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THE AU 20 YEARS RAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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Week of May 6, 2021



Aurora's Courtenay Field, a member of the non-partisan Future Majority, is one of several members calling on all levels of government to step up and provide further support for Mental Health care. *Auroran photo by Brock Weir*

Youth call on further mental health supports in light of COVID-19

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Courtenay Field grew up in an immigrant household where mental health, by her own admission, "was a very taboo subject."

When the Aurora student realized she needed to seek help, she felt unable to do so because she was a minor and financially reliant on her parents.

As an adult, however, Ms. Field is

dedicating her time to empowering youth to take control of their mental health "by giving them the resources to do so."

"This will be life and death for so many," says Ms. Field, a member of Future Majority, a non-partisan, non-profit group dedicated to "amplifying the voices of young Canadians so every candidate, politician, and party is an advocate for youth priorities."

Future Majority launched their latest campaign last week, one dedicated to addressing the mental health crisis, one

that has only been exacerbated by the global pandemic.

"COVID has been hard on all of us," says Ms. Field, a graduate of Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School. "It is a time where I myself have faced unforeseen challenges within my career and I was unable to get the regular support I would from my friends and family. Now more than ever, Canadians – particularly young Canadians like myself – are experiencing increased mental health challenges and

Continued on page 21

All Ontarians 18+ eligible for vaccine come May 24

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The light at the end of the tunnel has grown brighter following the Province of Ontario's announcement that all Ontarians 18 years of age and up will be eligible for their first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine by the end of this month.

Continued on page 6

MARKET MADNESS – The line stretched around the block for the opening day of the Aurora Farmers' Market's outdoor season on Saturday. Taking in the vendors at Town Park were Aiden, Avery and Dustin. For more on the Market's re-opening, see Page 18.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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Safety and sustainability are driving forces behind Stronach's Sarit vehicle



Contributed photo

Frank Stronach, right, shows the Sarit vehicle to York Region Chair Wayne Emmerson, left, and Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Ian Lovatt, centre.

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Little over a year-and-a-half ago, Ontario Premier Doug Ford approached Magna founder Frank Stronach with a dilemma.

General Motors had recently begun to wrap up a great deal of its operations in Ontario and, given Mr. Stronach's track record in the automotive industry, the Premier sought advice on how to generate jobs in a very specific sector.

It was a simple question, but it needed an extraordinary response and Mr. Stronach moved projects onto the backburner to focus on the task at hand.

He considered the problem one day while making the commute to Toronto.

"I had to go downtown a few times but what normally took me about half-an-hour to get down to Bay Street took an hour if everything was fine, two hours if there was a traffic jam," he says. "About 95 per cent of the cars I saw had only one person in there: the driver. I was in the traffic jam and thought, 'Holy smoke, I feel sorry for the people who have to do this every day.'"

And then the penny dropped. "When the Premier called me, I went back to the workbench and started to do a few sketches and started to make a prototype – just as I have done for the last 50 or 60 years," says Mr. Stronach.

The solution, he said, was to focus on electric vehicles here at home – but not the standard electric or hybrid sedans, but a compact electric

vehicle that can get a single occupant where they need to go around town and connect with transit hubs.

This was the driving principle behind the development of the ELVY Sarit (Safe Affordable Reliable Innovative Transportation).

The Sarit is billed as "the future of urban automotive transportation" and production will begin over the next year at a Stronach-owned plant on Aurora Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville – the first in a future compliment of 20 plants in the United States and five in Canada.

Built around an engineered safety cage, the three-wheeled vehicle will be able to travel 80 miles on a single overnight charge from a standard wall outlet.

It is designed to go anywhere a bike can go and could save drivers nearly \$11,400 a year in costs related to fuel, parking, insurance and maintenance.

"We use a lot of non-renewable resources with gas and oil and I thought if we add up all the gasoline being used every day from Tokyo to Rio, from Beijing to London, Rome, Los Angeles and New York, it is like the Hudson river flowing," says Mr. Stronach. "Just imagine a giant river that is being used daily. You don't have to be a scientist to know that the fuel will run out sooner rather than later."

The vehicle's primary purpose, says Mr. Stronach, is to go from your home to your workplace or a grocery store and back home again. In communities like Aurora, it is ideal to travel to and from GO stations and other transit hubs where parking is often at a premium.

"The first thing is safety," says

Mr. Stronach, noting that he is working with Ontario's Ministry of Transportation on a Micro-mobility Handbook outlining the changing rules of the road. "The fact is, Micro-mobility will be a must. Our cities are choked up in traffic and greenhouse gases. Look, if you live around the 401 and go into the city, why do you have to have a big car?"

Mr. Stronach's property on the southeast corner of Aurora Road and Highway 404 will be the headquarters for Stronach International and the nerve-centre for Sarit development.

He says he chose the location as it is a "gateway to York Region," a place where he has left an indelible mark as

an employer and community-builder.

"I just want to have less traffic here and this is where we will be doing more research. From there, we can copy the model and have the perfect factories. I think there will be about 20 in the United States and five in Canada. I don't want to rely on China; I want to have the product made in Canada and the U.S. I have done well here because I interface with employees. The employees did well because I shared with them and it was a give and take. If the economy doesn't work, nothing else will. We can't feed the hungry and we can't look after the most fragile in our society without it."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

“Town Square” name resonates with reader:

(Re: What’s in a name? New branding on “Library Square” is imminent, April 29)

I’ve read the suggested names for the new facility and decided to weigh in on the discussion.

When I think of Aurora, the following comes to mind: a quiet, pretty town welcoming all age groups (safe and comfortable); a great place to raise a family as so many young professionals are moving here (upwardly mobile); great schools and sports centres; access to excellent health care, medical centres, hospitals like Southlake and Markham-Stouffville (high tech).

As to the names:

Aurora Junction: What comes to mind is – sooty, other side of the tracks, old-fashioned

Church Street Square: What comes to mind is – nothing new happening here, some old historical buildings

Constellation Square: sounds like we’re trying too hard to come up with a nifty new name; a building near the airport

Town Square - the best choice.

Maybe it’s COVID talking, but this name is comforting and says everything about a community. A place where things happen – especially now with the new events planned to take place. Tried and true. Makes sense. When I travel, especially in Italy, the Town Square in any small town is always the highlight of any excursion.

I live across from the Town Park, having just moved back to Aurora since going to high school here 50 years ago, and I love the feeling of being part of a community.

The big box stores are a necessity, but I’m so glad there is a heart to Aurora on Main Street. The Saturday Market is taking place as I write this - quite a diverse group of people out there. And I’m loving it.

Also, on another topic, I’ve read that a walkway to connect the park to the new Town Square is being considered. My suggestion for that is to make Metcalfe a one-way street (travelling east would probably make the most sense) so that homeowners can access their driveways; the narrower street can then be set up with a wider boulevard with seasonal planters, benches, etc. en-route to the Town Park. Just a thought.

Promoting the new facility – Aurora Town Square (ATS): Artistic, Theatrical and Special events - What’s not to love!

**Bette Holancin
Aurora**

Pine Ridge memorial is least governments could do: reader

(Re: Advocates want “atrocities” committed at Pine Ridge to be remembered, April 22)

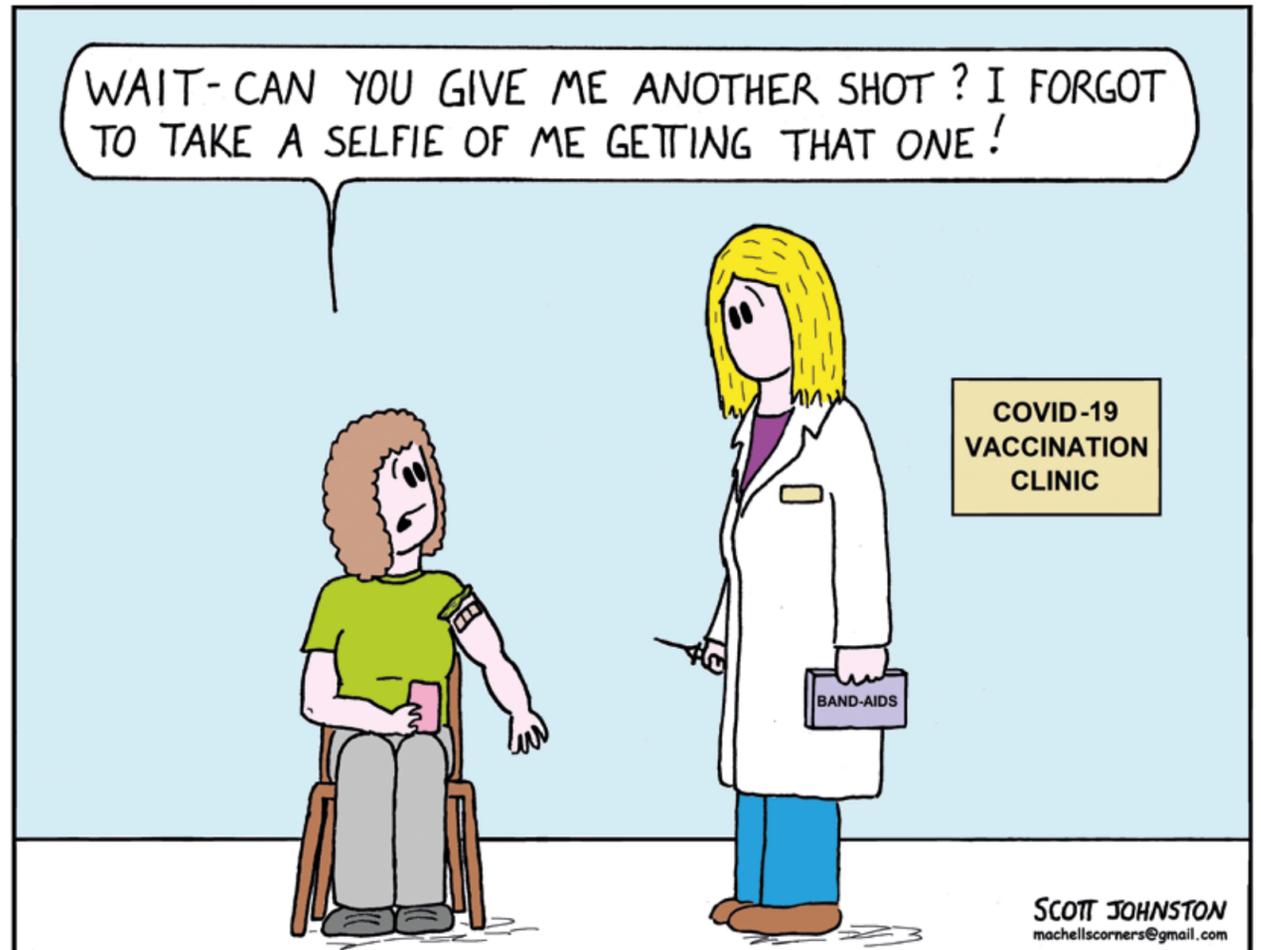
It is great that in the Town of Aurora, the Heritage Committee are supporting the survivors in asking for acknowledgment of the atrocities committed to residents of this institution.

The abusive history and experiences of residential schools or hospitals, must be acknowledged so the survivors can have some peace, so the community realises that institutional congregation of groups of people with disability and now seniors will lead to abuse and harm.

The public apology of our premier seems to be forgotten with

Continued on page 22

Machell’s Corners



Anger to laughter and back again

We couldn’t help but laugh when it came on the car radio.

Sitting in an underground parking garage in 2009 or so, it seemed unlikely that the 1934 instrumental version of the 1934 hit “Love in Bloom”, written by the less-than-marquee names of Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin, would take up valuable broadcasting space on a prominent radio station at what I can only imagine was a prime slot during the end-of-day rush hour drive time.

But there it was.

The tune itself didn’t immediately register until a familiar string of eight notes came in a few bars in, the simple notes that became the theme music for comedian Jack Benny throughout his venerable career – played off-key, of course, on his prized violin.

After hearing the Benny version of the song for so many years, it was almost as if our brains were attuned to his deliberately massacred rendition and, despite the song playing beautifully on the speakers, a couple of mild chuckles quickly rode a crescendo to laughter – a welcome release near the end of a particularly challenging day.

After a hospital stay of several months, it was time to help move my grandmother into long-term care.

Given her health circumstances at the time, it was an unfortunately inevitable step that had to be taken, but it was difficult nonetheless.

It is not to say that she was ill during the entirety of her hospital stay – don’t get me wrong, the health challenges were real – but it was, for several weeks, the only option for her to receive the care she needed, albeit in a less-than-ideal location.

Finding a spot in long-term care was, as so many of you can appreciate, as Herculean a task as it is now, so we – and she – had to wait. A few options came and went, but luckily, at the eleventh hour, a space opened up not too far away – and then it was crunch time: figuring out how to condense more than 80 years of life into the small but thankfully cheerful room she was about to occupy.

It was a difficult process, but when you’re under the proverbial gun you do the best you can at the time and hope there’s enough time to edit later when they’re all settled in and a few objects you thought were simply nice-to-haves turned out to be anything but.



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

Then, the day came: one which was greeted with fear and trepidation on all sides, fear and trepidation which manifested itself in occasionally unexpected ways. Needless to say, it was a stressful time for all: my grandmother moving on to what she undoubtedly knew would be her final chapter, us making sure everything was as in place as it possibly could, and collectively managing our respective fears for what lay ahead.

The consensus among our family, when all was said and done, was if we had the opportunity to do it again there isn’t anything we would necessarily change, but we’d try to avoid it at all costs, such was the stress and emotional toll it took on us all.

But now, particularly in light of COVID-19, I look back on this day with nothing but gratitude, not just the post-mortem laugh Jack Benny sent us, but the fact that we lucked out in the care she received.

She quickly made friends with her new neighbours. It didn’t take too long for her to win over the staff, to the extent where one evening a week she had a “girls’ night” with one of the staff members where they would munch cashews while watching “The Bachelor” and “The Bachelorette”. And when the time came for end-of-life care, they were on hand to make the transition as easy as possible.

The trials faced by long-term care in recent years, particularly over the last 16 months of the global pandemic, have only magnified to us the gratitude we should feel, but also question how we would have handled the situation if our loved one was in long-term care during this time of extreme challenge.

Or, in the words of advocacy organization CanAge, following the Auditor General’s report into long-term care, a time of “horror.”

“This report is heartbreaking,” said CanAge’s Laura Tamblyn Watts. “It painstakingly details residents abandoned by the government and health care system, the unnecessary loss of thousands of residents’ lives and staff left without basic PPE protections using garbage bags as IPAC (Infection Prevention and Control). It is the story of a government’s failures to protect our most vulnerable. Of administrative finger-pointing and an abandonment of a desperate long-term care sector. This is both a call to action and a horror. It is not, however, a surprise.

“Between the Auditor General’s findings and now this final report from the Province’s own independent commission into long-term care, it’s certainly been an eye-opening week for Ontario’s Ministry of Long-Term Care. I wish we could say we were shocked by the findings, but they simply pour more fuel on the fire of what we’ve been saying all along: this is a severely broken senior’s care system, and it has to change now.”

With my grandparents, we saw both sides of the coin: a thankfully temporary stay long-term care home for my paternal grandfather that was chronically under-staffed, and my maternal grandmother in a residence that went the extra mile to make her last chapter a positive experience.

But we had our experiences in a very different time.

The thought of the women and men who did their utmost to become a part of my grandmother’s life, rather than nurses and caregivers simply moving from patient to patient, forced to use garbage bags to protect themselves in literal life-or-death situations, sure in their commitment to the men and women under their care is heartbreaking.

As it has been since we first heard of these problems 16 long months ago and, in some terrible instances, years before COVID made its first appearance on our horizon.

To see it laid out independently, in black and white, and in no uncertain terms, is not only heartbreaking but sobering.

It will now be telling to see what comes from it, from the concrete recommendations in its pages, to our collective resolve to never let this happen again.

THE AU 20 YEARS RAN
Aurora’s Community Newspaper

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



The Aurora Museum & Archives is recognizing...

Packaging Design Day (May 7)

Some objects are just so commonplace that it becomes easy to forget how complex their design and production truly is. The humble milk carton is one such item: something most of us have used successfully for years without much thought, but which excels at its intended task. This empty, unprinted example (2002.7.1) was manufactured at the now-closed Tetra Pak facility that operated on Vandorf Sideroad starting in 1985. On May 7, we recognize packaging designs and their designers, and thank them for subtly making our lives cleaner, easier and tastier!



Welcome to Library Land

By Reccia Mandelcorn
Collections & Exhibitions Coordinator,
Aurora Museum & Archives

When I started my library career, I assumed my days would be spent in the pleasurable pursuit of storytelling and sharing wonderful narratives with fellow readers. And (full disclosure) as someone with a strong aversion to risk, venturing into the territory of business, job hunting and entrepreneurship were never on my to-do list. In fact, since I was 18, I've known no home other than Library Land.

However, over my career, my view has widened. The current economic upheaval has increased the need for libraries to support the business community and those who are looking for work, but even pre-pandemic, substantial research world-wide has shown the importance of libraries as economic drivers and supports.

In collaboration with our community partners, my library has been able to develop many opportunities for job seekers to learn new skills, from resumé writing, to interview techniques, to changing careers in a new country. Last week, I was reviewing a dip in attendance at a 10-week career series for women, and was thrilled to learn that some of the participants could no longer attend the morning sessions because they had successfully found employment. Reverse statistics at its best!

One of my favourite events is Entrepreneurs-in-Residence, an evening of fast-paced storytelling, tips and networking. Entrepreneurship is an exciting adventure, but even in the best of times, it is never without risk. COVID-19 has overturned the best of business plans, causing chaos and uncertainty. Yet, while many start-ups have suffered during the pandemic, Forbes reports an increase in entrepreneurial activity; responding to or anticipating needs in innovative ways.

Being a lover of stories, it's no wonder that I am captivated by the narratives of people who create their dreams, often many times over. From the wedding vow that freed a corporate executive to follow his creative passion to the resilience of an Olympic athlete who started an organic specialty tea company after a fall left her paralyzed at age 14 – these are stories of the human spirit. And stories are what attracted me to Library Land in the first place.

Whether you are seeking work, redefining your life, developing your skills or building a new future, I hope Library Land will be a place you stop by. And if you are an entrepreneur with a story to share, I'd love to hear from you at rmandelcorn@aurorapl.ca.

What I've been reading:

Our Riches
by Kaouter Adimi

Never Anyone But You
by Rupert Thomson

A Madness So Discreet
by Mindy McGinnis

Come Cold River
by Karen Connelly

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

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Should virtual learning be offered in a post-pandemic world?
Yes No Unsure

www.theauroran.com

PREVIOUS POLL
Would paid sick days help the fight against COVID-19?

RESULTS TO DATE May 4, 2021	YES	NO	UNSURE
	84%	11%	5%

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

Federal Budget fails to address the cracks in Canada's economic foundations

On April 19, the Government tabled the first federal budget in over two years. With hundreds of millions in spending and unprecedented deficit and debt levels, this budget is both a hit and a miss.

A national budget must do two things. It must address immediate short-term issues while also positioning for and protecting long-term growth. Recognizing the challenges of COVID-19 and the continued need for emergency relief, the 2021 federal budget provides appropriate short-term support for individuals, small businesses and some drastically affected industry sectors. These entitlement programs drive private consumption allowing for citizens to weather the current emergency, but for a vibrant economy they can't exist in isolation. Without substantial core investments to support the backbone of an economy no future prosperity will be built.

Unfortunately, with respect to the more difficult task of establishing and bolstering these economic foundations this budget falls short.

Grave cracks in Canada's competitiveness and productivity predate the pandemic. Foreign capital investment was leaving Canada in disturbing amounts and national security tariffs, non-tariff trade barriers, and complex regulatory and tax frameworks were driving companies to move assembly lines and jobs to other jurisdictions.

For some time, in response to changes in the global economic balance of power, countries around the world have charted a course away from globalization, and placed a greater emphasis on national capability, self-sufficiency, and security. Since the health and economic shock of COVID-19 this trend has accelerated. The resulting shortages of personal protective equipment, vaccines, other medical supplies as well as many other essential



MP'S REPORT

Leona Alleslev, MP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

consumer goods, has further illustrated the vulnerabilities in the Canadian economic framework.

The budget was largely silent on measures to address these pre and post pandemic economic foundation cracks. There was no mention of comprehensive personal and corporate tax reform or regulatory rationalization to improve Canada's competitiveness.

Investment in critical domestic industries such as PPE, vaccine manufacturing, and medical research was limited, and lacks the creation of domestic manufacturing capability. In order to bolster Canada's self-sufficiency and ensure greater longer-term health security, Canada must not only address the current lack of supply but also plan for the future.

Pandemic lockdowns have accelerated the transition to greater dependence on digital information. Canada's lack of a universally accessible, leading edge and secure digital infrastructure is leaving the entire country at a distinct disadvantage. The budget investments are insufficient to mitigate the nation's susceptibility to cyber-attacks and internet fraud or to allow the country to achieve digital access and information security.

Additionally, despite the looming shutdown of Enbridge Line 5 threatening critical supply to Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes, there was no mention of

Canada's energy future. Canada's oil and gas industry while meeting the highest environmental standards in the world, remains vulnerable to decisions of foreign oil suppliers. The budget did nothing to reduce Canada's dependence on dirtier foreign oil to achieve both climate change goals and domestic energy security simultaneously.

Lastly, there were no concrete measures or "fiscal anchors" to address the country's staggering deficit and debt. The deficit is forecasted to hit a whopping \$388.7 Billion or 17% of GDP in 2021, while the debt will exceed \$2 Trillion. At that level Justin Trudeau will have incurred more cumulative debt than all 22 Prime Ministers before him.

Worse still, this budget has overestimated economic growth by failing to adequately account for the impact of government stimulus and a disproportionately high housing market on GDP. If government handouts in 2020 were removed from the calculations the economy would have shrunk by 15.3% to its lowest level in seven years. Ultra-low interest rates, easy access to credit and a shift to work from home has resulted in the housing share of GDP reaching a record high, offsetting losses in many other areas. The government's statement that the economy will come roaring back fails to note that without stimulus and a red-hot housing market the economy is on life support.

Immense spending with large amounts of debt, will jeopardize Canada's future prosperity and leave a sky-high debt burden for generations to come. Core foundational investments and a clear-eyed view of the state of the economy are critical to protecting the health, and economic security of all Canadians. Economic recovery and Canada's future prosperity cannot be achieved without them.

Customer Service 101

I know we're all trying to shop locally and support our Aurora retailers during these trying times, but based on a recent attempted purchase, sometimes they aren't making that a happy experience.

I went online a few months ago to a nationwide retailer to purchase a fairly expensive item, and was delighted to see that it was on sale for half price – a big savings.

According to the website, there were items at stores throughout the GTA, but for the moment, the Aurora store was temporarily out of stock.

But I wanted to support our store, so I placed my order there, and received a confirmation email that the item would be ready in a week or so.

After a week I went online to check the status, which said the item was set for delivery in three days. Two days later I got an email from the company noting that they were cancelling my order.

I called the head office number accompanying the email. It was explained that if a store did not have a sale item, they would not get one from another store that had them, but would wait for the manufacturer to send them one. Until then, they would just keep providing the customer with a series of made-up delivery dates (my words, but that was the gist of it). Once the sale was over, they would cancel the order, at which time the customer was welcome to reorder the item, which would be available at the regular higher price.

Further, I was told that even if the store knew there may be an availability



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

issue prior to the sale ending, they were not obligated to advise the customer, or suggest they pick one up at another store, which I would have gladly done, if I'd known.

Bottom line, I was told that since the sale was over, I was out of luck.

Not excited about this explanation, I thought that I'd follow up directly with the store itself. I went online and found that their only listed contact information was a fax number!

I'm sure the last time anyone complained by fax about anything it was in the previous century.

With no access to this obsolete technology, the store itself closed for in-person visits (at the time – curbside pickup only), and no other contact options, such as - here's a thought - a phone number or email, their "customer service" had successfully defeated me.

This whole situation reminded me of an experience I'd had with a different chain many years ago.

In brief, I went to the local store to speak to the manager about an issue I'd had there and was told he wasn't

available and that if I had a complaint, I had to write a letter (!). This I did requesting a response, and hand delivered it at the store (the manager was still not there).

I never did hear back, so eventually I went online to their head office customer feedback site, and explained it all again. I received a response saying they were looking into it.

When I asked when I might expect a specific response they said that "looking into it" was just a standard wording they used, and they were not actually planning to get back to me with any further feedback. If I wanted an actual response, I'd have to explain my issue all over again through a totally different process.

Having failed to get any sort of answer to my issue in person (twice), in writing (once) and by email (twice), by this time they'd worn me down completely, and I gave up trying to contact them. But in a way this issue did have a resolution, as I went from purchasing items at this store every couple of months, to maybe having purchased one or two items there over the past 20 years.

Back to my recent experience here in Town, will this stop me from going out of my way to purchase items locally and support Aurora businesses? Of course not.

But will that be the case at this specific Aurora store?

We'll see.

Province to provide three sick days for employees during third wave

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

After months of calls from medical professionals and frontline workers, the Provincial Government has announced the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, which would offer up to three paid sick days per employee.

The announcement came last Thursday from Monte McNaughton, Ontario's Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. If the Benefit (CRSB) is passed by the Legislature, employers would be required to provide their employees with up to \$200 of pay for up to three days if they are missing work due to

COVID-19.

Such a program would be retroactive to April 19, 2021 and effective through September 25, 2021.

The three paid sick days would "ensure employees can pay their bills as they help stop the spread of the virus, including by "getting tested, waiting for their results in isolation, or going to get their vaccine," said the Province.

"Our government has long advocated for the Federal government to enhance the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit program to better protect the people of Ontario, especially our tireless essential workers," said Minister McNaughton. "It is a tremendously positive step that the Federal government has signalled their willingness to continue discussions on the CSB. Now we can fix the outstanding gap in the federal program so workers can get immediate support and stay at home when needed."

The announcement, however, was called a "half-measure" in some quarters, including the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario.

"Three days of paid sick time, administered through the already overburdened Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is nowhere near what is needed to save lives," they said. "It continues to leave occasional educators and other education workers, who have worked without paid sick leave through the pandemic, unprotected."

"This is the same government that moved quickly to eliminate paid sick days from all Ontario workers soon after taking office. The plan they announced today does not undo the harm they did by taking these away in October 2018. Educators, front-line workers,

advocates and the province's own advisory table have been asking for a robust paid sick leave program for over a year. Repeatedly, the Ford government dismissed these calls, deferring responsibility to the federal government, and shamefully voting against paid sick leave 21 times.

"Educators have seen how the pandemic has affected students, particularly those with family members

they live with those who work front-line jobs. They have watched families struggle because of the lack of legislated, employer-paid sick days. Like their inadequate vaccine rollout, they rushed to deliver a half-baked plan that underserves Ontarians. Countless lives could have been saved if the Ford government had truly done everything they could to implement a comprehensive paid sick leave plan."

All Ontarians 18+ eligible for vaccine come May 24

From page 1

The announcement, which was made by Health Minister Christine Elliott on Thursday, came amid calls from the Region of York for more vaccine supply.

The acceleration of the vaccine rollout is due to an expected increase in vaccine supply from the Federal Government.

By the start of this month, it was expected that 800,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine would begin arriving per week, ramping up to 940,000 doses per week by the end of May.

"Ontario's vaccine rollout is continuing to focus on getting vaccines to those most at risk," said Minister Elliott. "With a stable and reliable supply of vaccines on the way, we will continue expanding access to the vaccine in communities across the Province, especially those areas that continue to be hit hardest by COVID-19. The best vaccine remains the first one you're offered and I strongly encourage everyone to sign up as soon as it is their turn."

During the weeks of May 3 and May 10, 50 per cent of the vaccines are expected to be designated for hot spots, with an emphasis on mobile teams, pop-up clinics, mass immunization clinics, hospitals, primary care and pharmacies.

As of Friday, May 30, Ontarians 55+ were eligible to book a vaccine appointment, a move coinciding with a pilot program to distribute Pfizer to the same demographic in select pharmacies in Peel and Toronto.

But frustration is being felt in York Region, prompting a statement from Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson following the April 29 Regional Council meeting. On behalf of Council, he called on the Prime Minister and Premier to "support efforts for equitable distribution" in all hot spots across Ontario.

"Since the beginning of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the health, safety and well-being of York Region's 1.2 million residents remains our top priority," said Emmerson. "Without an immediate increase in the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to York Region's 16 identified hot spots, we cannot fully expand vaccination efforts to fully

protect residents and workers in these high priority communities."

Ontario's Vaccination Distribution Plan has identified 13 hotspots in York Region, but the Region notes they have identified three more hotspot communities. Given the supply of vaccines, however, Public Health has had to prioritize just six of the 16 hotspots.

"Without an immediate increase in the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to York Region's 16 identified hot spots, we cannot fully expand vaccination efforts to fully protect residents and workers in these high priority communities," said Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health.

REGION LAUNCHES VACCINE WAIT LIST

But, despite the continued shortage of vaccines, the Region has ramped up efforts to make sure every last drop goes into arms with the establishment of end-of-day wait lists for any vaccines left over from multi-dose phials.

This wait list pilot is open to all York Region residents, but is limited to the vaccine clinic at Vaughan's Maple Community Centre before any further expansion.

"The wait list functionality allows residents to add their name to a list for the opportunity to receive an end-of-day dose that may be available due to a multi-dose vial being opened; a very limited number of doses may be available each day, up to a maximum of nine doses," said Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications for the Region. "Those who wish to enroll on the wait list must be available between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. that day and able to visit the clinic within 15 minutes of being called; it is important to note adding a name to a wait list does not mean you will be called or you are guaranteed a vaccine. The wait list is created for the specific clinic day only and residents will need to add their name to a new wait list each day; only individuals who meet the current eligibility for that clinic can add their names to the wait list."

To book your place on the wait list, visit York.ca/covid19vaccine.

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Can't find the perfect gift for mom? Consider "adopting" a mom in need

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Mother's Day arrives on Sunday, a perfect time to shower moms with gifts and flowers – as much as stay-at-home orders allow. But however much moms enjoy these treats on their special day, there are plenty of mothers who don't want any gifts at all; they just want a helping hand.

That is a message being driven home this season by the Shine Through the Rain Foundation, an organization supporting families through life-threatening illnesses.

The group encourages you to consider "adopting" a mom this Mother's Day to help ease some of the pressures they are facing as they address life's greatest challenges.

"When Sophia (not her real name) was on maternity leave, she learned she had breast cancer," says Shine Through the Rain on the experience of a recent patient. "Instead of worrying about how to juggle life with the new baby and two other young children when she returned to work, she wondered how to hold it all together financially shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Unable to work because of treatments and side effects, it has been hard to keep up with the bills. Diagnosis was incredibly overwhelming and difficult for the entire family, but the treatments and side effects have taken the hardest toll. Since her diagnosis, Sophia has undergone surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. This has been life over the past year.

"Without a second income, there is very little money left at the end of the month to purchase groceries, let alone other necessities like Mother's Day gifts. The family is falling behind and have accumulated significant debt. Like many others diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, they fell behind on their basic utility bills and have had a hard time affording groceries. With Mother's Day just around the corner, for Sophia and other moms like her, she just wants to wake up in her own bed for Mother's Day in her own home, knowing she can turn on the shower that day and water will flow out. She would also like to know there is food in the fridge. For many mothers in the community, this is the reality of being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. No matter the occasion, that means there is no money to buy gifts because of the financial hardship illness has caused."

"Adopting" a mom for the occasion is a great way to honour your mother "with the most beautiful gift – making it possible for an ill mother to remain in her own home with her children, without the usual worries of how to pay for rent, utilities, groceries or hospital parking."

"This is the first year we launched this for Mother's Day," explains Laurie Docimo of Shine Through the Rain, noting that previous "adoption" programs, particularly around the holiday season, have been particularly successful. "The gifts they want, rather than a tangible gift, is just to help pay hospital parking costs and that would be the best gift they could possibly have. A lot of times, people who are very well-meaning have their individual preconceived notions that everybody likes a gift. Yes, they do, but when you're about to be evicted or you don't know how you're going to afford groceries... that is what they are concerned about.

"These needs have always been there. However, with COVID, it changed the patients' needs in more than one way. When COVID first hit, we noticed a lot of donors often came to a screeching halt. They slammed the brakes on their donations and a lot of the usual funders like individuals, corporate donors, and a lot of the foundations that exist out there [hit the brakes] but what we were starting to hear from the

patients, social workers, and child life specialists referring to their patients is not everybody can go to a food bank because sometimes when you're ill and diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, you need to be able to have a control over what kinds of foods they receive. Our grocery gift cards make it possible for our patients to control what they receive for food.

"Some people when they are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness lose their income, they don't have extended health benefits, or they have exceeded their maximum ceiling spend. Other costs like hospital and medical office parking, mileage, especially if they have to go to a large urban centre like downtown Toronto... It is real costly and not only do you have the every day cost of living, but you're dealing with reduced income, significantly higher expenses, and most people unless they have been in that situation, are not aware how financially devastating it can be."

For more information on how to "adopt" a mom, learn more about the organization, and how to help beyond Mother's Day, visit shinethroughtherain.ca.

45 residents now lost to COVID as active cases continue decline

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Forty-five Aurora residents have now lost their battles with COVID-19, according to York Region Public Health.

The forty-fourth resident to succumb to the virus was a 70-year-old Aurora man who saw his first symptoms on March 25 before a positive test result was received on April 13. He died Saturday, April 24 at Barrie's Royal Victoria Health Centre. He was exposed to the virus through close contact.

A 66-year-old woman was the community's forty-fifth loss attributed to the virus.

The Aurora resident first experienced symptoms of COVID-19 on March 29 before receiving positive test results on March 31. She died Monday, April 26, at Royal Victoria and her exposure is attributed to close contact.

Since the start of the pandemic, Aurora has seen a total of 1,654 cases of COVID-19, as of Tuesday, May 4, with 84 of these cases remaining active. 1,525 cases are now marked as resolved.

Of the active cases, 74 cases are attributed to local transmission, close contact or unknown exposure, 8 to workplace settings, and 2 to institutional outbreak.

532 cases have been attributed to variants of concern. 39 of these have confirmed lineage, with the balance being cases where mutations have been detected. 45 of these cases remain active.

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Business Improvement Area budget approved for 2021

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The work of Aurora's Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) will continue through the rest of the year following Council's approval of their budget last week.

On a vote of 5 – 2, Council gave the green light to a \$37,533 ask that will go towards several projects designed to make Aurora's historic downtown core a destination, including beautification programs and the creation of a COVID-safe outdoor gathering space just north of the Clocktower/Post Office building.

The BIA is funded through a \$40,000 tax levy that is funded solely from property taxes collected in the BIA's catchment area, which is portions Yonge and Wellington Corridor closest to the intersection.

This year's number reflects leftovers from previous years and cost-savings from projects put on the backburner in light of the global pandemic.

Opposing the budget request were Councillors Rachel Gilliland and John Gallo who said there wasn't enough information before them to indicate that there was a true buy-in from impacted property owners, particularly as a recent



The Aurora BIA includes portions of Yonge and Wellington Streets nearest the intersections.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

meeting of the BIA membership failed to reach quorum.

"Because of the lack of quorum, it is tough for me to accept them as approved finances," said Councillor Gilliland. "I want nothing more than to have this BIA and everybody to succeed in moving forward, I love the fact that they are trying to move this initiative forward, but at the same time there is a process. Within that period of time, it was concerning to learn that a lot of

the tenants didn't understand they had voting rights at that time.

"I don't know what the rush is, quite frankly."

The timing, noted Town Treasurer Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel was that the BIA tax levy needed to be approved in time for 2021 property taxes to go out.

"Here we are with time put against us, having to make this decision without having the proper information," Councillor Gilliland continued, adding she would prefer to take a vote on the matter after the BIA's meeting this month.

Similarly, Councillor Gallo said it was "kind of a leap of faith" to believe the majority of BIA members are "satisfied with everything that is going on."

"I did reach out to two different people and both of them were not at the meetings; one was aware of the meeting and I don't think had all the information for that meeting," he said. "There's definitely some work to do and I think in their budget they are putting some money towards trying to fix those problems. I really don't know how many members are on board with what the BIA is proposing."

"My preference would have also been to wait until their next AGM and have a better understanding in terms of what the membership feels and, to be honest, it is up to them to communicate to us if they are not happy. I have to reach out because I knew it was on the agenda but I haven't heard from anyone saying we have some serious issues with this. One could conclude they are happy. You could also conclude they just don't know, they weren't involved, apathy – we just don't know and I don't know which it is."

Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny added that although it was a "less than perfect process" he hasn't heard any

objections to the proposed levy, nor had Mayor Tom Mrakas who said, "I didn't speak to just one or two, I spoke to the majority of the property owners and the majority of tenants and I have no issues. I have heard no complaints. I have received no emails. I have received no phone calls from any property owner or any tenant in that area, and trust me when I say this: I receive quite a few emails and phone calls. On this one? Zero."

Town Solicitor Patricia De Sario noted that there has been no requirement for the BIA to vote on the budget since its inception two years ago.

"There are some questions about the rules and procedures they have in place and perhaps that is a role for staff and us to support the BIA," said Councillor Michael Thompson. "Because they are essentially established through us, through a bylaw, and have guidance with the Municipal Act, I am sure it is important for them to have policies and procedures in place in how they govern their meetings and what is required of them, and if they don't already have them there let's help support them and get them in place."

"When it was first established... I think there are some guidelines and rules out there. If any of the current members have issues, they can certainly look to that as guidance to see whether or not things were done correctly. Let's support them because at the end of the day a BIA is a good thing. It is meant to help our downtown merchants. The majority of them wanted the BIA, they were the ones who came to us and said, 'Let's formulate it,' and they did so. We need it even more so now as we look to try and come out of COVID and re-establish small businesses in the Downtown Core. Any help we can provide our businesses would be great. I look forward to a normal year where they can show residents and the merchants what they can do to help them."

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Kitchen Table CEOs continues expansion as more people than ever are working from home

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Just over a year ago, Tracy Smith took some significant steps towards finding that perfect work-life balance, launching Kitchen Table CEOs as an online resource for female entrepreneurs looking for resources and support to grow their small businesses and make their lives easier.

It was, of course, impossible to foresee that little over a week later, the world would be turned upside down by COVID-19, leading more women – and men – than ever before to be working from home contemplating their next moves in an uncertain time.

Inspired by her work in the communications industry, Ms. Smith saw that entrepreneurs and small business owners needed help navigating an ever-changing landscape, one which was evolving rapidly thanks to an online world – and that the speed in which things are changing has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“I often think of the quote, ‘If you build it, they will come’ and how untrue that is at times with the journey of entrepreneurship,” says Ms. Smith. “You build a great thing, but you have to keep tweaking, working and building your community, reaching out and adjusting.”

Despite the difficulties presented by the pandemic, many silver linings have been found at Kitchen Table CEOs.

Over the past 12 months, Ms. Smith has been busy working with several local clients. One of the trends she has noticed is a drive for businesses to reach new clients than ever before.

“They might have had websites, but they might not have the ability to sell their products on their websites, so we have had to add e-commerce so now they can reach a whole new audience of people buying their products that maybe don’t live in their same communities,” she says. “People are just getting scrappy and using Instagram direct messages selling their products that way. They have been doing what they have to do, but the definite trend is reaching new customers, reaching current customers, but in new ways apart from the traditional bricks-and-mortar and in-person. I see a lot of business owners taking control of their client relationships so they can reach them directly instead of relying on social media alone or just hoping people come in to really being able to tap into those relationships and build those through email lists.”



Tracy Smith, founder of Kitchen Table CEOs

Since the inception of Kitchen Table CEOs, Ms. Smith says it has been a very rewarding journey to “equip business owners with the tools to help them succeed in such an unprecedented time and create a community where people “know they’re not alone and where they can inspire and motivate each other.”

“It’s a place where we can swap ideas, provide tools and tips, and I think throughout this year everyone has needed this, regardless of where they are at or what they do. We all need to know we are not alone and can support each other. Change is inevitable, but it was way quicker this year than anyone wanted or should have been faced with. But, rolling with the punches, trying to think outside the box, being creative and just continually serving the clients and finding new ways to do so, I think, have been the themes for this year.

“[When we launched] Kitchen Table CEOs was for women entrepreneurs working from home and launching their business. Within weeks, virtually everybody in the country except for frontline workers had essentially become kitchen table CEOs and everybody was working from home. I think that that shift or movement has given new respect for people who do work at home. Just because you don’t have a traditional office space doesn’t mean you’re not getting a lot done and achieving a lot. The challenges exist when you’re working from home, and you’re juggling different things, different tasks, different challenges.”

The pandemic also helped Kitchen Table CEOs expand their mandate with the development of digital courses to reach new audiences themselves.

Ms. Smith recently launched an online course called Content Unleashed, a six-week session designed to teach business owners and entrepreneurs how to write

“Essential content” such as their product descriptions and About Me pages in a way to reach their target audiences.

“I was seeing a lot of people struggling with content and telling their story, and a lot of people were now going online and didn’t know how to describe their products in a way they needed to reach their clients,” she says. “This maximizes and amplifies their story and their content. That wasn’t originally planned, but it has been pretty amazing to be able to deliver that to the group!”

“We would like to continue to be a leader and a beacon for other women entrepreneurs looking for motivation, support and resources. I would love to continue to launch Content Unleashed and reach many more entrepreneurs and business owners to help equip them with the tools and templates they need to write their content and feel confident with that. The best part is I just want to continue to work with business owners to help them maximize their business and reach the clients they so deserve.”

For more information on Kitchen Table CEOs, visit kitchentableceos.com.



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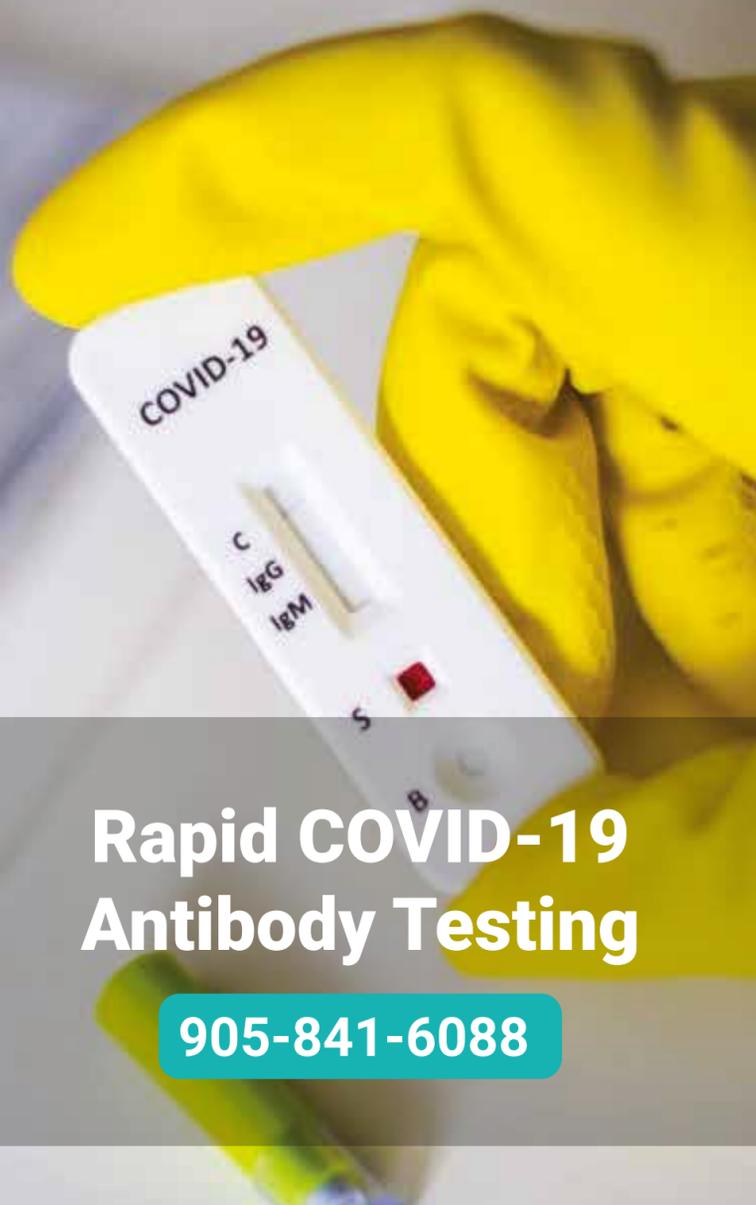
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Tensions rise over Diversity Mural funding

BY BROCK WEIR
 EDITOR
 LOCAL JOURNALISM
 INITIATIVE REPORTER

Tensions rose once again around the Council table last week over donations made to fund the creation of Aurora's Diversity Mural.

Questions were raised last month by Councillor John Gallo regarding a donation of \$10,000 to the project from SmartCentres, which continues to plan its retail expansion in Aurora – a donation which was announced to the Town's Anti-Black and Anti-Racism Task Force this past winter.

"It grieves me when something as worthy as this is challenged and excuses come up as to why it should be delayed," said Councillor Kim, responding to comments from Councillor Gallo that Council should hold off on the project until the completion of a municipal policy on public art.

"We approved unanimously the retaining wall mural on Yonge Street. That was drafted by staff, the diversity mural is following the same process, as per staff, as the Yonge Street mural and the only difference is the subject matter is diversity. Yet the diversity mural has had a much more

challenging time getting the go-ahead. If one is averse to the diversity mural going forward, just say so. There is no need to make up some kind of excuse about delays, the process, or even mentioning funding.

"Since when is saving taxpayer money a bad thing? How many times have we sat around the Council Chambers, especially during budget time when we question staff about Corporate Sponsorship and donations... to help with operating costs?"

To underscore his point, Councillor Kim offered a solution of his own: challenging Council to pass a motion to the effect of, "Let's have the taxpayers pay for this."

"The objective is something good for our community," he continued. "In the end, Council will make a decision, but I have to remind everyone that this is the same process that was followed in the retaining wall on Yonge Street, which was unanimous and that didn't even have a diversity topic. Please vote with your conscience and what you think is best for the Town."

Councillor Gallo did not let Councillor Kim's statement go unquestioned.

From his perspective, there were

more differences on the table between the retaining wall mural program approved by Council – one honouring frontline heroes on the fight against COVID-19 – and what has been proposed for the diversity mural.

"You're referring to the only difference from the other mural to this is diversity, insinuating that that is the reason why I am not in favour of this... is not only insulting but embarrassing because it couldn't be farther from the truth," said Councillor Gallo. "I supported this and I want it to happen, but it needs to be done right and to suggest that corporate sponsorship with a logo should be explored and perhaps we can do better, if that is negative, so be it. That's what I believe and that is what we should be doing. To suggest that maybe we can explore in detail other locations, what's wrong with that? It is nothing to do with not approving a location. Yes, is it the same process we took with the other one, absolutely, but on second thought can we not say, 'Okay, maybe I made a mistake with that?' What's wrong with changing your mind?"

"Those are my issues: in the absence of a fulsome policy, we're making these decisions and if we're going to do that, it is going to take even more time to get it right. These things don't go away. If you're making a correlation between me suggesting a corporate sponsor shouldn't have their logo on there or should have a public process, me suggesting we should put some time into a proper location and maybe that corner... making the jump that it is a diversity issue... is just ridiculous and it shouldn't even be coming out of anyone's mouth. I'll take the view that you didn't mean it that way but that is how I interpreted it and I didn't appreciate it."

Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who has stated her opposition to the process,

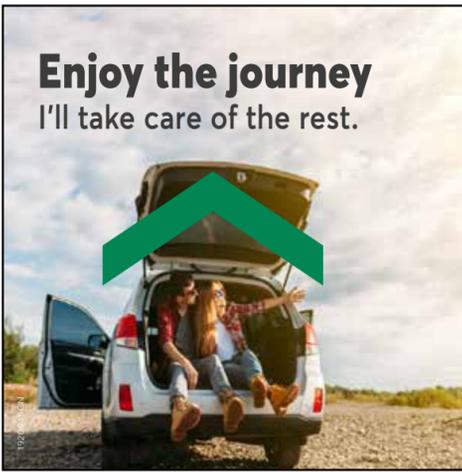
joined the conversation, stating that while it is a "great initiative" she felt the decisions had already been made before Council had a formal chance to weigh in.

"It was announced we're having funding at a Task Force committee meeting in January before Council was officially notified and then written in the paper, and we're officially told about it now? I kind of feel I have been in the dark the entire time," she said. "I feel there is a process that has been missing there."

But Councillor Kim pressed on, responding to Councillor Gallo's rebuttal insisting there was "nothing implied" in his comments.

"I was just commenting that there is no difference other than that point and there's no reason there should be such great debate over this one," he said. "It's like you guys are trying to put in a 'gotcha' moment, which is highly unfortunately adversarial, which is not the type of environment that I wish to work in. I have always said and I think it is mentioned a couple of times that it is not about who has the great idea, it is about supporting the great idea. The tone that I am receiving, that I received in GC (General Committee) and here tonight, it is very adversarial, it is not about cooperation or partnership. That is the tone I get. It's subjective but that's the tone I'm getting. For me, I put this out there because I thought it was an important project for the Town. I didn't think this was going to receive so much backlash. The fact that a couple of you are focusing on the corporate donation and the sponsorship as opposed to the other aspects of the project, it is befuddling to me. It makes it more personal as opposed to trying to build something together."

"I almost regret moving this forward."



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Location of diversity mural still up for consideration

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The future of Aurora's Diversity Mural could be in the hands of interested artists.

Council last week considered the final location of the Diversity Mural. Going into the meeting, lawmakers were faced with a recommendation to sign off on the building at the southwest corner of Yonge and Wellington as the final location for art celebrating the community's diversity, but concerns over the number of windows boasted by the wall in question, as well as some Councillors feeling left out of the process, resulted in a decision to allow interested artists to make their pitch on any of four mural locations shortlisted by staff.

These potential locations, in addition to Yonge and Wellington, include a wall of a professional office building just south of the intersection that is most prominently the offices of realtor Lenard Lind, a north-facing wall of the Aurora Public Library, and a retaining wall near Hartwell Way.

"I do think there is some discussion that has to be had on these locations before jumping into it," said Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who has been a critic of the process. "The perfect spot is there [but] I just don't know if it is the one that has been pre-selected as it is."

Similar views were offered by Councillor John Gallo, another Council member who has criticized the process, who said he felt the mural was being rushed.

"These types of things take time, effort and thought and they don't go away," he said, noting his preference to hold off on a final decision until

the drafting of a Town-wide public art policy is developed. "I feel like we're putting the cart before the horse. We're developing a policy that would dictate how these things are executed: criteria on selection, a site that is going to remain for a long time, perhaps a municipal site, something that is not going to be potentially redeveloped. I don't think we can say that for the site that staff is recommending, I support the initiative but I support doing it right."

While Councillor Wendy Gartner said the Diversity Mural "needed to be done," she had reservations about the site preferred by staff.

"There are way too many windows on that other location; it would be just too hard to work with," she said, conceding that Yonge and Wellington is

"the best location."

"This needs to be great and it needs to last for a long time," she said. "We need to get it right the first time. It's not trying to put aside or not honour the subject matter. It's just that it's such an important subject matter...it needs to be as perfect as it can be."

A motion to let interested artists decide which "canvas" they want as part of their vision was put forward by Councillor Michael Thompson. All four spaces, he said, are different shapes and sizes "and would lend themselves to a different end product to some degree."

The Diversity Mural project is being led by Phil Rose, who also serves as Project Manager for the Library Square development. He said it would

not be a problem to let the artists make pitches on the locations of their choice and could spur a "conversation" in the artistic community.

"Perhaps this is a way for all members of Council to get behind and support it," said Councillor Thompson. "Let the artists decide where to put the mural in terms of their vision and what they want to do. To me, that might be a way to move forward with this and to continue the momentum without any further delays."

The motion to allow artists to submit proposals for the location of their choice was approved unanimously by Council. However, when the amended motion came forward for a final vote, Councillor Gilliland was the lone vote against it.



Town Staff have nominated this wall at the southwest corner of Yonge and Wellington as the ideal location for Aurora's Diversity Mural.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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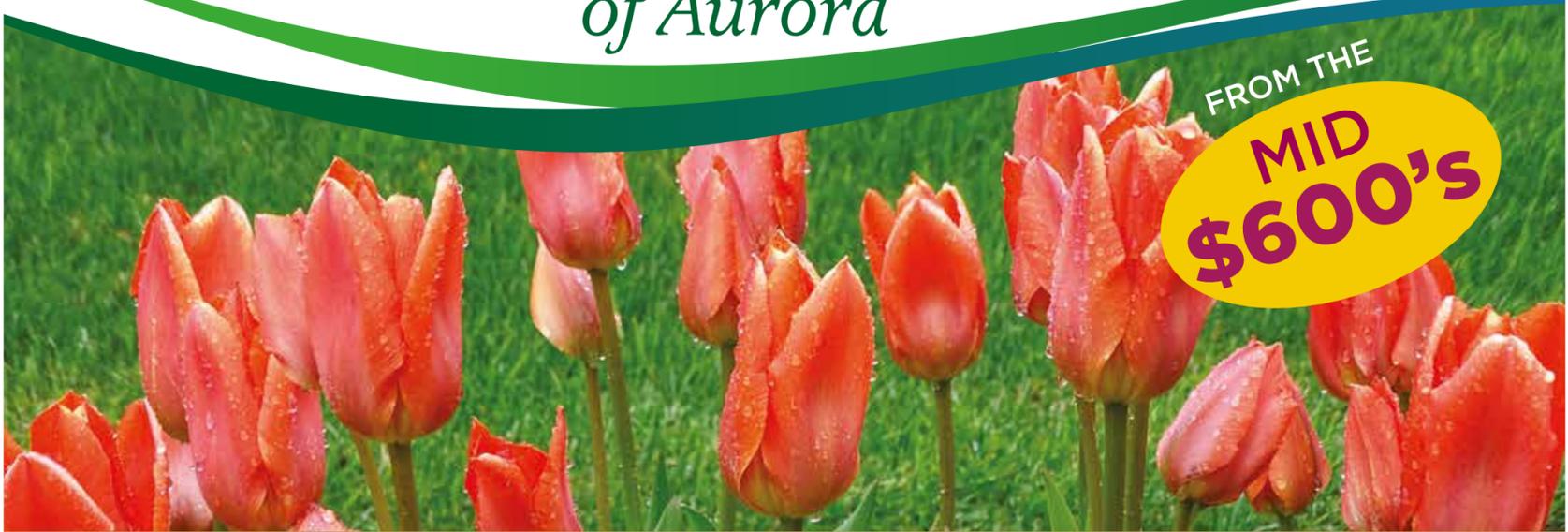
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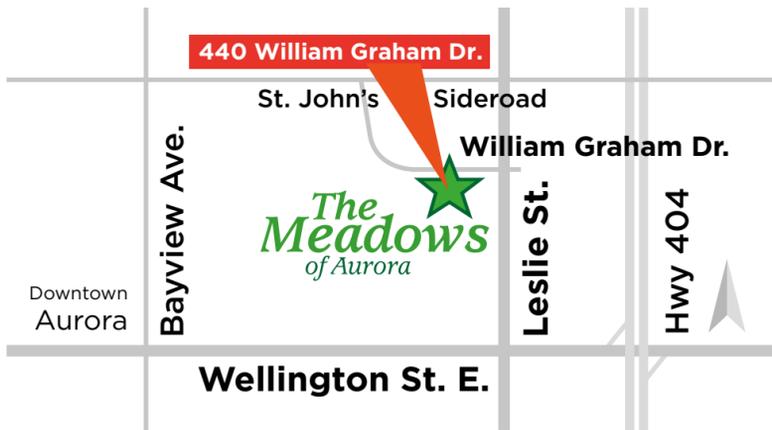
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Speed humps coming to portion of Centre Street to discourage wrong-way drivers

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Speed humps will be coming to Centre Street between Spruce and Wells Streets, pending approval from Central York Fire Services.

Council approved the latest traffic calming measures for Centre Street last week, part of a bid to discourage drivers from ignoring the one-way traffic controls on the western part of the street designed to prevent the residential thoroughfare from being used as a traffic bypass of Yonge and Wellington.

A solution to prevent drivers from ignoring the one-way direction has been the subject of debate for over two years, and despite significant time spent on the subject in recent months, the approval of speed humps did not come without question.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland, for instance, said she was not convinced the speed humps would have the desired effect and cited feedback from neighbours – or lack thereof.

David Waters, Planner for the Town of Aurora, said municipal employees hand-delivered surveys to 97 homes not only on Centre Street, but also Wellington, Spruce, Walton Drive and Catherine Avenue asking if there were “operational issues” with the one-way section of Centre and whether traffic calming measures were needed.

38 surveys received a response and the results found that “residents do have issues with the one-way operation of Centre Street in terms of the impacts with drivers going the wrong way,” said Mr. Waters.

“Of the 38 surveys that were delivered to the residences, we received nine responses, about a 24 per cent response rate, and the split between speed cushions – yes and no – was about five for and four against,” he continued. “It’s little over 50 per cent in terms of those residents who felt speed cushions would solve the operational issues with people going the wrong way on Centre Street.”

With 35 per cent of the residents saying it would solve a problem, Councillor Gilliland said it could mean 65 per cent of residents said it would not.

“Is this actually going to solve the problem of people going the wrong way down the street on a one-way street?” she questioned. “I look at my assessment and say no, we’re just going to say it is okay to drive down this one-way street slower. I am not convinced we’re going to solve this problem. I think they’re going to come back and say it is still happening.

“I just feel we’re putting a band-aid on something.”

The potential of more traffic calming measures on Centre was most recently brought forward by Councillor Sandra Humfries.

She expressed frustration that the need for something more was still being debated after two years.

“There’s a real reason for this, and it is to deter people from making a left turn at Centre Street versus Wellington,” she said. “The whole thing is to deter people from going

This is a safety issue for our residents and we should try to do the best for them

through there instead of going to Yonge and Wellington. Everyone wants to avoid Yonge and Wellington and that was a shortcut and it really caused havoc. For me, this is a very unique area. You could say, ‘no, it’s not worth it,’ and leave it alone. It’s up to you, but I come here pleading with you guys because we have tried everything: we’ve tried police, we’ve had signage... it’s human nature to try and take a short cut, so what you want to do is try and deter them by making it harder for them to go fast.

“We’re talking about four driveways and eight houses. They’re the ones that are going to get injured. If you don’t want to believe the neighbours, then don’t. I am really disappointed. If we’re going to go back to a two-way street, it will be a disaster.”

Councillor Wendy Gaertner was of the mind there are “no good solutions to this problem” as it is an “anomaly” but the Town has to do “the best that we can.”

“This is a safety issue for our residents and we should try to do the best for them,” she said. “I think we have to do it.”

From Councillor Michael Thompson’s point of view, none of the myriad traffic calming measures have solved the problems – and not just on Centre.

“We still see speeding on Kennedy, Mavrinac, Conover, but it helps to mitigate the issue,” he said. “We’re looking for the perfect response to it and I don’t know if there is a perfect solution, but at least this proposal... will help mitigate it a little bit and will help lessen the severity of it and improve the safety of the area. You will still have people who do that, but I would rather do something than nothing.”

Councillor John Gallo offered a similar view, stating there “is a definite need to do something.”

“I just don’t think that is going to deter them from doing this,” he said. “They already know they’re breaking the law. Getting a little bump while breaking the law is not going to stop them,” he said.

But, for Mayor Tom Mrakas, there were few alternatives on the table.

“We have a certain amount of options available to you – one is remove the one way which the residents in the area don’t want. The other is putting up a block wall so you don’t allow anyone to leave the area. That is not going to happen,” he said. “The other one is full on enforcement and that can’t happen. YRP (York Regional Police) can’t be there all the time. It is just not going to happen. They can show up there every once in a while, and not to minimize what is going on here, but YRP has bigger issues to deal with than to sit and catch people who are going the wrong way.”



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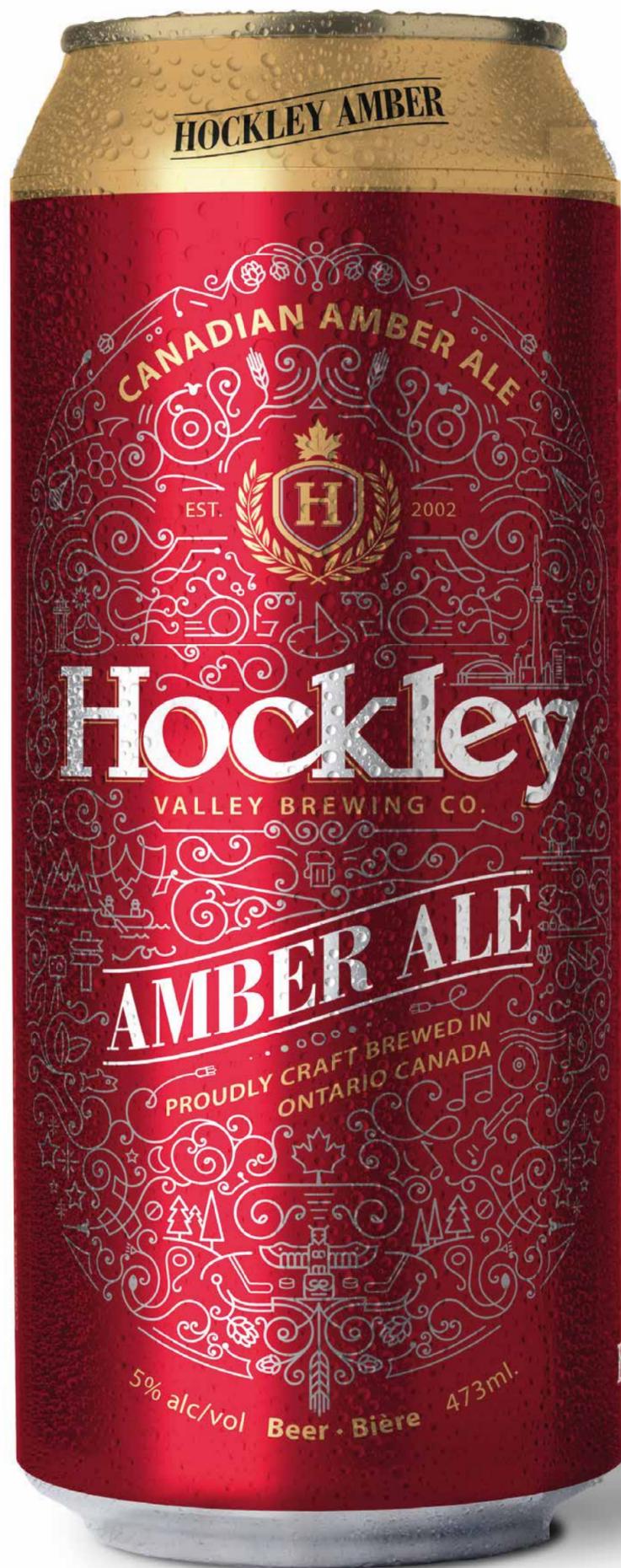


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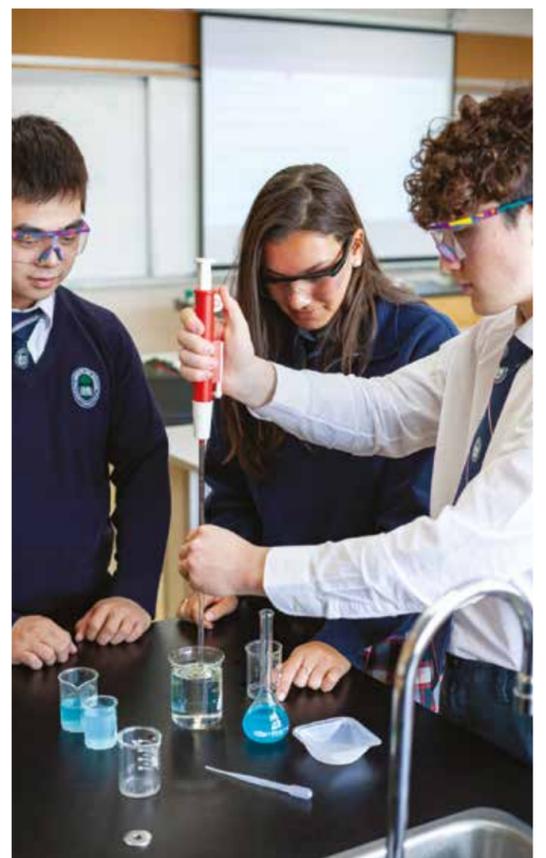
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Week of May 6, 2021



Aurora Tigers introduce four changes to team personnel



Mike Jones (far-left), Robert Powers (left-middle), Justin Bean (middle-right) and Greg Johnston were introduced to the Aurora Tigers staff. Photo courtesy of the Tigers

By Robert Belardi

The Aurora Tigers has introduced four changes to their team personnel, The Auroran has learned.

Team Governor of the organization Jim Thomson has taken over the General Manager position, former associate coach Greg Johnston has been promoted to the Head Coaching role, Mike Jones becomes the Assistant Coach, and Justin Bean is the new strength and conditioning coach.

“Dermot stepped away from the team due to personal issues. Instead of bringing another general manager in I thought I would get more involved and be the general manager and work with my new coaches on building a hockey team,” Thomson

said. “He (Dermot Anderson) did a very good job in putting a talented group together between him and Jim Wells,” Thomson said.

Wells, who was hired in 2019 to be the head coach of the club, resigned recently because his busy work schedule was going to interfere with his commitment to the club.

Thomson promoted Johnston to the helm. The two were teammates with the Toronto Marlboros in the OHL in the 1983-84 and 1984-85 season.

“I’ve always believed to promote within. It was a no brainer for Greg to become the head coach,” Thomson explained. “Great personality. Great knowledge. Great teacher. In my opinion, the right

personality for this era of young men that need to be taught and mentored and he is a great person to do that.”

Johnston played for the Boston Bruins and the Toronto Maple Leafs in his NHL career. Thomson went on to be drafted by the Washington Capitals and went on to play for the Hartford Whalers, New Jersey Devils, Los Angeles Kings, Ottawa Senators and the Anaheim Ducks.

Alongside Johnston and assistant coach Robert Powers will be Mike Jones coming up to the bench.

Thomson says Jones is an enthusiastic and energetic coach that will be an excellent buffer for the players and will be great for the chemistry of the bench staff.

“Mike Jones has a long hockey resume. He played Jr. A hockey. He played some minor pro. He’s been training and coaching for years. He’s very passionate about working with young men.”

And training the men is where Bean

comes in.

The former York University player recently played for the Wellington Dukes in the OJHL as captain in the 2016-2017 season.

He re-joined Wellington following a stint with the Mississauga Steelheads of the OHL. He previously played for the Dukes in 2013-2014 right after his spell with the Belleville Bulls of the OHL.

Since the OJHL season was cancelled a few weeks back, Thomson is gearing up for a return to the ice this summer. Prospects camp is set to run from June 7-10. Registration can be completed on the website.

The minute the government begins to uplift regulations and 50 players are permitted to be on the ice at one time, as long as it is safe he would like to host exhibition games with neighbouring clubs.

He is confident the OJHL will return to its full capacity in August.



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Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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Sports groups save with Town's purchase of Sports Dome, but work still needed to bring it up-to-date

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora residents and groups will see a savings of 10 per cent when they are able to book the Sports Dome on Industrial Parkway North once again, but a further \$600,000-worth of work might need to be carried out to bring the facility up-to-date.

The Town finalized its purchase of the Aurora Sports Dome at the end of March, a \$955,000 deal that was announced April 1.

"By taking the Sports Dome into Town ownership, we will be able to expand access and increase affordability for citizens and sports groups – delivering great value and excellent service at no additional cost to taxpayers," said Mayor Tom Mrakas at the time.

To this end, Council last week approved a 10 per cent fee reduction for regular indoor season rentals of the Dome.

"Under Town ownership and in the absence of a third-party for-profit partner, indoor season rental permit fees can be immediately lowered to provide for more economical access for the community," said John Firman, Manager of Business Support for the Town, in a report to Council. "At the moment, staff are dependent upon the financial information

provided by the previous owner to project revenue and expenses. As such, staff recommend a conservative approach to any fee reduction from the current rates charged by the previous owner. This will provide an immediate benefit to all who use the Dome, while enabling staff to monitor and evaluate actual revenue and expenses during the first year of operation."

That first year of operations will be telling as it will be these user fees that will help pay off debt financing to pay off the costs of retrofits for the dome.

\$600,000-worth of work has been identified for the Dome, including \$500,000 for the replacement of artificial turf, \$40,000 for air-conditioning the bubble itself, \$58,000 for HVAC work in the clubhouse and \$2,000 to replace a hot water heater.

"To allow this work to proceed at the most opportune time in the Dome's operation, staff are requesting that Council approve a new capital project for this work now," said Mr. Firman. "This proposed project is to be funded through the issuance of long-term debt financing which will be repaid through future dome operating revenues. Debt financing is required to manage the timing gap between the dome's immediate investment requirements and the generation of its future operating revenue funding source.

"A key financial objective of the Town is to ensure that the Aurora Sports Dome remains self-sustaining and therefore does not require any tax levy support. The sole source of funding for the dome will be its annual operating revenues. As the Dome has not generated sufficient revenues yet to pay for its initial investment requirements, debt financing is required to mitigate the timing gap between when the dome's initial investment is required and when its intended operating revenue source will be collected."

The turf replacement is set to take place next summer; Mr. Firman told Councillors last week, as there would not be sufficient time now to replace it in time for the anticipated opening of the facility.

Lawmakers, however, sought assurances that the uncertainty wrought by COVID-19 was factored into both the timelines and the debt plan.

"Everybody's concerned about COVID. How did COVID fit into this planning and what is the plan for changes, perhaps, in compensation should we not be able to open in the summer?" asked Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Mr. Firman said COVID was accounted for "insofar as we are heavily projected approximately 40 per cent revenue for this year, knowing that... based on our current Provincial orders [once] we return to the Orange Zone we would be able to open the door on a limited basis and start receiving some revenues.

"It's hard to be specific not knowing exactly what will happen, but if we're not able to open, obviously we would not receive the revenue, of course, and we would have limited operating expenses. Our overall operating expenses would be significantly reduced and could be recovered through future year revenues."

Youth Soccer reporting adverse mental health impacts due to shutdown

By Robert Belardi

In response to the COVID-19 lockdowns, a WhatsApp group with 17 youth soccer clubs was comprised.

Initially designed to discuss the sharing of resources, Executive Director of FC Durham Academy Elizabeth McCaw addressed another important topic of the group.

"The government isn't really asking our athletes what's happening to them," McCaw stated.

"The school lockdowns and the lack of structure, social connections and routine is how we build our programs. So, when we took that away from our athletes, the question just came up."

Riding into Mental Health week with CamH (May 3-9), McCaw wanted to share the voice of our athletes. Almost instantly, all groups agreed to comply and two questions were sent out to over 30,000 athletes.

"We got 3,500 [responses] within a five-, six-day period. It showed us instantly how bad the problem is. It was difficult to hear our kids speaking to us and our families."

In the absence of physical joy and outdoor fun on to the soccer pitch, the first question was, "Over the last year of navigating the pandemic, has your player's mental health been affected in any of the following ways? (Anxiety, Worry, Depression, Lack of Structure, Loss of Social Connection, Loss of Routine, Stress, other)."

The second question asked, "What would your player say is the thing they miss most about participating with their club/academy team in a regular in-person environment?"

After scrounging through the numbers and organizing the responses, the data was troubling.

According to their numbers, "86 per cent lack social connection, 82 per cent loss of routine, 67 per cent lack structure, 2 in 5 identified experiencing anxiety, stress and worry, 1 in 5 noted depression, 40 per cent referenced exercise and lack of physical activity as the thing they miss the most, and 32 per cent miss their teammates and friends."

Since the beginning of this recent lockdown, soccer clubs were gearing up for a return to the pitch and the hope was to get back to playing competitive matches. According to the survey, most players were a part of competitive teams. And now there is a risk of not even being able to get back to soccer as we knew it anytime soon.

"I know I can say this on behalf of

every club. We have sat back and sat back. We've believed in our government with confidence they'll take us through this and they have failed us," said President of Whitecaps London and match referee Abbi Lezizidis.

An article released by CBC's Muriel Draaisma written on April 14, said that Toronto's SickKids ER visits have grown by 25 per cent for children thinking about suicide. McCaw had heard that SickKids was up by 12 per cent in youth mental health visits in general from professor and holder of the Canada Research Chair in School-Based Mental Health and Violence Prevention Tracy Vaillancourt via email.

These alarming numbers have many parents with younger children and teenagers worried.

"There's another pandemic that's going to come as a result of COVID. If the government doesn't pay attention at the health table to say as we're dealing with one crisis, we're creating another, that's where we want to sit in the space," McCaw said.

What this exposed for all clubs is to generate a document of resources to help parents with children experiencing these adverse mental affects, reminding them of what options their children have to continue to get better.

What began as an advocacy campaign has now turned into a movement.

"What is important to note is we're not talking about soccer only, we're talking about youth sports," Lezizidis said.

"Basketball was approved to play outside last summer yet soccer wasn't approved. We couldn't touch the ball with our hands. We're looking for consistency. Some common sense here."

Lezizidis touched on multiple studies that proved transmission of any illness outdoors in the summer time is minimal. He also runs a men's soccer league in London and says seven different health units will dictate whether or not he will be able to play this season.

Both McCaw and Lezizidis plan to send a candid and open email to Premier Doug Ford, with the hopes of an Interview Opportunity to discuss what COVID-19 health measures are doing to children.

If the government can be the benefactor and the saviour for many local clubs itching to play they should know it's far beyond sport. At this point, it is about justifying the health of all young athletes. It's about understanding that physical health is not only of the utmost importance. Mental health is not far away either.

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Young leaders highlight the importance of cross-party action on mental health

From page 1

looking for support. Across Canada, Future Majority volunteers have been meeting with representatives from major parties over the last few weeks to share our stories and concerns about mental health. We have been blown away by the response from the Conservative, Liberal, NDP and Green representatives in ridings across the country who have agreed to our cross-partisan letter and take a stand on the importance of Mental Health.”

This is an initiative promoted not only by Future Majority, but a number of local organizations including Black Youth York Region, York Pride, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (York Region), Communities for Public Education, Dynamic Dance Company, Bully Free York Region, Windfall Ecology Centre, and Phoenix Leadership.

“Canadians are facing a mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by the pandemic,” said Julia Mellary, a local Future Majority volunteer. “The word ‘uncertainty’ continues to pop up as a common theme throughout the last year, whether it be relating to the reopening of schools, return to in-person work/volunteer opportunities, or visiting family. Mental health is an issue that touches all of us, thus a core element of the solution is making mental health a priority issue for every politician. Because young people are the largest voting bloc and we’ve voted in record numbers in the past two Federal elections, we have the power to make mental health an issue that every politician and party in Newmarket-Aurora prioritizes.”

Ms. Mellary told those in attendance at last week’s launch that she became passionate about mental health when she recognized just how prevalent both anxiety and depression was among her peers while in high school at Newmarket’s Sacred Heart. There, she took action joining forces with a teacher to form a

mental health council at school dedicated not only to providing healthy coping mechanisms to her fellow students but connecting them with local resources as well.

“It was abundantly clear once I graduated that the mental health crisis we’re experiencing at this time transcends what school mental health clubs are able to provide struggling educators and students,” she said. “Resources to professional mental health clubs are necessary for all Canadians and this does require the support of all parties. Mental health effects every Canadian and this is an issue that requires our attention more than ever in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

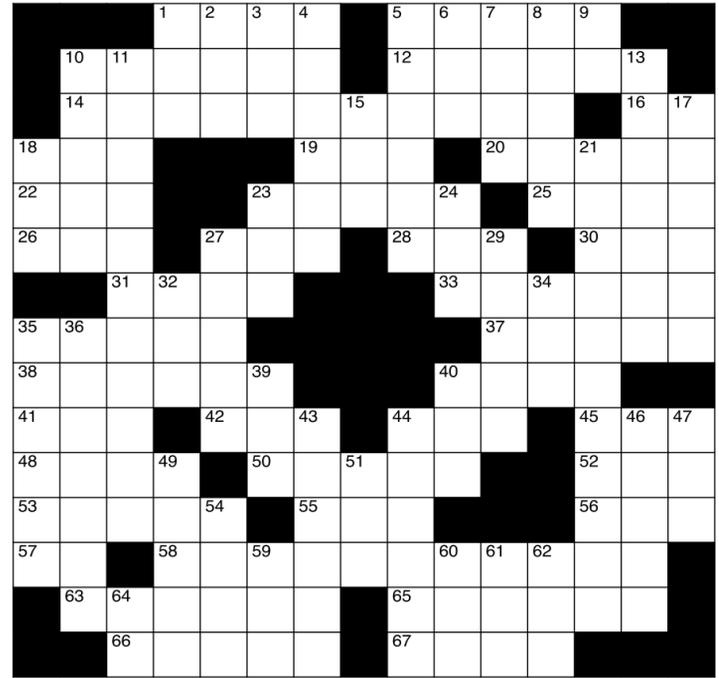
The pandemic, they add, has given Canadians a prime opportunity to connect, with social media channels providing a “versatile tool” to organize. The crisis has also made it clear that mental health supports are “needed and necessary” for “all Canadians in order to lead stable and prosperous lives.”

“The great thing about what Future Majority is [doing is] implementing a long-term strategy for the campaign,” adds Courtenay. “There are multiple party goals that actually take it beyond just one day. It is about creating something that is sustainable, which is really important. In the short term, we are advocating for a \$2,000 mental health spending account, which would be for the next 12 months and provide essential supports that are needed right now. We’re asking for a Royal Commission on a universal mental health program which would investigate the negative mental health outcomes caused by systemic racism and poverty and how to address it. In the long-term, we’re asking for universal mental health care for all Canadians where [you can use] your Health Card and not just your credit card to get those mental health supports that people need.”

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Large, flightless birds
- 5. Lifts and moves heavy objects
- 10. Hyundai sedan
- 12. Wear away by erosion
- 14. Arranged alphabetically
- 16. Top prosecutor
- 18. ___-de-sac: Dead-end street
- 19. Digital audiotape
- 20. Linguistics pioneer
- 22. Singer DiFranco
- 23. Arms of the sea
- 25. Near-reach weapon (abbr.)
- 26. Ballplayer’s accessory
- 27. You get one at the beach
- 28. U.S. founding father
- 30. W. Australia indigenous people
- 31. Amounts of time
- 33. Put on the shelf
- 35. Russian dynasty member
- 37. City along the Elbe River
- 38. A peninsula between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf
- 40. Actor Damon
- 41. ___ King Cole, musician
- 42. Company that rings receipts
- 44. Scatter
- 45. Basics
- 48. Part of a door
- 50. Indicates silence
- 52. Moved quickly on foot
- 53. Monetary units
- 55. A place to crash
- 56. Many subconsciouses
- 57. Group of countries
- 58. About line of latitude
- 63. Female follower of Bacchus
- 65. A dentist can treat it
- 66. Dull brown fabrics
- 67. Int’l nonprofit

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Midway between northeast and east
- 2. Partner to cheese
- 3. One from Utah
- 4. A way to move
- 5. Playing cards
- 6. Baseball stat
- 7. Long river in western Asia
- 8. Grandmothers
- 9. Entertainment legend Sullivan
- 10. Steam bath room
- 11. One who kills
- 13. Food
- 15. Swiss river
- 17. Fleet
- 18. Taxi
- 21. Working class
- 23. More (Spanish)
- 24. High schoolers’ test
- 27. Heavily built goat antelope
- 29. Murdered in his bathtub
- 32. Tease good-naturedly
- 34. Morsel
- 35. Cause persistent resentment
- 36. A radioactive element
- 39. Perform in a play
- 40. Witty remark: Bon ___
- 43. A great place to kayak
- 44. Conclude by reasoning
- 46. In an unfavorable way
- 47. Complex of nerve tissues (abbr.)
- 49. Machine for making paper
- 51. Feline
- 54. Yugo’s hatchback
- 59. Check
- 60. Press against lightly
- 61. Wind-pollinated plants
- 62. ___compoop
- 64. Commercial

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

the change in government. The survivors would like a memorial. The survivors of Huronia Regional Center in Orillia, and their supporters, did build a memorial and now are fundraising to make it accessible. Our local politicians should support this request by Pine Ridge residents. We need to bring out the dark history so the community learns and it's not repeated ever again. This is the least we can do for the survivors who were hurt and are obviously still hurting.

Susan Popper
Aurora

Last week at Council we discussed what could be considered one of the most exciting projects that our Town could see unfold this year – the addition of the “Canadian Achievements Diversity and Inclusion Mural.” Council engaged in a lively discussion about this initiative. The majority of Council agrees that this will be an incredible addition to our Town as a physical celebration of our inclusivity and diversity. The mural development process is like others we have previously undertaken – the Town will issue a call for artists and final approval of the mural will come before Council. Many locations were looked at for this mural, but I believe that there is one location that stands out and is the ideal fit for the mural. That is the north facing wall of 15242 Yonge



Getting Things Done

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

Street at Yonge and Wellington. This is the heart of our downtown core and the entrance to what will become a revitalized core. What better location than the entrance to our downtown! This location, in my opinion, is ideal as it will allow for the new mural to become an extension of the existing

mural and become a fixture of our Town for generations to come. With the “Great Canadian Achievements” mural on the east side, and the new “Diversity and Inclusion Mural” on the west side and the rainbow crosswalk in between this will not only be a focal point of our Town and speak to our celebration of inclusivity and diversity, but will become a focal point and landmark intersection in the GTA. The motion to approve the next steps, which will see the call for artists go out and the selection committees to review and choice of a submission with final approval coming to Council, was approved 6-1. I look forward to seeing the submissions from the art community and the one which will ultimately be chosen and brought before Council for final approval.



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