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APRIL 21 - 23

THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 18 No. 16 905-727-3300 theauroran.com FREE Week of February 9, 2017



Eight-year-old Bilal Mohamed and his nine-year-old brother Omar wave the flag following the Aurora Community Vigil held Saturday afternoon at the Aurora Cultural Centre, standing in solidarity with the Muslim community following the January 29 terrorist attack on a Quebec City Mosque. At the event, which was organized by the majority of Aurora's faith communities, Omar led the call to prayer, while Bilal shared passages from the Quran.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Vigil shows "strength in diversity"

By Brock Weir

Amid the prayers on Saturday afternoon was a story.

Offered by Peter Ginsberg of Newmarket's Or Hadash, it involved two people walking along the street about to pass a Mosque. One, he said, was a "socially isolated" and not-very sophisticated person, and the other, a person very involved in their community.

The second person greets his Muslim brothers and sisters, knowing them as the Imam who sat next to them at an Iftar dinner; a woman who volunteered with them at a homeless shelter a while back, or someone they knew from business.

The first person, however, is key.

"They don't know anybody in the Muslim community; all they know about Muslims is what they read on the internet and what they see on Fox News," said Ginsberg. "They get all nervous, they get scared, they are dressed differently and the person crosses the street to avoid them. That individual is lost and wandering around in the dark. We need to find those people, we need to bring them out, we need to talk to them and engage them, because they are people who do things like what happened in Quebec."

It was standing-room-only at the Aurora Cultural Centre's Brevik Hall

on February 4, as Aurora's faith groups welcomed the public to a Community Vigil in Support of Our Muslim Neighbours in the wake of a Quebec City-area Mosque which left six men dead on Sunday, January 29.

Over 200 individuals were well removed from the dark as the names of the victims – Azzedine Soufiane, 57, Khaled Belkacemi, 60, Aboubaker Thabti, 44, Abdelkrim Hassane, 41, Mamadou Tanou Barry, 43, and Ibrahima Barry, 39 – were read out by Mae Khamissa, a member of Aurora's Alabarar Muslim Association, followed by prayers from Aurora United Church, Trinity Anglican

Continued on page 18

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239 Earl Steward Dr. Unit 4, Aurora
(Beside Ren's Pet Depot)

Countdown to the Blues

The All-Star Big Band blew the roof off Highland Automotive on Saturday night at the annual Blues Bash, the formal kick-off and countdown of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival later this month. For more, please see Page 21.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Snow plowing levels to remain in place despite complaints

By Brock Weir

If you were hoping for improved street plowing after December snow storms left many Aurora neighbourhoods waiting for a full cleanup, you might be out of luck – at least for this winter season.

Aurora doesn't have the resources in place to return to previous snow plowing service levels, according to CAO Doug Nadorozny.

Mr. Nadorozny told Council last

Continued on page 14

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TOWN OF AURORA

Weekly Notice Board

Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Thursday, February 9	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Committee of Adjustment
Thursday, February 9	7 p.m.	Leksand Room	Economic Development Advisory Committee (rescheduled to Mar. 9)
Friday, February 10	3 p.m.	Leksand Room	Governance Review Ad Hoc Committee
Monday, February 13	7 p.m.	Leksand Room	Heritage Advisory Committee
Tuesday, February 14	5:45 p.m.	Leksand Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, February 14	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Wednesday, February 15	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board
Thursday, February 16	7 p.m.	Leksand Room	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Committee
Friday, February 17	10 a.m.	Council Chambers	Trails and Active Transportation Committee
Tuesday, February 21	5:45 p.m.	Leksand Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, February 21	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	General Committee
Wednesday, February 22	3 p.m.	Leksand Room	Community Recognition Review Advisory Committee
Wednesday, February 22	5:30 p.m.	Leksand Room	Finance Advisory Committee
Wednesday, February 22	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Public Planning

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

Council meetings are open to the public and can be seen on Rogers TV, channel 10. For a full list of upcoming meetings, please visit aurora.ca

Open Forum
As of January 24, 2017, Open Forum will be held at 6:45 p.m. Open Forum allows members of the public to voice opinions on subjects of municipal concern.

Public Notices

Town Notice Board Changes to Bi-Weekly Publication

As of the **February 9, 2017** Notice Board, the Town of Aurora will be moving to a bi-weekly Notice Board publication.

The next Town Notice Board will be published on **February, 23, 2017**.

Outdoor Ice Skating Rinks

The Town of Aurora's outdoor ice skating rinks are up and running for the 2017 winter season. The rinks are located at the following parks:

- Ada Johnson Park 60 Hartwell Way
- Confederation Park 30 Glass Drive
- Machell Park 2A Aurora Heights Drive
- Town Park 49 Wells Street

All rinks are lit for evening enjoyment until 11 p.m. Please note, the rinks are unsupervised and are for shared use hockey and pleasure skating. The conditions of our outdoor rinks is entirely weather-dependent. Updates regarding the condition of the skating rinks are posted on the Town's website and social media feeds.

Municipal Trees

Please be advised that Municipal Street Tree Block Pruning will occur on the following streets between February 2, 2017 and April 14, 2017.

- Tree Grove Circle
- Corner Ridge Road
- Carlyle Crescent
- Devins Drive
- Dodi Street
- Hollingshead Drive
- McClenny Drive
- Valley Crescent
- Wardle Gate

The Town of Aurora is Seeking Your Help to Fulfill Provincial Legislation.**Notice for Drinking Water Testing for Lead**

The Ontario Government's existing drinking water systems regulation (O. Reg. 170/03) requires municipalities conduct testing for lead in drinking water from plumbing that serves private residences. This means that the Town of Aurora is mandated to perform tests at private residential taps to check for lead in drinking water.

Although the Town of Aurora's records do not indicate the existence of lead in the Town's water, there may be some privately-owned lead pipes that have to be replaced or there may be lead pipe plumbing within a home.

Residents are encouraged to volunteer for the Town's testing program. A limited number of participants are required. The program will involve sampling tap water twice a year in the volunteer's home. All sampling will be done by identified Town Staff.

If you are available for 45 minutes within the 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. timeframe and would like to participate in Aurora's Drinking Water Lead Testing Program, please contact our Waterworks staff at 905-727-3123, ext. 3453 or email ivoinea@aurora.ca.

What's Happening

Summer Camp Early Bird Registration

Save 10 per cent on the cost of select summer camps when you register from **February 27 to March 10**. The Early Bird discount applies to the following camps: Tots of Fun, Kinder Kamp, Sports Camp and Adventure Camp, Arts Camp. For more information about summer camps, please visit aurora.ca/campprograms.

Older Adults Program – Ukulele Heroes

Play songs on the ukulele. No experience is necessary and there is no need to read music. Bring your own ukulele or instruments are available to rent from the instructor.

This six-week program starts on **Wednesday, February 15** from 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Registration is required. Please use course code 8414. aurora.ca/activeseniors.

March Break Family Fun

Make the most of your March Break in Aurora from **March 13 to 17**. With so much to do in Aurora, why not stay local and enjoy some of our exciting and low-cost activities. Check out our scheduled March Break activities online at aurora.ca/marchbreak.

Monthly Walking Club

Join us at the AFLC indoor track on **Thursday, February 16** at 10 a.m. for our free Older Adults Monthly Walking Club. There will be healthy snacks provided by Chartwell Retirement Residences, along with a fitness professional from the Club Aurora. Additionally, some months will also feature a healthy living seminar. aurora.ca/activeseniors.

2017 Spring & Summer Parks, Recreation and Culture Program Guide

Coming Soon! Look for your copy of the *2017 Spring & Summer Parks, Recreation & Culture Program Guide*, being delivered with the Banner Newspaper on **Thursday, February 23**. Online registration for Aurora residents starts on **Monday, February 27**. There are many programs and activities for the entire family to enjoy! For more information, visit aurora.ca/recguide.

Events at the Aurora Public Library

Author Talk: Finding Aurora 1867 in Aurora 2017

To celebrate Ontario Heritage Week and Canada's 150th birthday Aurora historian Jackie Stuart will share her new book *An Aurora ABC* on **Monday, February 13** at 7 p.m. in the Magna Room. Signs of Aurora Confederation can still be seen in Aurora today: the town bell, various buildings and a connection to Buffalo Bill Cody. Copies of *An Aurora ABC* are available for sale and signing.

Pre-register, online, in-person or by phone. Visit aurorapl.ca for details.

Free tickets to March Break events

We've got a jam-packed line-up of awesome events over March Break including Mad Science, Mystic Drumz, Reptilia and more! Free tickets will be available for pick up at the Children's Desk starting **Saturday, February 11**.

Aurora's Multicultural Festival – Open House

The Town of Aurora is hosting a Multicultural Festival in September 2017 and is interesting in hearing what the community would like to see at this Festival. Two open houses are planned for the purposes of gathering information on the programming elements of the Festival.

The open houses are scheduled on **Thursday, March 2** and **Wednesday, March 8** from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. All residents, community groups and businesses are invited to attend. For those who wish to provide feedback but are unable to attend, an online survey will be available between **Thursday, February 23** and **Sunday, March 12** on the Town's website. Please check back for details soon.



Aurora's ARCTIC ADVENTURE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2017 • 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.
AURORA TOWN PARK • 49 WELLS STREET

**ENJOY LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**
First Nations presentation
Ice-carving competition
Muskoka Wildlife animal show

**GET ACTIVE WITH WINTER SPORTS**
Hockey shootouts
Snow shoeing
Snow tubing
Body zorbing (inflatable body bubbles)

**BRING THE KIDS!**
Inflatables
Fishing game
Mini golf

**... AND BRING YOUR APPETITE**
*Soup for Smiles at the Armoury hosted by the Optimist Club of Aurora**
Food vendors on site*
*Nominal fees apply.

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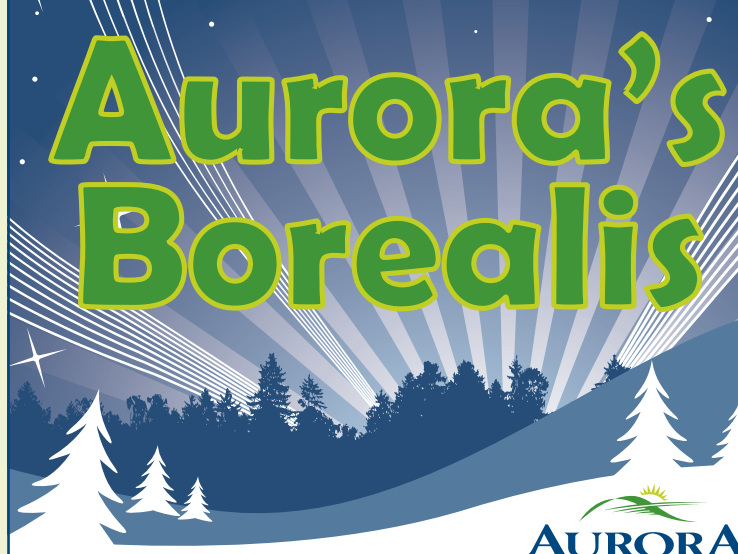
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Aurora's Borealis

Don't miss Aurora's Borealis

Visit Aurora Town Park every evening from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. until February 20, 2017 and enjoy the beautifully lit trees and festive atmosphere. Aurora Town Park is located at 49 Wells Street. For more information, please call 905-726-4762 or visit aurora.ca

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



What's Happening

Guided walks in York Region

Join us on free guided walks to experience the beauty of the York Regional Forest. Children under 16 years of age must be accompanied by an adult. Events are held regardless of weather conditions.

Snowshoe Stroll

Saturday, February 11 | 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 12 | 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Hollidge Tract, 16389 Hwy. 48, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Discover the forest on snowshoes! Learn about animal tracks and behaviours.

Registration required. Recommended for ages six and up.

Wild about Wildlife

Saturday, March 11 | 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Pefferlaw Tract, 24408 Lake Ridge Road, Town of Georgina

Enjoy a walk through the forest while learning about local wildlife. Registration required.

Register for our monthly events online at york.ca/forestevents or by phone at 1-877-464-9675. Registration opens one month before each event.

Share Your Photos and Win!

Upload your best photos taken in the York Regional Forest for a chance to have your photo featured in the Forests of York Region 2018 Calendar and win a Henry's gift card. For more information, please visit york.ca/forestphoto #YRFOREST.

Joint Operations Centre Tours to the Public

The Town is offering tours to the public of the new Joint Operations Centre.

The tours will be offered on the following dates:

- April 18 – 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- July 12 – 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- October 18 – 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

To register please, contact 905-727-3123 ext. 3447.

Police mark Black History month boosting “Unity in the Community”



Renee the Voice led attendees of York Regional Police's Black History Month celebrations in the national anthem as (inset top) Acting Chief Andre Crawford takes the salute. (Inset Bottom) YRP Superintendent Keith Merith was saluted upon his retirement.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

By Brock Weir

Unity is essential a strong community, according to York Regional Police as they mark the start of Black History Month.

Hundreds of people from across York Region gathered the YRP's headquarters in Aurora on Saturday morning for the annual celebration to pay tribute to African-Canadian trailblazers within the local police community as well as celebrate the theme of “Unity in the Community.”

Featuring entertainment from singer Renee the Voice and Latoya Mullings, as well as Josette Leader on the steel pan drum, it was a upbeat occasion tinged with poignancy.

“Today, we have gathered to celebrate 21 years of Black History month in Canada and 13 years of celebrations right here at the York Regional Police,” said emcee Sergeant Kolin Alexander. “We gather to pay respect to those who helped pave the way for future generations and to highlight the achievements of those who are making a difference right here today.”

Among those celebrated on Saturday were Markham resident Clive Hylton, who received the York Regional Police's Afro-Caribbean Canadian Internal Support Network Award for his work in youth mentorship, as well as one of their own: York Regional Police Superintendent Keith Merith, who recently announced his retirement after more than 30 years with the police service.

“Over the past few days, all of the Black officers here have been in a fog of disbelief upon hearing that Superintendent Keith Merith will be retiring in a couple of weeks after 30 years of dedication to York Regional Police,” said Deputy Chief Andre

Crawford. “Keith and I started our careers on the same day and over the years I always thought he was the one, one of the few black officers who had a chance of rising to the level that I am now honoured to be at today. I personally thank Keith for his support over the years and his ongoing commitment to this organization. Keith has been a shining example of a leader, a mentor and a friend to all of our black officers.”

Deputy Chief Crawford also spoke to the sudden immediacy of the always timeless message of “Unity in the Community.”

“We are privileged to act as hosts as we celebrate the significant role and contribution of black history towards the building of Canada, our multicultural nation of nations,” he said. “All one has to do is reflect upon the troubling events of the last two weeks taking place south of our border. We are bearing witness to a nation that is tearing itself apart, a nation that is losing its unity, a nation that has lost the value of community. We must never forget that that is not us. We must never forget that we as Canadians are far better than that.

“We are grateful for our community and our country as we celebrate the power of unity. Unity within our community has help shaped the resilience and determination we all feel in the ongoing quest for freedom and equality. It is fitting that we set aside time this month to highlight and recognize the successes, the achievements and the contributions of black history to our communities, locally and abroad. Remembering and honouring these trailblazers will hopefully inspire future generations of youth to strive for excellence by being the very best that they can be.”

Briefly

- SHAKE-UP AT TOWN HALL**

Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny is now holding the interim reins of the Town's Infrastructure and Environmental Services following the departure of the department's long-time director Ilmar Simanovskis. Mr. Simanovskis was appointed to the position during the 2006 – 2010 term of Council, a position he held until Friday. “Ilmar Simanovskis is no longer with the Town,” confirmed Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith, Aurora's Manager of Corporate Communications. “During his almost nine years with the Town of Aurora he has contributed significantly to the organization and we wish him well in his future endeavours. Managers in Infrastructure and Environmental Services are temporarily reporting to the CAO during the recruitment process.”
- BACKWARDS BROADWAY SUPPORTS HOMELESS**

Support Inn From The Cold, Covenant House, and Blue Door Shelters this Saturday as Aurora's Wavestage Theatrical Company takes over Newmarket Theatre for “Backwards Broadway” – a gala blind of race, age and gender, featuring veteran soloists from all their productions. Performances include selections from Into The Woods, Ragtime, The Secret Garden, Follies, Company, Shrek, and more! Buy a ticket and bring a new pair of warm socks to the concert to add to the kids of blankets and toothbrushes Wavestage is preparing. Showtime is 7 p.m. For tickets and further information, call 905-953-5122 or visit www.newtix.ca.
- FEBRUARY 7 COMMITTEE MEETING**

Freezing rain on February 7 led to the cancellation of that evening's General Committee meeting. Items that were on the agenda will be addressed at the upcoming Council meeting on February 14 at 7 p.m.



"OPERA'S GREATEST HITS"

Saturday, February 18 - 8PM at Trinity Anglican Church in Aurora...79 Victoria St.
Sunday, February 19 - 3:00 PM at Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. 10268 Yonge St.

Join us for a concert of your favourite opera themes.
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Wagner, Bellini, Offenbach, Leoncavallo, Meyerbeer, Di Capua and Verdi.
Special guest artists include Jennifer Tung, soprano and Romulo Delgado, tenor.

Tickets: Saturday: Adults \$28, Seniors \$23, Students \$15
Sunday: Adults \$30, Seniors \$25, Students \$15

For ticket information call: York Symphony at (416) 410-0860



TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF ACCEPTANCE OF PUBLIC WORKS

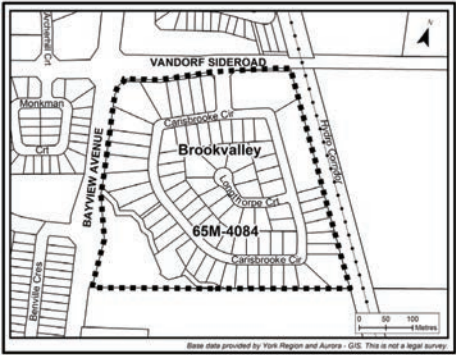
The Town of Aurora has received the following application under the **Planning Act**:

SUBDIVISION OWNER:	Brookvalley Developments (Aurora) Ltd. Registered Plan 65M-4084
DATE OF ACCEPTANCE:	December 13, 2016
APPLICABLE BY-LAW NUMBER:	5936-16

DESCRIPTION OF PUBLIC WORKS ACCEPTED:
All services referred to in Section 3.01 of the Subdivision Agreement between Brookvalley Developments (Aurora) Ltd. and The Corporation of The Town of Aurora for Registered Plan 65M-4084.

Description of streets in which Public Works accepted are located as per registered plan 65M-4084:

- Carisbrooke Circle, Plan 65M-4084
- Longthorpe Court, Plan 65M-4084



The public works as described above are herewith accepted by the Town of Aurora.
For more information, please call 905-727-1375.

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In response to “alternative facts”

(Re: Politics as Usual, January 26)

This is in response to Allison Collins-Mrakas opinion on “Trump and his appalling talking heads” under the title “Those are the facts, Jack.” Perhaps the writer should have been more appalled by Obama’s lies about Obamacare, including you can keep your doctor and plan and the costs will not increase, or his lies about Benghazi being caused by a video, or his lie about the hundreds of millions of unmarked bills flown to Iran in a plane not being a payment for American hostages. Obama lied about ISIS being the Junior Varsity team and pressured the intelligence community to prepare their reports to support his false narrative.

Those lies were about serious issues. The argument from the Trump administration about crowd size was raised in response to the media’s constant attempt to belittle his presidency.

This is not worth even reporting on. The media ignored Trump’s huge crowd sizes compared to Hillary’s small turnouts throughout the campaign.

Where is the outrage that a reporter falsely tweeted that Trump had removed the bust of Dr. Martin Luther King to push the lie that Trump is a racist? The reporter had to retract his tweet after it had been retweeted 3,000 times.

The facts were not checked before the tweet was sent. This paper’s negative focus on Trump is only a distraction from our homegrown scandals perpetrated by Wynne and Trudeau, and that is a fact.

Shelley Wister
Aurora

Environmentalists, developer and Town help chimney swifts come home to roost

The Chimney Swift was listed as a nationally threatened bird under the federal Species at Risk Act in 2007 and provincially under the Endangered Species Act 2007 in 2009.

In the past, forest management techniques reduced the availability of old growth forests throughout eastern North America. As the large hollow trees disappeared, the swifts adapted to using chimneys in houses, churches, schools and industrial buildings. However, as heating methods replaced fireplaces, many chimneys are being capped, steel-lined or demolished altogether.

This has contributed to a 95 per cent decline in the Chimney Swift population in the last 40 years.

There is one chimney swift roosting site and several nesting sites in the downtown core of Aurora – the roosting site being the old Wells Street School chimney. The recent conversion of this building into lofts by Betula Developments caused concern.

A group of citizens known as Nature Aurora worked with the developer, the Town, and the Ministry of Natural Resources staff, which resulted in the height of the chimney on Wells Street Schoolhouse Lofts being carefully raised so that it would conform to the old chimney.

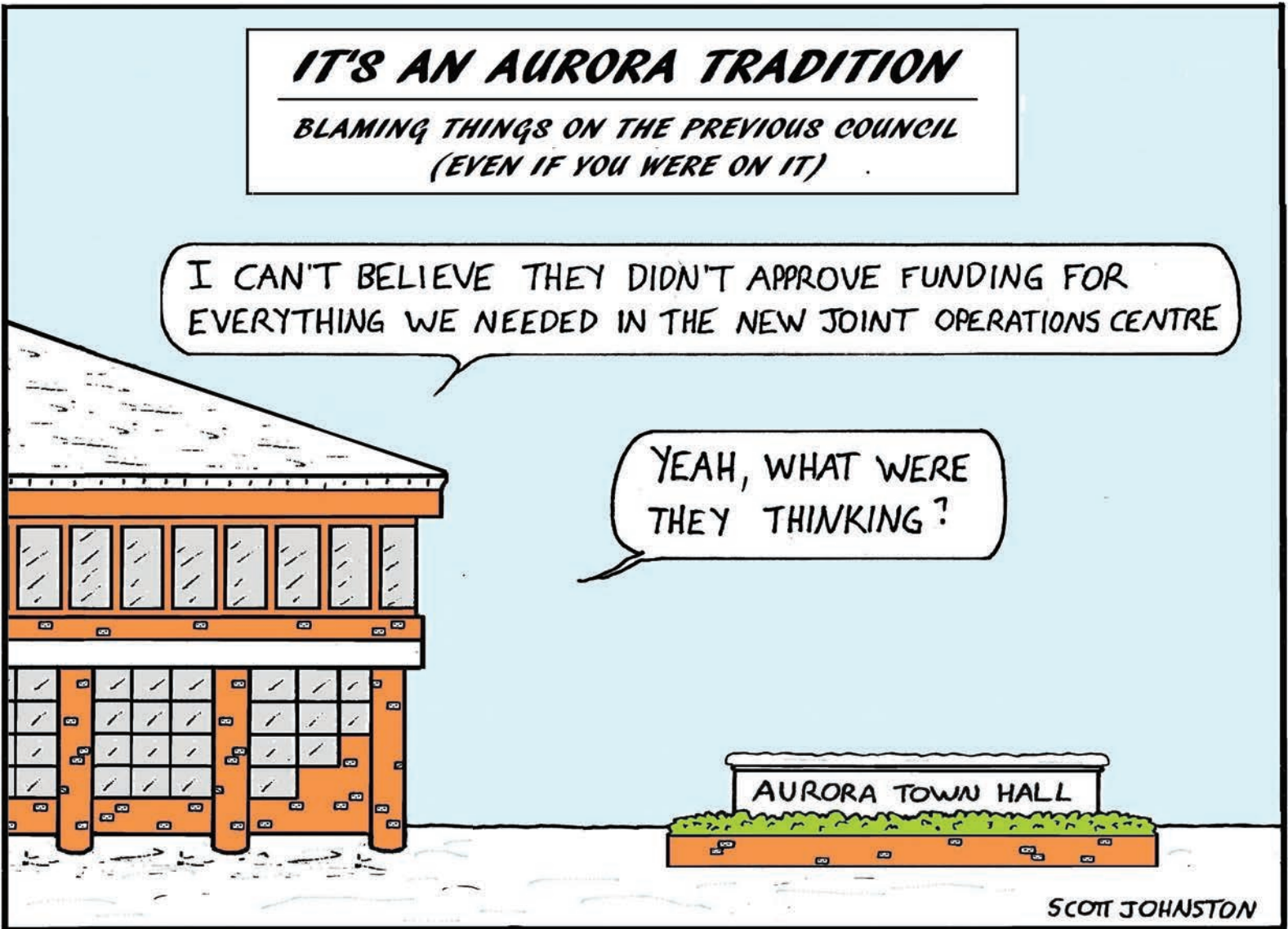
We are pleased to report that not only did chimney swifts return to this site after the construction was completed, but according to data collected by local volunteers of Nature Aurora in 2016, the population has exceeded previously reported numbers.

We would like to thank this developer for being a responsible corporate citizen in Aurora.

This success story is testimony to what can be done when there is cooperation between responsible development and conservation interest.

Christine James
Nature Aurora

Machell’s Corners



Strengthening the Ties that Bind



BROCK’S BANTER
Brock Weir

Suddenly, we were no longer part of “the other,” watching events unfold in the United States from a lofty perch. We were in the thick of it and it was a shift which permeated the thoughts and behaviours of nearly everyone I encountered.

Within just a few hours, just about every faith community in Aurora and Newmarket was in high gear, organizing vigils and other observances to provide not just a chance to mourn, but facilitate a healing moment for the community. Aurora and Newmarket finalized the details around the same time, but Newmarket’s got underway first – Friday night at the Newmarket Community Centre and Lion’s Hall, part of Riverwalk Commons.

The hall was filled to capacity with individuals from of all faiths, all colours, from both communities, and beyond. As I milled about the room, the sadness in the air was, to a very slight degree of frustration, largely directed at the political arena. While representatives of faith groups, politicians and a representative of LGBTQ+ youth were greeted warmly, a pointed remark by the representative of the Or Hadash Synagogue got one particularly resounding round of applause.

“I wish I had a magic wand to make a foolish president wise,” he said.

A few of the individuals who took part in Friday’s vigil were also on hand at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday afternoon for our local community vigil, but there were predominantly new faces in the crowd. With those new faces came, I observed, a different air.

It was a less politically charged atmosphere, and noticeably more contemplative and reflective.

Perhaps it can be chalked up to people having that cathartic round of applause the previous evening, or whether a shift of tone can take place in the cold light of day, but the question on people’s lips seemed to be: where do we go from here?

Frustration was gone, souls seemed to be buoyed in the intervening hours, and resolve was steeled.

Maybe it can also be chalked up to the moving moment near the very start of the Vigil when nine-year-old Omar Mohamed got up on stage to lead the Muslim Call to Prayer.

I have heard the Call to Prayer many times over the years, but there was something particularly moving about hearing it from the mouth of someone so young who, perhaps due to his age, might not be fully conscious of the world we’re living in today and how different it is from the world he entered nine years ago.*

Over the past week, I have seen Canadians united and galvanized in a direction that is becoming increasingly rare.

Some might fear that the worst is yet to come and might let the fear overcome them rather than using it to fuel the fire of forging onward, but to do so would be a costly mistake.

While the iron is regrettably hot, now would be a prime opportunity to strengthen the values so many stressed over the course of the last 10 days to be irrevocably Canadian.

Sunday’s toastmaster was right: patriotism can’t simply be based on flag waving or a vague sense of shared positivity. There does have to be a true understanding of the ties that bind, a renewal of the values of equality, freedom and inclusions.

“We are bearing witness to a nation that is tearing itself apart, a nation that is losing its unity, a nation that has lost the value of community,” said York Regional Police Chief Andre Crawford at another Aurora event little more than an hour before the Community Vigil. “We must never forget that that is not us. We must never forget that we, as Canadians, are far better than that.”

Everyone at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday were living embodiments of that sentiment. But, we can’t take the view that “we, as Canadians, are far better than that” as a simple statement of fact. Whether we are or not is a debate for another day, but if we want it to be true, it will only be the result of our collective efforts.

*Full disclosure here: upon talking to Omar at the end of the Vigil, I realised he was more precocious than I initially suspected. He was very keen to someday type his name into Google and having this week’s front page photo pop up, so I’m simply doing my part!



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**The Aurora Museum
& Archives is celebrating:**

Aurora – Canada’s Birthday Town!

Do you have memories about how Aurora became known as Canada’s Birthday Town? The Museum is seeking information and photographs for this summer’s exhibition. Share your story at letters@auroran.com.



MP’S REPORT

**Leona Alleslev, MP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill**

**New Year,
New Roles**

I have learned over the years that service takes many forms.

I began my career serving as an Air Force Officer in the Royal Canadian Armed Forces. I was proud to serve my country as an Officer, and in 2015 you gave me the opportunity to serve my country again, but this time as your Member of Parliament. A few months in to my term, I was honoured to have been asked to serve as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

As Parliamentary Secretary I enjoyed every minute of working on files like Shared Services Canada, Canada Post, and Procurement Modernization. I am proud to have served in this role, supporting the Hon. Judy Foote, but am now excited to have been asked to serve in a different role.

**Member of Standing Committee
on National Defence**

I am happy to announce my new role as a member of the Parliamentary Committee on National Defence. In this role, I will be serving Canadians in a new way and firmly believe this committee’s work is of the utmost importance at this time in our nation’s history to ensure that Canada’s interests are represented both at home and abroad.

Given recent changes on the world stage, Canada must stand strong. As many nations are turning in and becoming both more populist and isolationist, Canada must play to our strength of being an outward and open contributor to military and economic alliances.

In March, as part of the Defence Committee I will be traveling to Washington where the Canadian Defence Committee will meet with American Elected Officials as well as military senior leaders at the Pentagon to discuss the ongoing military relationship between our two countries. The United States is one of Canada’s greatest defence allies and we want to ensure that this relationship remains as strong as ever.

**Executive Member
of NATO Parliamentary Association**

I look forward to visiting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Headquarters in Brussels later this month as part of a delegation with the NATO Parliamentary Association. Our delegation will meet with the Canadian Ambassador to NATO, as well as political officials from NATO countries to discuss NATO priorities, Canada’s role in the organization, and how it can be strengthened.

NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance comprised of 28 member states. NATO’s essential purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members through political and military means. The organization promotes democratic values and encourages consultation and cooperation on defence and security issues to build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict. NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military capacity needed to undertake crisis-management operations.

Canada has been a proud member of NATO since the Alliance was founded almost 70 years ago. Canada is committed to promoting international peace and security, responding internationally to today’s complex security challenges. The world needs more Canada. Canada alone cannot solve the world’s greatest problems, but together with our partners around the world, we can.

**THIS WEEK’S
NEW POLL**

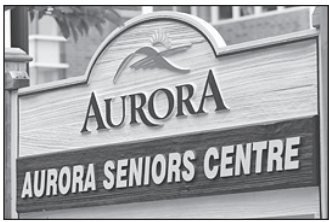
**Are you satisfied with Aurora’s
current snow clearing program?**
Yes No

Go to www.theauroran.com to vote!

Previous Poll Results

Do you agree with the sentiments expressed by those
in Saturday’s Women’s March?

RESULTS TO DATE	February 7, 2017	YES	NO	UNSURE
		64%	33%	3%



**SENIOR
SCAPE**

Christina Doyle

wishing a good morning. If you live in a condo, I pray that you have a friend with which you can share some fun times together. You only need A friend to make your life rich.

I give you permission to splurge on an extra piece of chocolate this month, an evening of tea and cookies with a loved one, then top it off with a nice warm movie that brings a smile to your face.

In February, the snow hasn’t melted, the sun is yet to be seen, the birds are few and sometimes the days seem ever so long.

Ladies, find that red lipstick; a woman is never too old for lipstick and having her hair done.

There are some wonderful love stories right here in Aurora. Two hearts finding each other in retirement homes, in high school dances, on blind dates, on an app on your cell phone. There is no reason why anyone should not feel loved, especially this month. Our little four legged furry friends hold so much love, and you may consider adopting a kitty or a puppy or even a canary.

The love you will receive from these precious animals will keep you on your toes and bring much laughter into your life. A dear friend of mine, upon losing her husband suddenly, went out with her children and adopted a dog. Yes, she still hurts and deeply misses her husband, but

By Christina Doyle

Please excuse my corniness, but I love February.

Valentine movies on TV with lots of cheese, as my daughter would say.

For those of you who have not heard that expression before, it basically means that every corny movie I like to watch always has a happy ending, boy meets girl, one of them is confused along the way, but then in the end, true love finds its way to both of their hearts.

February chocolate, funny valentines to read and a special red dress, a red shirt, a red tie, red, red and more red everywhere.

Yes, love is in the air and in our hearts; it sometimes looks like a memory of a loved one that we once had. Buried in your heart, are the moments you shared together as one. Just remember, be grateful that you had a love so special, while the rest of the world is out searching for that one true love. Your heart is completely submerged in loving thoughts of days gone by.

Its love when you look at that person and somehow all their quirks and funny habits mean very little as you realize just how much you love them, just the way they are. Its love when you have burnt dinner and your loved one says, “how about some KFC!”

Its love when you look at old photographs and now see the little wavy lines on your face, and your hair almost white, you consider yourself fortunate to have been given love.

Its love when you can say, I love you even when...

Often when I write for Seniorscape I look for inspirational quiet music to stir my soul and realize what a privilege it is to share with you my humble thoughts. There is no shortage of good wishes being sent your way. Like a good friend

Energy Planning issues will heat up again in York Region

The issue of high electricity prices in Ontario has continually been in the media spotlight over the past few years.

Ironically, there has not been much press coverage of local electricity issues, mostly due to the fact that Ontario is currently enjoying a rather healthy supply margin.

But local electricity planning issues will slowly bring electricity back into the public spotlight in York Region and Aurora.

Some background:

In 2004, many citizens of Aurora were furious about the possibility of upgrading the existing 115 kV transmission line to a 230 kV high voltage line that runs through town from Markham to Newmarket. The redevelopment would have meant taller towers with wider bases, with the end result being that the towers and transmission lines would have been closer to homes.

Many ratepayer associations, led by the Aurora chapter of Stop Transmission Lines Over People (STOP), as well as by local Council, were against this project and wanted the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) (now called the Independent Electricity System Operator or IESO) to fully investigate all the alternatives.

Residents were concerned, from a health and safety perspective, about the link between electric and magnetic fields (EMF’s) to childhood leukemia, and they were also worried about the value of their homes.

In the end, the transmission line was not upgraded. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) decision instructed that a transformer station, to reduce the high level voltage to a more manageable level, be constructed. The Holland Junction Transmission station in King Township was built.

However, by 2008 Northern York Region was continuing growing beyond the level at which the existing infrastructure could meet the standards for reliability. If the



**FRONT PORCH
PERSPECTIVE**

Stephen Somerville

main 230 kV transmission line became disrupted, the load at the Armitage Transformer Station in Newmarket, which is greater than 250 MW, could not be restored so as to comply with the IESO’s reliability criteria.

Restoration therefore could only be achieved in the required time-frame by either local peaking generation that can turn on and quickly ramp up to 350 MW, or a new 230 kV transmission line from Markham to bring in the electricity from elsewhere in the province.

In the end, the Northern York Region Working Group collectively identified the construction of a peaking plant as the preferred solution over enhanced transmission and an approximately 370 MW natural gas fired peaking (simple-cycle) generation was built in King in 2012.

Aurora had again sidestepped the political mine field of either having large scale generation built within its borders or a new transmission line running through town.

Fast forward to 2015 and the IESO was developing a twenty year plan to look at ways of ensuring a reliable supply of electricity for York Region.

According to an advertisement that appeared in another local paper at the time:

“An Integrated Regional Resource Plan is being further developed by the three electric utilities serving the region – Newmarket-Tay Power Distribution

sweet Lucky has been a joy for everyone in the family.

Let’s all become responsible for each other; let’s not leave any heart unattended. Let’s try to share ourselves with someone today. Let’s forgive and forget and make someone’s day a little special. Find those who are hurting and offer them your shoulders and listening ear as they open and learn to let go and begin healing.

Sometimes I think we walk around blindly when we know of someone who is mourning, hurting and becoming a recluse because no one took the time to even ask how are they doing.

This February is Heart month; share your heart with someone, take care of your heart. Exercise, walk, jog, bike, get off the couch and move. Put on some music and dance in your room and laugh and sing and be grateful that you are blessed.

I wish all our readers a very Happy Valentine’s Day and put on some music of Cole Porter and enjoy this life that you have been given.

**WHATS HAPPENING AT
THE SENIORS’ CENTRE**

Friday night dances: These popular dances will be held on Fridays, February 3 and February 17. Singles and non-members are welcome. The cost is \$5 for members and \$6 for non-members.

Light refreshments are served and there is also a cash bar. The dance runs from 8 – 11 p.m.

Line Dancing: If you want to learn to line dance or just practice, the line dance group meets every Tuesday from 6 – 7.30 p.m. The cost is just \$1 for members.

Ukulele Heroes: This is a new program being run by the Town of Aurora at the Seniors’ Centre. It starts on February 15 and runs for six weeks. The cost is \$90.

Ltd., PowerStream Inc. and Hydro One Networks Inc. – in conjunction with the IESO.

“A Local Advisory Committee is being established to provide advice on the development of the plan’s longer-term options, including innovative solutions that will address the region’s electricity needs. They will also advise on how to best engage the broader community in the discussion.

The Local Advisory Committee “comprises up to eighteen members, representing municipalities, First Nation and Metis communities, consumers and citizens, the business community, and environmental and conservation groups.”

As everyone knows, York Region is one of the fastest growing regions in Canada, and along with this growth comes an appetite for power. The overriding issue is that we do in fact need new sources of power in York region (at some point in time) to maintain our standard of living and way of life.

Communities cannot and should not grow unless energy needs are part of the equation. Just as we would not allow homes to be built without adequate provisions for water, sewage, schools and roads, nor should we allow development without a real plan for our power needs.

There is also the critical issue of balancing larger community interests vs. local interests – that is the provincial government mandate of ensuring that the lights stay on vs. local governments’ right to say no to a particular power project. It is a delicate balancing act.

In my next column, I will explore the priorities arising from the Local Advisory Committee Meetings as well as a high-level overview of potential options to address the longer-term needs in Northern York Region.

**Stephen can be contacted at
stephengsomerville@yahoo.com**

Aurora family pays it forward for disabled youth – with \$2 million gift

By Brock Weir

Aurora’s Jessica Coriat thanks the doctors and staff of Toronto’s Hollandview Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Centre with helping her to learn how to live independently.

Born with cerebral palsy, Ms. Coriat has gone from being a patient at the hospital to an enthusiastic volunteer, helping youngsters find that same independence.

The Coriat family, however, has taken paying it forward to a new level, donating a whopping \$2 million to Holland Bloorview to help others make this transition.

Holland Bloorview announced the Aurora family’s donation last week, which is part of a \$4.78 million donation to facilitate a multiyear strategy designed to transform how kids with disabilities reach adulthood. According to the hospital, the Transitions Strategy will “transform the journey to adulthood for kids with disabilities by breaking through barriers, partnering with leading adult services, and developing a young adults

program to address the needs of 16 – 26-year-olds.

“I realised we’re fortunate enough to be able to do it,” says Jessica’s father, David. “My daughter was born with cerebral palsy and I see what Holland Bloorview could do in terms of helping kids with disabilities. The program we discussed, Transitions to Adulthood, effectively showed these young people how to take care of themselves both from a healthcare standpoint, and financially because when you reach 18, government help stops. Somehow they have to deal with what life throws at them.”

Joining the David and Lynn Coriat in making this program possible is the Slaight Family; Gluskin Sheff + Associates Inc; Jon and Nancy Love; La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso; BloombergSen; RP Investment Advisors LP; Gerald Sheff and Shanitha Kachan Charitable Foundation and RBC Foundation.

“With any program, you need funding and we decided to step up and provide a good chunk of the funding, and with some

very supportive business associates, who helped us raise the money. In all, we know the program is going to be funded for at least five years.”

The donations were, of course, welcomed by Holland Bloorview who said these transition needs had long been identified by their client families, whether this feedback came from youth and their parents questioning what their next steps are when they are no longer in the pediatric system; what happens when they move from being a youth to adult in terms of independent living, employment, and post-secondary education; and even general life skills.

“We have created a utopia at Holland Bloorview for kids with disabilities where we have thought about all of their holistic needs...but once they become adults, that doesn’t exist in the same way,” says Sandra Hawken of Bloorview. “We knew we had an important role to play in the system, and with our families, to set them up for success as adults.”

Some of the key pieces, she says, are addressing barriers and gaps already existing when it comes to employment, independent living, and education. Programs already exist at the hospital to address that, but there was a definite need to expand them so more kids inside and outside Holland Bloorview have the opportunity to participate in programs that expand these horizons.

“One of the biggest pieces this transition strategy will enable at Holland Bloorview is a wholesale shift in the way we do things,” she says. “We’re committed to ensuring that every single client has a transition plan in place. Right now, that would be true for a smaller group of clients we have identified have that need but now we want to make sure that, regardless of the age of the child, as soon as they come into Holland Bloorview, we’re talking to them about all of the transitions their child will have through their childhood and beyond so it doesn’t become a scary time when your child becomes 16 – 18 and you have to think about what comes next.”

Through the program, Holland Bloorview hopes to be able to “build bridges” between the services they offer and opportunities elsewhere in the

healthcare and education systems. Right now, those systems are very complex, Sandra says, and clients are often left navigating them on their own, or with their families who are often continuing on in their caregiver role.

These are issues that have been identified by Mr. Coriat as well. These youth need to know how to access healthcare, go to the doctor, advocate for their ODSP, and teach them how to manage their dollars. As Jessica and her parents worked to navigate the system, David says he saw clients with strong family support systems in place, some single parent families, and some families struggling to afford the equipment their child needed to get by.



David, Jessica, and Lynn Coriat. Supplied photo

“Many had no idea how to reach out and get that equipment,” says David. “Our vision is the program will roll out [in a few years] across the various areas of Ontario and the grand vision is that it [fosters] Canada-wide programs where they work with all the various hospitals and agencies across the country. We view it initially as Toronto and York centric, but we would like to see it Ontario-centric and Canada wide. Canada-wide would take 10 to 20 years before it gets there, but I think in five to ten years there is a good chance it can be Ontario-wide.”

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Joint Operations Centre cost concerns sent to Committee

By Brock Weir

Councillors hope a future report will paint a “full picture” on the true costs of Aurora’s new Joint Operations Centre.

The Joint Operations Centre (JOC) was recently completed at the top of Industrial Parkway North and is now the home of Aurora’s Department of Public Works, as well as the Parks Department.

Earlier this month, Councillors received what was intended to be a “final” report, wrapping up the \$20+ million dollar project, but it turned out to be anything but a final report.

Lawmakers raised several questions on what the true cost of the building ultimately is after a several items were taken out of the scope of the project, deemed unnecessary at the time, only to be added back in at a later date.

At the previous week’s General Committee meeting, Council members lobbied several questions over the project at CAO Doug Nadorozny, Treasurer Dan Elliott, and Ilmar Simanovskis, who was, until this past Friday, February 3, Aurora’s Director of Infrastructure. Not content with some of the answers they received, they opted last Tuesday to send the entire report back to staff for more number-crunching and overall clarity.

“Last week, there were a number of comments made by Council around the table and...I share the concerns with the information in the report,” said Councillor Michael Thompson, who chaired the January 24 General Committee meeting and was unable to fully wade into the discussion until last week. “I know our CAO took copious notes on additional information that members of Council are looking for, and I just think, in my perspective, it is more appropriate to refer this report back to staff and ask that that be done.”

Seconded by Councillor Tom Mrakas, Councillor Thompson’s motion found additional support from Councillor Sandra Humfries.

“It is very important,” she said,

on turning this matter back to staff. “After thinking about it last week, what I would like staff to do is almost an audit of the whole sequence of events, what happened, when it happened – the full story. There may have been some additional information that may not be clear. We have to have it all on the table as to why this was done, and what decisions were made so we’re all clear on what the case really is.”

Meanwhile, efforts continue to pay for the project.

Aurora’s former Works Yard on Scanlon Court was recently sold for \$3.01 million dollars, but work is ongoing to clean up the lands, a condition of sale.

Proceeds from the sale of the land will go towards offsetting the cost of its multimillion dollar replacement, the Town’s new Joint Operations Centre.

Right now, Aurora has set a budget of \$250,000 to clean up the land, which was in use as the Town’s Works Yard for over 40 years, such as the removal of fuel storage tanks, Mr. Simanovskis told Council.

In total, a maximum of \$500,000 could be shaved off the proceeds going back into Town coffers if one factors in the sale costs, he added.

Councillors questioned how long it would take to pay off the construction of the new JOC, which was built on a 10 year debenture, to be paid off by development charges, the sale of Scanlon Court, and the proceeds of industrial and business lands on Leslie Street.

Some offered concern that DCs wouldn’t cut it.

“We’re reaching build out,” said Councillor Wendy Gaertner. “The 2Cs are going to be built out in a couple of years. If we’re not going to get that DC financing by the time the 2Cs are completed, where are we going to get it?”

Marco Ramunno, Aurora’s Director of Planning, told Council the development charges were mapped out over a 10 year period and, outside the 2Cs, there are other developments coming down the pipeline in other areas of Town that will contribute to the DC funds.

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Should Aurora become a sanctuary town? – Toronto motion raises questions



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By Brock Weir

Could Aurora become a Sanctuary Town?
A request by Councillor Sandra Humfries last week to endorse Toronto’s affirmation of its status as a “sanctuary city”, in the wake of international demonstrations protesting U.S. President Donald Trump’s executive order placing an indefinite ban on immigration from seven predominantly Muslim nations, raised questions around the local Council table last week.

The councils of both Aurora and Toronto met last Tuesday, January 31. Earlier in the day, the City re-affirmed its status as a “sanctuary city” which gives all residents “full rights to access all city services and city-administered services without fear, regardless of their documentation status.”

Their motion went on to “reject discrimination based on religious, ethnic, or national origin, affirms that refugees are welcome in our communities, and [Council] stands united with cities around the world against islamophobia, xenophobia and racism and calls on all Canadians, community leaders, and elected officials to speak out against discrimination and hate in our communities, across the country and around the world.”

Hours later, Councillor Sandra Humfries brought Toronto’s motion to Council’s attention during new business calling on Aurora to endorse the city’s decision.

“I would just like our Town to endorse it and support it,” she said. “I think it is a

wonderful reminder that we are an open-armed, welcoming country. Aurora has opened arms to our many multicultural nationalities and we have compassion for our fellow differences. I would love for us to endorse and create our own motion for this as well. I want to send a clear message to the Federal government to continue our immigration laws and policies, and we do not divide and mimic anything of our neighbours in terms of the actions recently displayed.”

The motion stopped there – for now.

Before it was ultimately taken off the table, in Councillor Humfries’ hopes that it could be re-introduced at next week’s meeting, some Council members said they had concerns on two fronts: the first being not having enough time to consider the full motion at the eleventh hour, and the second not being fully sure of what implications might come to Aurora by endorsing the motion.

“I am fully in support of the City of Toronto being a sanctuary city, they have been for years, [but] they had full background of knowing what it is and what it entails,” said Councillor Paul Pirri. “I am in full support of the sentiment, but what does it mean to endorse a city doing this?”

While Councillor Humfries, citing the welcoming of Syrian refugee families into the Aurora community last year, said it shows Aurora believes in sanctuary cities, she said it was particularly important in the light of the January 29 terrorist attack on a Quebec City mosque.

“I think it makes more sense for us to look at becoming a sanctuary town ourselves than just saying ‘Good on the

city of Toronto and endorsing their actions,” added Councillor Pirri. “For us, just to endorse what the city of Toronto is doing when we have no way of jumping in ourselves, I think we’re missing an opportunity here, so I will be voting against endorsing what they have done.”

Councillor Jeff Thom offered a similar view to Councillor Pirri, saying he did not feel he had enough time to fully consider all the points in Toronto’s motion.

“Of course, everyone abhors discrimination of any kind and I think we should all be working to eliminate that kind of discrimination but I think we should be given the courtesy to know what we’re voting on before we vote on it,” he said. “There is a lot of stuff with sanctuary cities that I don’t know. I don’t know in the Canadian context what it means.”

Councillor Wendy Gaertner, on the other hand, said what jumped out at her was Toronto’s message “to send out a clear message...rejecting all division, intolerance, and hate.” While she said that is something she supports, an alarm bell was raised with “a moral obligation to speak up whenever a government declares lawful refugees, visitors, and even its own permanent residents inadmissible or unwelcome.”

“They are actually making an anti-Trump statement, which may be appropriate for Toronto, but I am not sure it is appropriate for our municipality, even though I am sure many of us agree with it,” said Councillor Gaertner. “I would like to support this resolution and I think it is fantastic Toronto has stepped up.”

Similarly, Councillor Michael Thompson said he did not see a problem in endorsing Toronto’s motion, as Council often supports resolutions sent their way from other municipalities.

“I don’t have an issue declaring my approval of what Toronto did,” he said. “Good for them. Now, if we want to take it to the next stage and do more with something that is Aurora-based, then so be it. It is a place to start. I appreciate Councillor Humfries bringing it forward and I certainly will be in support of it to endorse it. Hopefully something more comes out of it.”

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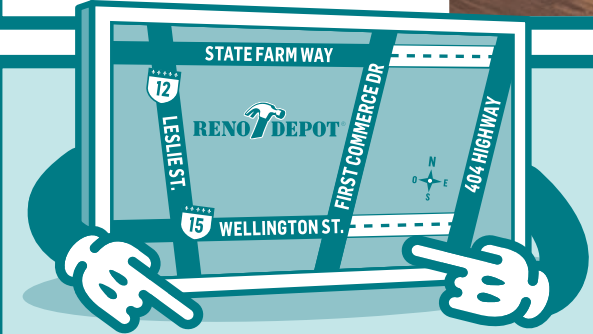
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Café Series gives chance for people to reconnect with themselves

By Brock Weir

Screaming on the street corner might not be the most “socially acceptable” way of expressing one’s self, but doing so with a guitar in hand, and set to a bit of a melody? Well, now you’re talking.

This is the feeling kept in mind by occupational therapist Michelle Scott as she helps facilitate the music therapy program at Eating Disorders of York Region’s Riverwalk Wellness Centre’s music therapy series. Based on Yonge Street, just south of Wellington Street in the historic post office building, Riverwalk is planning to take their therapeutic sounds out from under the clock tower and into the community to spread the healing power of music.

“The purpose of the shows is to raise awareness about the agency all over York Region but also to engage people and let them know there is support out there and, in an accessible way, share arts and music for people in the community who wouldn’t otherwise have those opportunities,” says Ms. Scott of the first installment of Riverwalk’s Café Series, which bows Saturday, February 28, from 6 – 9 p.m. at Books, Café and Things on Main Street Newmarket.

The second installment in March moves to Aurora at Bonsai Hill.

“In the Riverwalk community we have a really awesome group of musicians who have performed at Songs to Recovery (Riverwalk’s annual benefit concert),” says Ms. Scott. “In the past, we have put on more visual arts shows, but we thought why not put on a concert? In our music program,



Michelle Scott of EDOYR’s Riverwalk Wellness Centres.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

people just love music as a form of self-expression. Sometimes we will have a free jam, sometimes I will bring my guitar and we’ll look up chords on the internet for popular songs, and just sing and play percussion. It’s a really fun way to bring people together.”

Riverwalk prides itself on providing a “non-judgemental” venue for their clients to express themselves. Whether it is their music programs, or their visual arts programs, there are often people who come in saying “I’m not an artist,” or, “I’m not going to create something worthwhile or good.”

Job number one for people like Michelle is to make these thoughts things of the past.

“We emphasize that it is not really about the product, it is not really about what you’re going to create in the end, how accessible it is, or if you have an audience,” says Michelle, “it is more about the process of creating something and allowing yourself the ability to make mistakes and try out new things without the feeling there is judgement placed on you.”

So far, the program has attracted people ranging from the age of 18, to those nearing their seventies, just there to have fun and express themselves.

Ms. Scott says she knew from an early age the power of music as a personal outlet. For most millennials, “Sharon, Lois and Bram” was the first album listened to all the way through. But, once this rite of passage was out of the way, the next album Ms. Scott took in all the way through was Pink Floyd’s “The Wall.”

“From a very young age listening to music and hearing other people sing and write about things that are really challenging connected with me,” she says. “We live in a society that operates under a logical, positivist kind of philosophy which is super important, but also all that Right Brain stuff is really important too. In order to be a whole, complete person, you don’t necessarily have to be an artist per se, but being able to engage in the more playful, creative, imaginative side of ourselves is kind of integral to overall mental wellness – not just preventing mental illness, but promoting mental wellness in a positive sense.”

“I think there are conceptions that art therapy and music therapy are kind of wishy-washy, hand-wavy, ‘go bury your crystals at the bottom of a mountain’ kinds of things, but it is quite well supported in research nowadays.”

In the end, the new Café Series is about raising awareness about Riverwalk and the services they provide, about showing the York Region community that anyone who is dealing with struggles and life stresses is able to come to a place to hear from people who are dealing with the same thing and, in the end, they can try their hand at “engaging creatively and engaging with others in a safe space.”

“It is a way of helping people know their complete selves,” says Ms. Scott. “It is about having a full soul and a full heart and realising that you’re a full person. It is important to honour that playful, imaginative aspect of ourselves that is all too often forgotten when we’re running here and there and stressing out. It is important for people to reconnect with that part of themselves.”

For more on Riverwalk and the Café Series, visit www.edoyr.com.

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Two Country Day School students Oxford-bound this fall

By Kim Sillcox

January 11 wasn't an ordinary day for Trinity De Simone and Olivia Railton, Grade 12 students at The Country Day School.

Both girls had had this date highlighted in their calendars for months. This was the day that all shortlisted candidates for Oxford University hear via email whether they had been accepted. By 7 a.m., both Trinity and Olivia were grinning from ear-to-ear.

The School's university placement record has always been strong, but even the Oxford Office of Undergraduate Admissions reports that "it is very unusual for schools to have more than one offer holder."

Both students are passionate academic learners with a great depth of knowledge who were drawn to Oxford's tutorial teaching style of learning (most classes are taught either one-on-one or one-on-two, not lecture style) early in their high school careers.

Initially, they both viewed it as a long shot, but as the years passed, it seemed to become more attainable for each of them.

Trinity De Simone first dreamed of going to school in the UK while on a family trip to London in Grade 6. She has demonstrated her passion toward many things since arriving at CDS in Grade 7, including social justice and inclusivity, writing, reading and poetry, as well as drama and music. After Grade 10 she realized her academic average would allow her to be competitive and apply to universities outside of Canada. Meanwhile her thirst for knowledge and desire to explore topics in depth led her to establish a unique rapport with her philosophy teacher – the Director of Academics for Middle/Senior School, Mr. Dave Harvey.

"Our conversations have been central to why I got into Oxford," says Trinity. "I needed someone to talk with me about the things that I was interested in. Mr. Harvey was able to provide that for me through weekly one-on-one conversations."

It wasn't until a year into these in-depth conversations that Trinity realized how much they paralleled Oxford's tutorial system.

According to Mr. Harvey, "Trinity is naturally compelled to explore philosophical and psychological issues – it is at her core. She is also very engaged by ideas and acts on her beliefs." He has been recommending reading materials to her for the past two years.

In pursuit of an even greater intellectual challenge last summer, Trinity attended a three-week course at Cornell University called Genius and Madness in Literature. Similar to the interdisciplinary course she and Olivia took at CDS last year (On the Nature of Change), this university course was mostly literature based with some philosophy and psychology elements peppered throughout.

Students were assigned to read a text every day and a book every weekend. A pivotal moment for Trinity came after reading Kant's views on aesthetics and listening to a guest lecturer speak about it the next day.

"That was the moment for me when I knew I was going in the right direction in terms of philosophy and psychology – being able to use logic to explore concepts that are important and relevant to every day life." In writing her personal statement, she endeavoured to convey how much she loved her subjects and hoped that this degree of passion would carry through and be noticed.

Olivia Railton first set her sights on attending Oxford at a Debating tournament at Queen's University in Grade 9. A fellow debater from another CAIS school had just been accepted and Olivia immediately set about to learn more.

Her CDS debating coach, Kerstin Wyndham West, is an Oxford graduate and as a seasoned member of the CDS Debating and Public Speaking team for the past six years, Olivia has spent countless hours training with Ms. Wyndham-West and travelling to tournaments throughout Canada, parts of the U.S. and Hong Kong. She has achieved a great deal of success in her high school debating career, including a 2nd place finish at the World Championships last year in Pittsburgh,

PA (fellow CDS debater and friend Natalie Ganzhorn '16 captured 1st); 1st overall and top speaker for the second year in a row at the International Independent Schools' Public Speaking Competition and numerous other accolades.

"Olivia has researched numerous current affairs and human rights topics during her years of debating," says Ms. Wyndham-West. "She has developed excellent critical thinking skills and the ability to articulate her ideas effectively in both written and verbal form using real-world examples to back up her points. Not only have these abilities contributed to her success on the global stage, but they are also phenomenally important life skills that will no doubt stand her in good stead in her Law studies at Oxford University."

The National Debating Championships take place next month in Winnipeg and Olivia hopes to qualify for Worlds for the third time – taking place in Sydney, Australia this April. Ultimately, debating at the Oxford Union has been her ultimate dream, as it is reportedly the most prestigious debate society in the world.

When applying to schools in the UK, similar to the U.S. system, one must write a personal statement and take a standardized test, depending on which school you're applying to. Throughout the UK's UCAS system, applicants may apply to up to five schools through one common application with an earlier deadline of October 15 for Oxford. Students then learn if they are shortlisted for an interview by the end of November. It is strongly advised that all applicants travel to take part in their personal interview in early December.

Olivia and Trinity both made the trip across the pond, but were scheduled a week apart. The interview process was extensive, Olivia had three interviews and Trinity had four. Trinity applied open, which means she was randomly assigned to the college of Lady Margaret Hall, which was then deemed her "first choice" and where she stayed during the interviews. She also got additional interviews at a randomly assigned "second-choice" college, Pembroke. Olivia applied to her first choice, Wadham College, for Law with European Law which will allow her to study in The Hague in the Netherlands – home of the U.N.'s International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court during her third year.

"British universities don't put as much emphasis on extra-curricular involvement," explains Olivia, who is especially excited about the opportunity to study Law in The Hague.

While she admits that her debating skills were a tremendous help, she had to present a compelling argument as to why debating would help her become a good law student in constructing her personal essay.

According to Mr. Harvey, Olivia's verbal reasoning skills are unparalleled.

"As a world class debater, her verbal acuity is quite amazing. She also distinguished herself by pursuing an AP class in psychology on her own."

Distinguishing herself comes naturally for Olivia, and she has done it continuously since arriving at CDS in Grade 2. Her background in public speaking and outgoing nature have contributed to her success as a Student Ambassador for Admissions, and she is a wonderful addition to the School's Band and Coffee House evenings as a saxophonist, guitar player and singer; including doing duets with Trinity.

As one would expect, their interviews were intellectually rigorous. Trinity's were all on the same day, and included in-depth dialogues following pre-readings that she was given 20-minutes in advance, and the question, "Can computers think?" in which she engaged in a 20-minute one-on-one discussion. Olivia's interviews were spread out over three days and included writing applications of the Law, an interview with two Law professors seated across from her in an Oxford Board room, and a final one conducted entirely in French.

Through Olivia's involvement in the international debating circuit, she has developed a global network of friends, which she added five more to (four Brits and a German) during her interview stay. On their last evening, they promised to contact each other on January 11, regardless of the outcome.



Trinity De Simone and Olivia Railton.

Supplied photo

And as luck and smarts would have it, all six will reunite at Wadham next fall.

"Both of these students are extremely passionate learners and have been known, supported and nurtured at CDS," explains David Huckvale, the School's Director of Admissions

and University Placement. "When it comes to writing personal references, it is often a team effort, and there were many willing contributors for both students. Now the entire community gets to share in the rewards of their accomplishment."

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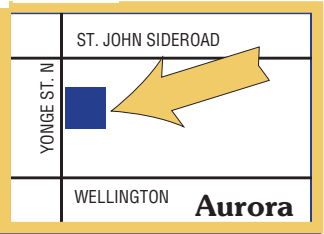


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The Bantam AA Aurora Panthers take on the St. Louis Lady Blues in the International Silver Stick tournament at the Aurora Community Centre on Friday.

Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte

Panthers lace up in International Silver Stick

By Jake Courtepatte

Over fifty Atom and Bantam rep teams took to the ice in Aurora for the girls International Silver Stick tournament this weekend, and two hometown teams came out on top. Both the Atom AA and Bantam BB Panthers were crowned champions in the largest minor hockey tournament in the world, each going undefeated en route to their championship. The Atoms defeated the Whitby Wolves and Oakville Hornets in round robin play, tying the Waterloo Ravens to meet the Stoney Creek Sabres in Saturday's semifinal. A 1 – 0 win set up a championship game against the Barrie Sharks Sunday at the Aurora Community Centre, winning the title by a score of 2 – 1 in a battle of the undefeated. The Bantam BB Panthers had a similar path to the championship game, allowing just one goal in wins over the Rocky Mountain Lady RoughRiders and the Barrie Sharks and a tie with the Kitchener Lady Rangers.

They met the Huron Heat in their final after shutting out the Oakville Hornets, downing the Heat 2 – 1 to earn the championship. In other action, the North Halton Twisters defeated the Kingston Ice Wolves to win the Atom A division, the Orangeville Tigers shut out the Clearview Ice Cats in Atom BB, and the Oakville Hornets beat the Brampton Canadettes in Bantam A. The Bantam AA Panthers went undefeated in round robin play, before falling 2 – 0 to a tough Stoney Creek Sabres squad in Sunday's semifinal. Stoney Creek went on to beat the Oakville Hornets in the championship game. Now in its eighteenth year, the annual Silver Stick tournament in Aurora attracts over 1,000 spectators and athletes. As the Central York Girl's Hockey Association regular season comes to a close, the Aurora Panthers rep teams are preparing for playoff action. Schedules will be posted at www.girlshockey-centralork.com.

Tigers split weekend against Spirit, Dukes

By Jake Courtepatte

Aurora's Junior A Tigers were victorious on the road for just the second time this season on Saturday, ending a three-game losing streak in their season series against the Stouffville Spirit. Stouffville got on the board early, followed by three straight Aurora goals off the sticks of Mel Melconian, William Constantinou, and Konner McMillan. With both teams trading a pair of goals in the second, Stouffville made it a 4 – 3 game with a goal from Alex Williamson early in the third. Anthony Pavaglio restored the two goal lead with a tip that squeaked through the pads of Hunter Jones with just over a minute left in regulation, while Jacob Kostopoulos capped off a two-goal performance with a late empty netter. Melconian's two-point night brought the rising star's point total on the season to fifty, while Pavaglio had a four-point night including three assists. It was the second win in four games for the Tigers, who were eliminated from postseason contention last week. Over two months separated the win from Aurora's only other one on the road this season, last beating the lowly Milton IceHawks in late November. Sunday night's matchup with the Wellington Dukes at the Aurora Community Centre seemed like both teams wanted to get home for the Superbowl, with all the action coming in the first period. After Carmine Alberga opened the

scoring seven minutes in with his fifth of the year, Wellington rattled off five straight goals past Brayden LaChance before the end of the first period. Both teams would go silent for the second and third, with Wellington coming out on top 5 – 1. With playoff hopes long gone, the Tigers still have a chance to pass the Pickering Panthers to get out of the NorthEast Conference basement. With a record of 7-35-1-4, they currently sit two points back of the Panthers, with a game in hand. The Newmarket Hurricanes, meanwhile, are the only team in a conference playoff spot yet to clinch. They can do so with just two more points, hosting the Spirit on Thursday at Ray Twinney, before visiting the Tigers. The Trenton Golden Hawks and Georgetown Raiders, both ranked in the top twenty CJHL teams nationally, lead the NorthEast and SouthWest Conferences respectively. This weekend marks the final time this season fans can see the Tigers at the Aurora Community Centre, with the Tigers hosting the Whitby Fury on Saturday and the Hurricanes on Sunday. Both games have start times of 7:30 p.m. Aurora will wrap up their schedule with four games on the road, visiting Burlington, Whitby, Orangeville, and Kingston. For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.



Tyler Davis reacts to being stopped in front of the Wellington net in the Aurora Tigers' 5 - 1 loss to the Dukes at the Aurora Community Centre on Sunday.

Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte



The St. Max Mustangs capped off their season with a 2 - 0 win over the Aurora High School Eagles on Monday.

Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte

St. Max Mustangs look to defend title in girl's hockey

By Jake Courtepatte

The St. Maximilian Kolbe Mustangs have a reputation to uphold in hockey, and the varsity girls squad is certainly doing their part. For the second straight year, the Mustangs have finished atop the York Region Athletic Conference heading into playoff action, posting a 7-1-0 record against the four other teams in the conference. They capped off their season Monday with a decisive 2 – 0 victory over the Aurora High School Eagles, who sit second in the conference. Forward Nikki Shaw put the team on her back scoring both goals, breaking the shutout late in the second before potting another by splitting the defensemen midway through the third.

Victoria Solilo provided the shutout, her fourth of the year. In eight regular season games, the Mustangs have allowed just five goals. With the playoff picture now set, the number-one seeded Mustangs will take on the fourth-seeded Stouffville High School Spartans in the first round of the YRAA playoffs. Each series is a first-to-three-points format. In the other matchup, the second-seeded Eagles will face the third-seeded Markham District Marauders. St. Max is the annual "team to beat" in the tournament, reaching the final in the last three seasons. In 2016, the Mustangs took home the title with a series sweep of the Bill Crothers Colts. Playoff action is set to begin next week.



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Wait for snow plows was an “operational decision,” says CAO

By Brock Weir

If you were left wondering where the snow plows were as you were trying to get down your street in December, it was an “operational decision” at Town Hall, according to CAO Doug Nadorozny.

As current Aurora policies stand, 8 centimetres of snow have to be on the ground before snow plows are deployed. The last significant snow event, however, clocked about seven centimetres of snow.

“We made a decision to wait until the next day to plow, and that snow sat all day Saturday on the ground,” Mr. Nadorozny told Council last week. “It was removed on Sunday.”

But, as Aurora had called a “snow event” in relation to its on-street winter parking policy, where all drivers need to remove their cars from area streets when Town Hall sets the alarm, an “expectation” had been set that streets

would be plowed.

“The expectation had been set through the calling of a snow event that the roads would be good by Saturday afternoon and we weren’t even trying to do that at that point,” he said. “We made an operational decision not to do that. It is trying to find that sweet spot in something as unpredictable as weather.”

Responding to a motion calling for the 8 centimetre threshold to be dropped down to 5, a level last maintained in 2013 and 2014, Mr. Nadorozny said a thorough analysis would need to be made in terms of risks. Aurora could find itself in a place where, in a severe snow event, it would simply not be able to keep up.

“Our drivers are only allowed to log so many hours before we have to give them a rest period,” he explained. “There are also so many hours they are allowed to work in any given week. In the old days, 15 years ago, snow plow operators would operate for 20 hours, sleep for four, and be back on the road and go. In today’s law that is just not acceptable and we would

be in big trouble with the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Transportation if we tried to do that.”

When levels hit 7 centimetres in December, there was a further storm of 22 centimetres in the forecast. With the staff and equipment Aurora had on hand, there was worry within the department about running out of staff hours, he said. It was then the “operational decision” was made to wait for more snow.

“That is what caused the frustration,” he concluded. “We debriefed over the situation, we spent a fair amount of time on it, and one of the considerations we did give was to – even if it wasn’t a full change in the service level – we contemplated whether there was a need to have some additional staff to head off that kind of circumstance again and, in the end, it really didn’t make any sense without a more thorough review. The thought was the likelihood of getting

the exact same situation again with 7 centimetres on the ground and 22 coming, figuring out the hours at the end of the week, we’re willing to take the chance we don’t get the exact same scenario again and, if we do, we adjust it a little bit differently.

“It is not to put off the discussion around service levels, but just to say that if the same thing happened I think we would handle it a little bit differently. The concern is [with five or six centimetres] we’re in great shape. We will get out and get all the plowing done and everything will be fine. The real problem will emerge in the first five when there is 21 coming. That is when we have to figure out how to deal with the hours we need to maintain that service level throughout the snow event. If we say we have a five centimetre standard, we have to put in place the resources to make sure we can achieve a five centimetre standard and that is the part that needs more work.”

Councillors question impact of returning to old service levels

From page 1

week the Town currently does not have the resources at its disposal to change the current threshold at which snow plows are deployed to secondary streets from the current 8 cm to the previous threshold of 5 cm, a level last in place for the 2013-2014 winter season.

The CAO was responding to a motion from Councillor Tom Mrakas calling on Council to re-instate the old levels following “concerns” raised by residents and businesses alike.

“Residents were driving around slipping and sliding everywhere,” said the Councillor. “At the end of the day, it is not a safe atmosphere and it is not a service level I think our residents deserve. We should be providing a much higher standard. I believe it is our job to provide the best possible service at the best possible price, and right now, as it stands, I don’t feel the service level for our winter maintenance is at the best possible service level for our residents.”

Councillor Mrakas’ motion to reinstate the previous levels “immediately”, however, failed on several fronts – including Council members questioning what budgetary impacts such a move would have on municipal coffers and, in turn, the taxpayer. The matter was ultimately referred to Aurora’s Finance Advisory Committee for further consideration ahead of the next budget cycle.

“We don’t have the resources in place to go to a 5 cm service as it is tonight,” Mr. Nadorozny told Council. “We will run out of hours in any [snow] event with a 5 cm standard.”

Nevertheless, Council agreed nearly across the board that this year’s snow removal program has seen its fair share of problems.

Councillor Sandra Humfries, for instance, said the previous Council’s decision to raise the threshold to 8 cm was a mistake.

“We thought we’d take a chance, we weren’t sure if the service levels would be impacted...and I had faith it would work,” she said, adding the change was supposed to see a balance struck between snow clearing and making sure resources were in place to ensure sidewalks were cleared in a timely manner. “This is not about finance, this is about delivering the services the residents’ need. Five centimetres? Bad on me that I accepted that policy in the last term. We took a chance and it just doesn’t work. I am appalled every time that we get a little bit of snow. Our staff works really hard to get the best done based on the policies we set out. It is not staff that made a mistake, we did. If we, as Councillors don’t feel this is a problem, then fine, vote. There is a huge

problem.” Others agreed it is a huge problem, but disagreed when it comes to dollars and cents. For many Council members it is very much “about finance.”

Councillor Paul Pirri said the new service levels were adopted to address cost increases and there was too little information in front of Council to know the implications of going back.

“What I am seeing isn’t necessarily a service level issue; in some cases, it is a common sense issue,” he said. “I have heard from some residents that the snow plow went by twice on their road during the last snow event and both times they just salted it, they didn’t drop the plow. For me, from a common sense perspective, if the roads have snow on them, if it is noticeable people would have a hard time driving on those roads, why wouldn’t you just drop the plow, clean it up, and help to alleviate some of the concerns the residents would have?”

You can’t just “snap your fingers” and go back without knowing what the cost will be to residents, he concluded. Councillor Jeff Thom had a similar conclusion, adding you need to have the best service levels for the best price, but the numbers need to be crunched.

“I agree with the sentiment that there are some core services we have to provide and we have to get it right every single time,” added Councillor Michael Thompson of water, garbage removal, and snow plowing. “I share some of the concerns [raised on getting the full impact of going back] and I would also like to get a sense whether or not the issues we have been experiencing recently are strictly policy-related, or is it really about how we have been implementing the policy. That kind of feedback is crucial.

“I certainly agree that we need to provide the best service level, absolutely, but I would feel more comfortable moving forward with changing by having some of that information provided by staff both around how the policies are being implemented and whether that is part of the reason why we’re having these issues, [and cost]. Perhaps we can find an interim solution over the next couple of weeks to help us move forward while staff bring that issue back, but certainly I feel more comfortable having some of those facts.”

Councillor Harold Kim, on the other hand, was succinct in his assessment.

“I am a little bit flabbergasted with the fact we have a 150 year history and track record and documentation of 150 winters that we still haven’t figured out what the best form of servicing people in the snow,” he said.

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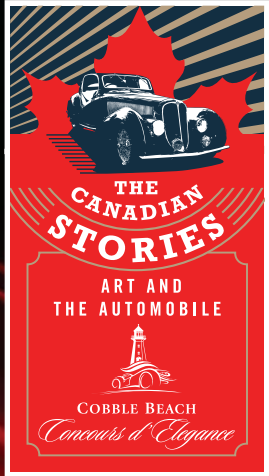
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Multicultural Festival committee nixed due to time concerns



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By Brock Weir

An initial move to make this year’s second-annual Aurora Multicultural Festival a fully citizen-led affair was nixed by Council last week amid timing concerns.

Earlier this month, Council members signed off on scheduling two open houses for members of the public to provide input on what they would like to see in this year’s festival, as well as tasking staff with coming up with term of reference for a new Multicultural Festival Committee intended to steer the ship.

While the two public open houses will move forward on dates yet to be set, the Committee idea was scrapped. Council’s initial motion called for terms of reference – informally, the purpose of the committee and duties of committee members – to come back for final approval later this month.

Some, however, said this was too tight a turnaround time to recruit members and have them in place to plan for a September festival.

“Thinking on this last week, I don’t particularly support the idea of having

a committee for this,” said Mayor Geoff Dawe. “We – and I – have spoken many times on our very efficient, effective and really good special events staff. I don’t see any reason, quite frankly, [for] terms of reference [to] come back.”

The two open houses received unanimous approval, but the Committee was struck down on a vote of 5 – 3, with Councillor John Abel absent from the meeting.

Among those supporting Mayor Dawe’s call to scrap the committee were Councillors Tom Mrakas, Jeff Thom, Michael Thompson, and Paul Pirri. Councillor Pirri said a week’s reflection on the plan made him question the logistics.

“Although we did think this made sense last week, once we look at the numbers in terms of the timing, having this committee in place to get this back to us in February and then to go out and get committee members, we’re losing all that time for staff to be planning an event. If we want to talk about having a separate Events Committee in the future, I am happy to have that discussion but [in terms of this event] I think we would be doing a disservice to the community because we would be missing out on the opportunity to go out and get all the work done.

“I think this event was run extremely well last year. I think there was fair representation from all cultures in Aurora last year, so I think, on the whole, we need to move forward.”

One member of the community, however, was less than enthusiastic about how the event was run last year. Former Council candidate Anthony Pullano has repeatedly criticized Council and planning staff for not including formal Italian representation in the first iteration of the festival, which highlighted five of Aurora’s many cultures. He appeared before

Council in Open Forum on January 24 to once again speak about the Festival.

Those in favour of the committee said putting one in place would make everyone accountable for the results.

“Our staff did a terrific job of organizing, implementing and executing the Festival last year,” said Councillor Harold Kim whose Notice of Motion saw the revival of the Multicultural Festival last year based on a template from the one-off event held in 2013 to mark Aurora’s 150th Anniversary. “I have no doubt they will do an even more exemplary job given one year’s experience under their belts.

“The one reason why I would be in favour of just maintaining the status quo and not having a committee on this is because of timelines. I do wish this was brought forward in November so the committee would have had more time to organize everything. With that said, we organized the first Multicultural Festival with one methodology and now I would like to see how it would work with just public participation. We have a dedicated group of residents here in Aurora who love to do these things and I would love to see new residents involved and put their names forward for the committee.”

A similar view was offered by Councillor Sandra Humfries, who said the more individuals helping engage the community the better.

“[The Town’s] Special Events [staff] are just incredible, but I do like the idea of having a committee,” she said. “I don’t want to waste anyone’s time in doing something like this, but I do believe it allows for an open communication vehicle for staff to consider different ideas from individuals who might want to participate and volunteer that day. I see this as more individuals helping engage the community. For me, it is a great idea to support staff.”

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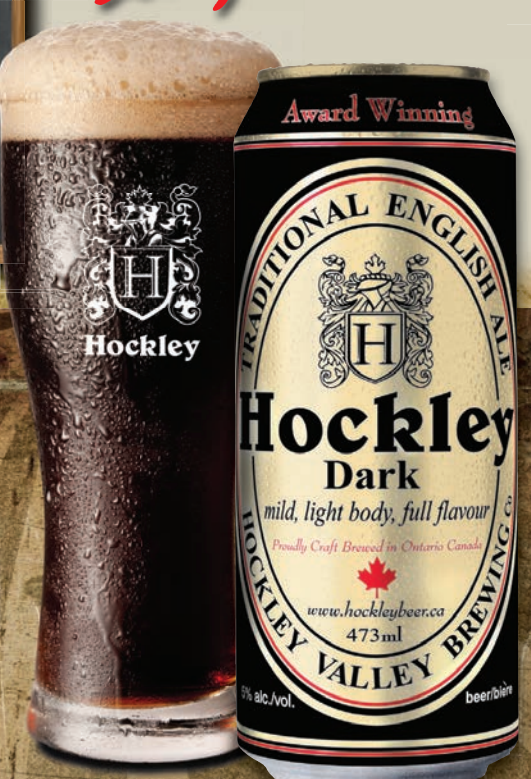
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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10
The lead-up to the Aurora Winter Blues Festival continues tonight at the Aurora Cultural Centre with the “Friday Night Blues Party” featuring Diana Braithwaite and Chris Whitely from 8 – 10 p.m. The Centre is proud to collaborate with the Aurora Winter Blues Festival for a night of hot blues! The finest couple in Canada’s blues scene graces our stage with their five-piece band. As the venerable jazz and blues bible Downbeat Magazine said about Diana Braithwaite and Chris Whiteley: “It’s a rare and good thing when two talented performers join forces.” Audiences, critics, and blues lovers all over North America and Europe seem to agree. Doors open at 7 p.m. for an 8 p.m. start. Tickets are on sale now -- \$30 in advance or \$35 on the day of the concert – from the Aurora Cultural Centre. www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11
WILL YOU BE MY VALENTINE? Join the Aurora Historical Society today from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. for a jewellery making workshop, just in time for Valentine’s Day. Come to Hillary House to make a hex nut bracelet, a gift box, and a card for your loved one. Must be 16 year of age or older to participate. Space is limited; contact 905-727-8991 or email leigha.cooney@aurorahs.com to register.

The Aurora Winter Blues Festival and the Aurora Public Library will host a Pop-Up Blues performance today in the Library living room from 1 – 3.30 p.m. Today’s theme: Lady Plays Guitar.

Calling All Writers – The Writers’ Community of York Region is thrilled to present its first student workshop to be held at 1310 Kerrisdale Blvd, Suite 200,

in Newmarket today from 2 – 5 p.m. This workshop is open to students in Grades 7 – 12. The Writers’ Community offers a variety of activities, including writer prompts, blue pencil sessions, book talks, and guest speakers guaranteed to stimulate your inner writer. Bring a friend to enjoy the experience. This is a fun opportunity to share with others the love of writing. For additional information, contact Youth Coordinator and Forum Facilitator Erika Willaert at hintsofgrey@gmail.com. Erika is the teacher-librarian at Rogers Public School and is a published writer with over 20 years of teaching and writing experience.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18
The Aurora Winter Blues Festival and the Aurora Public Library will host a Pop-Up Blues performance today in the Library living room from 1 – 3.30 p.m. Today’s theme: Old School Blues.

Raise The Roof Rhythm and Blues Dance: The Aurora Legion, in conjunction with the Aurora Winter Blues Festival, will host the “Raise the Roof” Rhythm & Blues Dance. For those of you looking for a fun evening of dancing, we have the perfect night out for you. By popular demand we have the big band sound of “Groovestra”, a nine-piece band that knows how to heat up the dance floor with its Jump Rhythm & Blues along with other popular hits from the 70s, 80s and 90s. Throw on your dancing shoes and come on out and support a wonderful cause. Proceeds from this event will go towards the Legions New Roof Fund, the Queens York Rangers Cadet Program and the AWWF Youth in Music Program. For more information, call 905-727-9932.

MARCH 31 – APRIL 2
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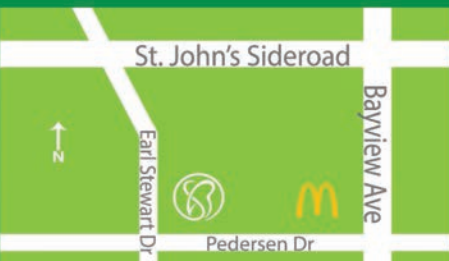
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Chris Whiteley and Diana Braithwaite will perform at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Friday night.

Supplied photo

Duo joins forces for a cool night of hot blues

By Brock Weir

After soaking in church music as a child, Diana Braithwaite often had one destination in mind after the service finished: over to her friend’s house to listen to her mother’s Bessie Smith album.

She was barely a tween at the time but she knew from then on, as she would later tell fellow musician Chris Whiteley, “I don’t think I can get out of these blues alive!”

Thankfully for Ms. Braithwaite and Mr. Whiteley, they’ve very content to keep swimming with the current of the blues as they prepare to bring their unique blend of talent to the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday night, February 10, for A Friday Night Blues Party, held in conjunction with the Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

Famed performers who have toured around the world, it’s rare the duo has the opportunity to play together as a band so close to home, but when the opportunity to play the Aurora Cultural Centre came about through their colleague, musician John Sheard, they jumped at the opportunity.

“We are both getting a lot of enjoyment about what happens when we perform together as a duo,” says Chris. “We often get the comment from critics and theatre audiences that the chemistry is somehow good. I think we share a similar outlook on what makes good blues music and I think that helps it make it work for us.”

So, what does ultimately make good blues music? There is a misconception, they agree, that the blues brings about, well, cases of the blues.

“It is very heartfelt music,” says Chris. “There is a lot of emotion in there. If you just analyse it strictly from a musical point of view, some people say it is a pretty simple kind of music with only three or four chords, but these performers always brought something special to it and that’s what the blues is: the personalities of the people and the personality we, as performers, try to bring to the blues. It is that heartfelt passion you can put into the music.

“People often think the blues is sad, but the blues often helps people feel better, and that is the history of the blues. They will be uplifted, but get a sense of the many different styles and people who helped make the tradition what it is.”

Adds Diana: “We work hard at presenting shows that are highly entertaining and that is what we usually get back from the audience. We want to make sure we give people a really good variety and take them on a trip through the blues. There is something about music that releases a lot of things. We are pretty well masters at that and audiences will leave feeling better and leave feeling they have experienced a very authentic blues show. Come out on Friday – and you won’t be sorry that you did!”

Diana Braithwaite & Chris Whiteley – Keeping the Blues Alive!, featuring John Sheard and others,

arrives at the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, February 10. Doors open at 7 p.m., with the concert beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 on the day of the concert. For more information, call 905-713-1818.



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Standing-room-only for multifaith vigil

(Above) The Aurora Cultural Centre was flooded with crowds at Saturday’s vigil. Below: Imam Refaat Mohamed of Aurora’s Alabrar Muslim Association.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

From page 1

Church, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, the Newmarket Islamic Centre, representatives of local Jewish and Hindu communities, and messages from all levels of government.

The reflective crowd was led in a call to prayer by nine-year-old Omar Mohamed who, along with his brother, Bilal, helped their father, Imam Rafaat Mohamed of Alabrar Muslim Association share passages from the Qur’an, all standing beside an altar of six candles, six white roses, and two Canadian flags, representing those who lost their lives.

“We have seen how Canada is a good example for the rest of the world,” said Rafaat. “All the world is moving us and seeing this beautiful reaction of Canadians getting together against any aggression, against any attack, any ignorance, any bigotry [shows] they all stand together. People like yourselves, beautiful people of this country of Canada, come together united and putting their hands together; side by side, and that is what this is all about.

“We pray that we all work together, side by side, hand on hand, to remove ignorance and to always stand united as Canadians. I pray for our country to be a country of strength, a country of peace, and a country of tranquility.”

These were sentiments shared across the spectrum of faiths, denominations, and simple humanity represented in the room on Saturday afternoon.

Sharing the parable of the Good Samaritan, representatives from Trinity said the concept of “neighbour” crosses all boundaries.

“Neighbour is the other person, every single other person,” said Rev. Dawn Davis. “Sometimes it is a very different other person who travels on the same road and sometimes falters and falls, is unjustly tricked, or even cruelly beaten down. Being in God’s company is to know, and even show love and mercy. From our neighbours to your neighbours, our deepest condolences.”

Filling the role as emcee for the community vigil, Rev. Paul Kang of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church said their hearts go out to all the victims “in the wake of this tragic act of hate.”

“Having the freedom to worship in our country without fear or prejudice is a sacred trust that was broken last Sunday in Quebec,” said Kang. “As people of faith, we hope to help begin the long process of repairing the trust that was broken by standing with you, Muslim sisters and brothers, in condemning this act perpetrated against a particular people, simply because of their faith.

“The Canada I know and the communities I have grown up in have always been secure and strong enough to both accommodate and honour differences: differences of opinions, beliefs, expressions and thoughts because, at our core, I believe what we share in common – our hopes, our dreams, and especially our vulnerabilities – can be used for a greater purpose and that is to bring us and bind us together in a spirit not of competition but of compassion.”

Sandra Fortini, Lay Pastoral Assistant at Our Lady of Grace, represented Fathers Francis McDevitt and Joshua Roldan at the vigil. In her message, she expressed her “shock and dismay” over last month’s attack.

“We stand with our brothers and sisters of faiths in denouncing these senseless acts of violence and pray that our Muslim brothers and sisters continue to feel secure and safe to practice their faith in their sacred spaces,” she said. “We need to give thanks to god for the safety and security we enjoy in this country and for the freedom to live lives of faith. But, we appreciate what a violation this event has been to that sense of safety and security and pray for the Muslim community that it can, in time, be restored.

“A hatred for diversity simply doesn’t reflect a love for the one who created it. We should celebrate the differences we have because of their beauty bit firstly because they are the work of God.”

CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Part of a can

4. A form of discrimination

10. Doctors’ group

11. Expression of joy

12. Spanish “be”

14. A mongrel

15. Helen was from here

16. With many branches

18. Fussy

22. Male fertilizing organ of a flower

23. Trap

24. Long, angry speeches

26. For instance

27. Sticky, waterlogged soil

28. Fasten

30. Card game

31. Seaport (abbr.)

34. Dresses worn in S. Asia

36. Midway between south and southeast

37. Of the mouth

39. Capital of Yemen

40. Branches of a bone

41. Very much

42. TV host Leeza

48. A way to change integrity

50. Plants with dark green, glossy leaves

51. Seedless raisin

52. Agency

53. Wear this when eating ribs

54. Martial artists wear this

55. Peanut butter

56. Drinkers sit on these

58. Pie ___ mode

59. Hebraic

60. River in India

CLUES DOWN

1. City in Washington

2. Entertained

3. Nakedness

4. Exclamation of surprise

5. Instinct

6. Making a mistake

7. “Borgias” actor Jeremy

8. Phrases

9. Millihenry

12. Long ago

13. Self-immolation by fire ritual

17. Disfigure

19. Horseshoe extension

20. Regions

21. Philippine Island

25. Appropriate for particular time

29. Small constellation in the Milky Way

31. Categorizes

32. Malaysian boat

33. Natives of Sri Lanka

35. Type of vessel

38. Prescribe

41. Ranking

43. Knickknack

44. Funeral

45. Mineral can be extracted from th

46. Tide

47. Lump in yarn

49. Food on a skewer

56. Letter in the Albanian alphabet

57. Midway between south and west

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Politicians issue a challenge in wake of Quebec attack

By Brock Weir

They may have been somewhat at a loss for words, but representatives of all three levels of government shared the idea that diversity is Canada’s strength Saturday’s Aurora Community Vigil, remembering the six men killed in a terrorist attack at a Quebec City mosque last weekend.

Attending the event at the Aurora Cultural Centre little over an hour after celebrating the start of Black History Month at York Regional Police’s Aurora headquarters, Mayor Geoff Dawe said coming to the vigil right after the celebration, the theme of which focused on celebrating diversity, was “almost like a bit of whiplash.”

“Canada is a country I believe celebrates, grows and benefits from its diversity,” said Mayor Geoff Dawe. “We are almost all immigrants, whether it is my family that goes back a couple of hundred years, or my wife’s family who came in 1960, or Syrian refugees who just joined our great country. It is diversity that makes us unique, it is diversity that really celebrates our values of hope, of inclusivity and understanding.

“We certainly stand together. We are a community, and it is extremely important to include everyone, to talk to everyone, and bring them into the fold. Ignorance is the tool that will bring us down. We have to struggle so hard to work against that ignorance.”

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev told the standing-room-only crowd that the “senseless shooting [left her] disheartened” that such intolerance could occur in Canada.

Strength, she said, is our diversity. “Our strength is our acceptance,” she said. “Our strength is our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and these are Canadian values we hold dear. This intolerant act does not reflect our values and I am so proud Canadians from across the country have come together to stand against this violent act. Canadians have fought and sacrificed to uphold our values of peace, diversity and acceptance. We must continue to stand united in our values during this time of tragedy.”

Representing Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson, who had a previous

commitment, were staffers Sarah Campbell-Morales and Samir Kassam, who read his message.

“There are those who fan the flames of fear, bigotry and hatred,” they relayed. “We must stand up to them, stronger than we have. Canadians will not be intimidated. This was an attack not only on Muslims but our shared

We are a community, and it is extremely important to include everyone, to talk to everyone, and bring them into the fold. Ignorance is the tool that will bring us down.

values of openness, transparency, and freedom. I will always stand with you, my Muslim brothers and sisters.”

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard also came to the vigil from the Black History Month celebration. The events in Quebec, he said, left “all of us

shaken.”

“I speak for the majority of those who call Aurora home when I say that we will not stand for hatred. Let this horrible act in Quebec bring us together, regardless of our faith, the colour of our skin, the place of our birth,” he said. “If I have learned one thing in my life, it is that we all want the same thing regardless of our background and who we are. We all want a better life for ourselves, a better life for our children. We want our children to grow up to be happy and safe and helping to make our society, this Canada, Aurora an even better place. That is the Canadian dream.

“I challenge everyone in this room, although I know I am speaking to the converted, because you are here, to look about their neighbourhood, to find someone who is different than them, whether they be of a different colour skin, worship in a different way, and reach out. Let’s form some real bonds of friendship that Aurora, historically, has been known for. I know it is in the Aurora spirit.”

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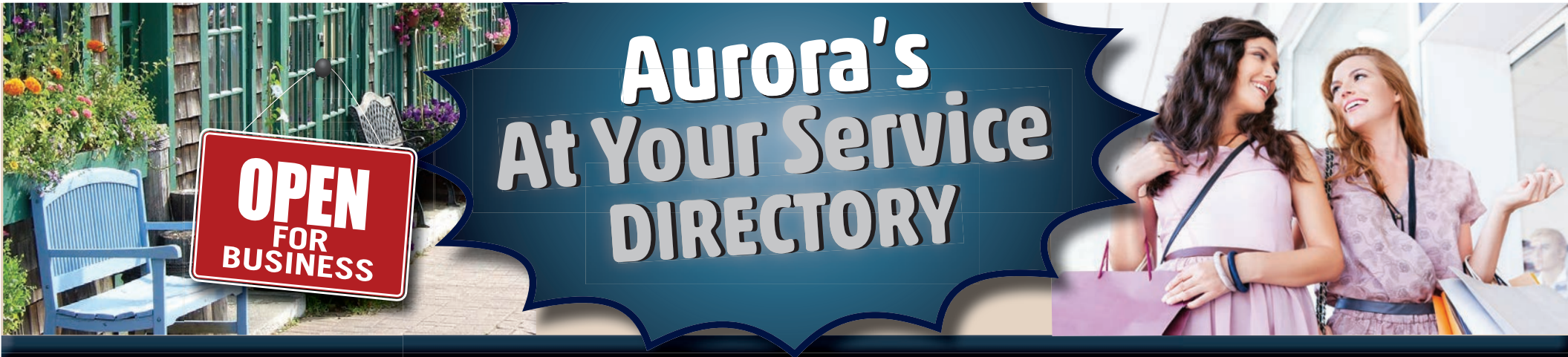
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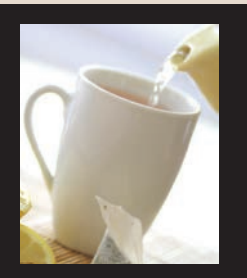
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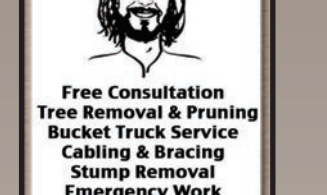
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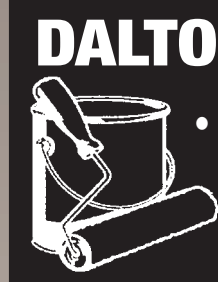
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Countdown to Winter Blues



The countdown is officially on to the Aurora Winter Blues Festival, which takes place February 24 and 25 at St. Andrew's College – with a number of events planned leading up to the big day. (Top Row) Musicians formed the All Star Jam Band for Saturday night's Blues Bash, which took place at Highland Automotive. (Bottom Left) The Blues Bash is also a way to highlight the work local charities benefiting from the proceeds of each year's festival do in the community. CHATS – Community and Home Assistance to Seniors – is one of the two charities, represented here by Tim Jones and Christina Bisanz, pictured alongside "The Blues Brothers" and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev. The Festival also benefits Blue Door Shelters. (Bottom Centre) Festival co-founders Helen and Jamie Macdonald draw door prizes. (Bottom Left) The visual arts were represented by Dubi, who painted portraits of famed musicians in real time to the music. For more, visit www.awbfc.ca.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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