region of York as their #YRStayConnected campaign heads into its third week.

Launched on January 18 to coincide with “Blue Monday,” a day purported to be the gloomiest day of the year, the campaign highlights ways to safely combat the isolation so many of us are feeling

and improve our overall wellbeing.

“We all have a responsibility to follow public health measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, including staying at home as much as possible and limiting close contact only to those in our immediate households,” says the Region. “However, it is also important that we continue to stay connected with others for our own wellbeing and that of others.”

“Whether you’re feeling ‘Zoom fatigue,’ missing your friends, missing a loved one or simply feeling lonely, rest assured that you’re not alone in this. Although we can’t see one another as we normally would have before the pandemic, we can stay connected, there are safe ways to do it and it is important for our wellbeing.”

Among the many suggestions and tips being rolled out by the Region are alternatives to Zoom calls such as joining an online community of like-minded individuals to foster hobbies, enjoy a virtual book club, or even a painting lesson; seeking out ways to become virtually involved in your community; or sending thoughtful gifts to each other while shopping local; taking part in recipe swaps; reviving the pen pal system; or simply picking up the phone.

“I think what we’re getting out will help people try to stay grounded and try to stay connected throughout all this,” says Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications for the Region of York. “It is trying times for everybody and nobody has ever gone through anything like this in our lifetimes. In the lead up to Bell Let’s Talk Day, we were talking amongst our team and thought maybe we could do a little



Photo courtesy of the Region of York

bit more.”

From that kernel of an idea, the team set to work brainstorming ways that these human connections could be maintained when many are feeling these connections fraying.

“A lot of this isn’t new, but they are reminders for people because people get so caught up in the day to day that sometimes just thoughtful reminders really help,” says Mr. Casey. “Like joining an online community, picking up a hobby you might want to try online, if you can pick up [something like that], why not start now? It’s a new year, maybe it is a good opportunity to connect with others and you can learn something new by taking an online class and putting yourself out there. Even connecting with old friends, I think we get caught up in the grind and we don’t reach out as much as we could to try to talk to someone you haven’t talked to in a while. And that could be even within your own family with a relative, a grandparent, or somebody who maybe you would normally see on

a more regular basis prior to the pandemic.

“Just reach out and connect, even just ask how they are doing. It’s the small stuff.”

Since the campaign’s launch last month, it has reached over 163,000 users on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. There have been 690 engagements with posts and many are re-sharing the Region’s messages within their own networks.

One piece of particularly meaningful feedback they have received from an online user thus far is, “It’s been fun to watch older folks like grandparents embrace technology for family video calls.”

“Bell references, ‘Let’s start the conversation.’ If this can help start the conversation and lift some spirits along the way, that’s all that matters,” says Mr. Casey.

To become a part of the online conversation and learn some new – or, perhaps, more traditional – ways to beat the feeling of isolation, visit York.ca/stayconnected or follow the hashtag #Yrstayconnected.

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Week of February 4, 2021



Indigenous business owner fears closure if reopening doesn't happen soon

By Robert Belardi

Georgette Dunn not only earned a degree at the University of Nottingham, she also found love with a man named Rick.

After they married, she convinced him to emigrate home with her and they settled in Aurora 10 years ago. Along with his bags, he brought along a fine history of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). In Nottingham, Rick was an active professional. So, it only made sense for the two to open up their own club in 2015 – Fearless MMA.

Dunn became one of the few female Indigenous business owners in Aurora and, to this day, holds that distinction high.

Over the course of this six-year period, Fearless MMA moved between two locations. Dunn has earned her NCCP Coaching Licence 1 and become a professional hand-wraper. Without an official title for it, she is qualified to wrap the hands of pro fighters. She also teaches female boxing and fitness classes, while Rick teaches MMA to both amateurs and professionals.

Together, they've built a wonderful community for fighters. They've built robust relationships, strengthened the will of others. They've also strengthened the mindset more, the very fibres of the human conscience. They've also taught others how to endure pain through Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and boxing.

Now, it's time to use everything she and Rick have taught others and fight through the threats of COVID-19.

Her now 6,000 square-foot facility is feeling the heat. There is a feeling of trepidation. Dunn says she is simply hanging on to what her and husband fought so hard for by a thread.

"We hope to be in the community for another six years, but it's not looking very good," Dunn said.

When in the Red zone, fighters did come in to train. Dunn said that was better than nothing, but not nearly good enough. 70 per cent of the business was lost.

A provision was introduced by Boxing Ontario and Boxing Canada that if you had any pro fighters coming to the gym, your facility can remain open. Fearless MMA has seen athletes qualify for pre-Olympics, national and provincial competitions.

Richmond Hill native Jahangeer Faquary qualified for pre-Olympic trials. Aurora native Sabir Yousufzai won Golden Gloves, the Brampton Cup and multiple provincial titles. Stouffville native Carter McGhie won the national Muay Thai championship last year and all the

way from Georgia in Europe, Emzar Lashvili, known as 'The Ninja' by Rick, emigrated just a year ago to Canada and is a fantastic athlete.

Just recently, Aurora native Todd Stoute, also known by his fight name The Black Hulk, is a pro fighter who has recently come to the club to train.

"We have 80 registered members with the sanctioning government. We were able to continue to train them. When the government went into the Grey zone and it happened in Toronto first, Boxing Ontario originally said the government was leaving it up to the sanctioning body to interpret the legislation and act accordingly," Dunn explained.

Boxing clubs in Toronto were only open for a mere three to four days before Public Health seemed to of denounced the Provincial government's proposed legislation.

"Boxing Ontario released a statement that Public Health/Health Canada, had released an addendum to the statement and said, to be clear, all indoor facilities were to be closed," Dunn said.

Clubs were not to be opened at all moving forward, despite any pro fighters. Dunn says its going to be a challenge to bring all of these athletes back up to speed once everything does open up.

Much like myriad other businesses seemingly resorting to virtual classes, Dunn says this is not an option. MMA is tactile. Everything is done within six-feet apart from one another.

The bills continue to add up. Every now and then, Rick and Georgette will enter the building to ensure everything is functioning properly. The Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) is running a month behind. Although it covers 65 to 90 per cent of monthly rent, Dunn fears when she must go back on her own, the debt incurred will be quite the load to carry.

"I guess everybody is in the same boat, but I guess everybody doesn't have the same amount of overhead, because we are such a large facility."

Boxing Ontario President Jennifer Huggins sent letters to petition this closure to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Sport, Recreation and Community Programs Division, Steve Harlow, the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, the Hon. Lisa MacLeod and Premier Doug Ford.

A meeting was held and the results of this meeting are pending. Dunn believes this might go very far.

In her facility, students who lack stable households came to the facility not only to train but to look for their

coaches to be a figure and a role model in their lives.

Dunn says many students discuss their struggles and to seek advice and mentorship. It is a grave concern to her and her husband, while also acknowledging the severity of the virus.

As of now, Dunn is putting together a marketing contingency strategy to promote discounted prices once she is able to open her doors.

She says she has a firm foothold in the Aurora community, having held fundraisers for women's shelter and food banks. She has also held fundraisers for Indigenous causes. As a proud Indigenous woman, recognized as Metis, she will continue to support groups, spread her culture and will continue the fight for all Indigenous communities to achieve equality.

It is very important to her to

keep the culture relevant, and notify people that she is a business owner. She wants to erase misconceptions and stereotypes. She wants to eradicate the borders that are created within our society and let citizens know, there are plenty of Indigenous entrepreneurs around.

And to all 200 members, Dunn says Fearless MMA is a place where the people in the community and elsewhere, can come and feel right at home.

Anyone is welcome to Fearless MMA. Even if you don't want to fight. Even if you want some rigorous cardio and teachings of self-defence, it's a great place for that too.

Dunn says she is unsure when the facility will be available to be open. She hopes it will be soon, as her and Rick continue the fight of their own. With all MMA teachings, they hope to be back at full strength once again.

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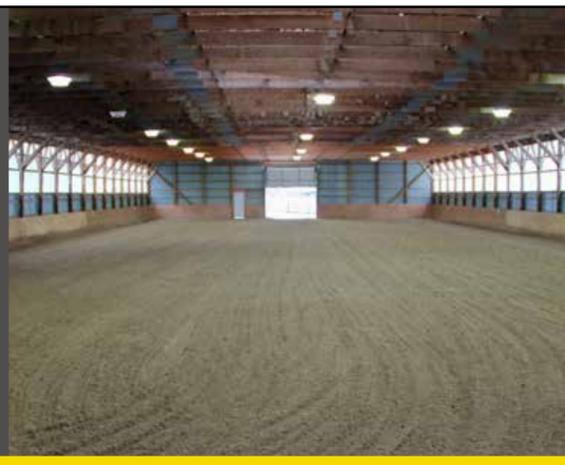
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KING CITY BOYS CRACKED AURORA'S JUNIOR A CLUB IN STYLE



Evan Roccatani and Stefan Lakoseljic have made the Aurora Tigers' roster.

By Robert Belardi

King City defencemen Evan Roccatani and Stefan Lakoseljic were walk-ons in the Aurora Tigers training camp and, in a rare setting, have cracked the roster for this upcoming season with the club.

"A lot of guys have commitments before they come to camp," head coach Jim Wells, Jr., said.

"It's just like an NHLer they have a contract right. These guys both came on as walk-ons essentially, and made their team in camp."

Wells went on to add the first thing that stuck out to him was their respective work ethics. They exemplified both in video, dry land and on-ice, integrity and consistency.

Lakoseljic constantly asked for feedback and both made it very clear how bad they wanted to be an Aurora Tiger.

"I've always wanted to play for the Tigers, ever since minor hockey," Lakoseljic said.

"It's always been a great hockey club, and I have so much respect for the organization, the management the coaching staff and everyone associated with the team. I also love how the team is always doing amazing things in the community."

The work ethic shown by these players was remarkable. They proved their worth by holding their play accountable and continuing to show improvement with every shift.

"Since I first arrived on the scene for tryouts, I knew that I had to be the hardest working player on the ice," Roccatani said.

"I knew if I did this it would give me a better chance to get noticed. Another thing that I noticed was that in the locker room everyone is respectful. It looked like a great

atmosphere to be around."

Both Roccatani and Lakoseljic say they couldn't be more pleased to have reached the Junior A level. Both have wanted this for some time and knew the Tigers were the best fit.

Lakoseljic got his first taste of Junior A hockey back in 2017-18 in midget, with the York Simcoe Express U-18 AAA.

He came on for one game with the Stouffville Spirit and said the game was fast and the players were bigger and stronger back then.

Since then he's come a long way. Following an 18-point season in 42 games played with the Port Hope Panthers in the PJCHL last year, Lakoseljic knows who he is now and what he will bring to the roster.

"I'm a fast, high energy, aggressive player, and I have a great first pass. We have a great group of guys, lots

of talent, and I look forward to seeing what we can do as a team," Lakoseljic said.

Roccatani has also had his eye on Junior A hockey for quite some time.

Following a 10-point season with the Toronto Nationals and a Div. 1 YRAA championship with his high school team, the King City Lions, Roccatani knows what's at stake and believes this year, the Aurora Tigers will be taking everyone by surprise.

"The team has made big strides this past year. I can see how good the team is just from tryouts and from a few practices. I think we are going to catch a lot of teams by surprise this season," Roccatani said.

In accordance with provisions set by Public Health and the Provincial government, there is no telling when the season will officially begin. But, when it does, these players couldn't be more excited to get on to the ice.

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2021 WATER & WASTEWATER MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Open House Round 2

The Regional Municipality of York is updating its Water and Wastewater Master Plan through the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment master planning process. The Master Plan Update will identify long-term infrastructure projects for future water and wastewater servicing needs to 2051. Your input will help inform the recommended servicing solution and future infrastructure that will be shared in the next Open House.

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York Region's number one priority remains protecting the health and safety of staff and our communities. We continue to monitor the ongoing COVID-19 situation in York Region and remain committed to effective engagement and consultation with the public and stakeholders.



Protection of "Henderson Forest" lands maintained by LPAT



Henderson Forest Ratepayers are hailing victory after Ontario's Local Planning Appeals Tribunal rejected development applications for a wooded swath of Henderson Drive. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

From page 1
decision into the ongoing battle over lands that have come to be known as the "Henderson Forest".

Advocates have been fighting to preserve the land in question since applications came to Aurora's Committee of Adjustment to make way for a single detached home on portions of two lots on Henderson. The plots, which are zoned for residential, are located on environmentally sensitive areas of the Oak Ridges Moraine, which means that any developments must have minimal impact on the environment.

The minor variance applied for by landowners was initially denied by the Committee of Adjustment and their decision was subsequently denied by LPAT on January 26.

"I am very pleased that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal made the decision to uphold the decision made at the municipal level," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "The Henderson Drive area in question is home to a large number of species of birds, animals and trees, and it is our responsibility to protect them. I would like to thank area residents, who passionately defended their view, as

well as staff who worked to ensure that the lands remained protected."

The decision was, of course, warmly greeted by the Henderson-area residents who began the fight.

George Skoulikas, President of the Henderson Forest Ratepayer Association (HFRPA) said he and members were "grateful" the tribunal "recognized the enormous ecological value of the Henderson Lands."

"This is a huge victory for the community at a time when the environment is under considerable attack," he said. "These properties are entirely within a Key Natural Heritage Feature (KNHF) Significant Woodland and contain other KNHF's Significant Valleyland and Fish Habitat. The sites are also home to several at-risk species of wildlife protected under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, federal Endangered Species Act and/or the Town's Official Plan."

Added HFRPA Vice President Wendy Kenyon, "As a result of the Tribunal's decision, the hundreds of mature trees will still stand, species at risk including endangered species, snapping and painted turtles and red-

headed woodpeckers remain protected, the wetlands remain unharmed, the valleylands retain their natural form and the lands' rich biodiversity remains intact. Other wildlife such as foxes, skunks and pileated woodpeckers can maintain a peaceful existence away from human disturbance."

Despite being pleased at the outcome, however, their enthusiasm, he said, was tempered by a flawed process.

"It requires a herculean effort on the part of a community to ensure that environmental justice is achieved," said Skoulikas. "Furthermore, a process that relies so heavily on the input of those with a vested interest in the outcome is destined to fail. You don't place a fox in charge of the hen house."

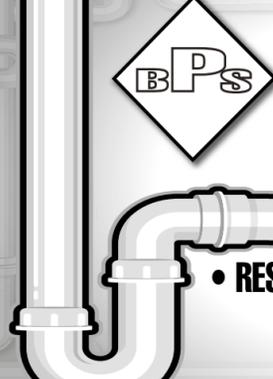
"One of the main findings of the Tribunal was that not enough information had been submitted by the applicant in order to assess the true potential environmental impacts," added HFRPA Social Media Coordinator Maricella Saucedo. "This is something the community has been fighting for from the very beginning, almost 4 years ago. We firmly believe that if the initial submission had gone unchallenged, the lands would already have been flattened, the hundreds of trees removed,

wildlife scattered and the subsequent environmental impacts left unchecked."

The group, noted Mr. Skoulikas, would welcome a thorough review of the Henderson Drive application process so that important lessons can be learned.

"In a recent press release the Mayor stated that it's our collective responsibility to protect the trees and wildlife inhabiting these lands. We wholeheartedly agree. Given the Mayor's encouraging statement we very much hope that Council and staff will explore creative ways to protect these properties in perpetuity. While, in theory, nothing prevents future attempts to develop, given the indisputable ecological value of these mature woodlands which are fittingly described in the Tribunal Decision document as "unique and environmentally sensitive", it would be shocking if any future application could ever be approved. This would go against the grain of Aurora's very identity as a green community.

At a time when the need to retain our woodlands and wildlife habitat has never been greater, any subsequent applications would require extensive scrutiny and, for sure, the community will be watching."



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Seniors housing needs to move away from long-term care "default": CHATS

Aurora Seniors' Centre considers mandatory vaccinations

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It is time for long-term care to be reconsidered as the default housing for the elderly, according to Christina Bisanz, CEO of CHATS.

Ms. Bisanz, head of CHATS – Community and Home Assistance for Seniors, which serves York Region and South Simcoe, pressed Federal Minister of Seniors Deb Schulte for an increased emphasis on measures for aging in place during a virtual roundtable hosted by Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen late last month.

"When will we be able to stop looking at long-term care institutions as the de facto default for the elderly and housing for the elderly?" asked Ms. Bisanz, looking for any opportunities the Federal Government and Ms. Schulte's Ministry might have to make it happen.

These opportunities, said Ms. Bisanz, could include working with developers to provide incentives for varying housing models "that truly enable people to age in place, to age in their own homes, with appropriate community support."

"That would be if they do need additional personal support in the home, community supports to help them get around, but moving away from just building more and more

beds to encouraging the building of homes that will support people to age in place."

There is a move forwards housing for seniors with complex needs and lots of support though long-term care, said the Minister, but other countries are following a different path.

Ms. Schulte said recent conversations with Ontario's Ministers of Long-Term Care and Seniors helped underscore this point.

"I said I am bit concerned about the money that we're bringing to the table to help through the National Housing Strategy and also the Rapid Housing Strategy that we have brought, which seems to be pushing such urgency and the model seems to be pushing towards these 100-bed facilities," said Minister Schulte. "That isn't what seniors want to live in. How do we make sure that in our rush to accommodate the need we're not creating the environment that people don't want to be in.

"There are other models. In our National Housing Strategy, it is the first time that we looked at long-term care, not just in a health mode, because it was always deemed from a Federal perspective that this is a health issue, not a housing issue. It is a continuum of housing and we need to think of it that way.

"The challenge is it is complicated because we have to do it in conjunction with the Provinces and territories because they fund the health care portion. There is a housing portion, so how do we work that combination? We're still trying to work that out.

We have money at the table, not only the 7,000 seniors' residences that we want to build or encourage to be built... in communities; We want

to make sure we're encouraging the opportunity to support long-term care as well and assist those being done."

There are "really great, creative ideas" that are coming up from community organizations and non-profits, the Minister noted, adding that if any of these are ultimately borne to fruition that it will only be done with partners.

"We need to get cooperation from the Provinces to be able to do a different model and my understanding is they are supportive. It just has to make sense, economically, that it can be done. It is a call to the community. If we want to see different kind of housing built, let's work together to do that."

Long-term care wasn't the only issue brought to the table during the virtual discussion.

Dr. Dave LeGallais, President of the Aurora Seniors' Association (ASA), focused on the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations. The Aurora Seniors' Centre, he said, is closed again due to present health restrictions after a brief re-opening window of two

months. Although the Minister did not weigh in on the specifics of the Seniors' Centre proposal, Dr. LeGallais said the Board of the ASA was considering requiring all members receive vaccinations should they want to participate in activities hosted by the Seniors' Centre.

"Since we were only open for two months and we're closed again," he said. "But of 40 different activities, we had only access to six of them because of the health standards. We couldn't bring the other activities in. When we went into Code Red, we could only get ten people in a room. We're probably servicing about five per cent of our members.

"My question to you is once we are able to open again and vaccines are available to all seniors, our Board was considering mandatory vaccinations for people who come into the Centre. I am not sure if legally we can do this, but what I do know is if we can do it we are going to get a lot more people coming into the Centre because they are going to feel safer and we can probably add most of our activities back again."

Buccaneers or Chiefs? Who has the edge this Sunday in Super Bowl LV?

By Robert Belardi

For the first time in Super Bowl history, a team will be hosting the NFL's most prestigious game in their home stadium.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers will become the first to do so on Sunday when the Kansas City Chiefs come to town to battle it out for the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Both teams earned their trip to the grand dance in exhilarating fashion. The Buccaneers staved off the Green Bay Packers in Lambeau Field 31-26. The Kansas City Chiefs came back down 10-0 to the pesky Buffalo Bills at Arrowhead Stadium, with a 38-24 victory.

Each year, the hype surrounding the Super Bowl never seems to fade, but this year's storyline is one for the ages.

Tom Brady will be playing in his 10th Super Bowl, having won six titles already. And he will be taking on the quarterback on the other end of the field who was his Super Bowl predecessor in Patrick Mahomes.

Mahomes looks to defend his title, having won the Super Bowl last year against the San Francisco 49ers.

And he might be able to do so because of his coaches. Chiefs head coach Andy Reid and offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy aren't shy to take risks. We saw it in the AFC Divisional Round against Cleveland on fourth down with their back-up Chad Henne. To risk it all is what Reid and Bieniemy are all about.

Football Editor at theScore, Daniel Valente predicts Reid and Bieniemy won't be the only ones that are willing to chance it.

"Really what makes this matchup against Tampa Bay intriguing is they're going up against another coach and another team that has the philosophy of, 'we're going to risk it all,'" Valente said.

"Bruce Arians, Tampa Bay's coach, no risk it, no biscuit. He's same thing. Third and one he's going long. I think if it's any team that can go blow for blow with KC, it's Tampa."

In a tale of two offences that totalled over 6,000 yards in the regular season each, the Chiefs have distinctive weapons that Valente says are talented to earn more yards after

the catch.

Tyreek Hill, Mecole Hardman and Travis Kelce are only three of the Chiefs' offensive stalwarts that will be quite the load to handle for the Bucs.

But another intriguing matchup in this one is the Buccaneers pass rush against a banged-up Chiefs offensive line.

"I think that's the one thing that's being overlooked a lot in this matchup is the battle in the trenches. Tampa's pass rush against KC's depleted offensive line. They're down (Eric) Fisher and Andy Reid said today (January 25) that Mitchell Schwartz isn't looking likely to be coming back in the Super Bowl," Valente said.

If Tampa Bay wants to pull off an upset, this is the key matchup. The Buccaneers stout defence with Ndamukong Suh, Jason Pierre-Paul, Vita Vea, Shaquil Barrett, Devon White and Lavonte David will be key.

If the Buccaneers also want to control the tempo offensively, they can do so running the football. The Bucs have two studs in Leonard Fournette and Ronald Jones with other running options should they choose to use them.

But, Valente says, he is confident in Kansas City's defence heading into this matchup with the Bucs. It's because of their defensive coordinator.

"What really gives me trust in Kansas City's defence, is their defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo. He's gone up against Brady numerous times in his career. He's the guy who ended the (Patriots') undefeated season when he was with the Giants," Valente said.

"He's done it once in '07. He's caused Brady fits throughout his career."

It's going to be a tale of matchups heading into this game. It's going to be about the Chiefs defence locking up Bucs wideouts Mike Evans, Chris Godwin and, depending on his usage, Antonio Brown.

Valente's pick, if he had to choose: 23-17 in favour of the Kansas City Chiefs. He says in these matches that are labelled to be shootouts, defences come to play. It will be a tight game. We'll find out on Sunday who will bring home the Vince Lombardi trophy.

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“Modernized” fence bylaw rejected by Council

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A “modernized” bylaw will have to wait another day after Council rejected new proposals for resolving fence disputes between neighbours – and between property owners and the Town.

Council voted down the recommendations brought forward by staff last week, largely opposing a new process which would have turned the ultimate decision-making authority first to staff and, in the event of a further dispute, to the Aurora Appeal Tribunal, which is composed of members from the Town’s Committee of Adjustment.

Moving the decision-making process away from Council, which is properly termed as “delegated authority” was the top-of-mind issue when Council tackled the report last week after postponing a decision in December.

“I am a proponent of as much as we can [that residents can] come to Council,” said Councillor John Gallo. “That is what makes a small town a small town, that the residents know that they can come to us when they have good things to say and bad things to say, or want some change. The more delegated authority we give the less contact we have with residents, in my opinion. In my view, it has been unfortunate that we have moved towards much more delegated authority than I would like. It certainly allows for much more streamlined and timely meetings, but I feel the connection to the residents, we have lost that to a certain degree.”

Similar sentiments were offered by Councillor Rachel Gilliland who also underscored Aurora’s “small town feel.”

“I still like to think of us as a very small town and we’re not necessarily this big cities [like] Toronto... and Ottawa,” said Councillor Gilliland after asking staff for their rationale on proposed fees within the draft bylaw. “I don’t know if we’ve had a tonne of incidences where people have come to Council to dispute a fence height or the fence bylaw in the last 15 or 20 years.

“I want to give residents the opportunity to come before us. We’re elected to represent the people and we want to be able to give them the opportunity to listen and to help them out when they need it. We do have an Appeals Tribunal and we have a Committee of Adjustment and such, they are there to do a job as well. There haven’t been a lot of disputes over fences [in 15 or 20 years, but] I still want to give the people the opportunity to come to Council and if they feel they want to come and plead their case then I want to let them do it.”

Had the proposed bylaw moved forward, fence-related disputes would have first gone to the Director of Corporate Services, under whom the Bylaw Department falls, and, if there were still concerns, to the Appeals Tribunal.

The Appeals Tribunal currently focuses on animal control muzzle orders and any issues related to licensing.

“If Bylaw made a decision to suspend or revoke a license based on non-compliance, that person could appeal that decision to the Appeals Tribunal,” said Director of Corporate Services Techa van Leeuwen. “Their decisions are final and binding. [The proposal gives] delegated authority to me as the Director to make those decisions. Notification will be provided to the adjacent property. The thing that will be considered will be if it (the fence in question) is compatible with the surrounding area. Are there reasons such as possibly noise related to traffic and other reasons why we would justify the approval?”

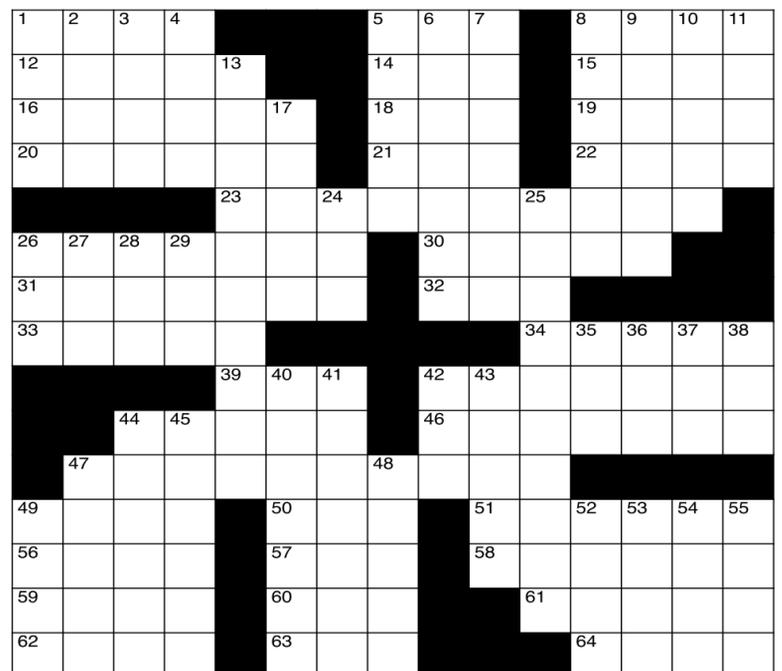
“If the decision is we refuse the request, then we have the option to appeal to the tribunal. Of, if we were to approve, anybody who had an objection also has that option to submit a request to the appeal tribunal.”

Although she said she was initially in favour of the overall fence proposals, Councillor Sandra Humfryes’ lingering questions also centred on the issue of delegated authority. While some of the proposals were “positive,” she wanted

Continued on page 18



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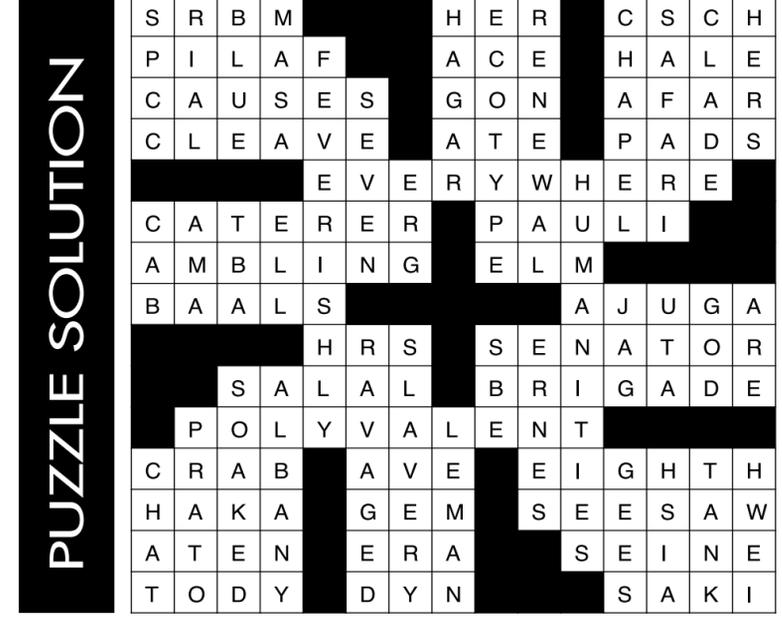


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Nuclear near reach weapon
- 5. Of she
- 8. Hyperbolic function
- 12. Rice dish
- 14. A team’s best pitcher
- 15. Strong and healthy
- 16. Induces
- 18. Popular manga series
- 19. From a distance
- 20. Split
- 21. Consumed
- 22. Cushions
- 23. All over
- 26. One who provides food
- 30. St. ___ Girl, brand of beer
- 31. Walking slowly
- 32. Wood
- 33. Semitic gods
- 34. Bugle
- 39. 60-minute periods (abbr.)
- 42. Congressman
- 44. Plant of the heath family
- 46. Subdivision of an army
- 47. Having many different forms
- 49. Shellfish
- 50. Latin for hail
- 51. Between sixth and seventh
- 56. Maori war dance
- 57. Precious or semiprecious stone
- 58. Teeter totter
- 59. Deity
- 60. A major division of geological time
- 61. Fishing net
- 62. Small Caribbean bird
- 63. Field force unit
- 64. Japanese beverage

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Prevents oil spills
- 2. Monetary unit
- 3. The color of the sky
- 4. Dough used to make tortillas
- 5. Popular comic strip character
- 6. Distinct form of a plant
- 7. Replenishment
- 8. Has its own altar
- 9. Expedition to see animals
- 10. Group of related organisms
- 11. His and ___
- 13. Frenetically
- 17. Small integer
- 24. Unit of energy
- 25. Studies of culture
- 26. Taxi
- 27. Doctors’ group
- 28. Don’t know when yet
- 29. Former measure of length
- 35. Popular CBS series
- 36. Skin condition
- 37. Christian creator and ruler of the universe
- 38. They ___
- 40. Caused severe damage
- 41. Work done under harsh conditions for no pay
- 42. One point east of due south
- 43. Sea eagles
- 44. Drenched
- 45. State capital
- 47. Italian city
- 48. Sweetheart (archaic)
- 49. Brief talk
- 52. Popular disco group: Bee ___
- 53. First Chinese dynasty
- 54. Military vehicle
- 55. Chinese Moslem





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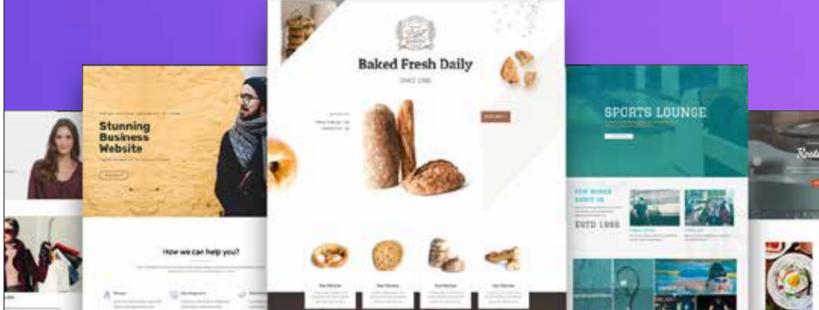
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Full month of virtual activities planned to mark Black History Month

From page 1

Council in its proclamation. As such, throughout the month of February, the Town, in association with the Aurora Black Community group on Facebook, have spearheaded and compiled several events throughout the month to mark Black History Month. In collaboration with such organizations as the Aurora Public Library and the Aurora Film Circuit, events include online cooking demonstrations, lectures, and film viewings, but there are more opportunities that should be explored in the lead-up to February of 2022, according to Task Force members.

"I think [the events of last summer related to Black Lives Matter] really opened the eyes of a lot of people in Canada and all over the world," says group member Mae Khamissa. "I think now is the time for us to stand up and put an even bigger focus on the importance of Black History Month. Celebrating is the key factor. Next year, we would like, as a Committee, to showcase it and hopefully we can showcase it in a much more personal venue of some sort, celebrate it, whether it be music and the arts, so we can bring people together and understand what Black History is."

The Town's plans for Black History Month came into sharp focus last

month during a virtual meeting of the Task Force. On the agenda was time allocated for members to provide input on what was in store, but some members expressed frustration at being asked for their opinions so late in the game – particularly the individuals with lived experience invited to come to the table.

It was agreed that it was a good start and they set a goal to use the months ahead to plan a particularly meaningful celebration of all the accomplishments of Black Canadians and contributions they have made to the development of the country.

"In Aurora, I want people to know that Black History is not for Black people, it is for the entire community," says Phiona Durrant, founder of the Aurora Black Community Facebook group. "The Aurora Black Community group is not a Black people group but a place where we are bringing people together. It's about that piece more than ever. We want to create events, as little as they are, to [reflect] an eclectic culture for participating so is not just Black faces. It is very important that that piece is highlighted."

Black History Month commemorations this week include an online presentation on Black History through a specifically Canadian lens

hosted online by the Aurora Black Community from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., this Thursday, February 4, and a lecture from Dr. Cheryl Thompson hosted that evening by the Aurora Public Library. A cooking demonstration will be hosted by the York Region Food Network highlighting the cuisine of Barbados on Friday morning from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

Over the weekend, the Aurora Film Circuit will host a live review and discussion about the Netflix series "Self Made", in which Octavia Spencer

portrays beauty entrepreneur Madam C.J. Walker. This will take place Saturday evening at 7 p.m.

A further cooking demonstration, this time hosted by the Aurora Black Community on their Facebook Page and YouTube channel will take place beginning at 6.30 p.m. on Thursday, February 11.

For a full listing of events, including registration, and how to become a member of the Aurora Black Community group, visit aurora.ca/blackhistorymonth.

"Modernized" fence bylaw rejected by Council

From page 17

clarity on the process.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner also gave the proposal a mixed review. Although she said she was in favour of it overall, the delegated authority also gave her a moment of pause.

"I do think in keeping with our small town feeling that a resident should always be able to come to Council," she said. "I like the idea of removing it initially from us, but I think at the end of the day I want them to feel they can come to Council. We don't have many cases... I would like to think we're approachable

no matter what."

Added Councillor Gallo: "We are elected to represent the residents. They are selected by us to do a particular job and delegated authority to me limits the exposure to the residents and that is primarily what I am against. If we were inundated with these issues, if we were fixing something... we're not fixing anything. We have never been inundated with these issues and we have never had a lineup of residents asking for our help regarding fences. It has just never happened. We're not fixing anything. I am not even sure why we're doing this."



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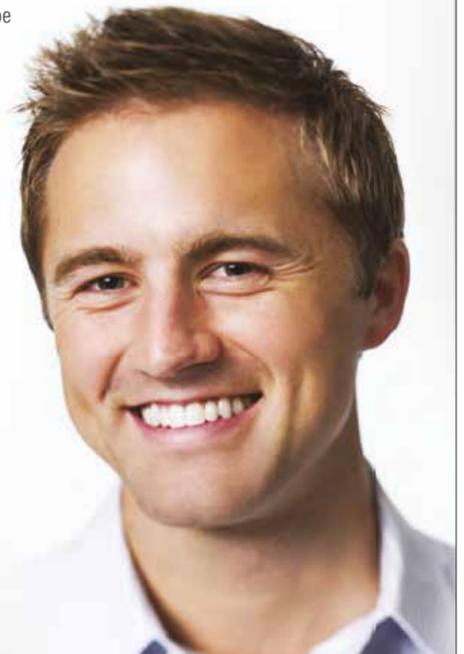
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Simple

1⁹⁸ EA

Lindor milk chocolate 202 g, Golden Gallery assorted chocolate 175 g, Turtles, Aero in heart shaped box 180/183 g or Ferrero T24 boxed chocolate 259/300 g, selected varieties 20002017001/21332552

SAVE UP TO 5.10

8⁸⁸ EA

10 LB BAG
Farmer's Market[™]
Russet potatoes
product of Canada
Canada no. 1 grade
20601020001

2⁴⁸ EA

Royale bathroom tissue 30+60 rolls or Royale facial tissue 12's
20705292/21191252

SAVE 4.00

10⁹⁸ EA

D'Italiano bread
selected varieties
600/675 g
20626915

1⁹⁸ EA

Mazola vegetable, canola or corn oil
2.84 L
20015260

SAVE UP TO 3.10

4⁸⁸ EA

ALL CHECKOUTS OPEN GUARANTEED*

Every Saturday & Sunday 10am-6pm

*Unless we are unable to at any time due to technical difficulties and/or other unforeseeable circumstances outside of our control.

15900 Bayview Avenue
Aurora, Ontario, L4G 7Y3 905-726-9532