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THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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FREE

Week of March 9, 2023







A DILLY OF A GAME – Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese and Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland met up with Justin and Jane at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Monday afternoon for a game of pickleball. The popularity of the game, which combines elements of tennis and badminton, is seeing a surge in popularity and avid game-players are calling for more options to play. For more, see Page 12.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

YCDSB reaffirms commitment to "equity" after heated meeting

Parents object to "safe space" stickers in classrooms

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The York Catholic District School Board has reaffirmed its commitment to equity after police were called to its February 28 meeting.

At issue was the display of stickers

denoting some classrooms as "Safe Spaces" for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Several delegates came forward to voice their opposition to teachers displaying these stickers, with one parent going as far as to suggest that 2SLGBTQIA+ students should be barred from attending Catholic school.

Three days after the meeting, YCDSB Director of Education Dominic Scuglia said many members of the York Catholic community reached out to the board to

say "the delegations caused hurt" and conceded there was a violation of the Board's Code of Conduct in "that the delegations did not treat all members of our community with dignity and respect at all times."

"As a Catholic learning community, we believe that Jesus taught us that every person is a child of God and is worthy of love, dignity and respect," said Scuglia in a statement. "Sharing

Continued on page 16

Council calls for "Made in Aurora" plan for Affordable Housing

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As the affordability crisis continues, Council is looking for a "Made in Aurora" plan for affordable and attainable housing.

Local lawmakers last week unanimously approved a motion put forward by Mayor Tom Mrakas calling

Continued on page 8

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Robotics team aims to be environmental innovators at Town Hall

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Existing infrastructure like lampposts and rooftops should become local hubs of power generation, say students from Équipe Francobotique.

The Aurora-based all-girl First Lego League team, which won the Ontario Championships this past January, were at Town Hall last week to pitch to Mayor and Council a green initiative that clinched them a place at the worlds in Arkansas this Spring.

The idea is simple, but effective: transforming flat rooftops with solar panels and lamp-posts with miniature wind turbines to generate power for electric vehicles (EVs). Solutions like these, they say, will not only make adopting EVs easier, but more environmentally friendly at the same time.

Each year, in addition to the Robot Games, the First Lego League tasks teams with identifying real-world solutions to real-world issues under an umbrella theme – this year, energy.

“After extensive research on the energy theme, we decided to settle on the following problem: [EVs] can greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help combat global warming but their use will significantly increase our demand for electricity and the environmental benefits depend on sources of electricity,” the team told Council, dressed in their trademark Pikachu hats.

Locally-generated renewables, they said, can power electric vehicles without requiring any “major” infrastructure changes.



The Aurora-based Équipe Francobotique, a First Lego League team bound for the world competition in Arkansas this spring, made a green pitch to Council last Tuesday night.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

“Most charging stations are installed where people work, play and live,” they said. “Since daytime charging aligns with peak solar input and nighttime charging aligns with wind output, our solution seeks to retrofit existing infrastructure near public charging stations with a combination of solar and wind energy generators.

“Most charging stations are installed where people work, play and live. Since daytime charging aligns with peak solar input and nighttime charging aligns with wind output, our solution seeks to retrofit existing infrastructure near public charging stations with a combination of solar and wind energy generators. Renewable energy will be generated on site and used

to charge the vehicles parked there using the EVs themselves as a large collective battery. This will help offset the need for additional energy generation and storage and will prioritize the use of renewable energies.”

In researching their project, the team focused on small-scale generation, with design specifications for each. They visited the Town’s EV charging stations, as well as those in Newmarket, to see opportunities and do comparisons. Eventually, for further research, they picked the parking lot of Upper Canada Mall, with its large roof and number of lampposts, as the ideal location on which to base their model.

“We visited the parking lot to measure

using trigonometry the heights of the lampposts and the mall itself. We counted the number of lampposts and estimated the number of solar panels that we could install on the roof, taking into account [safety and setbacks] as well as all the rooftop furniture.”

Completing cost analysis, they presented their solutions to Upper Canada Mall, who greeted their proposals warmly.

“The managers of Upper Canada Mall were particularly interested in our combination of both wind and solar retrofits,” said the team. “They loved our pergola-style solar awning as well as our hybrid lamp posts, stating the mall roof is too old to support the weight of solar panels... and that our solar awning would be easy to build and our hybrid lamp posts would be a great solution for the dark mornings and nights especially during the winter months.

“We would like to encourage all municipalities, including our own, to consider using existing infrastructure to generate local energy to power public EV charging stations. As our next step we plan to create a green energy retrofit calculator that will allow individuals to input their roof top area and number of lampposts and then obtain a personalized cost, energy and environmental benefit analysis. We were wondering if the Town of Aurora would be interested in collaborating with us on the next step in our innovation project.”

Indeed, Councillors said they wanted to continue the dialogue.

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson congratulated the team on their achievements so far and wished them every success in Arkansas. He opened the door to collaboration, dovetailing with the Town’s Economic Development Board, to look into things that can be done within Aurora.

“In the past, we have initiated different applications to develop funds for green initiatives,” he said. “Perhaps there’s an opportunity there to look at other ways to use your tremendous talent for the betterment of the community.”

Added Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo: “The missing component of electric vehicles has always been where do you get that energy to recharge them and clearly you’ve spent a lot of time focusing in on that problem and came up with some wonderful solutions.”

Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she didn’t have the words to express her appreciation, but hailed the team “for being our hope for the future.” Mayor Tom Mrakas was also focused on the future.

“From seeing the innovation and what you guys have brought before us, it is quite clear you guys are going to win,” said Mayor Mrakas on their upcoming trip to the United States, to which the Town has sponsored them \$2,500. “We’ll continue the conversation to see how we can work with you guys through the Town and implement some of your innovations.”

For more information on the team, visit sites.google.com/view/equipefrancobotique.

To lend your support to their trip to the International Competition, email the team and head coach Renee Northrup at Equipe.Francobotique@gmail.com.

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Public Health suspends data reporting as third anniversary of COVID-19 approaches

Encouraging signs all around, says Region’s top doc

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As the third anniversary approaches of the World Health Organization’s declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, York Region Public Health has announced that, as of this month, they will cease regular updates on the virus, including updating their COVID-19 dashboard.

“Since March 2020, the Region has provided regular updates to the media and the public in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; these updates provided important information about the status of COVID-19 cases in York Region and have shared details on COVID-19-related fatalities in our community, vaccination status, outbreaks and hospitalization,” said Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications for the Region of York.

“As COVID-19 cases continue to trend downward and restrictions in our community have been lifted, York Region will cease regular COVID-19 updates to media partners and on social media channels, effective March 2023. Public Health will focus on managing and reporting COVID-19 data and information in alignment with other reportable infectious diseases.”

Since it was first launched in March of 2020, York Region Public Health’s COVID-19 dashboard was a way for members of the public to track not only the number of cases that were circulating in the community, how many individuals were hospitalized, where they were exposed to the virus and, sadly, how many community members died with the illness.

But, as reporting changed across the Province, and rules were relaxed, the numbers on the dashboard reflected less and less the current reality.

In the last dashboard update on February 28, the Region reported 79 total confirmed deaths of Aurora residents since the start of the pandemic, with 90.7 per cent of residents aged 5+ having received two or more doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

“It’s hard to believe but we are approaching the three-year anniversary of the World Health Organizations’ declaration of the COVID-19 global pandemic on March 11, 2020. Fortunately and finally it does seem that we are turning a corner,” said Dr. Barry Pakes, York Region’s Medical Officer of Health, last week.

“While the impact of COVID-19 is very much with us, and impacting acute care, our physical and mental health, and our ability to recover, things are much closer to normal than they have ever been. Our hospitalization numbers

are decreasing, our wastewater burden is decreasing, and our outbreaks in facilities are lower than they have been in many years. Previously to get to these low levels of COVID-19’s impact, we needed severe pandemic control measures, but this time we’ve achieved this with overwhelming population immunity from vaccination and several waves of very transmissible variants.

“What do we still need to do? People are still dying of COVID-19 unnecessarily and we still need to protect the most vulnerable among us from illness, as we would with any other infection. It is still important to take appropriate precautions like staying home when symptomatic, wearing a mask around vulnerable individuals and crowded spaces, and washing your hands frequently. This will minimize the risk of COVID-19 in the most vulnerable and help keep us in a good place. COVID-19 wise and relating to other infections.”

The “success of each and every person’s good health,” he said, remains in a “very large part” due to vaccination, particularly the bivalent vaccine, which protects from severe illness and hospitalization. There has been “excellent uptake” with this booster amongst the over-70 population, but younger demographics are “less protected than they need to be.”

Encouraged all residents who have not yet had a booster do so, and getting the shot now will carry protections into the fall.

Attention is also shifting back to other vaccines, particularly those that were more difficult to administer at the height of the pandemic.

“Over the last three years, health care public health and our lives have been immeasurably disrupted,” said Dr. Pakes. “These actions saved lives – tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of lives across Canada – but one of the consequences of these measures was they moved our focus away from other

preventive health actions and made us vulnerable to other illnesses. One of the very important impacts of the pandemic was the disruption of our usual vaccination efforts.

“As you will know, there have been measles cases now detected in Ontario and many cases globally. Measles is a very, very infectious virus

that can kill and disable children, and it is very vaccine-preventable. It was eliminated from Canada only 25 years ago and we can’t allow it to return. The last thing we need now are more outbreaks and illnesses, so what we each need to do now is ensure everyone is protected through our regular vaccine schedule.”



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reader “dismayed” by meeting, comments

I am dismayed by the lack of coverage concerning the homophobia and hatred which disrupted the York Catholic Board meeting last week.

For those who missed the CBC article, on Tuesday February 28, angry and homophobic parents interrupted the YCDSB meeting in Aurora to oppose the use of “safe space” stickers, which are used to signal support and acceptance to LGBTQ and transgender youth.

These parents actively denied that the school should be a place free from bullying and harassment for these students. In the words of Sheree di Vittorio, one of the parents to oppose the stickers, “Catholic schools should not allow transgender or LGBT students to attend.” You’ll see by her wording here that she acknowledges transgender and LGBT students exist—she just doesn’t think they deserve to feel safe at school.

It is impossible to maintain this view while at the same time advocating for any kind of anti-bullying or anti-hate campaigns. This is bullying.

It is a truism to point out that Catholic schools have failed to be safe spaces for many of their students, to the point where hatred threatens to usurp love for thy neighbour as part of the Catholic tradition.

We could not trust them to be safe for Indigenous children.

We cannot trust them to be safe for 2SLGBTQ+ children. [It’s important not to overlook the relationship between colonialism and homophobia.] Whose children are they safe for? Certainly not for the children of the parents who disrupted this meeting. The wounds from hearing this kind of hate—and being raised around it—do not heal easily.

My wish, above all, is for the children who hear these words to know that there is a safe place for them in the world. It may not be in their hometown, and it may not be in their schools, where it should be. But it is out there, it exists, and it is beautiful.

Alexandra Sweny
Received Online

Profit has no place in healthcare: reader

I am appalled at what Doug Ford is doing to public healthcare (as well as public education and the greenbelt).

Universal healthcare only works if it is free for everyone. Siphoning money into private care will strip our system of the best doctors and nurses and make public healthcare unsustainable for access as well as workload for all healthcare providers.

Please stop the privatization of our health care. Profit has no place in health care!

Joanne Dixon
Bolton

THE AURORAN

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Deadline for submissions
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Macell’s Corners

SUGGESTED UPDATES TO AURORA'S CREST



Crown replaced with construction cone

Leaves changed from maple to cannabis

Mountains become snow windrows

Five Fleury plow furrows now stripes representing the six wards

Motto updated to "Still a small town?"

SCOTT JOHNSTON
© machellscorners@gmail.com

Underestimating our students

Do you ever look back on your childhood and wonder how you survived it all?

I bet most of us do, even if our respective benchmarks of what had to be endured might be a little bit different.

If you’re of a certain age, you might have fond memories of running out your front door barefoot after dinner to play with friends, not for a moment thinking to lock the door behind you.

All my parents needed know was their own parents wanted them home before the streetlights went on. The world was essentially your oyster. Not so much today.

For my generation, let’s say people born between 1980 and 1990, we had other things to worry about... Dangers like ... Red Rover?

I’m old enough to have fond memories of my own “calling so-and-so over” in a spirited round of the recess-time game with nary an injury sustained by any party; yet somewhere along the line it was a game deemed too hot to handle and summarily banned.

Yet, we lived to tell the tale.

Were we built hardier than the generations that have come since then? I don’t think so.

What might have set our generation, and even that of our parents, apart is we were by and large encouraged to develop and foster our critical thinking skills.

Us kids from largely White communities were, of course, spoon-fed a bucolic version of our own country’s history that rarely touched upon the realities of our nationhood, but we were largely encouraged to examine, study, and read up on issues that were truly affecting our world.

That, sadly, seems to be on the wane in some parts.

Last week, for instance, Police were called to the headquarters of the York Catholic District School Board after delegates – mostly parents – spoke with anger and frustration over the fact that some teachers had deigned to designate their classrooms as “safe spaces” for all students.

The general thrust of the argument that a simple sticker, simply by nature of it featuring a graphic of the Pride flag, was somehow an attempt to “indoctrinate” students in... respect for one another, regardless of sexuality or gender identity? Nope.

“Brainwashing” was one term thrown out for the overall argument, and at its heart was, “to believe that being gay is okay.” Heaven forbid.

“Inclusive education means that all students are supported and included in all



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

aspects of their education, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity,” said one parent, apparently without a healthy sense of irony. “It’s imperative that we all view students as equals and ensure they are comfortable and welcome in all aspects of their educational experience.”

“Creating a safe space for one group,” the delegate continued, “can also lead to exclusion of another. This is especially true if one...is given preferential treatment over another, which appears to be the message of these stickers.”

This, in my opinion, is hardly the case.

While the sticker in question might include the Pride Flag, an obvious symbol of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, it’s message really is that it’s a “safe space” for all students to be themselves, without judgement, and the symbol’s inclusion is merely a testament to the fact that this once- (and, sadly, still-) marginalized group has a place within their community – perhaps a place that is being denied to them in the home, their particular faith community or, depending on their age, even the workplace.

“There is absolutely no need to have such an aggressive campaign all around schools exposing younger children like my nine-year-old to sexual ideologies and indoctrinations that she’s far too young to understand,” the delegation continued.

Words like “aggressive,” “sexual ideology” and “indoctrination” are buzzwords designed to rile rather than reflect reality. After all, at the heart of a debate is a humble sticker that teachers have been using for well over a decade. Although designs have varied over the years, they have almost invariably included some sort of symbol that “safe spaces” are indeed accessible to younger members of our society who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

And those buzzwords, particularly in the last few months, have been thrown about with wild abandon on both sides of our border. One only has to look as far as the recent legislation passed in Tennessee banning drag shows with other

similar bills working their way through their respective corridors of power with alarming speed, all in the name of a fantastical “danger.”

But, why? After all, although terms have changed over the centuries, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals have always been integral parts of our communities. Drag too is almost as old as civilization itself. The better question might be, “Why now?”

Take a moment to respectfully listen to a parent about why they might take their son or daughter to a Drag Queen story hour and the level of joy that all parties experience might prove enlightening.

My generation, again using the 1980-1990 birth bracket, survived seeing Robin Williams dressed in drag in Mrs. Doubtfire without any ill-effects and have probably even shared the laughter with their own kids. We also withstood “indoctrination” when exposed to reruns of Tom Hanks and Peter Scolari Buffy-and-Hildegard’ing it up on Bosom Buddies – but, again, those Red Rover wranglings may have set us up to have iron-rich constitutions.

Kids of the 70s had a learning moment when they sat down with their families to watch All in the Family’s Edith Bunker (Jean Stapleton) show much-needed kindness to her dear friend Beverly LaSalle and mourned along with her when LaSalle was murdered simply for being a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Kids of the 50s and 60s regularly saw Milton Berle sashaying across their TV screens in ballgowns and other forms of drag, apparently without any ill effects, saw Mary Martin take wing as Peter Pan without palpitations, and survived more than one occasion of Lucy and Ethel donning suits and mustaches to pull one over on the boys.

Heck, keep climbing our family tree, and those of our ancestors lucky enough to score a seat to the Globe Theatre in its prime saw dudes don the duds of Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Desdemona, and Juliet without the roof caving in.

And on and on it goes.

Learning about gender roles on the stage in Grade 10, as far as I’m aware, did not encourage any of my peers to ponder careers in drag any more than learning about the Archimedes principle prompted us to seek out careers as arithmetic professors in nudist camps – but both gave us a good foundation in history and mathematics.

We could handle it, and so can they – if given half a chance. And, thankfully, schools appear to be withstanding the barrage to do just that.

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is enjoying...

A small home-cooked meal!

Similar to the small iron bank we featured a couple weeks ago, this “Cora” miniature iron stove (2001.23.6) demonstrates the quality of craftsmanship that was put into children’s toys in the early 20th century. This stove’s main door swings open, and it originally came with a matching chimney and circular burner covers. The full-size and -function version of these stoves appeared in nearly every home at the time, transitioning from wood-burning to coal, then gas. Electric stoves became popular in the 1930s, although gas remains popular – maybe just so people can say, “Now you’re cookin’ with fire!”



Parsa’s Perspective

Michael Parsa, MPP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

With February coming to an end, March will welcome the start of the spring. The month of March marks a joyous time for many of us who celebrate the festivities that come along with the new season. These cheerful celebrations, which will be held across our community during the upcoming month, deserve honourable mentions and recognition.

To begin with, I look forward to celebrating the second anniversary of Persian Heritage Month. Following the legacy of the passing of Bill 271 in 2021 by the Ontario Legislature, I will join the province in commemorating and learning more about the long-standing cultural tradition of the Persian-community in Ontario. The Persian community has made significant contribution to the growth of Ontario’s industries and businesses, which has had a major role in supporting other communities in the region.

Another event in March that the community anticipates with enthusiasm is celebrating Nowruz, the time where multiple festivities are held in honour of the Persian New Year. Haft-sin tables are set up in homes and shops to symbolize the jubilant transition into the spring equinox and to bring forth blessings for a bright future. In warm spirits, families, friends and loved ones gather around to celebrate Nowruz and wish each other a prosperous New Year.

Around the end of March and proceeding into April marks Ramadan, an ancient tradition observed by the Muslim communities around the world. Muslim households in the riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill will be fasting and demonstrating acts of compassion and generosity. This period of deep personal worship is a time for self-reflection and to build stronger and closer bonds with their loved ones.

Beginning on March 8, the Hindu community will be celebrating Holi, a sacred holiday that encourages joy and positivity among family and friends. Holi features a boisterous festival where those in attendance participate by throwing of coloured and vibrant powdered dye. This Festival of Colours symbolizes the triumph of good over evil and the promotion of unity in the community.

During the spring break, on March 17, we will celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day, a heritage holiday celebrated by Irish Ontarians across the province. Public parades and festivals are held in honour of Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Attendees of these gatherings dress in green to represent the shamrock, the Irish national plant.

As your local representative at Queen’s Park, I will continue to advocate for your best interests at the legislature. If you have in any need of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to my constituency office at 905-773-6250 or by emailing us at michael.parsa@pc.ola.org.

THIS WEEK’S NEW POLL

Do you play pickleball?

Yes No Unsure

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RESULTS TO DATE	March 7, 2023	YES	NO	UNSURE
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Feel free to e-mail Scott at:
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GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

The community interest in the sport of pickleball continues to grow. And this is reflected in our ongoing discussions about sport and recreation planning in Aurora.

Thus, I am pleased to inform residents that our Town’s Draft Park and Recreation Master Plan update is coming to Council soon (April), and one of the focus areas of that plan is identifying new opportunities for the Town to provide more access to enjoy the growing sport of pickleball.

As your Mayor, I have always been committed to promoting sports and an active lifestyle in our community. I believe that it is essential that we keep up with the changing landscape of sport and recreation and ensure that we provide new opportunities

for everyone of every ability to enjoy these activities. That is why I created the Mayor’s Round Table of Sports, to hear directly from sports organizations and recreational groups.

The Mayor’s Roundtable of Sport was launched in 2020 to “...to empower all local sport organizations to work together to move sport forward and find solutions to address the current and upcoming challenges they are facing.” This group works collaboratively to support the needs of all sport and recreation user groups.

While pickleball enthusiasts do not yet have a formal organization, I have

reached out to users to discuss how the Town can help foster the creation of a pickle ball organization to better ensure the needs of the growing sport of pickleball are met through current and future Town programming.

In the interim, pickleball representatives are encouraged to join the meetings of the Mayor’s Roundtable on Sport. Please contact me at tmrakas@aurora.ca to be informed about the exact date of the next meeting. I will be providing an update on the recommendations from our soon to be released Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

I look forward to working with you for the continued expansion and enhancement of sport and recreation programming in Aurora!

Edible Observations



A few random observations from recent visits to grocery stores around Town.

We’re Fortunate

Let’s start off with the good news. We’re fortunate that in Aurora we have such a wide variety of grocery stores to visit – about a dozen different ones by my count, with an increasing number of places to buy more exotic foods and spices not historically seen for sale here. And that doesn’t include all the food outlets just over the border in Newmarket and Oak Ridges.

Inflation

Of course, the biggest shock one has when they do their grocery shopping these days is the sharp increase in prices.

They say grocery bills have gone up about 9 per cent over the past year. I don’t know about you, but I’m finding many of the things we buy have gone up a lot more than that. For example, stuff that used to cost \$2.99 is now well over \$4, and 99 cent products are \$1.79.

Even without a calculator, that’s a lot more than 9%. And while it’s not breaking the bank paying another dollar for an item here and there, multiplying that by a cartful of stuff every shopping trip really adds up.

Shrinkflation

It’s obvious to anyone who’s bought groceries lately; many products are getting smaller, while maintaining a similar price.

While I’m not in favour of rising prices, I’m also not a fan of surprises.

There’s nothing like being halfway through making a well-known recipe that requires a package of something that’s always been 250 grams, to find the package looks the same but now only contains 175 grams.

Do you reduce everything else in the recipe by ... um ... 30% and make a smaller batch, not change any other ingredient portions and hope the overall result tastes okay, or pause everything and run to the store to get more of that product, 70% of which you won’t use?

More is better?

It used to be that it was just the big bulk stores that forced you to stock up. After all, who wouldn’t love a great price on 10 pounds of cloves, or a dozen pineapples? That you’d still be eating masses of these spices and fruits well beyond both your enthusiasm for these items, or their best-by date is another issue.

Increasingly, I’m finding grocery stores are taking a page from this practice and pushing us into buying more.

I remember when individual items regularly went on sale. Now to get any sort of savings – and who doesn’t like savings? – you need to buy multiple items, which requires no longer figuring

Town supports Bill 5, Integrity Commissioner concerned with current form

By Elisa Nguyen

Lawmakers in Aurora have made the unanimous decision to endorse Bill 5: Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, and to send a copy of the motion to provincial leaders.

“I do think there’s lots of work to be done, but this is the first step in showing our support, that we need to address this, and that there is some accountability,” said Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland.

In the February 28 Council meeting, Integrity Commissioner Jeffrey A. Abrams presented several “practical limitations and concerns” in adopting the Bill in its current form.

The Bill amends the *Municipal Act, 2001*, requiring municipal Councillors and members of local boards to comply with workplace violence and harassment policies, and permits municipalities and local boards to direct the Integrity Commissioner to apply to the court to vacate a member’s seat.

“The ultimate goal is to prevent very

bad behavior and to deal with those who refuse to abide by the accepted standards of behavior,” said Abrams.

“We support the objective of Bill 5 in principle, but, as is often the case, it is in the details where it falls down. This is an important issue to a lot of people. It is important that it’d be gotten right.”

A major concern brought to Council pertained to the high-risk nature of going forward with the process of supporting a court application for a member’s removal from office, which Abrams noted was a costly, timely, and uncertain process.

Most importantly, he said, a focus on preparing a case for eventual court application could interfere with the informal course correction opportunities.

Based on cases from the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act (MCIA), Abrams said that judges can be reluctant when faced with the choice to remove a duly-elected official from office, preferring to leave the decision to the electorate.

“And even if a court application is

undertaken, it will take more time and more money with uncertain outcomes,” he said.

As a suggestion, Abrams said that Council should make an early choice on whether to remove the member from office if the facts are proved to be true, rather than choosing to give direction to the Integrity Commissioner to commence a court application after being provided with a report.

“Unless we have that election upfront, we have to be prepared to write a report that is sufficient to hand over into the court process. And you can imagine, with an allegation of harassment, how robust that would have to be. And I don’t think that the writers of the Bill have thought that through.”

If the decision to remove the member from office is voted in favor, then a report would be prepared to support court applications; however, Abrams suggested a “less adversarial” approach be taken if the Committee voted not in favor of removing the member from office.

“Because not every incident of bad behavior should be addressed with the formality, expense, timeframes, and animosity associated with litigation,” he said, adding that the potential of removal from office should not drive every investigation.

Abrams suggested going to the courts for the most egregious cases of workplace harassment.

The current Integrity Commissioner process, he agreed, is not satisfactory in a serious case of harassment, where the victim would have to wait for uncertain remedies for the conclusion of a court application.

He added that a more helpful legislative change would include in the Municipal Act that municipalities, when considering Integrity Commissioner reports, can impose constraints and remedies targeted to preventing and resolving the behavior complained of preventing its recurrence.

If a Council member abuses staff, the right to have staff could be denied, or the presence of a chaperone required, or enforce constrained times and days when the member may be on premises similar to a restraining order, Abrams said, to provide a few examples.

“These practical, curative and almost immediate remedies need not be restricted to harassment cases,” he said. “If a financial transgression is involved, deny them a corporate credit card or deny them the discretionary budget. If a breach of confidentiality, maybe they can’t attend in closed sessions. If micro aggressions in the course of Council meetings is the issue, allow for their

speaking privileges to be limited.”

“Council should be able to impose constraints and remedies targeted to preventing and resolving the behavior complaint and preventing its reoccurrence when recorded when considering recommendations from its Integrity Commissioner.”

Abrams said Principles Integrity supports Bill 5 in principle, however, that there are “defects” to its current form. If the Bill’s main intent is to have members follow municipal harassment policies, he noted that it can be done through current Ontario regulations very quickly.

“Our concern is that adopting the Bill in the current form, while I agree with the purpose of it, will have a significant impact on our ability as Integrity Commissioners to achieve the course correction.”

Abrams said his remarks are gleaned from his broad-based experience as an Integrity Commissioner. Principles Integrity is appointed to York Region, East Gwillimbury, and about 50 other municipalities and public bodies across Ontario in addition to Aurora, he said.

In response to the feedback presented by Abrams, Emily McIntosh and Jenna Weck from the “Women of Ontario Say No” Bill 5 advocacy group said that it was unfair to declare that the Bill is unpragmatic when it is still in the early stages of development.

“To speak to your Integrity Commissioner’s points, a lot of great feedback there. And our comment to that is it’s premature,” said Weck.

She noted that the Bill is still in its first reading. If Bill 5 is passed, extensive conversations will be held on how the bill can be improved.

“It is extremely problematic to put the focus on the pragmatism of a Bill that isn’t even passed, because we have nothing today to protect not just women—people, today, of all backgrounds.”

They also noted that if the current violence and harassment policies were sufficient enough to keep members of office accountable, they wouldn’t be advocating for the Bill. “We wouldn’t be here if that was that if that was passed. That hasn’t happened yet. And in addition, it doesn’t offer that opportunity for removal,” Weck said.

“Your colleagues also noted that it would only be in the rare circumstances that they believe something would go to the courts. And, yes, that costs more money. But those circumstances are rare, and also I find it personally, but on behalf of this movement, problematic to apply a fiscal lens. We are talking about people and workplace safety, not manufacturing processes in a plant.”



HOLI CELEBRATION – The Newmarket Community Centre was the scene of a vividly-colourful observance of Holi on Saturday. Organized by local residents, the afternoon and evening of food, music and dance brought out people from across York Region – including Mayor Tom Mrakas and Newmarket Mayor John Taylor, joined by Newmarket Councillor Christina Bisanz, Shikha, Pallavi, Bhawana, and Tanu.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Black History Month programs had people “think differently” about moving forward



The Aurora Black Community Association, Aurora Black Caucus and Aurora Film Circuit took over Cineplex Aurora last week for a screening of the feature film, *Brother*, the final event in a month-long celebration and commemoration of Black History. Pictured here are Novelett, Mildred, Mrs. Graham, and Phiona.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Black Community Association is looking back on another successful series of engaging Black History Month programs, but also looking forward on ways to continue the conversation.

In conjunction with several community groups, and the Town of Aurora, along the way, the Aurora Black Community Association (ABC) helped kick off Black History Month at the start of February with the raising of the Pan-African Flag at Town Hall. Further events included a Black History Month gala hosted at Cornerstone Community Church with keynote speaker Dr. Jean Augustine, a paint and poetry night, a Diversity on Ice afternoon, all before a special film screening last week at Cineplex Aurora, co-hosted by the Aurora Film Circuit.

“Seeing so many people able to come out, enjoy, and work together is important,” ABC founder and president Phiona Durrant tells The Auroran, adding the feedback she received from event attendees was particularly heartening. “They carry a ripple effect. Black History Month can be seen in so many ways: it can feel heavy, it can feel negative, it can feel bitter.”

This will be kept in mind as they move forward with the idea of Black History every day.

Durrant likens community engagement between the end of one February and the beginning of the next as the “notes” that fall between the beginning and the ending of a song, and the momentum is there to keep the community humming along.

“A Black history event is not the change, it’s the work we’re doing in between to build collaborative relationships [and] the meetings we’ve been having about

measurable equity is what’s really going to bring the real change we’re looking for. It’s good to have the notes, but it’s the in-between pieces.

“We can easily create something that is more diverse, but that should be used as a tool to see if equity is really happening. You can have maybe five per cent [of municipal staff be diverse] and then think, ‘Okay, that isn’t good enough because you need more...’ but that doesn’t mean equity is happening. That doesn’t mean people from diverse backgrounds, from different sexual orientations, from different skill sets, are really growing in that organization. Diversity on its own really does nothing for us. What is equity?”

Over the next little while, Durrant says she will be reaching out to various organizations to ensure opportunities for Black youth, as well as brainstorming ways to get people to “stop focusing on racism or think differently from how

they focus on that because what it kind of does is have you constantly explaining over and over.”

“Stop looking at what the barriers are, but look at what they can do to make a difference,” she says. “Barriers are always going to be there, that’s a given, and I can’t see a time where we’re not going to be facing barriers...but how do we get involved? Leaving the gala, part of what was beautiful coming from the community was, ‘What can we do to help?’

“Nobody teaches compassion, courage, confidence, active listening; we’re not taught how to receive feedback, how to effectively confront. We’re not taught how to have a difficult conversation. It’s up to all of us to change our mindset and position ourselves and be intentional about it.”

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Council calls for “Made in Aurora” plan for Affordable Housing

From page 1

on municipal staff to develop an Affordable Housing Action Plan (AHAP) in conjunction with the ongoing update of the Town’s Official Plan (OP).

The vision for the AHAP is to “guide decision-making on how to address affordable housing and promote attainable housing options for residents through clear objectives and targets specifically designed for implementation within the local Aurora community context,” said Mayor Mrakas in his motion.

Speaking to the motion at the Council table, Mayor Mrakas said looking at this alongside the OP, which will serve as a blueprint for local development through 2051, is an opportunity which should be “seized,” creating “action-focused policies that better enforce or ensure affordable or attainable housing for the next 30 years or beyond.”

“There is a housing crisis in Canada and community leaders across this country are responding to an urgent call to action in addressing that crisis,” he said. “There’s broad consensus that more must be done at the municipal level to move from policy to action. Aurora can heed the call to action by developing our own Made in Aurora plan...to address housing affordability in the community both now and 30 years from now.

“We already have the building blocks of a workable plan. Our OP already

includes policy options to foster the development of a diverse housing stock through the inclusion of affordable units and low-rise intensification and designated MTSA [Major Transit Station Area] and along transit corridors. We have policies in place that encourage the growth of housing options to meet the needs of all residents including young families and seniors. These are great initiatives, but with provincially mandated projected growth of another 30 per cent over the next 30 years, we are going to need to do more if we are to meet the housing needs of the future.”

Simply stating that more affordable housing is needed isn’t enough, Mayor Mrakas contended, and the success of any plan that ultimately comes forward depends on “evidence-based action.”

“Through the development of a collaborative, community-focused plan driven by engagement with residents, builders, community groups, local partners, and other stakeholders, the Aurora Affordable Housing Action Plan will provide clear objectives and measurable targets for affordable housing options that are specifically designed for implementation within the local Aurora community context,” he continued, adding success will also hinge on a plan being enforceable.

Despite disagreements with the Province over Bill 23 and the abilities of communities like Aurora to determine

how they develop, Mayor Mrakas said he didn’t anticipate meeting any “resistance” in going down this road because “we are all united in a common cause.”

“We can seize the opportunity to use the tools available to us to develop a Made in Aurora affordable housing plan and take another bold step forward in Aurora’s movement forward to plan a responsible future.”

While Councillors were supportive of the motion, discussion came down to the details.

Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim, for instance, said affordable and attainable housing “can be seen as a euphemism for public or subsidized housing,” and that is not the case.

“I find the greatest challenge for developers of affordable housing, after insufficient funding, is NIMBYism,” said Councillor Kim, referencing the acronym that stands for Not In My Back Yard. “As we have witnessed recently, NIMBYism is alive and well everywhere and I hope that the Affordable Housing Action Plan incorporates some plan as to how we’re going to overcome this phenomenon because there’s no point having an action plan unless the plan includes education and how we’re going to convince local residents to take part in this affordable housing action plan. I

hope that’s included in the action plan as well.”

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland said in light of the last Council’s efforts to preserve the Town’s so-called Stable Neighbourhoods that “some consideration to that area might be different than other parts of the community.”

“The details of the Action Plan will go down to specific sites with...tangible targets,” said Marco Ramunno, Aurora’s Director of Planning. “With respect to the mix of housing, affordability level is something we will look at as well. We have seen other housing action plans that establish housing affordability, etc.”

“I don’t think we’re going to be hindered by Bill 23,” he continued. “The Provincial plans and the Regional plans and our local plans all speak to affordable housing targets and ensuring there is a mix and range of housing types to meet affordability targets. We’re not going to be hindered by Provincial legislation. I think it’s a mandate of the Province and York Region to try and implement those targets.”

A draft of the Town’s Affordable Housing Action Plan could be before Council as early as “May or June” of this year, staff said.

Feds, Province announce funding to increase high speed internet in York Region

Province also makes transit investment

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Residents of “underserved” areas of York Region will soon see a boost in high-speed internet following a joint announcement by the Federal and Provincial governments on Thursday.

More than \$48 billion in funding was announced on March 2 as representatives from all levels of government converged in the Region’s Newmarket headquarters.

“This funding is part of a continued commitment by all levels of government to bring reliable high-speed internet to homes and businesses across Canada, Ontario and York Region,” said the Region of York in a statement. “The investment will be allocated to a broadband infrastructure project through the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) that will see high-speed internet brought to more than 3,800 underserved homes across the Region. Through the Region’s own dark-fibre network, operated and managed by YorkNet, we are building an affordable, reliable and sustainable network across York Region that also supports Regional operations and services.

“The Universal Broadband Fund, together with investments from the Region and the internet service provider of the project, Community Network Partners Inc. (CNPI) total nearly \$120 million and will allow YorkNet to expand its network by hundreds of kilometres and reach thousands of underserved homes. Once the dark fibre is installed by YorkNet, CNPI will be able to connect the network to begin offering underserved homes high-speed internet.”

In his previous career as mayor of Newmarket, Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen says he knows well the impact this will have on the area.

“We started up ENVi Networks as York Region’s first municipally-owned

internet service provider,” he said. “For over a decade, I worked closely with the Council and staff to build and expand the capacity of YorkNet, consistently advocating for broadband as critical community infrastructure. We all know the internet is no longer a luxury in this day and age; it’s a necessity. More than 3,800 households across York Region, closing 99 per cent of the underserved gaps in the Region before. Along with my York Region colleagues, it was an honour to work with our partners to ensure everyone has access to high-speed internet.”

Thursday’s funding announcement came on the heels of another pledge, this time concerning transit, from the Province.

\$17,161,653 from gas tax funding will come to York Region to improve the local transit system, said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy.

“Great news for the residents of York Region who deserve access to reliable transportation,” she said in a statement. “This funding of more than \$17 million, which includes a 1 per cent increase over the last year, will help expand and improve local public transit so more people, including those in Newmarket and Aurora can safely get to where they need to go while reducing congestion and protecting our environment.”

The announcement was also heralded by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa.

“Our government is supporting municipalities across Ontario and York Region to ensure safe and reliable transit options for everyone,” he said. “This investment will develop and improve transit systems, strengthening Ontario’s public infrastructure and ensuring long-term economic growth.”

Added Ontario Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney: “Public transit is a key driver of economic growth in Ontario, helping people get to where they need to go, whether it is to work, school, or run errands. As more people return to public transit, our government is providing municipalities with the

Continued on page 17

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Local shelters supported by 100 Women Who Care – Central York



Members of 100 Women Who Care Central York Region presented their cheque to Blue Door Shelters outside of their Kevin's Place residence on Gorham Street in Newmarket last week.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Caring and giving have been the watchwords for 100 Women Who Care – Central York Region since its foundation seven years ago – and now they’re extending their embrace to local shelter services.

On Wednesday, representatives of 100 Women Who Care – Central York Region (CYR) visited Blue Door Shelter on Gorham Street in Newmarket to present an impressive cheque of more than \$11,000 to the service.

100 Women Who Care is based on the idea of women coming together once a quarter, \$100 in hand, and, in the course of just one hour, pooling their dollars to benefit one area non-profit and/or charity who are invited to present at each meeting.

Blue Door Shelters has been on the

group’s radar since its inception, and now this support is a reality.

“As a group of women, we come together to do everything we can to ensure local not-for-profits and charities have the funds they require to achieve the goals they want to deliver,” says 100 Women Who Care CYR founder Laurie Brakeboer. “Blue Door has been on our radar since we started in 2015 and I think there were many of us who wanted to see it brought forward. Deborah [who made the pitch at the most recent meeting] made everyone aware of how important it was that they receive the funds to keep going with what they do.”

It was a timely donation, says Blue Door Shelters CEO Michael Braithwaite, noting that it’s particularly important during a housing crisis.

“Blue Door supports our most vulnerable, but our most vulnerable come from our Out of the Cold program,” says Braithwaite, whose

organization hopes to operate an emergency men’s shelter, currently slated to be built by the Region of York in Aurora’s south end. “Right now, when our temperatures can drop to -20, the needs are substantial. The dollars we get from government doesn’t cover all the needs we have, so this money will help us provide shelter, food support, and housing support for the hundreds of people we support every winter.

“Right now, about 80 per cent of people who come through the shelter system, is income-driven and lack of income.... We’re in this crisis because of bad policy and only good policy changes can make that change happen.”

Part of that change, he says, is a Housing Prevention Benefit proposed by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH.ca).

“It’s a groundswell that is going to change things,” he says of the CAEH’s campaign.


In its seven years, 100 Women Who Care CYR has gone from strength to strength, but according to Ms. Brakeboer they’re not immune from the affordability challenges that all Canadians are experiencing at the moment.

“Like many others, we are starting to experience a membership decline and I think... it’s the economic situation of a great many people and just people re-thinking giving dollars, but at the same time we have so many people expressing interest in becoming members. There’s just a joy of being part of this group. We really do have a lot of fun together: we have our social time before the meeting, the meeting is one hour from start to finish, so the time commitment is low. We’re currently

and always looking for new women to step up and join us because the larger the group is, the more money we can have. The more money we have, the larger the cheques our charities get.”

Braithwaite agrees, adding: “100 Women Who Care is the power of scale and impact. You bring 100-plus women together and they each give \$100, that impact is then magnified over 100 times and it makes an incredible difference. That’s community in action!”

For more about 100 Women Who Care – Central York Region, visit www.100womencyr.ca. For more information on Blue Door Shelters and the services they provide, visit bluedoor.ca.



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AHS launches Youth Mentorship Program to give students hands-on experience in museums

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It’s often said that you can’t determine where you’re going without knowing where you’ve been – and sometimes knowing where you’ve been is all about interpretation.

The Aurora Historical Society (AHS) is hoping to help local students learn the ins and outs of interpreting our history, curating artefacts, and managing museums through the launch of their new Youth Mentorship Program.

Meeting biweekly, the Youth Mentorship Program is available for students in Grades 9 to 12, giving them the chance to not only learn about working in the arts and culture field, guided by experts, but earn community service hours required for their high school diploma in the process.

The program is the brainchild of Selin Kahramanoglu, the AHS’ Programming and Outreach Coordinator, who got their start as a volunteer at the Society’s Hillary House National Historic Site and Koffler Museum of Medicine.

“I was a volunteer before I worked here and I was just helping take down exhibitions because I was a youth interested in exhibitions,” says Selin. “I was allowed to help with the labour of taking down exhibitions and learning a bit of the behind-the-scenes. As I started to learn more about the history of the property and how unique it is, not just this Region but generally in Canada, I thought, wow, this is a story that other

people should probably learn a little bit more about. When the opportunity came up after my schooling to work here instead of just volunteer, I got very excited and I got to try a little bit of everything. I started in collections so I got real up close with the family who lived in this house and now in my new programming and outreach role I get the chance to develop programs that complement that new history that I learned about and help share it with the wider community.

Giving this experience, and those shared by youth volunteers who spoke of how they enjoyed their getting their volunteer hours behind Hillary House’s gothic revival walls and wanting more “consistent” volunteering opportunities, the idea for further mentorship was born.

“We wanted to create a program that provided them with consistent volunteering hours, but in an environment where they felt safe to develop their own skills and also help them take away some new skills as well,” says Selin. “We developed the program that would invite high school students to come twice a month at the end of their school day to learn about work in the arts and culture field, so they could learn about the nuances of what our museums or not-for-profits, what kind of programs they run, the different cultural institutions they can work for in the future, while also learning general job skills. We want to give them a fun project, too, so they have something to look forward to and it’s not just dry information.”

Near the end of the school year in June, the participating students will launch a full exhibition that will take over Hillary



Selin Kahramanoglu, Programming and Outreach Coordinator for the Aurora Historical Society, is pictured with artefacts inside the medical office at Hillary House National Historic Site.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

House that month.

“I want them to be able to understand the different roles they could have at a museum,” Selin adds. “We have staff who have different specializations so they we can leverage that and they can learn from what really piques their interest. They get a chance to take field trips and go to other cultural institutions in the area. They get to see what it’s like working at an art gallery versus our historic house museum and working at a library which is another parallel field in arts and culture. I wanted them to see the breadths of opportunities they could have but also giving them the basic job skills to give them that confidence as they’re getting into that age where maybe they’re thinking about part-time jobs, how they’re getting nervous about how to apply... it’s building that confidence and helping them take advantage of their own personal interests and taking it to the next

level, really.

“If I just have one student say I feel a little bit better about my job application, confidence or just generally their confidence in engaging with the public then I consider it a success, but maybe a little bit beyond that, I am hoping that they put themselves out there a little bit more and they’re encouraged to reach out to their community and see what else they can participate in and take initiative in their own learning for the future. If we see some students coming out of this program saying, ‘Hey, thanks to this program I now have some of the basic skills to be able to apply for this position at this place I really wanted to go to then I would be really happy for them and I would consider that a success, too.’”

For more information on the Aurora Historical Society’s Youth Mentorship Program, email Selin Kahramanoglu at programming@aurorahs.com.



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Week of March 9, 2023

SAC Sweeps CISAA D1 Weekend Series with Upper Canada College

Jack Pridham's hat trick spurs Saints to wild 8-6 win at La Brier; Luke Brandon turns away 21 shots to shutout UCC 4-0

By Jim Stewart

The St. Andrew's College Saints swept two games from Upper Canada College on the weekend in two vastly different ways.

The Saints shut out UCC 4-0 on Saturday afternoon in Toronto, after a wild 8-6 win on Friday in Aurora.

Jack Pridham's hat trick spurred the Saints to their home ice victory and Luke Brandon turned away 21 shots to shutout the Blues on the road to cue SAC's early-March sweep.

A common theme to both CISAA Division 1 victories was the Saints' power play that scored six times—three in each game—to impel SAC to a pair of victories.

Saints Head Coach David Manning commented about his team's efficacy with the man-advantage versus UCC.

"The power play has been good for us all year long. There's a level of comfort with the senior players running the power play. They've been dangerous when they're out there and have clicked all season. We went 3 for 3 on Friday and 3 for 4 on Saturday so the goals were timely, especially when they drew four-minute penalties. We made them pay for those penalties."

Another highlight of the weekend was the offensive production of Saints' forward Jack Pridham. The Boston College commit produced five points in the Saints' wild home win on Friday, comprised of a hat trick, two assists, and the game-winning-goal.

Coach Manning said he was impressed with Pridham's six points versus UCC.

"He's definitely an opportunistic and skilled player who made the most of his chances this weekend. Jack makes a team play if they give him some room and he has a great collection of skills."

On Saturday's win in Toronto versus UCC, the Saints' power play broke a 0-0 second period deadlock when Captain Jonathan Castagna tallied his 16th goal of the season at 11:03 assisted by Lucas Veilleux. SAC's power play struck again less than a minute later when Jack Good—on assists from Ryan Castle and Connor Arseneault—gave the Saints a 2-0 lead heading into the final frame.

Two minutes into the third period, the Saints built a three-goal cushion when defenceman Francesco Dell'Elce scored his team's third power play of the game on Veilleux's second assist of the game.

Dell'Elce tallied his second goal of the period with assists going to Dean Letourneau and Jack Pridham to provide the margin of victory over UCC.

In a stunning contrast to the prior game versus UCC, Coach Manning applauded the better defensive effort and the play of his goaltender Luke Brandon who turned away 21 shots for the shutout.

"Luke was solid and he made all the saves he was supposed to make to earn the shutout. We were more focused on playing proper defense. We were tougher to play against on Saturday and our team protected Luke better in the second game."

The Saints outshot UCC 47-21 on Saturday afternoon, after blitzing their opposition for eight goals on 57 shots on Friday on home ice.

In Friday afternoon's lid-lifter, SAC jumped out to a 1-0 lead at La Brier Family Arena on Anselmo Rego's 24th goal of the season assisted by Dean Letourneau, but UCC drew even less than 2 minutes later on Louis Charles Tremblay's marker.

Saints' Captain Jonathan Castagna broke the 1-1 tie with an unassisted goal with 6 minutes left in the period. Two consecutive goals by Jack Good 14 seconds apart gave SAC a commanding 4-1 lead after one period of play.

However, UCC struck back quickly—just thirteen seconds into the second period—when Tremblay scored his second goal of the game and Leo Schneeberg pulled the Blues within one at 6:51.

SAC responded to UCC's surge when Jack Pridham fired a power play goal with assists from Dell'Elce and Veilleux to put the Saints up 5-3. Tremblay tallied his third goal of the game to reduce UCC's deficit to 5-4 and Blues' centre Atom Thususka tied the game 5-5 before the SAC power play went back to work.

Pridham's second goal with the man-advantage put the Saints back on top 6-5 on assists from Rego and Dell'Elce with 24 seconds left in the period.

Pridham struck again to complete his hat trick—assisted by Ben Power—six minutes into the third period to put the Saints up 8-6 with what turned out to be the game-winning-goal.

UCC drew to within one when Matteo Russo struck at 9:45, but SAC's Lucas Veilleux removed the remaining suspense with 1:26 left in the game with his ninth goal of the season. Dell'Elce—on his third assist of the game—and Castagna set up the Saints' eighth and final goal of this "Friday afternoon shootout in

Aurora."

Coach Manning praised the play of Austin Gao, a call-up defenseman from the Markham Majors of the GTHL, who "played very consistently all weekend and was voted player of the game on Friday by his teammates."

The Aurora resident was called up due to a rash of injuries that have struck the Saints.

Seven SAC players are currently hobbled by myriad injuries. Despite the number of regulars missing from the lineup, the Saints will soldier on and travel to Lake Placid to complete their PHC schedule this weekend.

The Saints' 2022-23 season comes to an end when they travel to New York to play two PHC games versus Northwood at the Olympic Center on March 10-11. The Saints were eliminated from PHC playoff competition in Minnesota earlier in

The power play has been good for us all year long. There's a level of comfort with the senior players running the power play. They've been dangerous when they're out there and have clicked all season

February, but defeated Northwood 6-5 in a Consolation matchup.

Pridham led the SAC weekend points parade versus UCC with 6 (3 goals/3 assists) while Dell'Elce added 5 (2 goals/3 assists), and Veilleux totalled 4 (1 goal/3 assists). Good had 3 goals and Letourneau totaled 3 assists against the Blues.

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Pickleball surges in popularity, Town seeks solutions for lack of court space

By Elisa Nguyen

Pickleball has seen a surge in popularity, and it's only a matter of time before hundreds of residents are engaging in the friendly and competitive game in Aurora, so long as enough court space can be found.

As there are currently over 300 players in Aurora, a number that is forecast to grow exponentially in upcoming years, delegates from across Town have expressed the need for indoor and outdoor facilities to be added to the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Gord Kerr, a member of the Aurora Pickleball Group, who has worked with Tennis and construction facilities since 1978, said the Town has two dedicated pickleball courts which isn't enough to support the pickleball players.

In his proposal to Council on February 28, Kerr suggested painting pickleball lines on top of an underutilized tennis court and considering the building of a six to ten court facility in the future.

“It’s going to bring in revenue to Aurora, and you’re going to get yourself back on the map,” he said.

Kerr noted that the existing pickleball courts in Aurora are both minimal and unsafe to play on.

He said that there is no fencing and a tripping hazard at the court edge, making the few existing courts difficult to play in, and putting the Town far behind other municipalities such as Richmond Hill, which he noted has over 20 indoor pickleball courts and will install a new 16-court facility at the Observatory this year.

Kerr said one possibility is to rejig two tennis courts into four pickleball courts, as pickleball courts are smaller in size than the average tennis court, then scheduling allotted tennis and pickleball play times.

“At least that gets you some instant pickleball courts for now,” he said.

An indoor facility and clubhouse could then be built and completed for 2025, he said, noting that there is room to install a

new 12-court facility in the unused area near Edward Coltham Park at 95 William Graham Drive.

"If we have to help you, if we have to do some fundraising or something, you tell me what park you want to do and I will design it, I'll put it all together and give you some budget proposals so that you can put it together," Kerr said.

Jane Snape, Pickleball Coordinator for the Aurora's Senior Association, said the group offers beginner women's and men's separate pickleball sessions and mixed doubles play both at the Aurora Seniors' Centre and at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

Currently, she maintains a list of about 200 senior members from Aurora who are interested in playing pickleball, many of whom are forced to stay indoors to play pickleball during the cold seasons of the year.

“Our Seniors’ Association membership is extremely active, and we want to stay healthy and fit, physically and mentally, by playing pickleball. But we desperately need more pickleball indoor facilities so that everyone who wants to learn to play and enjoy pickleball can do so,” Snape said.

“The one pickleball court at the senior center is used for the majority of our pickleball activities, a total of 30 now. We use the three courts at the Leisure Complex for a total of six hours, but there is a huge demand for indoor pickleball play for all ages.”

Snape requested that more time be given at the Leisure Complex for pickleball hours, in hopes that the general recreational time can be returned to the time it had been allotted before the pandemic.

Furthermore, she said that court time should not be regulated for one hour of play the same way as tennis courts. Rather, just like the Aurora tennis club does now, players should be able to book a daily time slot, Snape said.

Although the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update in 2016 intended to create opportunities for outdoor pickleball

through the use of a multi-purpose court template, such as utilizing existing tennis courts, Snape believes that the experiment failed as the time allotted to pickleball was during the “heat of the day” and tennis players were generally not in favor of sharing their court.

“Aurora needs a pickleball club, but you can’t have a pickleball club without a dedicated pickleball facility,” she said, adding that the game has grown to encompass a variety of ages, not just older adults.

Tournaments require locations not dependent on the weather; she said, noting that Canadian winters can also be very destructive for outdoor courts and making an indoor facility could be more cost effective in the long run.

“Pickleball is affordable, easy to learn and play and provides fun friendship and community for all ages. Please make sure that the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes both outdoor and indoor pickleball courts in future predictions,” Snape said.

Michael Bowcott, President of the Richmond Hill Pickleball Club and founder of the Richmond Hill Pickleball Network, which currently holds over 900 members, was also in attendance at the committee meeting to share his insights on why pickleball has become the fastest growing sport in North America.

Some see it as a competitive sport, some as a social game, and others as a therapy, he said.

The Richmond Hill Pickleball Network started almost two years ago and grew to become the largest network in Canada with over 900 members, he said, simply through word of mouth.

Spending the last year working with Council in Richmond Hill, Bowcott helped spearhead the building of 16 dedicated pickleball courts.

From a grassroots perspective, Bowcott says he has also seen the sudden popularity of pickleball in his interactions when offering free lessons in the summer. “The people that came out to them were mostly

women, and by word of mouth, we grew from zero to 150 by the end of the summer, and I was just working July and August.”

“The people were telling me how this game would change their lives, people that showed up there that I thought it would never see again, kept coming back, they kept coming back, and they kept getting better and better,” he said.

“This is more than a game, it’s more than a sport. I’ve kind of joked about it and referred to it as a therapy for many people. And you’re going to face increasing demands over the next year or two.”

Different cultures, backgrounds, and ages can be found playing the sport, the average age being 52 years old, Bowcott said, adding that it is “a game that will bring a community together like no other.”

With over 900 pickleball club members in Richmond Hill, the city has recently secured a facility in Vaughan to offer more opportunities.

Bowcott predicts that the sport will continue to see a surge in popularity and that municipalities will face increased pressure to provide more opportunities to play, but also to find suitable locations that can support the increasing demand for pickleball.

"I think the key for you is to really put together a strategy for pickleball. You have to locate them in the right areas, you should go with a multi-court facility, and try to avoid the expedient solution of painting lines on [tennis courts] because you will create tensions between the tennis players and pickleball players," he said.

“So, I would encourage you to build pickleball into your masterplan, give it consideration, because there’s no doubt in my mind that you are going to face increasing pressures and as you run out of suitable places for these locations.”

Bill Maron from Total Tennis Inc. said that in his experience operating a dual-court facility for tennis and pickleball in London, Ontario, he has seen Pickleball increase by 700 members over the course of four years, whereas tennis increased by

Continued on page 15

A modern outdoor patio featuring a grey sectional sofa with light and dark green cushions, a wooden coffee table, and large potted plants. The patio is paved with large, dark grey rectangular tiles. In the background, a city skyline is visible through the foliage.

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Town issues TikTok ban for employees

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Effective Monday, March 6, Town of Aurora employees will no longer be able to use TikTok on their municipally-supplied phones.

The move follows a similar move made by the Federal Government last week, after the Feds determined the social media platform’s data collection policies could pose security threats.

“Following a decision by the Federal government, upon the advice of the Chief Information Officer of Canada’s determination that TikTok presents ‘an unacceptable level of risk to privacy and security,’ the Town of Aurora has made the decision to restrict access to the TikTok app on Town-issued devices, effective immediately,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement.

Monday’s decision came on the heels of comments made during last Tuesday’s Council meeting on whether the municipality would follow the Government of Canada’s lead.

“It would be a temporary ban from employees’ phones out of an abundance of caution given that the Government of Canada is investigating the privacy concerns,” said Daniel Bitonti, the Town’s Manager of Corporate Communications, just prior to the announcement. “The truth is we, as a Town, the communications department hasn’t been using TikTok as a way to get out information, so it is not a huge loss in terms of communicating with residents. You could argue maybe we should have been on TikTok to get to another demographic, certainly if the Government of Canada feels that after their investigation employees should have access too, we will revisit it. It’s a fluid situation.”

Region approves additional \$12.8 million to budget

York Regional Council approved an additional \$12.8 million as part of the 2023 budget to provide further support to residents impacted by homelessness, mental health and housing.

“As York Region’s population continues to grow, more residents need support to address critical and complex challenges,” said the Region in a statement Monday. “Across York Region, rapidly rising housing costs, lack of affordable supply and a need for support services focusing on preventing and addressing homelessness and supporting residents’ mental health are increasing.”

For 2023, the \$12.8 million funding will be allocated to:

- \$4.1 million to address urgent needs of residents experiencing homelessness
- \$5.5 million to increase, sustain and enhance the community housing system
- \$3.2 million to enhance the Community Investment Fund to address gaps in critical community services, including mental health and supports for sex trafficking survivors

“As part of Regional Council’s commitment, through the Pandemic Management and Recovery Reserve Fund, a total of \$51 million will be funded to this important work over the 2023 - 2026 term of Council. The equivalent of an additional 1% tax levy increase for community needs will be drawn from Regional funding reserves,

avoiding an additional tax levy in 2023.

“The additional funding aligns with the recently approved York Region Strategic Plan, specifically in the area of Healthy Communities. It also helps meet the priorities and outcomes identified in Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone, York Region’s 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan and the 2021 to 2024 Housing York Inc. Plan.

“Using reserve funding for operating expenditures is not sustainable in the long term and staff will report back to Council through the 2025 budget on program outcomes and options for permanent and sustainable funding. Although Council has made significant investments to increase the supply of community housing, additional investments are needed to address these challenges to help reduce homelessness and to address other gaps in the system of community supports.”

Pickleball surges

From page 12

150 in the same amount of time.

The facility originally started as a tennis club, giving tennis players longer booking privileges, until they found that the courts weren’t filling up.

“We did have this indoor club in London that was open seven days a week, 14 hours a day, six dedicated pickleball courts at the time, and six dedicated tennis courts. So, we had three 400 people, you know, every day in the facility, moving about playing their game,” he said.

Players may be happier having separate court space, Maron said, however, he noted that tennis players eventually accepted the sounds of the ball hitting the paddle or the jovial excitement of the social pickleball sport.

For shared court space, the facility painted pickleball court lines in a light gray color intended to be less of a distraction to tennis players.

“Realistically, any facility where you play a sport there is rarely perfect,” Marson said. “So, what I have come to know is you get used to your facility.”

Council endorsed a motion put forward by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese and Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland directing staff to “explore ways to increase the number of pickleball courts in Aurora, possibly for this season” and report back on options and budget considerations through the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

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Community stands together for International Women’s Day



Gathered together for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy’s International Women’s Day event were, from left, Vaughan-Woodbridge MP Francesco Sorbara, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Federal International Trade Minister Mary Ing, MP Taylor Roy, Minister of Women & Gender Equality Marci Ien, Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Markham-Unionville MP Paul Chiang, and Richmond Hill MP Majid Jowhari. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Political action takes many forms, but if you’re born political?

That was the question posed to the community on Friday by Lily Poursad, a speaker at a forum hosted at Aurora Town Hall on Friday by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy ahead of International Women’s Day.

Welcoming Liberal MPs from across York Region, keynote speakers included Poursad, Anastasia Dieieva, Malika Khimji, and guest of honour Marci Ien, the former broadcaster and Toronto Centre MP who currently serves as Canada’s Minister of Women and Gender Equality, and Youth.

“This year’s theme in Canada being ‘Every Woman Counts’ [and] it’s also a time for all levels of government and all business and community leaders to recommit to building a fairer and more inclusive future with equal opportunity for everyone,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas welcoming the speakers and members of

the public into Council chambers. “A sad reality is far too many women, girls, and gender-diverse people still face significant barriers and we know that those who come from marginalized and racialized groups face even more obstacles. It’s incumbent on all of us to work together to ensure all women, girls and gender-diverse people have the same opportunities to succeed... I think one important way of doing this is by having dialogues and conversations like we are having today that can inspire and empower others.”

Poursad, who ran for Federal office in Canada nine years ago, helped spur this dialogue, with some of her own experiences as an Iranian-Canadian with deep community ties.

“Women and being a woman is the most political subject matter all around the world,” said the Gender Equality expert. “We are born political, our bodies are a political matter, the rights of our body and our rights to live and how to live are political. That is why we have to acknowledge International Women’s Day. A few weeks after the Islamic Revolution

in Iran, I remember clearly I was on the street with my mother, who is an advocate of women’s rights in Iran, being jailed and forced into exile in the past 20 years. My grandmother who ironically was having a hijab by choice, we were all marching to the street because just a few days before that the new regime announced the mandatory hijab. I remember clearly why we were walking in the street for the demonstration. A group of revolutionary guard in front of us in huge trucks filled with stones and rocks, and they were stoning the crowd, women and children, and chanting one thing – and my Iranian friends in this room know what the chant was: either you’re going to put the hijab on or we’re going to beat you on your head.

“The most important gender-equality based women-led revolution in the world started from Iran and we have to understand the value of it because we cannot drop the ball one more time for Iranian women and women in the Region because I promise you if we get to the end of this oppressive era... the Region will be a better place to live, Afghanistan will be a better place to

live, Ukraine will be a better place to live, and for women around the world.”

Watching the situation in Ukraine very closely is Anastasia Dieieva, who was a leader on equity back home and remains so in her new residence of Canada.

She shared with the audience of a beautiful sunny day playing with her son in a Kyiv park in February of 2022, going to bed, and waking up early the next morning to news of the Russian invasion.

“The very next moment I heard explosions,” she recalled. “When I heard them, I was petrified. I looked at my apartment and my heart was full of anger because I felt like no one could ever force me to leave my beautiful home, which I built with my own two hands, the place where I was joining with my people during the reforms, solving internal issues with my hands and my desire to change this country.”

In Canada, she said she found a society where people share those same values and paid tribute to the nearly 8 million women and children who have fled Ukraine.

Continued on page15

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From page 14

Able to continue her work in Ukraine remotely – “COVID taught us how to do it effectively” – she said she saw examples of “self-leadership of so many people from all over the world – Ukrainian people who showed self-leadership, who showed that they are the role models for their kids.”

It was a lesson, she said, in how to “transform the pain in my heart into action.”

“Trauma and pain in heart hurts the same. For those who survive the war; for those who survive sex crimes for those who lost loved ones. The most important thing we can do to each other, as women to women, as men who support women in parliament...is what we can do to help transform this pain into positive action. Actions are like flowers through the crack in concrete, how they blossom. They are persistently growing and growing. That’s how Ukrainian women feel.”

Providing a different lens on the world, Malika Khimji shared her perspective as a female Muslim immigrant who came to this country from Kenya. Here, she has become the first-generation university attendee in her family, choosing to study politics in government to have the chance “to one day be a woman like many others in this room” who are making “vital changes.”

“My parents have played a vital role in empowering me and my sisters as strong women,” she said. “Additionally, my religion has also taught me the importance of women gaining an education and being a voice to contribute to the betterment of society. My parents gave up their well-established lives in Kenya [so] my sisters and I could have life and opportunity in Canada where a woman’s voice truly matters.”

“We can use our voices and privileges to support and raise more awareness for the injustices that Indigenous women here in Canada are facing, 63 per cent of Indigenous women have experienced violence and nearly half have experienced sexual assault. This is an important reminder to us that although we have accomplished a lot as women our mission

is not over yet and there is still lots to do and achieve. Together, us as women are a symbol of strength, perseverance and power. We will not rest until every woman in this world has a fair chance at life.”

The words were taken to heart by Minister Ien who said she was impressed by the voices of young women in attendance.

“That’s what people are afraid of – it’s not the youth, it’s the power behind it,” she said. “Look at the diversity in this room. It’s diversity in where we come from, it’s diversity in age, it’s diversity in experience, it’s diversity on our life journeys. Look at this room. This is Canada. Women aren’t just one big homogenous group. This room reflects that. There are various life experiences that have to be acknowledged and I agree. In a lot of cases, most cases, we have each other’s backs but as we look forward to International Women’s Day, and I agree there is so much more to do, it’s about the work. That day is about the work and it is about acknowledging the history of it.”

“Being in a position where you have a microphone in front of you is a unique thing because on a daily basis you have to think about how you use it, and in my mind I was always hearing my dad, the beautiful man that he is, and my dad saying, ‘Make sure you play it safe. Don’t rock the boat. Your mom and wanted you and your sister to have more and be more, so you have a great pension that you don’t want to mess with, you don’t want to push too hard, to say too much. Just do your job and do it well.’ But I wanted to say too much and I wanted to push and I wanted to rock the boat and do all of those things. It took me a while to do them but I really did them.”

Canada, she concluded, is a “country that is inclusive for all people.”

“It is about having the courage to walk into unfriendly rooms and, whether you see yourself or not and be resolved that your presence is going to change the temperature, that you’re going to push no matter what and do so knowing you’re going to make a difference for those beside you and frankly coming behind you. Allyship is so important. I am thankful for each and every one of you.”



Malika Khimji speaks as Lily Poursad looks on. (Above) Anastasia Dieieva.
Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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YCDSB reaffirms commitment to “equity” after raucous Board meeting leads to police call

From page 1

the Gospel message and promoting equity are at the core of our work because we see these priorities as one and the same. We are committed to ensuring that we provide a place where those who feel excluded, bullied or struggling with their sense of belonging can gather in support of one another with Jesus Christ as our role model. This is why all our schools display the message, ‘We are diverse. We are one in Christ.’

“Our partners at the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA) recently distributed stickers to their members that feature a Progress Pride Flag and the text, ‘Safe Space.’ The Board of Trustees is not typically asked to approve operational matters and they did not know of or approve these stickers before they were produced and distributed. The leadership of the YCDSB feels that the message of ‘Safe Spaces’ is consistent with our core Catholic values. Pope Francis has repeatedly discussed how the 2SLGBTQIA+ community should not be marginalized but should be welcomed with respect and sensitivity. Therefore, the YCDSB has encouraged teachers to display or not display these stickers based on their personal beliefs.

“We acknowledge that this has been a difficult time for many members of our community. We also recognize that there are differences of opinion on whether the stickers should be displayed in our schools. I ask all members of the York Catholic community to refer to our Code of Conduct which guides us

in maintaining a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate.”

Several delegates approached the podium in-person and virtually last week at the YCDSB’s Aurora headquarters to speak out against the stickers, stating that the words of the Bible “supersede” the views and teachings of Pope Francis.

“If homosexuality is taught in elementary schools, it would very easily become part of the curriculum,” said Sheree Di Vittorio, who delegated virtually to last Tuesday’s meeting. “This is inappropriate at a Catholic school because it would be contradicting the Catholic beliefs of the school. The introduction [of such topics] could lead to harmful consequences for the children. There is absolutely no need to have such an aggressive campaign all around schools exposing younger children like my nine-year-old to sexual ideologies and indoctrinations that she’s far too young to understand. Where does this kind of behaviour end if we’re now bending scripture in the name of inclusion?”

“Inclusive education,” she said, means that “all students are supported and included in all aspects of their education regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity” and viewing all students as “equals” is imperative. Creating a “safe space” for one group, she added, could lead to the “exclusion” of another and even the “preferential treatment” of some.

“All students should have access to an environment where they can feel safe and comfortable; while

that is especially important for marginalized groups that doesn’t necessary mean we must focus only on them,” she continued. “When any child experiences discrimination and hate in any form it can be incredibly harmful. It can lead to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem. It can also lead to physical and mental health problems. This is not the message that is being promoted by the stickers in question. While I have nothing against the gay community, homosexuality is still considered a sin. It is a transgression against the will of God, an act that that robs people of their natural heterosexuality and the ability to create a traditional family.

“There are Biblical reasons why homosexuality is considered a sin and regardless of what Pope Francis may think, the Bible and its teaching supersede his ideas of how we need to handle this issue.... Catholic schools should not allow transgender or LGBT students to attend. We don’t even allow non-Catholic denominations to attend our Catholic schools.”

Similar views were expressed earlier in the evening by parent Carlo Ravenna who said Board members should be “ashamed” of themselves for “turning their backs” on the word of the Bible.

“The trustees are here because we put you here. As taxpaying citizens who pay your wages. We expect that you have our children’s best interests at heart. As Catholics, our expectation is the words of the Lord are being preached and instilled in the minds of our children to coincide with the faith we practice at home,” he said. “The

Safe Place stickers that were secretly plastered all over our schools without our consent and our knowledge, they shouldn’t say ‘safe space,’ they should say ‘danger zone.’ We need all you members here to understand that we are awakened to what’s happening and we will no longer accept this abuse and brainwashing that is being pushed to our children.”

Following the meeting, Pflag York Region voiced its support for the use of “Safe Space” stickers in the classroom, pushing back on the “danger zone” claim.

“The reality is, the danger zone queer youth face on a daily basis is largely invisible and unfortunately, clearly includes spaces like their homes and their caregivers who ought to know better,” said Tristan Coolman, President of Pflag York Region in a statement. “These parents and caregivers, who made no attempt to support the queer identifies of their children are failing their duty. For 29 years, Pflag Canada York Region has offered spaces for families and caregivers to discuss their concerns with other members of our community to better discover how to support their queer loved ones and we will continue to offer that space to anyone.

“We believe faith and queerness do not need to live in opposition of one another. At times faith is used as a shield for hate speech and hate crimes. The actions of the parents at these meetings, or anyone else in opposition to these safe space stickers are not fuelled by faith, they are fuelled by hate.”



“Beer, it’s the best damn drink in the world.”

Cheers to Jack Nicholson



Seven charged in alleged trafficking ring

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Seven people, including residents of York Region and Peel, are facing multiple charges related to labour trafficking.

The charges come after 64 Mexican-born nationals were found by York Regional Police’s (YRP) Special Victims Unit – Human Trafficking Section and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to be “exploited through an international labour trafficking ring,” said the YRP following an announcement at their Aurora headquarters on Friday morning.

“In November 2022, York Regional Police received information that Mexican nationals were being exploited for labour in York Region,” said the YRP. “An investigation, dubbed Project Norte, revealed that an organized group of criminals enticed the victims into Canada with promises of good work and a better life. However, they ended up living in deplorable conditions and were driven to work sites in private buses which were in a state of disrepair. The workers were mistreated, abused, and exploited for manual labour at farms, factories and warehouses across the Greater Toronto Area. The victims lived in squalor and were compelled to work long hours for little pay, while their exploiters reaped the benefits of their labour and lived in luxury.

“On February 8, 2023, after an in-depth investigation, officers from York Regional Police, along with members of the OPP, the Toronto Police Service and Peel Regional Police, executed search warrants at five properties in the Town of East Gwillimbury and the Cities of Vaughan, Toronto and Mississauga. As a result, 64 exploited workers were rescued, five people were arrested and charged and two outstanding suspects had warrants issued for their arrest.”

Project Norte was a victim-centric investigation, the YRP noted. On the day of the warrants, a Victim Assistance Center was set up to provide food, shelter, medical attention, information and support services from police, CBSA, paramedics and community supports including Victim Services of York Region. Of the 64 people rescued, 53

accepted the offer of help and continue to be supported.

“This investigation has been a difficult one. To see the state of the workers’ living conditions, considering the promises that were made to them, was heartbreaking,” said Chief Jim MacSween. “The Spanish-speaking officers who assisted in the investigation were also deeply affected, as they could see the reflections of their own families and friends in the faces of these hardworking people who were only trying to find a better life.”

Among those charged are:
Tre Trinh, 45, of Vaughan who is charged with six counts of trafficking in person, and single counts Instructing Commission of Offence for Criminal Organization, Commission of Offence for Criminal Organization, Participation in Criminal Organization, and Material Benefit Resulting from Trafficking in Persons.

Thi Him Huyen Vu, 49, of Vaughan, who faces four charges of Trafficking in Persons, and single counts of Participating in Criminal Organization, and Material Benefit from Resulting from Trafficking in Persons.

Jesus Navarrete Garcia, 51, of Toronto, who faces 11 charges of Trafficking in Persons, three counts of Sexual Assault, and single charges of Instructing Commission of Offence for Criminal Organization, Commission of Offence for Criminal Organization, Participation in Criminal Organization, and Material Benefit Resulting from Trafficking in Person.

Monserrat Monjaras of Mississauga faces five charges of Trafficking in Persons, and single charges of Participation in Criminal Organization, and Material Benefit Resulting from Trafficking in Persons.

Hiram Amaury Martinez Rodriguez, 48, of East Gwillimbury, is facing two charges of Trafficking in Persons, and a single charge of Participating in Criminal Organization.

Warrants for Arrest are outstanding for Juan de Jesus Rosales Gomez, 31, of no fixed address, who faces a charge of Participation in Criminal Organization, and Luis Alberto Garcia Galvan, who is charged with Uttering Forged Document.

The charges have not been proven.

Feds, Province announce funding to increase high speed internet in York Region


From page 9

funding they need to accommodate growing ridership, while ensuring they can continue to deliver safe and reliable transit service for people in their communities.”

Funding for the gas tax program, according to the Province, is calculated by the number of litres of gasoline sold in Ontario over the last year.

“Municipalities that support public

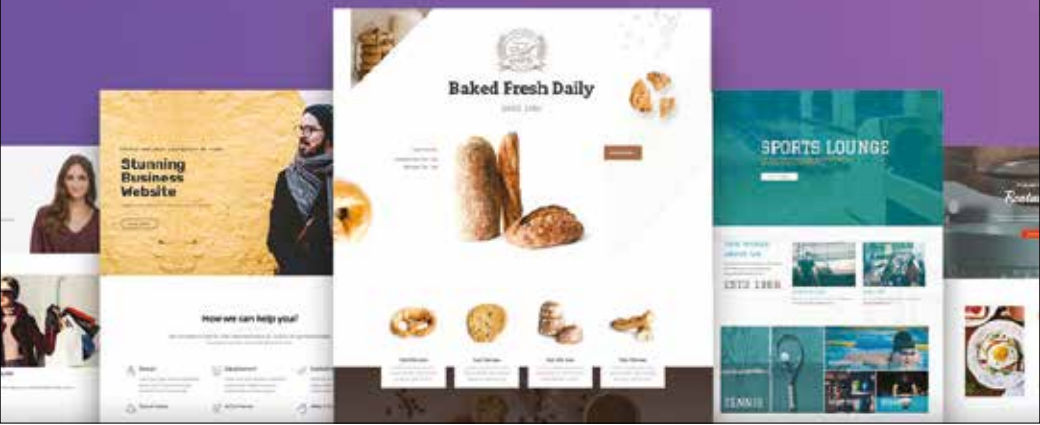
transit services in their community receive two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenue collected,” they said. “To make up for reduced gas sales due to ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s gas tax program includes one-time additional funding of \$80 million to help ensure municipalities can continue to support their transit system.”



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Dignity

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12	
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50			51					52	53	54			
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58								59					

CLUES ACROSS

1. Half-conscious states

8. Unnatural

13. Deep regret

14. Rogue

15. Taken without permission

19. An alternative

20. After B

21. Partner to flowed

22. Weekday

23. Body part

24. World’s longest river

25. One of the Greats

26. Make clean

30. C. Canada indigenous peoples

31. Japanese seaport

32. Most unclothed

33. Small grouper fish
34. Soluble ribonucleic acid

35. Distinguishing sound

38. French realist painter

39. Popular beer brand

40. Views

44. God depicted as a bull

45. Relieve

46. Residue after burning

47. Habitation

48. Poe’s middle name

49. Japanese title

50. TV series installation (abbr.)

51. Beloved country singer

55. Single unit

57. Genuine

58. Develop

59. Traveled through the snow

CLUES DOWN

1. Clues

2. Do again

3. Current unit

4. Neither

5. Corporate exec (abbr.)

6. Second sight

7. The absence of mental stress

8. Supplemented with difficulty

9. Stop for good

10. College dorm worker

11. Bones

12. Most supernatural

16. Spanish island

17. Unlimited

18. Where golfers begin

22. No charge

25. Print errors

27. Professional drivers

28. Kiss box set

29. Short, fine fibers

30. Administers punishment
32. Czech city

34. Normal or sound powers of mind

35. The academic world

36. Crustacean

37. Currency

38. Pastoral people of Tanzania or Kenya

40. Cloth spread over a coffin

41. Grouped together

42. On land

43. Glistened

45. A type of extension

48. One who assists

51. College sports conference

52. Zero

53. Midway between northeast and east

54. Type of screen

56. The 13th letter of the Greek alphabet

D	E	D	D	E	L	S				E	C	U	D	E
E	H	E	C	N	I	S				D	V	N	O	W
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PUZZLE SOLUTION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

The Aurora Cultural Centre presents a free March Break Crafternoon for all ages. Drop in 10 a.m. – 2.30 p.m. at NC Aurora Armoury, 89 Mosley Street. Three art activities, including making watercolour butterfly patterns, masks and “papier-bouquets.” Join-in djembe drum circles at 11 a.m., 12 noon and 1 p.m. lead by Glenn Marais. This is a free, fully supported activity presented by the Aurora Cultural Centre.

THROUGH MARCH 18

The Mayor’s Celebration of Youth Arts continues through mid-March at the Aurora Cultural Centre gallery, 2nd floor, Aurora Town Hall. Celebrate the artistic talent and expressions of Aurora’s graduating class at this show featuring 53 students and 84 works. Gallery Hours: Monday – Saturday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. Also available for viewing online at AuroraCulturalCentre.ca/mcoya2023.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

The Aurora Historical Society’s (AHS) Speaker Series continues this evening at 7 p.m. with an in-person and virtual presentation: Intro to Local Historic Sites panel. Get to know the local historic sites all around you! Join us for Intro to Local Historic Sites, a panel discussion where we are hosting professionals from Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre, Sharon Temple National Historic Site, and Georgina Pioneer Village & Archives. Learn about their behind-the-scenes work, and the daily challenges of running these unique landmarks that are so close to home. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS members and \$12.50 for non-members.

SATURDAY, MARCH 25

The Aurora Historical Society (AHS) will host a Heritage Craft Workshop: Introduction to Quilting today from 1 – 3 p.m. at Hillary

THINGS

You Ought To Know

House National Historic Site. Learn the basics of quilting or join other quilters and work on personal projects at our upcoming Introduction to Quilting Workshop! Our instructor will teach you the basics of quilting using hand sewing, and help grow your skill in this popular heritage craft. Materials will be provided, and we encourage you to bring your own too! Advance ticket purchase required. Please visit our website or call us to book.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

The Aurora Historical Society will host an Easter Egg Decorating Workshop at Hillary House from 1 – 3 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per adult, or \$10 per child with materials included. Gather the family and decorate some Easter eggs! Be creative with your design and get a sneak peek of our historic property while you are visiting us. Workshop includes all materials. Pre-registration required. All children require adult accompaniment. Our Gift Shop will also be open for your last-minute gift needs! Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website here <https://aurorahs.com/easter-egg-decorating-workshop-2>.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8

HELLO SPRING – The Town of Aurora will host its Easter-themed Hello Spring! event today at the Aurora Seniors’ Centre from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Celebrate spring with fun activities and a chance to see the Easter Bunny! Hop into spring celebrations with your family and friends at Aurora’s Hello Spring event. Welcome the warmer weather, budding flowers and connecting with nature by participating in our fun indoor and outdoor activities for everyone to enjoy! \$5 per person and wristbands must be purchased in advance from the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Town Hall, or the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. Various outdoor activities include story walks, egg fishing, flower planting, a hopstacle course, an animal education display by LaSalle Farm and more. Don’t forget to check out activities located inside the Aurora Seniors’ Centre such as meeting the Easter Bunny, enjoying a Pancake Breakfast hosted by the Optimist Club (nominal fees apply), and more! Children will receive an activity bag to continue the fun at home.

CONTINUING

The Aurora Historical Society offers a Youth Mentorship Program biweekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3.30 – 5.30 p.m. A new program offered exclusively for youth in Grades 9 to 12! Earn volunteer hours while learning about working in the arts and culture field, guided by our knowledgeable AHS Staff. Explore community hotspots together, and work on a collaborative peer exhibition that will open in Summer 2023. Get passionate about your interests, showcase your talents, and develop your skills. The AHS is dedicated to providing safe, accessible, engaging and innovative programming. Sign up today to claim your spot. Email Selin at programming@aurorahs.com. Free. In person.

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les ADULTES / 18+ (des francophones aux débutants capables de converser) - qui cherchent à mettre en pratique leurs compétences Conversationnelle en français. Over Zoom with a nominal fee of \$2.50. RSVP by visiting meetup.com/Partagez-le-francais. For more information, email partagez.york@outlook.com.

Support AbuseHurts’ Delivering Hope Full Circle Program textile recycling and donation program. In the current COVID climate, a greater number of people are wanting to donate or get rid of unwanted items, increasing the need for more outlets being available to receive the items. This program will provide a convenient way for people to donate or get rid of used/unwanted clothing, blankets, linens and furniture and will help lessen the amount of items ending up in landfills. Materials that were previously perceived as waste will now be seen as a valuable resource further encouraging redistribution. The items will be recycled in the following ways: To be given to individuals who are survivors of violence and are transitioning from shelters into new homes; To be sold in our store; To be sold to a textile recycler, which makes for an ongoing source of funding for Abuse Hurts enabling them to provide their services to the thousands of people that require them each year. When and Where: Monday and Wednesday, every week, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., with 30-minute time slots – only 1 drop off per time slot. If you do not have an appointment, we cannot accept your donation. The Abuse Hurts Warehouse is located at 1208 Gorham St, Unit 4, Newmarket - rear unloading dock. Visit AbuseHurts.ca to select your drop off time slot.



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Winter 2023 – This and That II

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 Toronto Maple Leafs and the new proposed federal riding boundaries for Newmarket-Aurora.

First, I am very happy but nervous. As a longtime suffering Leafs fan, things have been going extremely well so far this year.

The Leafs battle hard in every game and have won against the elites, Boston and Tampa, among others.

All aspects of their game have looked well – balanced scoring, defense and goal tending.

And they just picked up two nice additions well before the trade deadline with rumors that the Leafs GM may not be finished on the trade front.

I am nervous though as the Leafs do at times seem to play down to the level of their inferior opponents.

But, as we all know, this team will only be judged by how they do once the play-offs begin.

Looks like they will play the Tampa Bay Lightning in round one and if they can finally win a play-off round, then most likely face the Bruins.

I really do think this is the year that the Leafs win at least two play-off

rounds and, dare I say it, go all the way. Yes, I said it. Now I have most likely jinxed the team.

I can then proudly wear a tee shirt that I have from the 1993 Leafs playoff run that says “Stanley’s Coming To Town” without being laughed at!

Second, Canada will soon be getting a new federal electoral map, which will offer some changes to the Newmarket-Aurora riding, among others.

Canada will move from 338 electoral districts to 343, and according to a recent column by David Aiken of the Toronto Sun, “of the existing 338 ridings, 271 will see their boundaries change...While Ontario gets one more seat, Toronto itself loses a seat, dropping from 25 to 24.”

Also from this interesting article: “The system of independent provincial commissions re-drawing riding maps has been in place in Canada since 1964. After each decennial census, Elections Canada makes a recommendation on the adjustment of the number of seats to be added to the House of Commons,



Stephen Somerville

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE

a recommendation which must be approved by the House of Commons. After that, though, it’s up to three-person commissions in each province to re-draw existing maps to account for those new seats or redistribute existing seats based on population shifts.

The head of each provincial commission is a judge appointed by the Chief Justice of each provincial court. The other two members of each provincial commission are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Commons and tend to be academics or retired civil servants.

So far, at least, the Canadian system of re-drawing electoral districts has avoided the gerrymandering controversies of the United States where state legislatures get to re-draw electoral maps and often do so to obtain a partisan advantage for the party in control of that legislature.

It looks like most of the changes in the Newmarket-Aurora boundaries will be somewhat minor; that is, if you don’t live in that part of the riding that is

being changed!

Currently the riding goes from Wellington Street in the south up to Newmarket and is bounded by Leslie Street on the east and Bathurst Street on the west.

There will be an addition at the top of the riding, reaching into the East Gwillimbury area while a swath of voters will be taken from the bottom area of the riding in Aurora.

More specifically, the area in Aurora that will be removed is bounded from Wellington up Yonge Street to Orchard Heights and then down Bathurst Street. This area will be added to the riding beneath which will be the Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill riding.

I live in this part of the riding and this change makes absolutely no sense to me.

I know that the non-partisan electoral commission wants to maintain an approximate size of the individual ridings at about 120,000 or so, but this could most likely have been done in a different way.

These new boundaries would not take place until January 2024, so if a federal election was triggered this year, it would take place based on the existing riding boundaries.

Stephen can be contacted at stephengsomerville@yahoo.com

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Meticulously Landscaped Corner Lot. Approximately 6,000 sqft. Well Manicured Garden. Professional Stone Walkways & Patio. Private Oak Ridge-Lake Wilcox Neighbourhood of Richmond Hill. A Truly Spectacular Property. Offered at \$3,000,000



NEW CUSTOM BUILD LAKE WILCOX

New Lake Wilcox Home With Fenced Ravine Yard, Upgraded Kitchen, and Luxurious Primary Bedroom With Ensuite and Walk-in Closet. Secondary Bedrooms Also Have Ensuities, with Hardwood Floors, Walkup Basement, and Rough-in Internet and Audio. Offered at \$2,990,000



STUNNING BRAND NEW BUNGALOW

Great Opportunity. Custom-Built Ranch Bungalow. Approximately 3,000 sf Above GRade. 6,000 sf of Total Area. Oversized 3-car Garage. Backing Onto Large Open Land. Peaceful Innisfil Location. Offered at \$2,178,000



EXCEPTIONAL & RARE OPPORTUNITY

Attention Developers, Builders and Investors! Future Redevelopment Potential. High Profile Location in the Heart of Prestigious Aurora. 297ft Frontage, More Than 2.5 Acres. Private Grounds with Pond & Water. Offered at \$4,500,000



ELEGANCE & STYLE

Almost 6,000 sqf of Finished Living Space. Entertainer's Dream Kitchen. High-End Thermador Appliances. 4 Large Bedrooms. All With Walk-In Closets. Fully Finished Basemetn. A True Renovated Masterpiece. Attractive North York Location. Offered at \$3.488,000



CHARMING AURORA BUNGALOW

Charming Bungalow in South Aurora, Perfect for Families and Investors. Features a Large Deck, Mature Trees, and Central Vac and Surveillance Cameras for Added Security. Finished Basement with Bar and Workshop. Walking Distance to Schools, Parks, and Shopping. Extras Include Stainless Steel Appliances and Alarm System. Offered at \$1,028,000



STUNNING EXECUTIVE HOME

4-Bed Executive Home with \$250K in Upgrades Backing onto Ravine. Gourmet Kitchen, Family Room with Fireplace, Office. Primary Bedroom with Ensuite, Walk-in Closet. Secondary Bedrooms with Ensuities, 2nd-Floor Laundry. Private Backyard with Pool, Shed with Hydro. Close to Amenities, Parks. Offered at \$1,580,000



RENOVATED CONDO -24HR SECURITY

Renovated 2 Bedroom & 2 Bathroom Unit in "The Residences Of Ridley" by Tridel. Custom Kitchen with Stainless Steel appliances and quartz counters. Primary bedroom with walk-in closet and spa-like ensuite. Amenities include pool, gym, and party room. Close to public transit and amenities. Offered at \$889,000



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Private 10-acre Estate Home in King with Grand 2-storey Foyer, Chef's kitchen, family room with fireplace, hardwood floors, primary bedroom with spa-like bathroom, walk-up basement, and workshop. Offered at \$3,400,000

免费精准估算房产市场价值，请联系我们，Daryl King 团队，竭诚为您服务
欢迎致电或发送电子邮件，了解更多地产资讯



*As per REMAX stats for Large Residential Teams, March 2022. Not intended to solicit clients currently under contract with another Brokerage.