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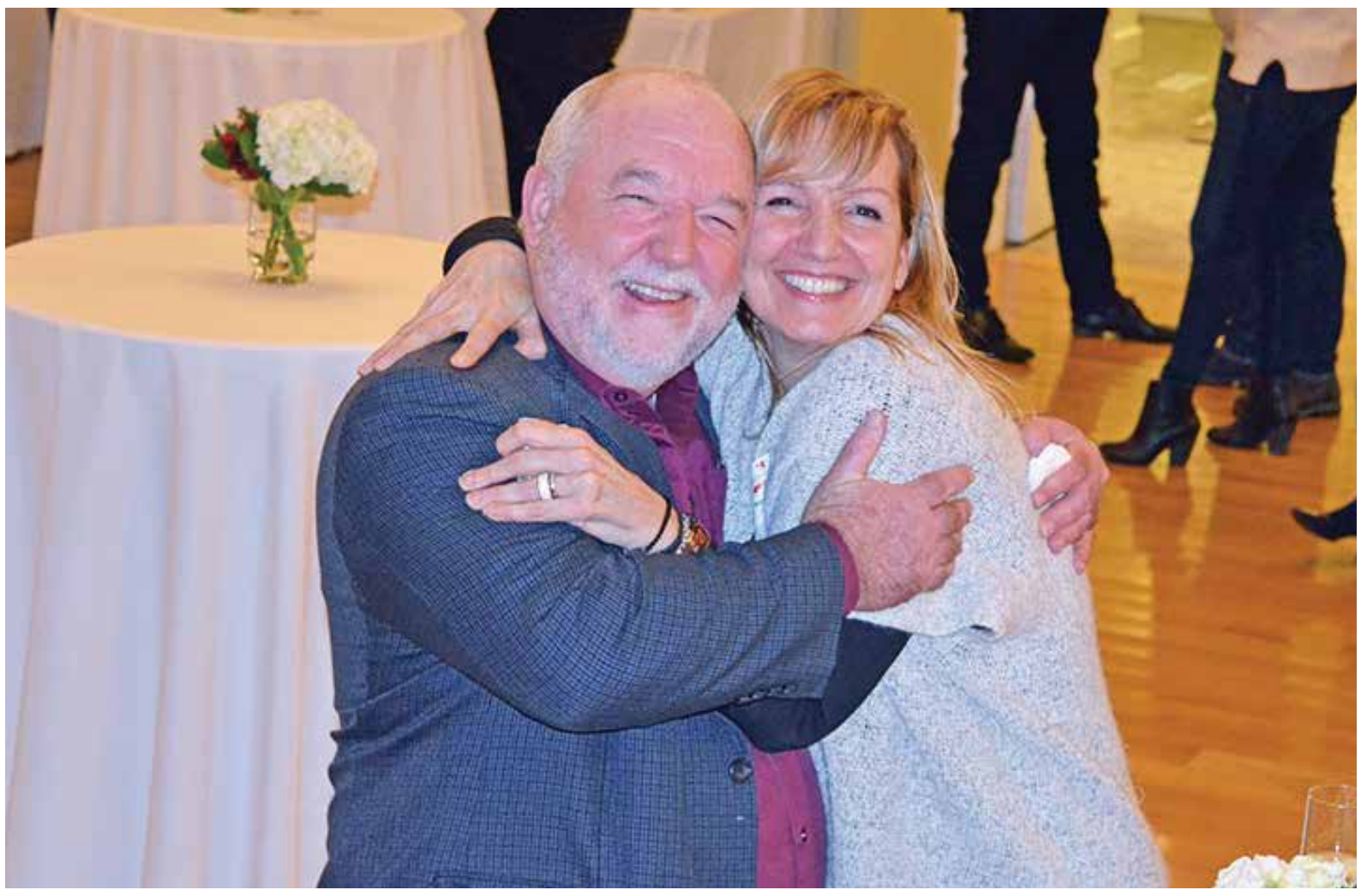
THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 18 No. 13 905-727-3300 | theauroran.com | FREE | Week of January 18, 2018 | CMCA AUDITED



A SALUTE TO COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS – Former Aurora Citizens of the Year Brian North and Mary Georgopoulos hug it out at Newmarket's Old Town Hall on Thursday afternoon at a reception celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Aurora-based community organization Neighbourhood Network. For more on the milestone, please see Page 22.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Protection of "stable neighbourhoods" to be considered next week

By Brock Weir

An interim control bylaw to protect Aurora's "stable neighbourhoods" for up to one year could be in place by the end of the month.

Next week, sitting at the Committee level, Council will consider an interim control bylaw, which would put a one-year moratorium on new housing builds in established neighbourhoods that are outside the norm of existing bylaws and building standards.

The move comes just over a month after Council tasked staff with carrying out a study on current zoning provisions and regulations already on the books when it comes to infill housing in stable neighbourhoods.

A one-year moratorium on builds outside these already-existing conditions would, according to Development Planning Manager Glen Letman in his report to Council, allow for further study on existing framework and best practices throughout the Greater Toronto Area to ensure the best policies are in place here at home.

"The Town's Official Plan is the primary tool in managing development and growth for both the short and long term and setting the vision, principle

Continued on page 25

Sizzling blues is the perfect warm-up for cold Aurora nights

By Brock Weir

Temperatures may have plummeted again after a midweek warm spell, but heat will soon be in the air.

The Aurora Winter Blues Festival is set to return once again this February with a month-long series of events designed to bring some "hot blues" to our cold nights.

Benefiting Blue Door Shelters, CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors), and Music Aurora's "Youth in Music" program, the seventh annual festival will present "Journeymen Blues," featuring the line-up of Steve

Continued on page 21

BONDING MOMENT – Olympian Kristina Valjas May (Volleyball) greets Yousof and Yara at Saturday night's Snowflake Ball held at Highland Automotive. Returning for a third year, the Snowflake Ball is an opportunity for fathers to connect with and have bonding time with their daughters. For more, please see Page 8.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Open House Sunday 2-4pm, 25 Underhill Cres., Aurora – Bathurst to Henderson to signs! Shows to perfection! Just move in! New 50 year shingles & new eavestroughs! Updated furnace, windows & more! Immaculately kept and elegantly upgraded! Hardwood floors! Updated kitchen w/granite counter & SS appliances! Updated baths! Inlaw potential in bright professionally finished look-out lower level! $994,888
WOW – SHOWSTOPPER RENO + IN-LAW POTENTIAL!

Open House Saturday & Sunday 2-4pm, 9 April Gardens, Aurora - Bathurst to Aurora Heights to signs! It's a beauty! Open concept plan! Gourmet centre island kitchen with granite counters, servery & SS appliances! Hardwood plank floors on both levels! Enticing ensuite! Bigbedrooms! Bright walk-out lower level! Loaded with extras & upgrades! Demand N.W. Aurora child-safe crescent location! $1,150,000

TOWN OF AURORA

Notice Board

AURORA

Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Tuesday, January 23	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session
Tuesday, January 23	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	General Committee
Wednesday, January 24	5:30 p.m.	Holland Room	Finance Advisory Committee
Wednesday, January 24	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Public Planning
Tuesday, January 30	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, January 30	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Thursday, February 1	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Environmental Advisory Committee

*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.**

Public Notices

Notice of service disruptions

Please see below for the scheduled service disruption at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC):

On Tuesdays at 7:45 p.m. Aquafit and pool spa sessions at the AFLC will be cancelled for the remainder of the winter season. We apologize for any inconvenience.

For more information, visit **aurora.ca/news**.

Register now for winter programs & aquatics

Registrations are open for winter programs and aquatics. Pick-up a copy of the guide at our recreation facilities, Town Hall or the Aurora Public Library.

To register, visit **aurora.ca/recguide.**

IMPORTANT: Waste and recycling collection dates have changed for 2018

Some waste and recycling collection schuedules in Aurora have changed as of **January 1, 2018**. Residents are encouraged to review the collection map found on **aurora.ca/wasteandrecycling**, find their street name and check to see if their collection date has changed or has stayed the same. Also, visit the page to access a new tool that will populate your accurate collection day using your address. Not all households are affected.

All homes in Aurora received a new calendar by mail in December. Residents are encouraged to download the My-Waste app to access waste and recycling information, set reminders and to receive notifications on important changes to waste and recycling programs. The My-Waste app can be downloaded from the App Store on your mobile device.

If you currently have the My-Waste app on your mobile device you will need to reset your new waste and recycling collection day on **January 1, 2018**.

For more information, visit **aurora.ca/wasteandrecycling**.

Get moving this **Friday, January 19**!

Our PA Day Skate runs from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex.

Find out more by visiting **aurora.ca**.

What's Happening

2 a.m. to 6 a.m. overnight parking restrictions

Please be aware that the 2016/2017 overnight parking pilot program has ended. Our bylaw states that cars must be off the road between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. between **November 15** and **April 15.** Winter road maintenace may take place several days before and after a weather event.

The Town of Aurora is committed to ensuring safe travel on our roadways. Thank you for your cooperation.

Club Aurora open house on January 20

Join the fitness staff on **Saturday, January 20** at Club Aurora's open house from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. This exciting event will include great giveaways, demos, free classes and much more. For more information, visit **aurora.ca/fitness**.

Club Aurora wellness seminar – Agility and Coordination training for the older adult

Register today for Club Aurora's wellness seminar *Agility & Coordination training* for the older adult on **Saturday, January 20** from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the AFLC. For more information, visit **aurora.ca/fitness.**

2018 Christmas tree collection

The Christmas tree collection will take place during the week of **January 22, 2018**.

The tree cannot be larger than 6 ft (1.8 m). If it exceeds this size, the tree must be cut in two and bundled.

All decorations, lights, tinsel, nails, stands and tree bags MUST be removed to ensure collection.

Please make sure the tree is clear of snow banks to allow for easy pick-up. Thank you for your cooperation.

2017 textile pilot program has ended

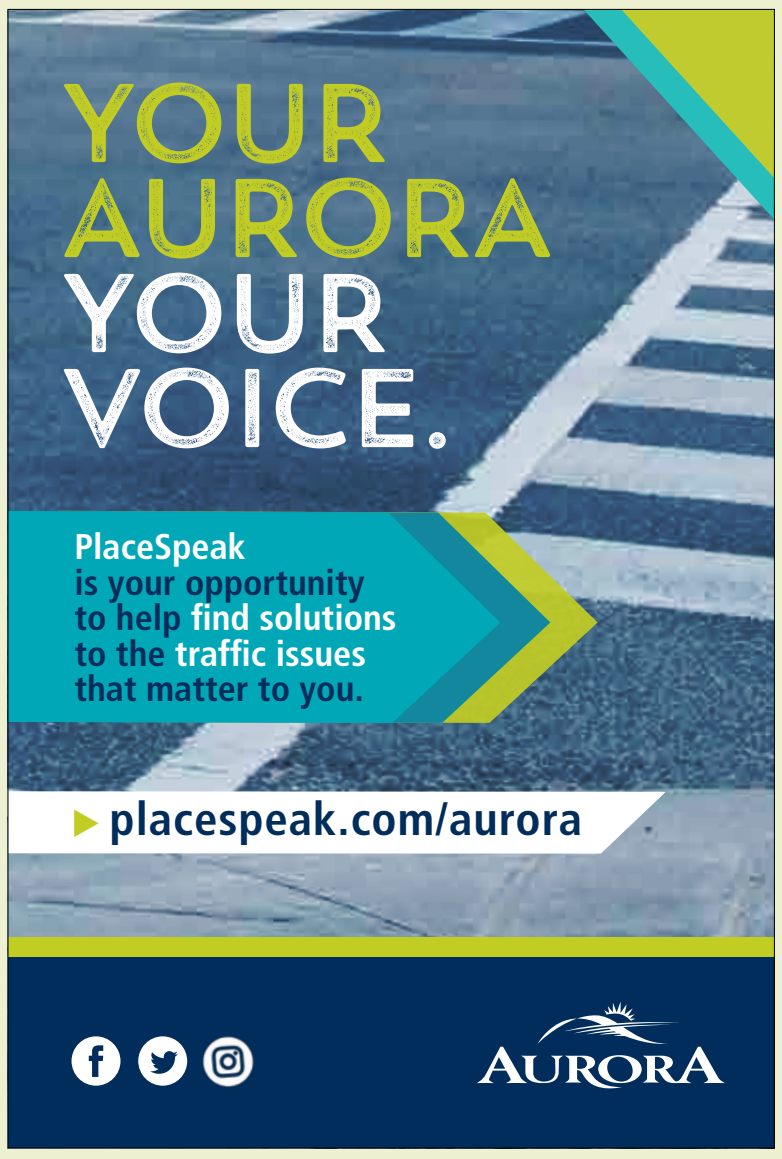
Thank you for participating in the 2017 textile pilot program. The door-to-door textile pick up program has ended.

Textile boxes are still in place at the following locations:

- Aurora Community Centre, 1 Community Centre Lane
- Aurora Family Leisure Complex, 135 Industrial Parkway North
- Aurora Public Library, 15145 Yonge Street

Visit **aurora.ca/wasteandrecycling** for updates about textile boxes in Aurora or call Access Aurora at 905-727-1375.

What's Happening



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Skate with your hockey heroes – and take your ideas to Council – Saturday at new Levee

By Brock Weir

It's been five years since the Aurora Council last had a levee – then, it was a frigid day in Town Park to mark the Town's Sesquicentennial – but Aurora is set to mark the start of a new, warmer tradition on Saturday.

Aurora residents and visitors are invited to celebrate the start of the year with Mayor Geoff Dawe and the rest of Council at the Mayor & Council New Year's Levee, which is billed as a new way to "give [elected officials] a chance to connect with the community."

Running from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, the event will feature cake, hot beverages like hot chocolate and coffee, face painting and crafts from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., and then Aurora's Junior A Tigers will take to the ice for a free skate with members of the public from 11 a.m. to 12 noon.

"On behalf of Aurora Town Council, we look forward to enjoying this fun-filled day with our Aurora community and their families," said Mayor Dawe in a statement. "The Town of Aurora has several new and exciting projects planned for 2018. The Levee is another opportunity for residents to engage with Council and share their ideas and feedback on what's to come. We look forward to seeing you there."

The Levee has its roots in France, where the King would be ceremonially woken up by members of his court to start the day, part of an entrenched social ritual. In time, this tradition evolved into a New Year's tradition where the Monarch, Governor General, or other elected officials would meet constituents and hear their concerns.

Here at home, the fledgling roots of this "new tradition" were planted, according to Mayor Dawe, by Councillor Sandra Humfryes and the ball just started rolling.

"I have been at the East Gwillimbury Levee for the last couple of years and I thought about it here, but when Sandra suggested it, it made sense to see where we could start and where something like this might go. One of the challenges is always getting people engaged and there is a goodly number of people who come out to the skates on Saturdays and Sundays. This is an opportunity to perhaps get a few more people out to the skate and see some of the facilities we have, as well as talk to members of Council, which is always a good thing. The Tigers will be out, so maybe you will have a chance to give an aspiring young hockey player a chance to skate with the Tigers!"

For Lisa Warth, Aurora's Acting Director of Community Services, job number one in getting this off the ground was giving the general public a fun chance to "mix and mingle" with their Council.

"We decided to do it at the SARC and combine it with the already scheduled leisure skate, so the skating is sort of the central focus," she says. "We will have face painting and crafts for the kids, then the Aurora Tigers will be there to mix and mingle as well. They will be there for the whole period of time and then go in the ice to skate with kids and families at 11.

"I am interested in seeing the families come out and have a good time. It is always nice to see the kids out participating and to see the smiles on their faces when they get their faces painted and make a craft. I would also be interested in listening to some of those conversations the members of the public might have with their members of Council and hear what people are interested in."

For more on the Levee, call Aurora's Special Events line at 905-726-4762.

MP TO HOLD LEVEE AS WELL

Aurora's Mayor and Council are not the only ones holding their New Year's Levee on Saturday.

Continued on page 10

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AURORA

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Disagreement over stable neighbourhoods path

I am writing a bit late as this issue surfaced around the holiday period and was not on the front page of the local paper:

We heartily disagree with the path that the elected officials are considering taking in this regard.

We did not move into a heritage designated house/neighborhood when we moved into Aurora. We simply moved into a lovely neighborhood where new development has since and suddenly become quite prevalent.

Through liberal zoning, strong tendencies to approve variances by the Committee of Adjustment and an OMB process that favours development (and, we feel, a Planning Department that appears very pro-Development), we find ourselves in a neighborhood that is "In Transition".

In fact, it is so far "In Transition" that it is our belief that the ship has sailed.... our nice homes are reduced to land value only. There has been such a momentum on our street that it is likely that every house on our street will eventually be torn down and rebuilt.

Now Council is thinking of coming along and restricting development temporarily? Affecting even the amounts we could get for the land value of our house?

You do realize that this means our houses will be unsaleable for that duration? What right do you have to affect our market values? When Mayor Dawe asks the question, "I have no knowledge whether this would negatively or positively affect property values?"...let me try a reply "It will negatively affect property values."

We do reiterate that putting these points into action as an Interim Control Bylaw while "the staff report" is being done would be beneficial:

- Times for Construction-should only be permitted 9 am-5 pm on weekdays excluding holidays--it feels like we live on a construction zone!
- Lights on At Night-many new homes are built with downward casting pot lights outside and are very bright. These should not be on night after night in a "look at me" fashion...aside from the neighbour's enjoyment/ inconvenience, isn't there a consideration of light pollution?
- Privacy-do not allow upper level balconies that overlook other's backyards. Imagine what that feels like especially when you have a big house beside a normal sized house
- Privacy-do not allow windows on the sides of big houses or be sparing of them and ensure they are small, if necessary, and do not impact the privacy of the neighbour
- Privacy-do not allow another house built behind a house, to have full view of their neighbours backyard (within reason)
- Sunshine-carefully consider the shadows that a new house will cast over the property of a neighbour's house to ensure the sunshine they get currently in minimally impacted
- Trees-that is the only thing that your Committee of Adjustment seems to consider so perhaps that is going well ..if so, keep it up but it should be part of your review and strengthened, if necessary

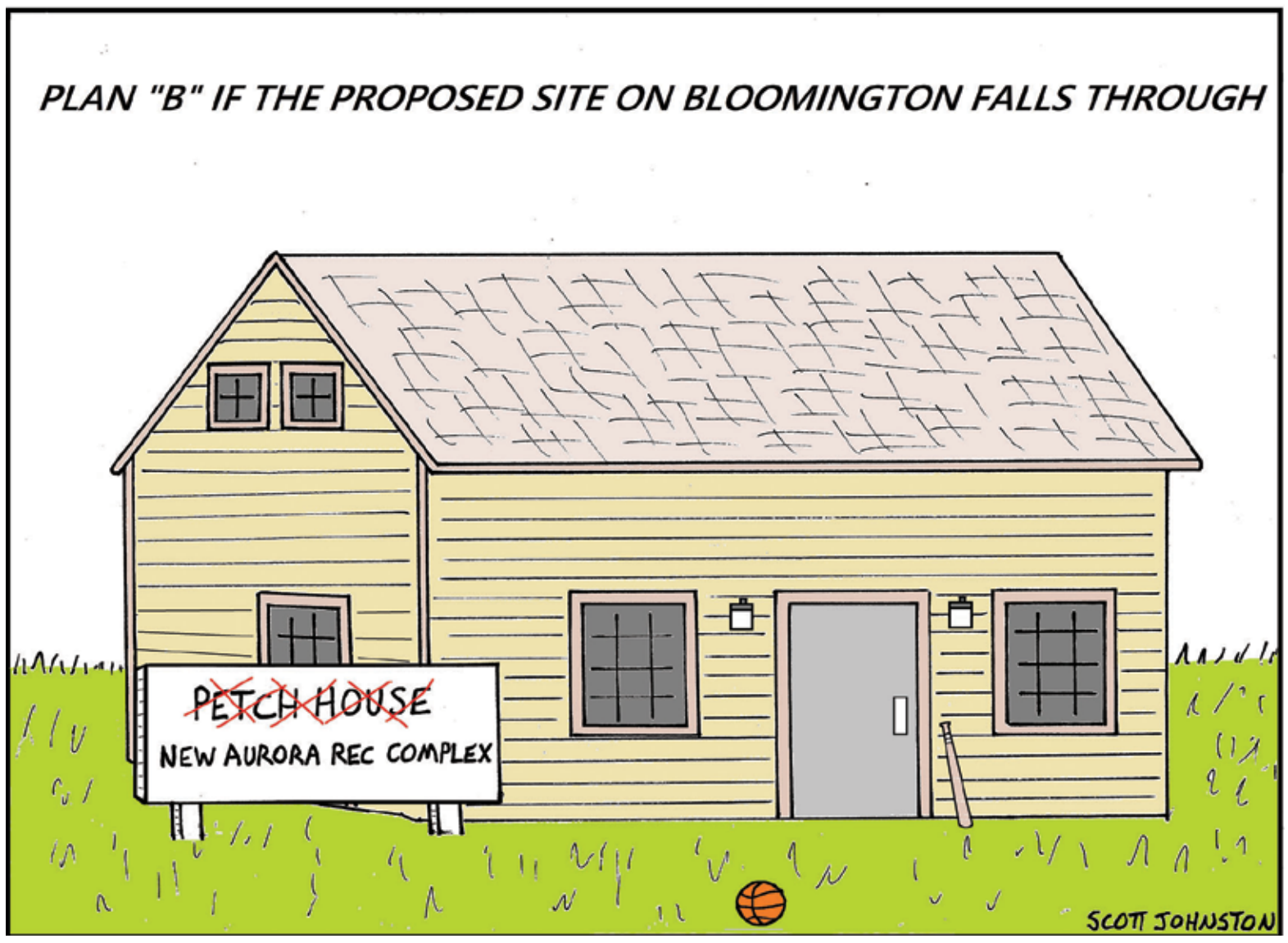
We have every right to enjoy our home and neighbourhood while we live here!

And these points should form part of the permanent solution as well!

Bottom line, we do not support any measures that would have a negative impact on our ability to sell our property at the highest price possible. Residential properties are the main investments for the majority of people and a key part of future retirement investment.

Joyce Deutsch
Aurora

Machell's Corners



'Cause you've got personality

BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

John Steinbeck is quoted as writing, "Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen."

Perhaps, as far as ideas go, it is a bit simplistic, but, when you pare it down to its core, it is a fundamental truth.

But learning how to handle them is the tough part, and it is fast becoming a lost art. It's not that I would ever presume to have mastered that art, but I've had a few good ideas from time to time; ideas that were valued, sometimes pooh-poohed because they were a bit unusual or, worse still, "just not the way things are done." More often than not, however, there were kudos to go around simply for speaking up and throwing an idea on the table, regardless of whether it ultimately gained traction.

In recent years, it seems that these values seem to be going by the wayside in the grand scheme of things. In the wider world, there was a trend that it wasn't enough to have and foster an idea – but, let's face it, there was never a time when that alone was enough – but rather who is presenting said idea.

Over the last year though it seems this trend is going further adrift and ideas are sadly becoming less and less important compared to the weight given to the presenter.

I remember back in the good old days of, say, ten years ago, where the world was very much a different place. Sure, scandals of varying magnitude could make or break a person, a campaign, or a political party but, more often than not, dialogue leading up to the scandal du jure was peppered with ideas, vision, and a particular philosophy.

These ideas, visions, and individual philosophies set out a clear course, a menu, if you will, of what each person, each party was offering a potential voter. Amid the swampy rhetoric was a vision to be had, a vision that was more or less easily digestible and, depending on which colour you happened to bleed, ready to be consumed by the masses.

Nowadays, thanks to the political machinations in the United States and, in some cases closer to home, such as the Trudeaumania echo, it is becoming increasingly centred on the person, the personality, rather than what they and their team ultimately represent to the people.

Writing this on Sunday afternoon, I am casting my mind back to this time exactly one week ago, before a tidal wave washed out of the ballroom of the Beverley Hills Hotel. At that time, I was writing about the options we have to "keep house" with just a few months away from two very important elections.

Then, just a little while later, a potential game-changer.

"We know that press is under siege these days," said the speechmaker. "We also know it's the insatiable dedication to uncovering the absolute truth that keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and to injustice. To tyrants, and victims, and secrets and lies. I want to say that I value the press more than ever before as we try to navigate these complicated times. What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have."

With that, the speechmaker touched upon racism and sexism in her particular sector, particularly women who have spoken up about sexual harassment in the entertainment industry, and, really all industry; of the fight for Civil Rights in the United States, and ultimately the ticking clock racing each of these forms of hatred and abuse.

"In my career, what I've always tried my best to do, whether on television or through film, is to say something about how men and women really behave," concluded Oprah Winfrey as she accepted the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement at the Golden Globe Awards. "To say how we experience shame, how we love, how we rage, how we fail, how we retreat, persevere, and how we overcome.

"I've interviewed and portrayed people who've withstood some of the ugliest things life can throw at you, but the one quality all of them seem to share is the ability to maintain hope for a brighter morning, even during our darkest nights. So, I want all the girls watching here, now, to know that a new day is on the horizon. And when that new day finally dawns, it will be because of a lot of magnificent women, many of whom are right here in this room tonight, and some pretty phenomenal men, fighting hard to make sure they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to say, 'Me too' again."

And, with that, a contender for the 2020 U.S. Presidential election was born.

Oprah's words represent, I believe, universal ideals and something all people with even the slightest semblance of humanity can subscribe to, but they are all ideas that have been voiced before and, until they are the norm, will continue to be voiced until something has been achieved.

But what is it about Oprah's words that turned a simple speech, albeit a powerful and moving speech, into something which has sparked a movement?

That, in the end, might be the most complex – and yet, at the same time, simplest – part of the conversation.

With the ongoing onslaught against the most basic norms of humanity, Oprah's words obviously struck a chord with a wide cross-section of people around the world.

They tapped into a hunger and thirst for passion and normalcy that has been sadly starved since November 2016.

But what of the words themselves? Obviously much of the sentiment in the speech reflected not only ongoing political tensions in the United States but also turmoil within an industry that has been long-festering, only to recently burst to begin what will undoubtedly be a very long healing process – but they are sentiments not altogether different from those offered in recent years by Secretary Clinton, Senator Sanders, and countless others determined to find themselves on the right side of history.

The difference? Personality.

For over two decades, Oprah Winfrey held court on television, amassing an unprecedented following that transcended racial, gender and income barriers, offering both an outlet for people to share their stories and an avenue to find inspiration and, some would argue, salvation. It is a flock she has continued to shepherd after her retirement from daily television with an increased emphasis on film and the written word, but it is as strong as ever.

It's not unlike the audience the current occupant of the White House has fostered through a potent combination of entertainment, grandiloquence, and offering an outlet for people to share their worst qualities.

Nobody can deny the events of November 2016 were a cataclysmic game changer, but as they have altered, and continue to alter, world events, perhaps it has changed the very playing field politics is fought on.

Donald Trump's ultimate success is sweeping into power in a never-before-seen cult of personality.

It might be our new reality that the only way to fight a personality cult is with another personality cult.

And, although ideas seem like they are sadly becoming less and less important, I for one would sleep better knowing Oprah's finger is on the button.

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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to letters@auroran.com.
Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

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ADVERTISING POLICY
Publisher is not liable for slight changes or typographical errors that do not lessen the value of an advertisement. Disputes must be brought to the attention of the publisher prior to the following edition.

The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating…

Cheese Lovers Day! (January 20)

Whether you enjoy cutting off a piece of a larger cheese loaf (993.20.8) or grating some up to sprinkle on pasta (994.4.11), we hope you'll treat yourself on Cheese Lovers Day. But, in all honesty, if you are a true admirer of fromage, isn't every day Cheese Lovers Day?

Events to celebrate the Holiday Season!

IN GOOD COMPANY

Mayor Geoffrey Dawe

Celebrate the New Year with myself and members of Council at the Mayor and Council New Year's Levee.

This new tradition gives us a chance to connect with the community and share ideas and feedback on what's to come.

The event will feature crafts, face painting and cake from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and a free skate with players from the Aurora Tigers between 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. The celebration will be held on Saturday, January 20 at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex located at 1400 Wellington Street East from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. All members of the public are welcome!

On February 7, attend the opening reception for the Mayor's Celebration of Arts. Explore the artistic pieces of talented youth from Aurora High School, Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School and The Fifth Collection from St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School. For more information on this event, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

Looking for something to keep you busy on the Family Day holiday? Join us for Aurora's Arctic Adventure and enjoy professional ice carving, outdoor winter games, outdoor skating, mini snow tubing, live entertainment and more! The event is being held at Town Park on Monday, February 19 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Try out your culinary skills in Aurora's Junior Chef Competition, open to anyone between the ages of 9 and 14. The deadline to apply is Thursday, February 1. The competition will be taking place on Monday, February 19 in Victoria Hall at Aurora's Arctic Adventure. For more information, please call the Special Events line at 905-726-4762.

Don't miss a chance to connect with me at the Annual Mayor's Luncheon hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, February 21 at Oakview Terrace starting at 11:45 a.m. This event gives me a chance to connect with Aurora's business community and answer key questions that directly affect local businesses. Tickets can be purchased online ataurorachamber.on.ca

Last but not least, I would like to congratulate Neighbourhood Network on their 10th anniversary! Your hard work and dedication to help make Aurora a better place to live is inspiring. We are happy to have you as an important Town partner that works with us to build a strong, cohesive community!

Stay connected to the Town. Visit the Town's website, read the Town's bi-weekly Notice Board published in The Auroran, subscribe to our social media feeds and sign-up for our monthly Town e-newsletter, Aurora Matters and engage with us through PlaceSpeak. For more information about the Town of Aurora, visit aurora.ca

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about our Town. I invite you to contact my office to set-up an appointment to speak with me in-person by either emailingmayor@aurora.ca or calling my office at 905-726-4741. I am always happy to hear from you!

Have a wonderful week!

Welcome to 2018!

MP's Report

Kyle Peterson, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

I hope that you were able to spend some time over the holidays with friends and loved ones and took the opportunity to reflect on 2017 and look forward to the coming year.

Kolton, Kash, Andrea and I enjoyed spending the holidays together here at home in Newmarket-Aurora. We had great fun ringing in the New Year at both the Town of Newmarket and Town of Aurora First Night events. Thank you to all the organizers, staff and volunteers who made it an excellent family celebration despite the frigid cold!

I was also pleased to attend Aurora's 1st Menorah Lighting earlier in December in celebration of Hanukkah at Aurora's Town Hall. It was a well-attended and wonderful celebration of hope and peace. Thank you to Rabbi Hecht for bringing our community together on this important occasion.

In early January, Neighbourhood Network celebrated its 10th anniversary. I was proud to play a small role in its founding by Belinda Stronach and Magna International. I was happy to attend the 10th anniversary celebration. Congratulations to all who work hard to continue to make this such a success. Please visit: www.neighbourhoodnetwork.org to get involved.

As we look towards 2018, I wanted to share with you some exciting opportunities that are part of our commitment to grow the economy, support the middle class and local businesses that are the engine of growth and innovation. Our plan is working – since coming into office, almost 700,000 jobs have been created by Canadians and Canada has the strongest economic growth in the G7. But we recognize that there is more hard work ahead of us, and we are moving forward with our plan to build a better economy for all.

Applications for Employers to participate in the 2018 Canada Summer Jobs program are now open and will be accepted until February 2, 2018. The CSJ provides funding to employers to help create valuable summer job opportunities for full-time students between the ages of 15 and 30, while strengthening local economies and communities across Canada.

The CSJ Program provides funding for not-for-profit organizations, public-sector employers and small businesses with 50 or fewer employees. Not-for-profit organizations can receive up to 100% of the provincial/territorial minimum hourly wage, as well as employment-related costs. Public-sector employers and small businesses can receive up to 50% of the provincial/territorial minimum hourly wage.

In 2017, our community and many local youth benefitted significantly from this program. Newmarket-Aurora received $832,454, creating 264 positions with 87 employers. Through programs like this, our local students have the opportunity to gain valuable experience and learn new skills for their future careers. Employers interested in applying for the CSJ Program may contact my Constituency Office for more information or questions with the application process.

This past week, our Prime Minister announced the launch of the design phase of an exciting new initiative for youth across the country – the Canada Service Corps. The Canada Service Corps will be a new national youth service initiative that will provide our youth with more chances to serve their communities while gaining valuable skills and experience to position them for success in the future.

Canada Service Corps will be provided with $105 million up to March 2021, and will fund eligible projects that present opportunities for young Canadians to get in involved in service to communities.

Giving them meaningful opportunities to serve their communities will empower them to learn, grow and help build a better Canada by giving back.

The Canada Service Corps will be a program for youth, developed by youth. Youth between the ages of 15 and 30 are encouraged to share their thoughts on service and what it means to them, online at www.Canada.ca/canadaservicecorps.

In the coming weeks, I will be returning to Ottawa for the start of the Winter 2018 Parliamentary Session. I look forward to continuing to work hard for the residents of our community and to represent Newmarket-Aurora in the House of Commons.

As a reminder, you can reach out to my office and my staff at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you need any information or assistance with Federal Matters. We are located at 16600 Bayview Avenue, Suite 202. You can reach us at Tel: 905-953-7515 or by email at Kyle.Peterson@parl.gc.ca

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Residents must have a voice on stable neighbourhoods

A presentation on October 24 and a motion by Councillor Wendy Gaertner reminded Council that in 2011, an Official Plan was passed.

This plan, in part, addressed stable neighbourhood designation and protection. Aurora Council agreed that staff would investigate what other municipalities were doing to protect their older communities from over-large houses in these sensitive areas.

It was suggested that a report would be made sometime in the first quarter of 2018. It seems like an unusually long delay for a bit of research that could be done in a matter of weeks.

It was agreed that the report would be discussed in an open session with Council and staff. However, there must be a process for the public to provide meaningful input.

Several zoning bylaws need to be revised and updated to protect the older sections of Town from blockbuster houses. Builders and developers must not continue to dictate the character of our own stable environments.

Residents must be heard!

It is important to remember that Aurora grew in stages with each new subdivision exhibiting distinct characteristics. We, in these older parts of Town, are not against development per se, but object to buildings which clearly are not appropriate.

Outrageously oversized houses do not fit in with our older neighbourhoods.

Zoning bylaws must be changed to reflect and protect our values. For example, in the Regency Acres subdivision, the average bungalow ranges from approximately 1,100 to 1,400 square feet with roof heights ranging from 17 to 20 feet – measured from peak to ground level.

A new house in our area measures 3,400 square feet and reaches a height of 38 feet, measured to the peak of the roof – not mid-point to the roof which the current zoning bylaw permits.

The difference is huge! The effect of this oversized structure will severely impact air flow, block sunlight and create privacy issues for the adjacent residents.

In fact, one elderly couple mentioned that their property value has probably decreased since, 'Who would want to look at *that* from a front window?" This mega house should have been rejected outright based on common sense alone, since it clearly does not fit in with the existing neighbourhood.

It is worth repeating that guidelines in the Official Plan were designed to protect these older areas when new building occurs. Almost seven years is far too long for these policies not to be incorporated into new bylaws!

Why the delay? Why were changes not made to the zoning bylaws to reflect these policies? This discrepancy needs to be addressed now. Positive changes must be made to reflect the values that residents place on their older communities. Building heights, distance, between adjacent buildings and not coverage are a few of the issues that need to be resolved with public input.

It must be noted that we are not against new builds, but need assurance that new constructions conform with the character of stable neighbourhoods.

Changes must be made now before the present Council ends for the fall election. If nothing is done in the next few months, we could see two or more building seasons with nothing being corrected to solve our important problems.

This leads us to the question, "Who ultimately controls residential development in Aurora – the elected members of Council? The various Town departments? Speculators and builders, lawyers, real estate agents, etc.?"

As mentioned in a previous article, "Is it all dollars and sense or nonsense?"

In closing, we sincerely hope that the residents' concerns will be heard by members of Council before our stable neighbourhoods are destroyed forever!

Gloria Smith
Aurora

LETTERS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Do you think tougher measures for stable neighbourhoods will be a positive or negative?

A) Positive B) Negative C) Unsure

Go to www.theauroran.com to vote!

Previous poll results

Are you optimistic about the year ahead?

RESULTS TO DATE JANUARY 16, 2018	YES	NO	UNSURE
	62%	23%	15%

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Raise your voice to protect stable neighbourhoods

I attended a Council meeting on October 24 regarding the homes that are being bought in the older neighbourhoods of Aurora and torn down and then replaced with huge homes that do not fit into the rest of the landscape.

I am concerned for the future of older neighbourhoods in Aurora if we do not create a framework for acceptable building practices now to maintain the character and aesthetics of where we live.

We moved to our current home over nine years ago. We specifically chose our neighbourhood because of the large trees, large lots and smaller homes that are, on average, 1.5 storeys tall. Our home is back split and we can easily live here until our need for permanent care in a retirement home. We love the privacy our property allows us, yet the convenience of living in Town. We do not want our neighbours' homes towering over our backyard and crowding as close as possible to our lot lines, encroaching on our privacy.

Everywhere I look it seems these smaller homes are being torn down and replaced with huge 2.5 – 3 storey homes that crowd as close as possible to the lot lines. There are some great examples of this on Child Drive, Wells Street, Fairway Drive and Seaton Drive. These homes that are being built can be seen from blocks away; they do not fit into their surrounding area. They block airflow and sunlight to their neighbours who enjoyed these things before these new homes were built.

I am not adverse to the current homes being replaced with new homes, but I do believe that there should be tighter restrictions with regard to height and square footage. They should also not be able to remove all of the large trees on the lot that make our neighbourhood so enjoyable. The new homes should be designed to respect the character of the existing neighbourhood and the residents who currently reside there.

I am tired of being told "It is happening everywhere," or "that is the price of progress," etc. We can make a difference, we can make ourselves heard. Sometimes we need to stop, take a step back and look at the whole picture. If people want large houses, they are out there. Please feel free to go buy one in a neighbourhood that is full of those houses. Don't destroy the special qualities of my neighbourhood by buying a home, tearing it down, and replacing it with a monstrosity that is misplaced and not wanted.

How can we help make this happen? Contact a Town Councillor and let them know your concerns, talk to them. We voted them into Council to be our voice and to help us run our community. Write letters to the paper and copy these letters to the Council members. All of their contact information is on the Town website.

I am sure you've heard the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Well, join your voice to ours and soon we will have a choir and change will happen.

I would like to thank Councillor Wendy Gaertner for bringing the concerns of Aurora citizens to the attention of Town Council and ensuring that we are heard.

We need our Town Council and the Planning Department to talk to each other and work together. Come up with a plan that keeps the residents happy and still generates the wealth that seems to drive the concerns in Town. This needs to happen sooner rather than later before we lose the neighbourhoods that make Aurora such a great place to live.

Aurora is growing in leaps and bounds and with good reason; we're an amazing community and people want to live here. We were called "The Beaches of the North" in a magazine article I read last year. Let's try to keep Aurora an amazing place to raise families and let's protect our older neighbourhoods.

Georgia Pottage
Aurora

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Confusion abounds over what is allowed in stable neighbourhoods: Councillor

There is some confusion about Aurora's Official Plan, our Zoning By-laws, and what is currently being allowed to be built in our "Stable Neighbourhoods."

This is the planning term use for our older residential areas.

Our Official Plan is our main planning policy to manage our growth.

The purpose of the Plan is to ensure that future development will be compatible with what exists; and will be in the public interest. One of the fundamental principles of the plan is to protect our older residential neighbourhoods from incompatible development.

The Province and Region approved our Official Plan. It was passed by Council in 2011.

Aurora recently updated our Zoning By-law. However, we did not update the bylaws pertaining to older neighbourhoods.

New building in these neighbourhoods is following the old regulations from 1968 regarding building height, percentage of a lot that can be covered by a house, distance it must be away from neighbouring homes, etc.

Updating these old by-laws will put the protection envisioned in our Official Plan into action.

It will ensure that new development is consistent with the character of what already exists. Doing this as soon as possible may give us a chance to make positive changes for the upcoming building season.

Our Official Plan, including Section Six which includes the policy for older residential areas, can be found at www.aurora.ca.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner
Auroraa

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Thursday, January 25th • 2:30 – 3:30 pm
A fascinating presentation by Toronto District School Board history, culture and social studies resource specialist Lianne Harris.

Robbie Burns Tribute
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Councillors defend lease deal, costs negotiated behind closed doors

By Brock Weir

Local Councillors are defending a decision made behind closed doors to strike a deal with Niagara College for the use of the Aurora Armoury.

Councillors faced criticism from one of their own at the last Council meeting of the year when it came time to firm up the Town's move to lease the historic building at the northeast corner of Mosley Street and Larmont Street to the College for an offshoot branch of the Canadian Institute of Food and Wine.

A long-time vocal opponent to the deal who said he would rather see the building used solely for municipal purposes, Councillor John Abel was firm in his criticism of Council moving ahead with the agreement, which was negotiated in closed session.

"When we are discussing something like this, we should have it out in the open," said Councillor Abel on the $4 million agreement, translating to $400 per square foot which he said is "exceedingly high" for any business, and also taking aim at the decision to sole source the deal to Niagara College rather than putting the option up for a public bid. "I think the norm to build new is far less. I am not comfortable with the cost, I am not comfortable with the lease because it really is the taxpayer that is going to pay for that."

In response to Councillor Abel's comments, Doug Nadorozny, CAO of the Town of Aurora, said that while initial estimates to refurbish the Armoury came in around $2.1 million dollars, that was just to refurbish the existing shell, properly insulate it, update some of the infrastructure and bring it up to code. The proposal to expand the building is the reason for the expanding budget.

"With the repurposing, we made sure that the renovations…are done so with the idea this is community space first and foremost and even if the day comes where the college doesn't use it, a very minimal amount of renovations would be required, if any, frankly, to leave it as open community space.

Since we were doing this all confidentially at the time for the benefit of both parties, the purchasing bylaw allows under this circumstance to do a sole source. The architect we had chosen had experience doing similar facilities and had worked with Niagara College in the past. It was with that we sole sourced

"There is also an allowance for the work to integrate the building into Town Park. There is a significant component of landscaping and patio and those kinds of things. None of the design work has been done yet, but we have thrown a number in there for all of that detail to come back to Council.

"Since we were doing this all confidentially at the time for the benefit of both parties, the purchasing bylaw allows under this circumstance to do a sole source. The architect we had chosen had experience doing similar facilities and had worked with Niagara College in the past. It was with that we sole sourced."

The majority of Council members defended the move to negotiate the details behind the scenes, including Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who said she wasn't always on board that the Niagara College deal was the best move for Aurora.

"I have always been very careful about going into Closed Session and making sure it was appropriate," she said. "I think it was appropriate and I don't want to be implied by anyone at this Council table that it wasn't. It's a very complicated subject, it was a very complicated negotiation, it took a lot of thought, took a long time for me to come around to the idea, but I think we have made a good choice and I am hoping that at the end of the day the community will feel that as well.

"It is an exciting opportunity and Aurora has always been behind. A bold move? I am not sure. We thought it out very, very, very, very carefully and there was an agreement by eight out of nine people sitting at this table and we have moved forward with that. I really don't like anyone implying I did anything untoward. I don't believe that I did."

Councillor Tom Mrakas followed suit.

"I have seen Councillor Gaertner in action many times and she has been one of the biggest proponents to if you go into closed session you're doing it for the right reasons, so I think if we weren't following the process, if there was one person who would stand up to say it, it would be Councillor Gaertner. I think we can reassure everyone, all the residents, that we felt we did everything properly," he said.

Added Mayor Dawe: "I have no doubt that if we were straying [beyond the rules of Closed Session outlined by the Municipal Act] our solicitor and/or our Clerk or CAO would let us know we were going in a direction we shouldn't. I have no doubt in my mind that the direction we followed was solid."

Advertorial

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However, many people are hesitant to have surgery given its invasive nature. It is important to know that although surgery is sometimes necessary, it is considered a last resort in most cases.

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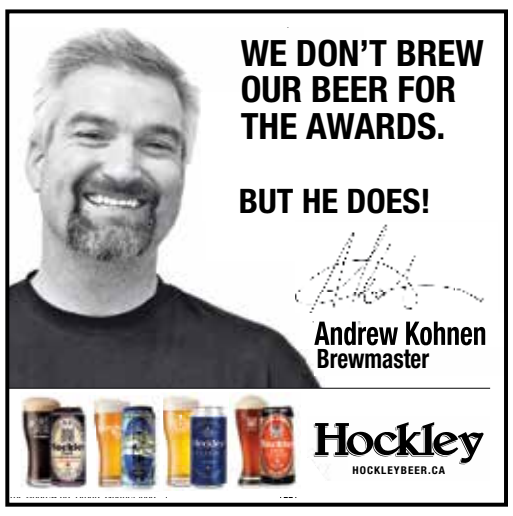

& BUSINESS & FINANCE

New Year could bring new incentives for affordable housing throughout York Region

By Brock Weir

The dawn of a New Year could bring the dawn of a new day in affordable housing across York Region.

This winter, the Regional Municipality of York is expected to receive a report on a new framework which would put in place incentives to bring about more affordable housing.

According to Valerie Shuttleworth, Chief Planner for the Region, staff will be reporting to Regional Council "in probably February or March" on an incentives framework to foster the development of affordable housing. Until this point, she said, York was waiting for guidelines from the Province on exclusionary zoning – such as housing density – but something had to give.

By June, a further presentation to Regional Council will delve deeper into how affordable housing is defined.

"In June, you will see a much more in-depth report on affordability by type, a little more detail by location, and we're going to look a little more specifically at rental and setting some thresholds around affordability," she said. "We have some ability to alter the definition as long as we get the Provincial okay for it."

Currently, the definition of "affordable" housing in York Region is pegged at just under $468,000, but that could be up in the air. Most recently, in the last year-and-a-half, there has been increased interest in rental units throughout York Region, said Rick Farrell, General Manager of Housing for the Region. A significant factor in this surge is a corresponding surge in rental prices, which has climbed up to nearly $2,000 a month in many cases.

"The problem with that this year became that once they introduced rent controls again, some of the [developers] are now thinking twice about it because it does cap the return on their future investment,"" he said.

While a review of the Region of York's Housing Strategy is still some months away, some local lawmakers have looked at ways Aurora can get its foot in the door on the plan, or even set out with some incentives of its own to increase the number of affordable units here in Town.

> *We committed in our 10 year housing plan to look at ways to provide incentives for private, affordable market housing and rental housing. There is a lot of good stuff in there; we're not developing a housing strategy [but] an incentives framework.*

"It is my impression that Aurora is in need [of] more affordable housing and more rental units," said Councillor John Abel, who introduced a motion himself last fall to get a head start on some of these incentives. "It's acute in our area. The other part is if you're developing a tool kit and a strategy, and if you're aware of a strategy Aurora already has in place, you could then [have that as a tool]."

While the Region stopped short of telling Aurora to forge ahead on a housing strategy of its own, the Regional representatives told Council the municipality should do what it thinks is best.

"I think Aurora should do what Aurora thinks it should do and we will bring our framework forward," said Ms. Shuttleworth. "If Aurora has something in place before we report to Regional Council, we will take that into consideration, review it, work with it, see how we can include it and work with our framework together with Aurora's. Having Marco [Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning] and his staff at our local municipal housing working group, I think we're all kind of talking about the same thing.

"We're not saying wait. We have a 10 year housing plan. We committed in our 10 year housing plan to look at ways to provide incentives for private, affordable market housing and rental housing. There is a lot of good stuff in there; we're not developing a housing strategy [but] an incentives framework. In 2018 we will be refreshing that 10 year strategy."

From Councillor Wendy Gaertner's perspective, any further incentives are a long time coming.

"I keep talking about trying to get developers to give us affordable housing through bonusing," she said. "I have been talking about it for years and I don't believe, to this point in time, we have ever accomplished that. It is very frustrating."

AURORA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Aurora Chamber Insider Session: Calling all new members, future members and current members! Learn more about the benefits of membership.
Join Us: Thursday, January 25, 2018 at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Annual Mayor's Luncheon: Learn the answers to key questions about the Aurora business community!
Join Us: Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at Oakview Terrace, 11:45 am – 2:00 pm

Learn More & Register: www.aurorachamber.on.ca/events

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introducing Seanna Murray, Member Relations Ambassador

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce Seanna Murray, our new Member Relations Ambassador. In this role, Seanna will foster relationships with members of the local business community. You may have already seen her out welcoming new members or supporting current members.

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SNOWFLAKE BALL RETURNS FOR THIRD YEAR

After taking last year off to focus on building the event, the third instalment of the Snowflake Father Daughter Ball returned to the showroom of Highland Automotive on Saturday night and was a resounding success. (Clockwise from left) Crowds of girls, along with their father figures (dads, grandfathers, brothers, uncles) hit the dance floor. Laura and Emily with Dave – who won the dance-off. Michael, Rachel, Hillary, Samantha, Jasmine and Glenn. Ivy and Richard.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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York Region artists keep the Canadian love going in Showcase 2018

By Brock Weir

Last year, the Society of York Region Artists pulled out all the stops to showcase the best of Canada, reflected through their own unique eyes.

But although the Canada 150 year has come and gone, this maple love continues to reign supreme at the Society's (SOYRA) latest show and sale, Showcase 2018, now on at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

The annual event formally opened with an artists' reception on Saturday afternoon and will run through January 28.

"We seem to have a wider variety of styles this year with various media that are being used that we have not seen in the past, which makes for some very interesting viewing," says SOYRA president Linda Welch. "25 per cent of our exhibiting artists are brand new for our organization and we're attracting professional full-time artists to the organizations and that is a feather in our cap. It means that are standards are now widely acceptable and I am particularly proud of the show we have this year."

As the pieces came together, Ms. Welch says she saw a "smattering" of themes, but a definite trend emerged in the field of Canadian landscapes.

"There's a focus on nature and wildlife in many different styles," she explains. "There is high realism and there is abstracted work on the other end of the scale. We also have new photographers who are bringing in new techniques. I believe there was quite a bit of interest in what we tried to do here from the visitors' side [with Canadian work last year] and I have seen, as people come into the show, they ask if there is a Canadian theme, or if we can point them to Canadian artworks, works representing Canadian locations.

"From the artists' side, a number of our artists spent quite a bit of time travelling to various locations across Canada, so I see that inspiration represented in our continuing work because once you go to a place and it strikes a chord, you continue to emulate that in your artwork."

Showcase 2018 is one of three major shows carried out by the Society of York Region Artists each year. Next is the 50-year strong Art Aurora, a collaboration with the Town of Aurora, to be held the first weekend in May. This is followed by an autumn show slated for St. Andrew's College the weekend after Thanksgiving.

It's essentially a set schedule with SOYRA followers eagerly anticipating the three shows, but with each year, their audience grows.

"We have a following and the following comes as far away as Toronto, Mississauga and Peterborough," says Ms. Welch. "We have some galleries that are now following us and they come to check out the quality of the work we have and I know there has been follow-up, which is nice for our artists as well. For Showcase 2018, I want art lovers to come and enjoy the colours and moods in each piece.

"I know there is subject matter that is appealing to all ages. We have had families in already with little ones as young as three. We have a People's Choice ballot and even a three year old had a favourite. There is subject matter that is appealing to everyone and part of our mandate – yes, it is a sale but part of our mandate is to bring a little colour and life to our community, so it is a form of entertainment. If they come in and spend an afternoon looking at something that makes them feel good, then we have succeeded because that is what art work is supposed to do: make you think or make you feel, remember something from your past or make you smile."

(Top) Linda Welch, left, President of the Society of York Region Artists attends Saturday's opening reception with Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre. (Above) Taking in the art – and the music, courtesy of the Aurora Winter Blues Festivals, were Sofia, Veronica and Albert Spinu, budding musicians in their own right.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

Festive fun with your elected officials set for Saturday

From page 3

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev will host her own event at her constituency office from 1 – 3 p.m.

The free event will feature hot chocolate and other holiday treats, along with a chance to mix and mingle with Ms. Alleslev and your neighbours.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together and celebrate the beginning of the New Year," she said. "I look forward to meeting with you and your friends, families and loved ones to reflect on 2017 and discuss the future of our community and our country."

Ms. Alleslev's office is located at 12820 Yonge Street, Suite 202, in Richmond Hill.

"People's" chamber is not accessible to all, says activist

By Brock Weir

Last month, Tyler Barker made an impassioned plea to Council to step up its game when it comes to accessibility.

Aurora should set the standard when it comes to making things accessible and inclusive to everyone, regardless of ability, he said, rather than simply meet minimum standards set out by Provincial legislation through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

"Why do they always say it meets the minimum standard?" he asked Council over concept plans drawn up for the future redevelopment of Library Square. "Would you like the minimum standard on your home renovations? On your car? On your health care?"

It was a message heard loud and clear by Council, but if his mother wasn't at his side holding the microphone, it's a point that might have been missed.

Mr. Barker lives with cerebral palsy and, as such, needs a motorized wheelchair to get around. While this is challenge enough, it is compounded by the size of his wheelchair, which makes navigating the narrow wheelchair ramps down to the floor of Council Chambers himself next to impossible.

Instead, he had to make his point from a top-deck door to the Council chambers, out in the lobby, talking to lawmakers below.

It's a point he has made before, and indeed some modifications have been made on the ramps to allow for a smoother ride, but with an election in the air, Mr. Barker is ramping up his efforts to see real change in the place where Aurora's laws are made.

Following last Wednesday's meeting of Aurora's Accessibility Advisory Committee, Mr. Barker invited The Auroran to accompany him as he attempted the trek down to the podium, a place where the politically-minded twenty-something would ideally like his voice to be heard.

The challenge was clear.

Wheelchair ramps down to the floor of the Chamber are only accessible from the rear of the room, where individuals using mobility devices have to navigate around a panel of wall concealing the doorway into the room.

Accessibility advocate Tyler Barker tries to negotiate his way down a ramp into Aurora's Council Chamber last week, a task he ultimately could not manage without some assistance around tight corners.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Rounding the corner was impossible without the assistance of fellow Committee member James Hoyes who helped ensure Mr. Barker wouldn't catch his elbows or any other parts of his wheelchair on the corners. Rounding the corner from the upper platform to the top of the ramp was another challenge, ultimately met alone with a few back-and-forths of the wheels.

It was a different story when he came to the bottom of the ramp's first flight and had to round the corner. While approximately a foot of the railing going down the centre of the ramp has been removed since 2014 to allow for a wider berth, it still proved an obstacle and required a hand from his fellow committee member before he could make the journey to the podium.

The podium itself earned praise, since being modified and automated to change in height to accommodate all users, but the journey itself is the problem.

"Imagine if I was on Council," Mr. Barker mused once he completed the trip. "It could take me 15 minutes to get up and down. [Accessing the Chamber] is better than it was, but especially with the $500,000 audio system that was put in, this could definitely be more accessible and inclusive."

Mr. Barker referenced the $500,000 new audio-visual system installed in Council chambers which has been fraught with technical difficulties since it was installed midway through this Council term.

"I don't bang my elbow on the ramp anymore, so there is a little bit of an improvement there, but the turning radius is still cumbersome and I can't do it on my own because I don't want to take a chunk out of my wheelchair. I mentioned it four years ago and let it go to be polite, but after the $500,000 so-called enhancement of the audio in the rooms, I think they can do better than this. It doesn't need to be me, but what if someone in a wheelchair or walker just wanted to run [for Council]? How would anyone get down here without help? To do this on my own, I would have to bring somebody and that's not very independent and I don't see any other mothers or family members helping each other at Council. They may come to watch, but they don't come and sit beside them to help them. Whitchurch-Stouffville has a very easy-to-access Council Chamber, so do Richmond Hill, Vaughan and East Gwillimbury."

Watching all this unfold was Councillor John Abel, Council's representative on the Accessibility Advisory Committee. While he said it is possible to get an elected official down to the floor with the modifications had been made, he gave it a failing grade overall because the desks and seats for Council members could not accommodate larger wheelchairs like Mr. Barker's.

"It fails, but he does get people up and down," said Councillor Abel. "We're going to adopt a phrase that it is 'not meeting the AODA, but exceeding it.'"

"Exceeding the standards," added Mr. Barker. "This is not minimum standards."

According to Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith, Manager of Corporate Communications for the Town, recent renovations to the Council Chamber were carried out for the audio-visual system only, and not intended to renovate the chamber itself.

"However, during the A/V project we did take the opportunity to improve accessibility," she said. "The Council and staff tables were moved closer together to allow more space for a wheelchair to manoeuvre behind, we installed an adjustable height lectern that is wide enough to fit a mobility device, and the old screens were removed and replaced with flat screens in order to provide more space for those navigating the wheelchair ramp. In addition to making improvements for those with mobility issues, we installed assisted listening devices for the hearing impaired.

"Renovations to the Chamber have been considered by Council in the past and the Town's current Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which is reviewed by the Accessibility Committee on annual basis, includes a project to increase accessibility in the Chambers by 2023. In the meantime, the Town continues to work with the committee to identify and remove accessibility barriers and ensure that all AODA legislated obligations are met in a timely manner and compliance with these standards are maintained."

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If/Then explores the "What if?" at Theatre Aurora

By Brock Weir

Have you ever wondered what would have happened if you went the other direction when you came to a fork in the road?

Of course you have, we all have, but, for most of us, it is a question that will always be unanswered.

The possibilities, however, are fun to explore and that is just what Theatre Aurora will do when the curtain rises on If/Then next Thursday, January 25.

A contemporary musical with music by Tom Kitt and lyrics by Brian Yorkey, the story follows Elizabeth, a city planner, who moves back to New York to re-start her life in the big city. Eventually, her life follows the two parallel paths of "Liz" and "Beth", putting the magnifying glass on "the intersection of choice and chance."

"For me, it was that we shouldn't be so laden down by choices," says director Sergio Calderon of what attracted him to the project. "We should be open and available and be able to say 'yes' and move forward without being too calculating, without being too reserved in how we live our lives. It calls into question whether fate or predestination exists, and how would we ever know? We wouldn't, because we would never get to see multiple versions of our lives, but in a theatrical way it is great to explore those ideas."

If/Then arrived at Theatre Aurora almost entirely by chance.

In this, their 59th season, they intended on staging the landmark musical Rent, but rights were suddenly pulled from community theatres across North America when producers decided to stage a 20th anniversary tour. That same week, however, Mr. Calderon received word that the rights for If/Then had become available and it fit their season's theme like a glove.

"Once me and my team had been chosen to direct it, I had to read the play about 28 times, simply because of the storyline," he says. "We're following the life of one woman after she makes a decision that would change the course of her life and we see both of those paths play out on stage, similar to the concept of [the film] Sliding Doors. In order to make sure each life and each of the characters in both of those lives were clear in my mind [in terms of] their arc, their wants, and how they are going to achieve those wants, we had to have a really great sense of what each person does in each life."

It was a difficult task for both director and cast, particularly lead actress Jody Butler. But, it's a task Mr. Calderon says Ms. Butler makes look "effortless."

"It is an incredible thing to witness in itself," he says. "We underwent a full day of physical movement workshops in order to try and identity the potential for how physically the life of Beth presents itself, to her, and to everyone who exists in that world. How do you carry yourself in the world of Liz? One life has greater stresses and pressures, and one life has different ones that would affect every person different, physically. It's physicality, but also how each one of them speaks – not about huge differences, but the subtleness of language in the text and how you attack it. She is on stage for virtually the entire show. In order to make those huge transformations, emotionally and physically, in a split second at times, is also a very massive challenge for an actor to undertake."

As such, with such a complex show, Mr. Calderon says the pre-production process on If/Then started a full two months earlier than the typical shows, from the complex scenery changes to ensuring the characters are fully formed.

Sometimes the rehearsal process, he said, felt like a "freight train that was out of control" with one song calling for six scene changes, flipping back and forth between the lives of Beth and Liz four times, but it is all worth it in the end.

"Before your eyes you will be transported to about 100 different places in New York City," he says of the intricate set. "The elements are all coming together and we are steamrolling towards that dress rehearsal where every single element falls into place. As a director, my anticipation is always the sharing. As an artist, I just want to share the work and see the reactions that the audience will get from watching the work that we have created. It is a very, very moving piece of theatre. There are a lot of elements that are quite relevant to our living in today's world, so our hope is that it will strike a chord with our audience members because it certainly has brought many members of our cast to tears over the last number of weeks.

"The main theme is, 'What if?' While it is worthy spending a bit of time asking that question, it is really wanting the [audience] to realise that spending too much time with that question will actually make them miss out on what is in front of them. It is about being open, ready and willing to accept any possibility that is in front of them without belabouring it because, at any given moment, this time will pass and you'll never get that back."

If/Then opens at Theatre Aurora next Thursday, January 25 running on select dates and times through February 3. For more information, and tickets, visit www.theatreaurora.ca or call 905-727-3669.

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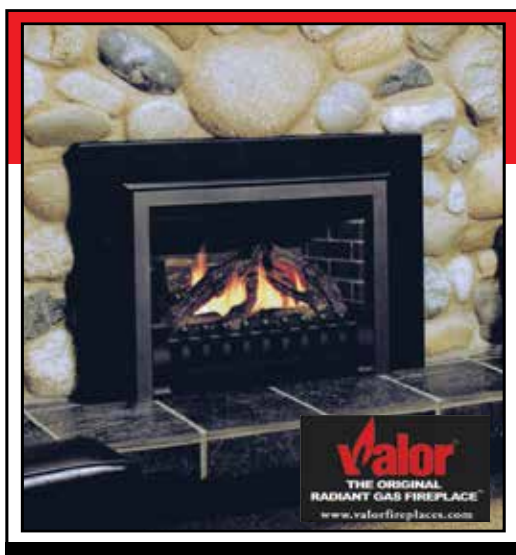

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Region needs to step up efforts in "harm reduction," says AIDS Committee

By Brock Weir

The sheer size of York Region – not to mention the Region's diversity – can often make it challenging for support workers within the area to meet the needs of the community, but the Region needs to step up and provide resources to reduce existing gaps in harm reduction.

This is the message members of the AIDS Community of York Region delivered to Federal representatives last month as part of World AIDS Day.

Donning the red and black suitable for the international observance, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev was joined at the Committee's offices in north Richmond Hill by Markham-Stouffville MP Jane Philpott, Canada's Minister of Indigenous Services and former Federal Minister of Health, to hear concerns of outreach workers that have been informed by experiences in the field.

The two Members of Parliament joined a talking circle comprised not only of AIDS Committee staff and Board members, but also community partners and friends to specifically discuss local and provincial challenges, along with opportunities, when it comes to HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment across York Region. Chief among their concerns were a lack of resources surrounding harm reduction, which encompasses the distribution of safer sex information, including the distribution of condoms, needle exchanges, providing food and clothing, along with shelter and sleeping bags to homeless members of the York Region community, along with providing health care information, counselling, and referrals to at-risk individuals.

"We see a lot of long-term survivors in this Region," said Megan McGrath, Manager of Support Services for the Committee. "We see a lot of newcomers, immense diversity, which brings its unique challenges and joys. I would say the biggest challenges thus far have been geographic. It is a very large and diverse region, so there is a lot of people coming from very different places, travelling long distances to access services not only within York Region but outside the Region.

"A lot of our folks have historically accessed services in Toronto, because they are quite accustomed to that, they continue to access services in Toronto. Sometimes that is because they don't exist in our region and sometimes that is because what is familiar and what feels safe for them. To have resources available to them to access the services they want to access is really, really important to us as an agency."

But there are those gaps in harm reduction which, she said, leaves the Committee without the resources to "reach folks who are using substances in the Region."

"Currently there are a number of people and populations who are at risk of contracting HIV or are living with Hepatitis C who we are not funded currently to assist, which is really important because we don't want to wait until those folks end up being positive for us to be able to offer them resources," she said. "We want to be able to offer resources now."

This was a view bolstered by Vibhuti Mehra, the Committee's Executive Director who also steers the Harm Reduction Coalition of York Region.

"There is no detox centre, no place for me to access treatment if I am having that moment where I want to help myself [and] I have to think about going to Brampton and I cannot get there," said Ms. Mehra, adding more outreach workers were needed, as well. "Public health is not really out in the street and they are not necessarily the most accessible people. We can't know about those narratives unless we meet the people and someone has to meet the people and they are out in the streets, they aren't going to come into a clinic, they aren't going to walk through our doors. They are not necessarily aware of what is available or have the resources to come up here.

Cabinet Minister Jane Philpott, far right, was joined by MP Leona Alleslev and Vibhuti Mehra, Executive Director of the AIDS Committee of York Region, for a World AIDS Day event, which was hosted by the north Richmond Hill-based organization.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

"We have to go where people are. I worry that is going to be a baggage we'll deal with much later. Harm reduction is our value. We don't want to wait for someone to have an overdose or even contract HIV because they didn't know a safer way of using."

In response, Ms. Philpott told the assembled circle that there is "such a struggle" to provide services and care for people in the Region, an issue which she identified as a practicing physician in Stouffville. She said she believed there are "more gaps than any of us really understand" because they are difficult to quantify with accurate data.

"In terms of harm reduction, I would love to have more conversation on what opportunities there are and what we [might be able to do] through our offices to link you into some potential opportunities," she said. "I just think on injection drug use in the country I don't need to tell you guys how critical it is that we in York Region get ahead of the challenges that the country is facing widely and I think one of the nice things about not having much established is it allows you to be maybe a bit creative. There are not established patterns on how we amplify the opportunities and I love your views on trying to get the resources to where people are."

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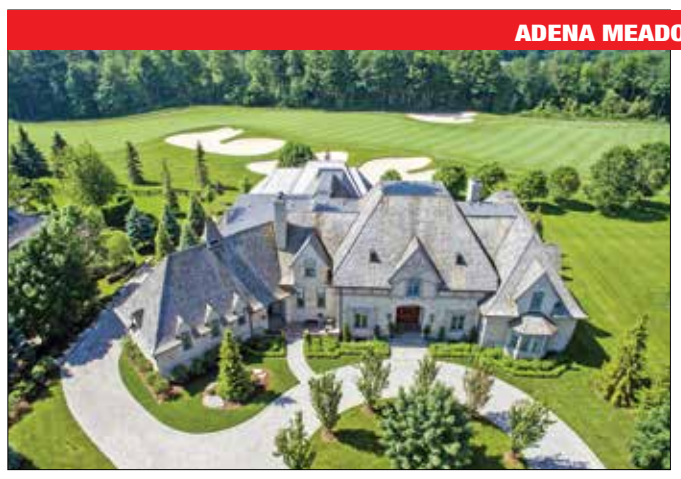

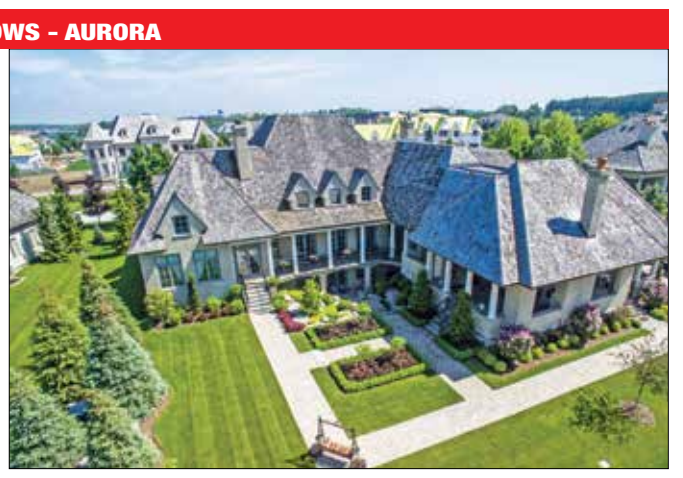

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Chapter Closes on Old Library

Going…going…gone – the landmark former home of the Aurora Public Library faded into the history books last week. (Top and second) Library Square demolition began January 4 and by this past Thursday, all that remained was the extension built onto the west of the old library. (Third and Bottom) By Saturday, all that was left of both the former library and adjacent seniors' centre and fire hall was a pile of rubble, as seen from the window of the neighbouring Aurora Cultural Centre.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

Aurora Historical Society
Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, February 14, 2018
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Approved Library Square concept backed by Cultural Centre

By Brock Weir

The Aurora Cultural Centre could be set for a future expansion following the approval of a design concept for Library Square.

Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, threw the Church Street-based organization's weight behind the "lowered square" concept at the last Council meeting of 2017, stressing that a planned building intended to act as an extension of the Centre in future Library Square plans must be built in conjunction with the adjacent public square area.

"Both plans have an extension to the Cultural Centre indicated and the Aurora Cultural Centre and Aurora Museum & Archives, as residents of that space [see it as] a very active space," she said. "Neither have enough programming and storage space to meet the needs of the community. A purpose-built cultural expansion would be a welcome addition to allow us to do more programming and to house other cultural partners and their programming. Building plans also have a public plaza and typically a plaza like that is successful if it is easy to activate, walkable, green and with interesting art, structures and amenities to support longer stays by the community.

"Concept Two was preferred in our conversations with the understanding that the extension would need to be part of the design. Out of the two concepts, Concept Two provides an easily activated plaza space to program without additional infrastructure costs. The natural bowl provides strong architectural visuals and seating for the community to enjoy any programming happening in the plaza. In my experience, plazas without natural infrastructure cost more to activate and are less frequently used because they can be cost-prohibitive to reassemble the space every time."

On nice days, the outdoor space could be used to offer classes, but it only works if the expansion is included because the Centre is concerned the building would be "looming, unconnected physically to the plaza that is lower" than the current building.

"The expansion would allow for a practical connection to the plaza and through to the connected heritage building as we recognize that in either concept a connection would be beneficial," said Ms. Haines. "The expansion would also connect us with parking and would be particularly beneficial if it could solve our current loading challenges in to the Cultural Centre. There is also the potential for increased accessibility for patrons through the atrium connected through the expansion that could also be programmed, allowing for internal programming to be seen from the plaza and the street. Parking continues to be a point of discussion with the Board looking for ways to ensure patrons have access to the space and the number of current spots is not reduced, including our lot which will disappear with the expansion."

There is an "appetite," she concluded, to encourage the Town to make a decision based on the best long-term plan in bringing about a space that is "active, easily accessible" and "vibrant."

"This design will set the stage on how the community feels about their downtown and whether they want to come and participate in activities there," she said. "How this concept links to Town Park, the Armoury and transit solutions, parking, contributes to the success of downtown businesses, community engagement and cultural activation."

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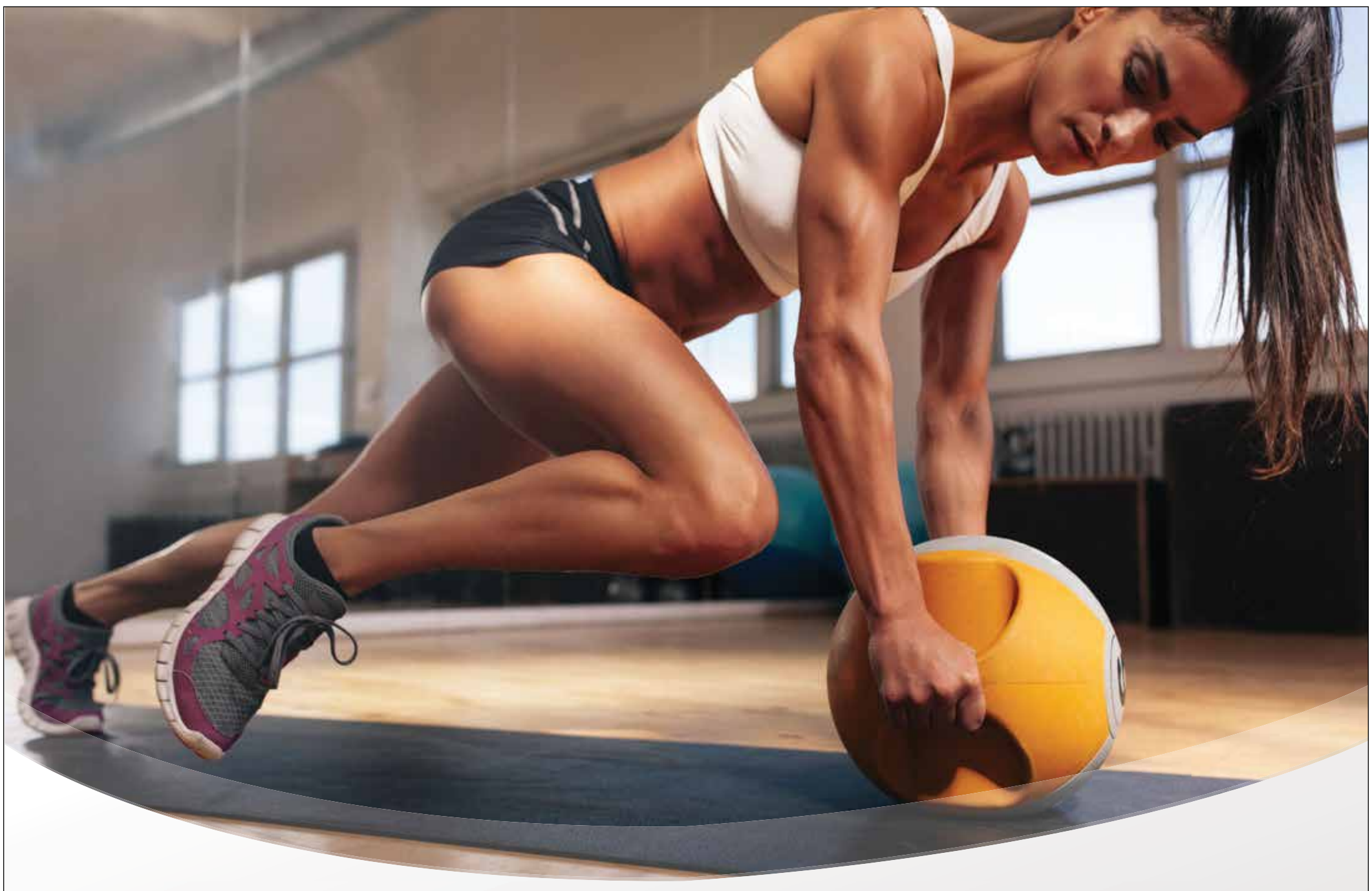

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Crime Stoppers focuses on transnational organized crime

By Brock Weir

International borders used to be a buffer against many forms of organized crime, but with the growth of social media and even Bitcoin, this is quickly becoming a theme of the past.

January is Crime Stoppers Month and, here in York Region, the organization which allows persons to provide anonymous tips to solve crimes is highlighting the prevalence of transnational organized crime in our community.

The continued increase in the number of human trafficked individuals, along with the infiltration of contraband and counterfeit goods which present health and economic threats, often under the direction of organized crime groups, and the growing threat of cyber-crimes on businesses are setting off alarm bells, says Crime Stoppers.

And no community is immune.

"Transnational crime includes anything from terrorism to international money laundering," says Constable Peter Dunn of Crime Stoppers York Region. "They are using all sorts of methods to dupe people out of money and borders no longer stop them from doing this because people can call up from the other side of the world and, through identity theft, create identification that can be used for illegitimate acts through international fraud schemes."

Such schemes, he says, include people calling to tell you your child is in a South American jail and needs $1,000 wired immediately, and any variety of scenarios.

"This effects everybody in York Region, Canada and the world," he says, adding the cyber-currency Bitcoin is adding a newer dimension to transnational organized crime. "Bitcoin itself is not a crime, but what it is used for is a crime. Different types of crime trends can touch and adversely affect everybody because criminals are no longer impeded by borders."

To this end, Crime Stoppers is raising awareness that their anonymous tip system is firmly in place to help bring these crimes to justice, and it can simply be a matter of picking up the phone and making a call, sending a text, or logging onto a secure website.

"Crime Stoppers is a great avenue that allows people to maintain anonymity but also allows them to do the right thing by contacting Crime Stoppers to let them know this is happening," says Dunn. "People probably think the Police are running it [but] Crime Stoppers is run by a board of civilian volunteers from the community. They own the Crime Stoppers information. They allow us to utilize that information under some protocols. They give it to us providing that we follow… the guidelines. We then disseminate this information to the respective police agency because if it is a tip on homicide, it goes to the homicide unit. If it is a tip on drugs or a meth lab, it goes to drugs and vice; if it is a tip on someone drinking and driving it goes to the traffic enforcement unit.

"It is strictly anonymous. We don't know who the person is when they call us, we don't know who they are when they text us. We have no way of knowing who they are, nor quite frankly, do we want to know who they are. I don't think there's any mistrust about how Crime Stoppers works, I just don't think people necessarily understand how it works."

Crime Stoppers raises awareness not only in the month of January but throughout the year, including several in-school initiatives to underscore the importance of the organization to students. Not only does it go a long way to illustrate how to do the right thing, but it can be a valuable tip line for students to report what they suspect to be a crime, any type of bullying, or, in the words of Dunn, "picking on people because of their sexual orientation."

Anyone looking to report a crime through Crime Stoppers can do so by calling 1-800-222-TIPS, leaving an anonymous tip online at www.1800222tips.com or by texting your tip to CRIMES (274637) starting with the word YORK.

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE

Stephen Somerville

The (old) boys are back – and getting slower and older!

A number of years ago I decided to try and find somewhere much closer to home to play hockey – those late Sunday night games in Toronto were killing me the next day!

Luckily enough, a friend asked me if I wanted to play organized "pick up" hockey on Sunday afternoons at Pickering College.

I didn't know what to expect at the time, but I said, "Sure."

We don't have referees or timekeepers or scorekeepers.

One of the guys acts as a convenor, and instead of throwing the sticks in the middle of the ice as we used to do as kids to determine the teams, he chooses the sides while we are in the dressing room.

We have about twenty guys, all shapes, sizes, ages and levels of ability ranging from not very good (moi) to guys who played Junior "A" hockey.

I have been playing with this group for almost a decade now and I have never had a more enjoyable experience.

The guys are funny, and just like the eight year old boys we used to be, we still like to use a little trash talk.

And we still have the enthusiasm of youth.

We forget all our cares and concerns for that one hour. And what a glorious hour it is.

What I appreciate most is no coach yelling, "Somerville, for the love of God, would you pretend to back-check just once this season", or my all-time favourite, "Somerville, these are not ceremonial face-offs, you are actually allowed to win one of them, you know".

We always kid each other that if you don't play well, you will be sent down to the minors. Leaf players can get sent down to the Marlies; the only thing lower than our league is public skating!

And having your friends as the goalies is always great for the ribbing and bragging rights that goes on during the rest of the week.

I also play hockey in the Tuesday night over 50 League in Aurora.

We have two officials, and an official time keeper.

During the first game this year I was (honest truth!) "minus three" after the opening shift.

I was the starting centre who lost three draws in quick succession and the puck was in the back of the net three times before the game was one and a half minutes old. I wanted to stay out on the ice for a fourth – but my teammates thought that I had done enough damage for one shift.

What follows is a partial transcript of the conversation I had with a player from this hockey team a couple of years back:

Stephen: What's this on my shirt?

Other Player: Somerville, we haven't even got on the ice yet and you're already complaining. Sorry that you didn't get the "C", but we were thinking of giving you an "A" – for … (can't print this due to The Auroran being a family newspaper) – but the seven-letter word used has the same last four letters as foxhole. You get the picture.

Stephen: Thanks for that Mike, now you just wait until I tell your sister (a.k.a. my wife) how you treat me. No, I am not complaining about my lack of team status but how come my shirt has a small patch on the front that says "old timer". I don't mind if it says "terrible player wears this shirt", but not "old timer". I only want to be called an old timer when I can get into the movies cheaply or get my hair cut at a reduced rate".

These Sunday afternoon and Tuesday evening one hour games are like a fountain of youth – carefree and fun. I wouldn't miss it.

Just don't call me an "old timer" though.

Stephen can be contacted at stephengsomerville@yahoo.com

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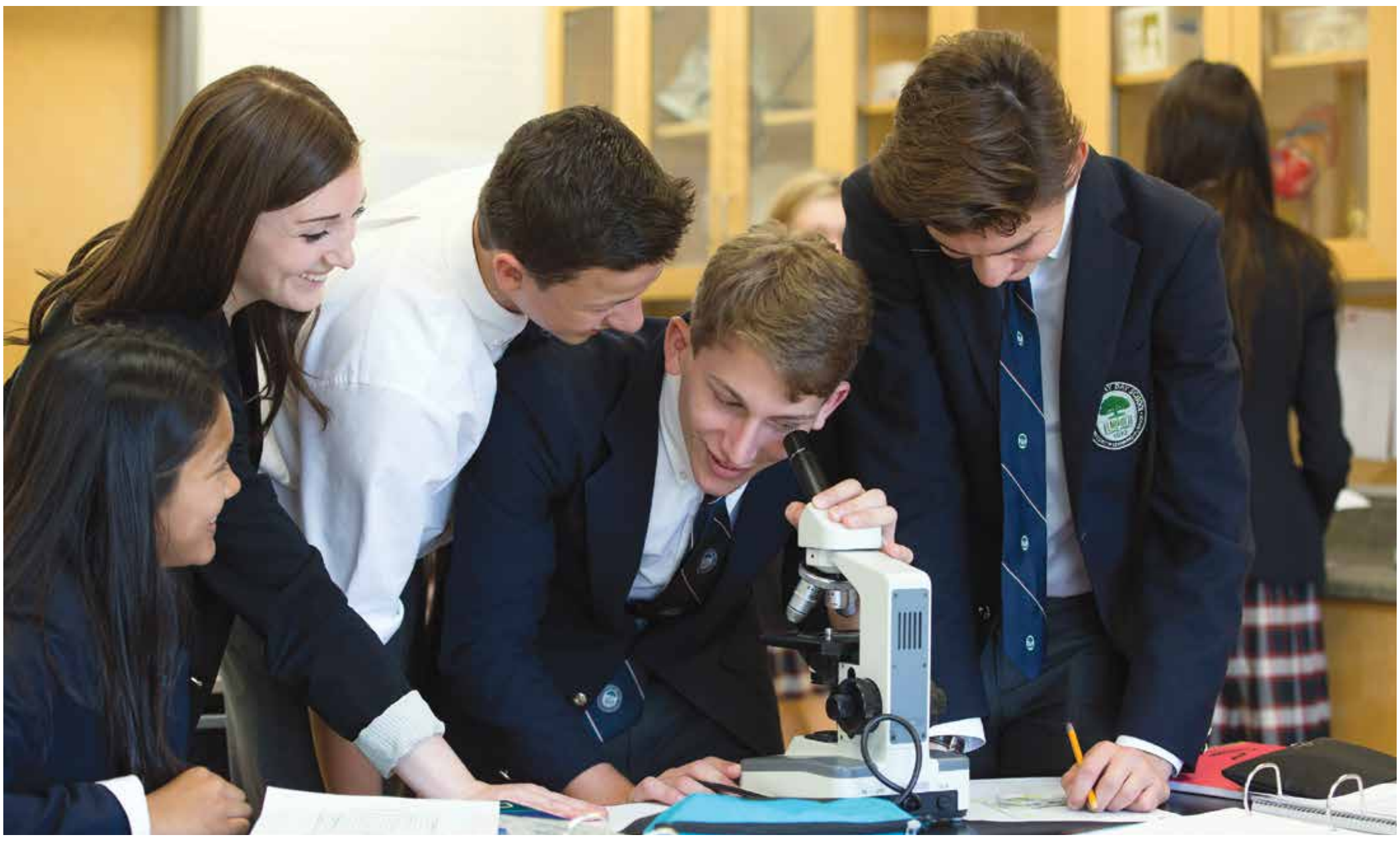

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Vol. 18 No. 13 905-727-3300 | theauroran.com | FREE Week of January 18, 2018

Tigers battling Hurricanes for North division supremacy

By Jake Courtepatte

As the OJHL regular season winds down, the playoff race is heating up.

The Aurora Tigers are among the hottest with just over a month left in the regular season, earning an "honourable mention" in this week's top-20 rankings of the best Junior A hockey teams in Canada.

Sunday's 7 – 1 win over the Pickering Panthers tied the Tigers with the Newmarket Hurricanes for tops in the OJHL's North division, a title Aurora has been chasing for months against a very talented Hurricanes squad.

It took a 13-game point streak, dating back to the first day of December, for the Tigers to catch the Hurricanes, knotted at 52 points apiece and two ahead of the Markham Royals.

With the entire OJHL suspending play on Friday night due to weather conditions, both Aurora and Newmarket had just one game on the past week's schedule. While the lowly Stouffville Spirit managed a 1 – 1 tie with the Hurricanes on Sunday, Aurora was taking the Panthers to school led by a goalie clinic from Bradley Van Schubert.

Van Schubert tightened his grip on the team's starting position by making 25 saves on 26 shots, while Austin Eastman and Joseph Mizzi contributed a trio of points each.

Twelve players recorded at least a point in the win, storming back after a Pickering goal just over two minutes in for seven straight.

Captain Jake Bricknell capitalized on goal number twenty-two of the year, just one day after earning player of the month honours for December. The ex-OHLer has been the top difference maker for an Aurora team that struggled mightily last season, earning the 'C' before the drop of the puck this year and leading the team with 66 points in 36 games.

Those numbers are good for second place in league scoring, behind just Andrew Petrucci of the Toronto Lakeshore Patriots.

With just fifteen games left on the regular season schedule, the race for the top position in the league's North division could come down to the wire.

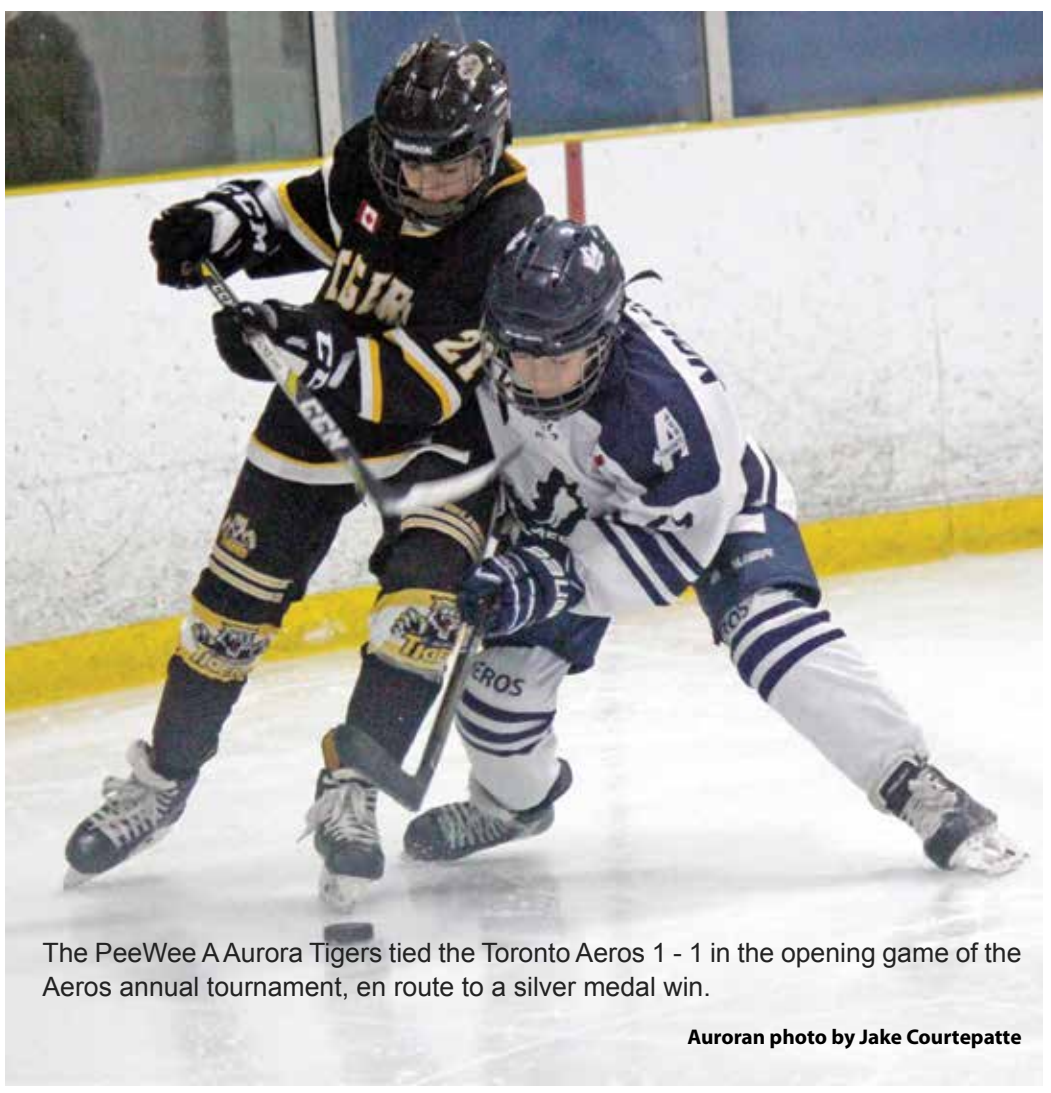
While Markham resides just two points back of both the Tigers and Hurricanes, the leading teams have three games in hand, giving them quite an advantage.

The Yonge Street rivals will meet one more time this season, on February 8 at Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex, where the Hurricanes have lost just four games in regulation this season.

In the meantime, Aurora plays a rare Tuesday night road game in Lindsay after press time, followed up by a return to the Aurora Community Centre on Friday to host the Whitby Fury, their first home game of 2018.

Puck drop is set for 7:30p.m.

For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.



The PeeWee A Aurora Tigers tied the Toronto Aeros 1 - 1 in the opening game of the Aeros annual tournament, en route to a silver medal win.

Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte

Tigers earn silver in Toronto Aeros tournament

By Jake Courtepatte

Aurora was all over the podium at the Toronto Aeros annual invitational tournament, earning silver in both the PeeWee A and Atom AA divisions.

The Atom Tigers roared into competition on Friday with an 8 – 2 win over Richmond Hill, followed up by their only loss of the round robin to Gloucester later that evening.

A 2 – 2 tie with Forest Hill the next morning and a 3 – 0 shutout of the hometown Toronto Aeros set up a semifinal date with the Toronto Wolverines, who Aurora handily defeated 4 – 2 on Sunday.

That set up another meeting with Gloucester in the championship game, who maintained their perfect record by shutting out the Tigers 2 – 0.

The PeeWee As met a tough hometown Aeros team in their opening game, coming away with a 1 – 1 tie, before cruising through the rest of the round robin with three straight wins over the East Enders, Toronto Shamrocks, and York Mills, giving up just one goal along the way.

The semifinals had Aurora matched up against the similarly-undefeated Toronto Titans, with Aurora earning a championship berth by way of a 2 – 1 victory.

Having allowed just three goals throughout the tournament, it was Burlington that came away with the victory, a 3 – 1 game to give Aurora their second silver medal of the tournament.

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The successful applicant will be an objectives-driven professional who has experience working with volunteer Community sport and allied recreation leaders in a variety of settings. Academic background in sport administration is required, as is knowledge of the Aurora Sport Plan and the Aurora sport community. Excellent verbal and written communication skills are necessary.

The Sport Plan Coordinator is a contract position of one year, requiring 15 -20 hours per week that often includes activities that are outside of regular business hours.

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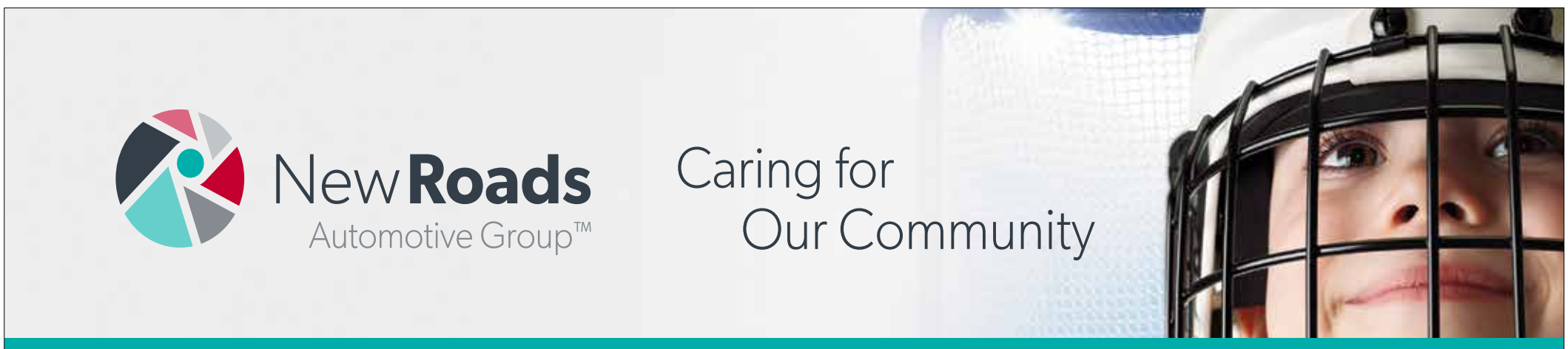

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The St. Andrew's Varsity B Saints battled Pennsylvania's Kiski School in Game Three of the annual Gary West Tournament at La Brier Arena on Saturday.

Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte

B-Saints take bronze in home tournament

By Jake Courtepatte

St. Andrew's varsity B squad can run with the big dogs.

They proved their worth last weekend in earning bronze at the second annual Gary West Invitational Tournament, hosting teams from across Canada and the northern United States at La Brier Arena on campus.

Caleb Creasor played the overtime hero in securing the win in Sunday's bronze medal game, adding four assists in taking down the CISAA rival Upper Canada College.

The Saints rolled through the competition in the round robin matchups, earning wins over both Lower Canada College and Kiski School and a tie with Gilmour Academy, setting up a semifinal berth against Everest Academy.

A 5 – 2 loss set up the third-place battle with UCC, where Kristopher Jansen and Parker Boland each scored twice, as well as Creasor and Coulson Link.

The Gilmour Academy Lancers were victorious over Everest Academy in the tournament's championship game.

John Hopkinson and Dalton Lehman shared the crease for the Saints throughout the tournament.

The prep school is now lined up to host the annual Macpherson Tournament from January 26 – January 28, drawing competitors from Ontario, Alberta, Quebec, New York, New Hampshire, and Maine, as well as Germany's Jungadler Mannheim, the first overseas team to participate in the 35-year old tournament.

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AURORA

Musician Glenn Marais, front, provided entertainment at the formal launch of the 2018 Aurora Winter Blues Festival. Hosted by the Aurora Public Library, the launch was attended by (from left) festival co-founder Jamie Macdonald, Reccia Mandelcorn of the Aurora Public Library, Councillor John Abel, who also serves with Music Aurora, Rose Kirby of the Aurora Legion, James Hoyes, Music Aurora's Danielle Grattage, and the Legion's Lori Hoyes.

Photo by Lucy Frechette

Get ready for a full month of Blues

From page 1

Strongman, Jack De Keyzer and Michael Schatte at St. Andrews College on Friday, February 23.

This "killer lineup" will be followed the next evening with a "throwback tribute" to the album Mad Dogs & Englishmen, saluting the music of Joe Cocker and Leon Russell, with special guests The Dan McKinnon Band.

That, however, is just the main course.

There will be plenty of appetizers throughout the month of February to whet your appetite, the first being February 3 from 7 – 11 p.m. with the annual Blues Bash, held again this year in the showroom of Highland Automotive professionals.

"This year, the Blues Bash will showcase Sons of Rhythm," says Music Aurora's Greg Smith, who launched this year's Festival at the Aurora Public Library with Aurora Winter Blues Festival (AWBF) co-founder Jamie Macdonald. "I think people will love their energy and people will be up on the dance floor absolutely loving those guys. For me, that is going to be a personal highlight. It's a very local, grassroots kind of evening with local talent and a great way to support our local charities. If you're coming for the first time, come out on February 3 to get a taste of what the Aurora Winter Blues Festival is all about."

The 2018 Blues Bash will see some changes from previous years. In the past, the event has put on two stages of music throughout the dealership, but this will be consolidated into one large main space next month showcasing both the pros, and the local youth talent who have become a mainstay of the party.

The party continues Saturday, February 10 with a free guitar workshop from 10 – 11.30 a.m. in the Magna Room of the Aurora Public Library, hosted in conjunction with The Arts Music Store and, next door in the Lebovic Room, a free song-writing workshop at the same time.

Festivities shift over to the Aurora Cultural Centre on Thursday, February 15 where the seven-time Juno-nominee Ken Whiteley takes the stage with Freedom Blues, a menu of songs set to "address both contemporary and historical struggles for the freedom endemic to a healthy, progressive society."

Music will then blow the roof off the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion on February 17 when Soul Benefit, featuring Steve Falk and Friends, will host a dance to benefit the Legion's ongoing Raise the Roof Campaign.

All throughout this time, pop-up performances will be taking place courtesy of the 33 1/3 Record Store at Bayview Avenue and Hollidge Boulevard.

The popular record store is a first-time partner with the AWBF and both parties are excited about the new relationship.

"They have come on as a sponsor this year and it will be exciting because they will be at the Festival theatres on the Friday and Saturday with a wide selection of vinyl from the Blues genre and patrons will be able to browse and look at some amazing vinyl," says Mr. Smith.

Which brings us back to the main course.

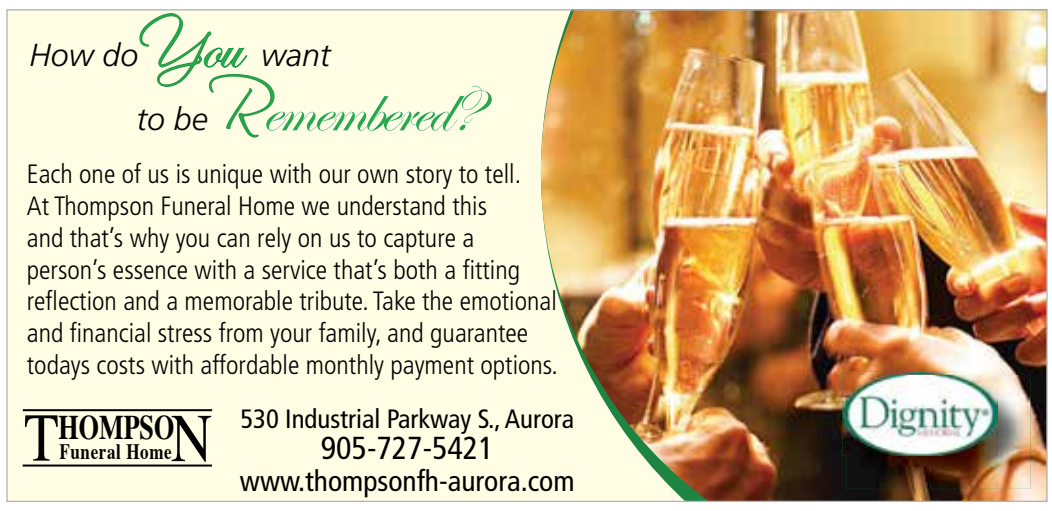
St. Andrew's College will be the setting for the Aurora Winter Blues Festival proper on Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24.

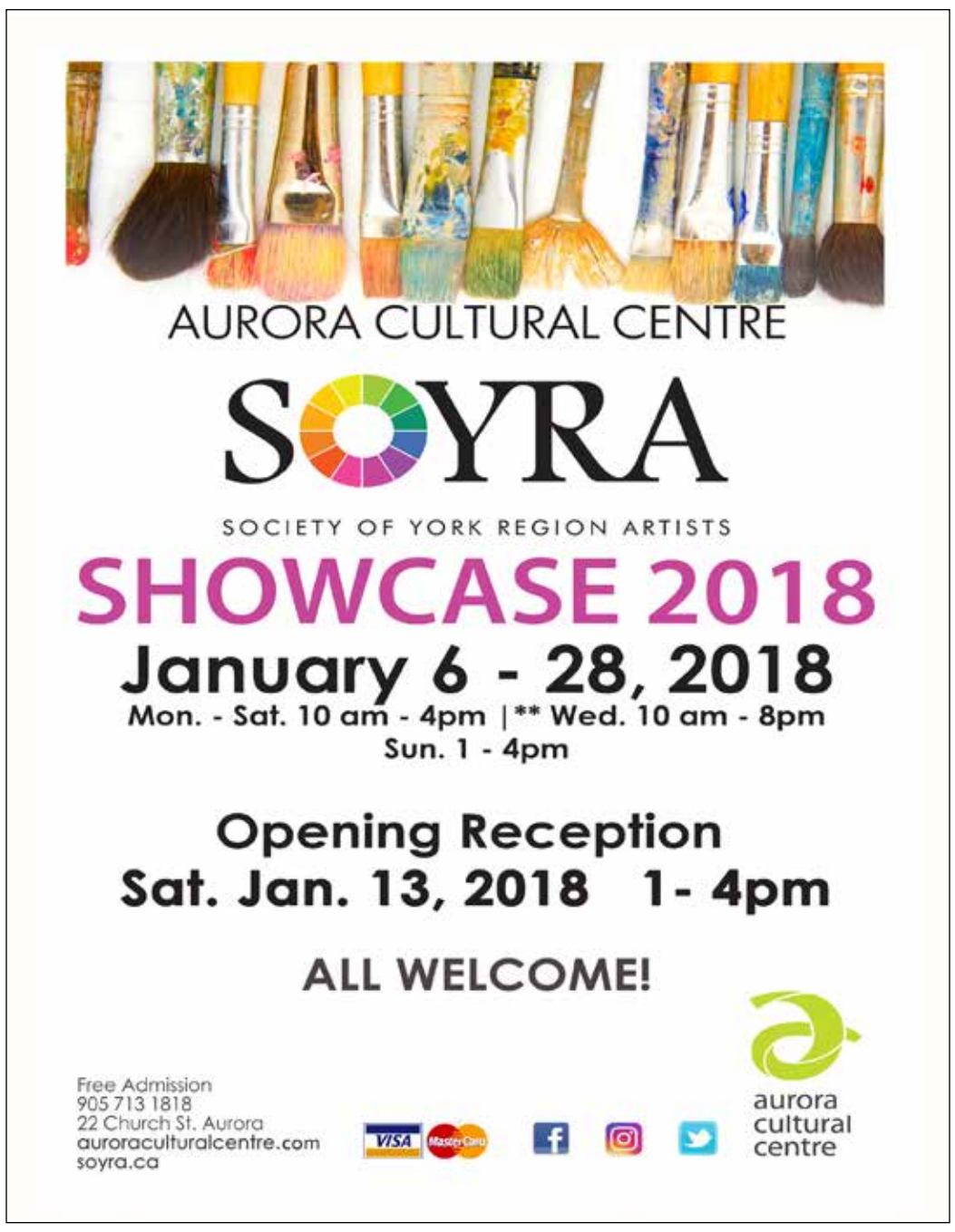
"Journeymen will bring together three top Canadian male blues artists who have paved the way for many people in the blues industry to make a living," says Mr. Smith of De Keyzer, Schatte and Strongman. "They are on the road and perform 200-plus nights a year and are very active, very talented individuals. On Saturday, with a tribute to Joe Cocker, Leon Russell and their album Mad Dogs & Englishmen, we will have a 13-piece band with some of the top performers in Canada in the blues industry."

This all-star line-up on the Saturday will be opened by The Dan McKinnon Band.

"St. Andrew's College has been a phenomenal partner," says Mr. Smith. "We had a few technical challenges last year, which have been addressed, and they have been very open to working with us in terms of the technical programming of their equipment to provide an even better experience for our patrons this year. We hope everything will be bigger and better than it was last year!"

For more information on the Aurora Winter Blues Festival, including dates, times and tickets for the Blues Bash, main stage events, and everything in between, visit www.awbf.ca.





Neighbourhood Network honours its first decade and sets sights on the future

By Brock Weir

Neighbourhood Network needed no introduction to the people filling the hall of Newmarket's Old Town Hall on Thursday night as the Aurora-based community organization celebrated its first decade connecting community.

Most of them were there at its inception when the fledgling brainchild of then-MP Belinda Stronach brought together a few handfuls of community organizations and even more handfuls of local volunteers to make a difference, and all looked on with pride as they saw how the "mighty" idea turned out to be an equally "mighty" force for good in northern York Region.

"Neighbourhood Network was born out of a little idea that individuals, if given relevant and easy opportunities to connect with their communities, could turn into powerful resources," said Ms. Stronach in a statement read out by Magna for Community's Steve Hinder. "I like to think of Neighbourhood Network as the original online matchmaker – only its success is not measured by marriages, but measured in good works.

"From the early beginning of connecting volunteers with those in Newmarket-Aurora, Neighbourhood Network now connects over 12,000 volunteers in five municipalities in York Region with organizations and individuals who need support."

Indeed, Neighbourhood Network still sticks close to its original mandate of connecting community groups with specific needs with potential volunteers within the community who might be able to lend a hand, but often don't know where these volunteer opportunities – or community needs – lie.

With its early foundations in Aurora and Newmarket, it now serves the communities of King, East Gwillimbury and Georgina.

Speaking of Neighbourhood Network's foundation, Mr. Hinder said these needs became relevant to Ms. Stronach during her time as MP when constituents would come in with needs that were often beyond the purview of the Federal government.

While some came in for assistance with their Passport applications, immigration matters, or dealings with the Canada Revenue Agency, Mr. Hinder said the majority of people who came in were simply looking for help in its most basic form.

"Belinda always liked to use the example of a single mom with three kids whose fridge had just died," he recalled. "She said, 'You can't tell me there are not 100 fridges in homes in our community looking for a good home.' The problem was neither one of them knew the other existed. It was our job to hook them up. It was on this pretext Neighbourhood Network was formed, knowing the literally hundreds of charities, non-profits looking for volunteers and the people in the neighbourhood willing to help. They just don't know where the needs are and it is our job to share that knowledge."

One man working behind the scenes to lay the groundwork for that vital connection between organization and volunteer is incumbent Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson who, back in 2007, was working as a lawyer for Magna International, which continues to fund Neighbourhood Network.

At the time, Mr. Peterson said the automotive sector wasn't "going the way many would have liked" and the company was being encouraged to invest in the needs of the community.

"Magna stepped up and invested," said Mr. Peterson. "It was great to see that community support by all those people. At the time, we needed community support as well as corporate support and it was great we had Tom Taylor and Tim Jones, the former mayors from the towns where Neighbourhood Network first set its root to step up [as ambassadors]. We sat around the house on Yonge Street having brainstorming sessions trying to think, 'What exactly is it we're intending to do here?

"It's a testament to the community that we are so blessed and fortunate to call home that something like Neighbourhood Network can thrive. We're lucky to live in a relatively affluent community but we can't forget that not everybody shares that affluence. Not everybody is as fortunate and lucky as their neighbours.

"Neighbourhood Network is, in a way, an acknowledgement of that very fact and it is great that so many volunteers and so many corporate partners stepped up to help those in our community who aren't as lucky or as fortunate or as blessed as others, and I think that will be the legacy of the first 10 years of Neighbourhood Network, and I hope it will continue to be the legacy of the next decade or century into the future."

To ensure Neighbourhood Network continues to thrive into the next decade or 10, this two-way exchange will need to continue.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Hinder said he encourages community groups, businesses and residents alike to reach out for Neighbourhood Network when they recognize a need in the community and "Are unsure what role you and others might play."

"It is our job to know who is out there and what they are doing," he said. "When the needs are identified, we love convening a meeting, getting everybody around the table, and nine times out of ten we find the community has the resources to address their own issues; they just didn't know one another existed.

"It's a powerful thing. We believe the community has the ability to solve its own problems and that is our job."

For more on Neighbourhood Network, visit www.nnetwork.org.

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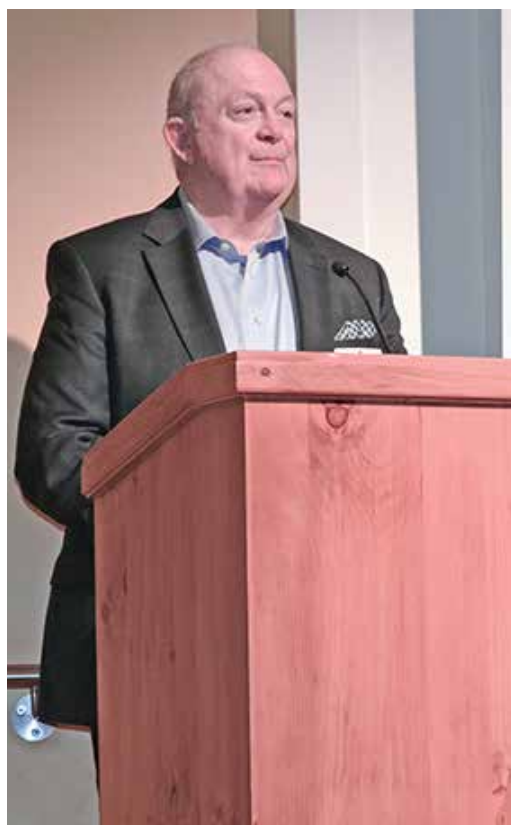

Members of Neighbourhood Network's founding family, Steve Hinder and Kyle Peterson, now Member of Parliament for Newmarket-Aurora, spoke at Thursday's 10th anniversary party.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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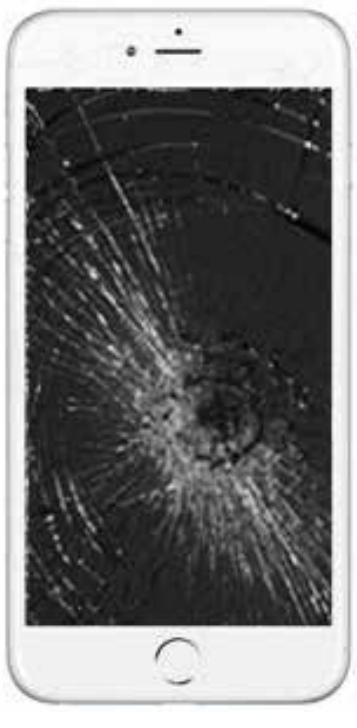
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THINGS YOU OUGHT TO KNOW

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

Celebrate the New Year with Aurora's Mayor and Council at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (1400 Wellington Street East) this morning from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The New Year's Levee will feature cake, hot beverages, face painting and crafts from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. followed by a free skate with the Aurora Tigers between 11 a.m. and noon. All members of the public are welcome to attend this free celebration.

* * * *

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev will host her New Year Levee today from 1 – 3 p.m. at her office (12820 Yonge Street, Suite 202, Richmond Hill. Come celebrate the New Year with your family and friends and enjoy some hot chocolate and treats.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21

Arts Society King presents the return of the previously sold out The Art of Scotch today from 2 – 5 p.m. at the King Heritage and Cultural Centre. Enjoy and taste five scotches, a presentation by a scotch sommelier, nibbles and fun. $70 all inclusive per person. Artssocietyking.ca.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) meets at the Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Parkway North, tonight at 7 p.m., for a meeting at 7.30. CFUW helps empower women's lives through friendship, education, outreach and advocacy. Historian Jacqueline Stuart will be speaking on "A History of Women & Education in Aurora and Newmarket." All women, regardless of educational levels, are welcome.

JANUARY 25 – FEBRUARY 3

Theatre Aurora is proud to present the Canadian premiere of the Broadway hit and Tony award winning musical If/Then. Story by Tom Kitt, Music and Lyrics by Brian Yorkey. Get your tickets now before they're gone! Opening Thursday, January 25 and Presented by Theatre Aurora, winner of the THEA for Best Musical Production of 2016/2017 ACT-CO season, directed by Sergio Calderon THEA award winner for Best Director, Musical 2016-2017. Call the box office at 905-727-3669 to reserve or order online by visiting www.theatreaurora.com.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

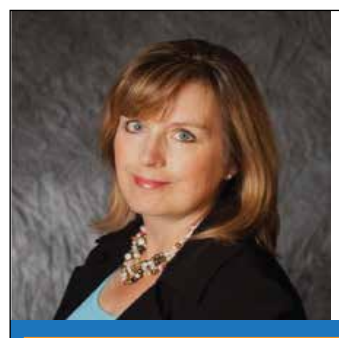
Newmarket Soccer Club's Girls U11 team will hold a fundraiser this evening at Boston Pizza Aurora (8 First Commerce Drive) from 6 – 8 p.m. Be served by the team and 10 per cent of all sales will be donated back to them.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

John Sheard presents A Tribute to Stuart McLean tonight from 8 – 10.15 p.m. at the Aurora Cultural Centre. Sheard spent countless miles travelling across the continent with the legendary Stuart McLean. Join us for a special evening of backstage stories, tour bus tales, music and humour from 20 years on the road together creating memories for a lifetime. With special guests Chris Whiteley & Diana Braithwaite, Dennis Pendrith, and introducing Kalya Ramu. For ticket information, call 905-713-1818 or visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca/events/tribute-to-stuart-mclean.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

The PROBUS Club of Aurora holds their monthly meeting today from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Royal Canadian Legion (105 Industrial Parkway North). This month's speaker is Mr. Tranh Campbell. He was the 32nd Vietnamese orphan loaded into a Canadian Forces plane on April 12, 1975. For more information on this month's speaker, please call Cliff White at 905-841-2421. New members welcome! Call Gary Gilbert at 905-895-2849, or be our guest at the meeting.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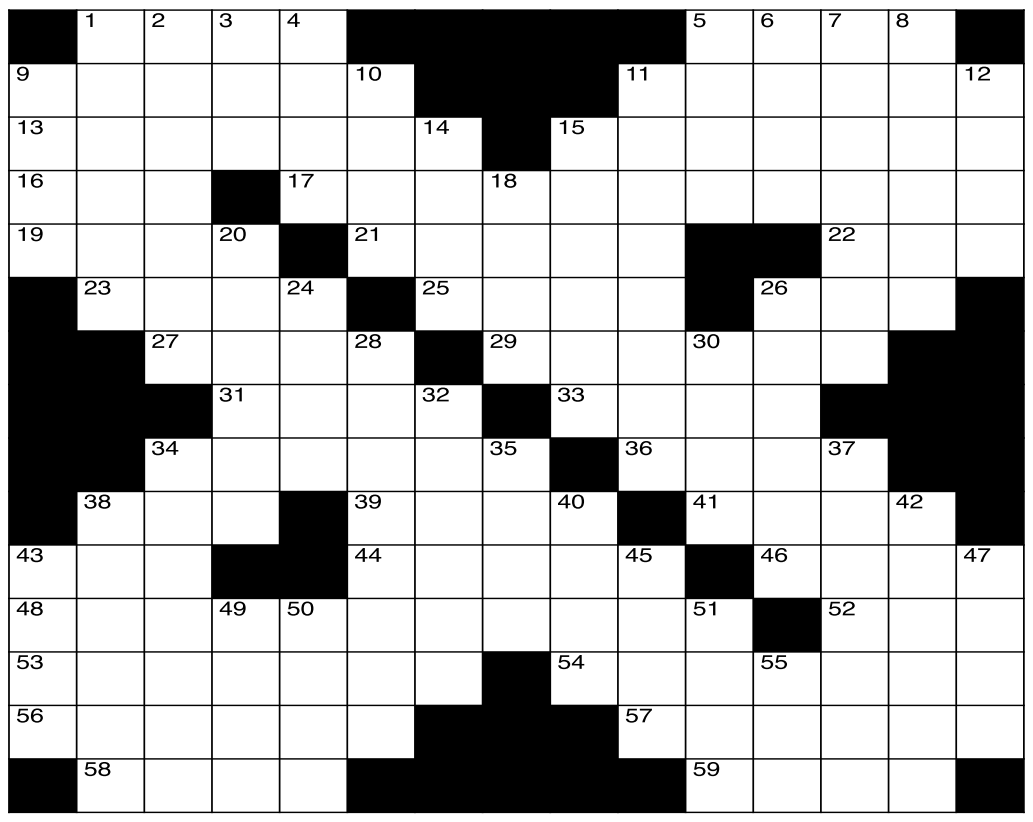

CLUES ACROSS

1. Methaqualone pill (slang)
5. Religious service
9. Woodland gods (Greek myth.)
11. "Where Is My Mind?" rockers
13. Deliberately contrary states of affairs
15. Inflection of the voice
16. "Great Expectations" character
17. Becomes a butterfly
19. Spoke
21. Tennis player Sharapova
22. Midway between northeast and east
23. Afrikaans
25. No instruction set computing
26. Pacific Standard Time
27. Relaxing places
29. Confiscates
31. Gladys Knight's fellow performers
33. Witnesses
34. Taking place in a series
36. Satisfy
38. Freshwater fish of N. America
39. Laments
41. "Girls" creator Dunham
43. Indian title of respect
44. Cocoa plum
46. Network of nerve cells
48. Link together in a chain
52. Cool 70s crew "The __ Squad"
53. Persons engaging in energetic pursuits
54. Accumulation of glacial debris
56. Fastened
57. A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
58. Whiskey and bread are two
59. Scottish tax

CLUES DOWN

1. Rope used to lasso
2. Idyllic places
3. Field force unit
4. Guitar great Clapton
5. Slang for type of skirt
6. Figure skating jump
7. Innocent
8. Mathematical ratio
9. Slowly drinks
10. Line where edges meet
11. Offices of the pope
12. Dry or withered
14. "__ the Man" Musical
15. Difficult situations
18 Greek goddess of discord
20. Marked by smartness in dress and manners
24. Habitat
26. Annoy constantly
28. Full of life
30. Great energy
32. BBQ and soy are two
34. Virtuous
35. Not fatty
37. Foes
38. Merchandiser
40. Dishonest scheme
42. Repents
43. Protective crust
45. Native American people
47. Any place of bliss or delight
49. Bring up
50. Birds
51. Geological times
55. Consumed

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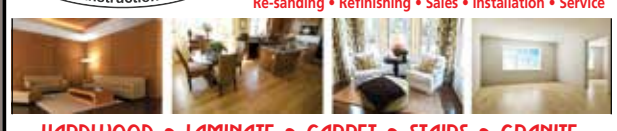

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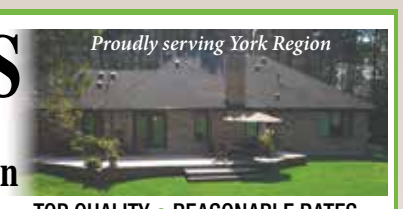

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Interim control bylaw could last a year

From page 1

and supporting policies to guide growth within the Town," says Letman. "As noted by Council, protecting stable neighbourhoods, both older and newer, are not only a defining element of Aurora's character and urban structure, but also an asset and attractor for new residents and investment interests.

"The Official Plan seeks to ensure stability and vibrancy of these existing neighbourhoods by protecting them from the negative impacts of potential incompatible development and growth pressures. Infill is to be compatible with the established community character, building scale and urban design. 'Compatible' refers to development that may not necessarily be the same or similar to existing buildings in the vicinity, but nonetheless enhances an established community and coexists with existing development without causing undue adverse impact on surrounding properties.

"Conducting a study, as directed by Council, will further examine a background assessment of the Town's existing policy framework, existing zoning provisions, and a review of best practices undertaken by other GTA municipalities."

If approved at the January 23 General Committee meeting, and ratified the following Tuesday by Council, the study will look at defining and establishing boundaries for the study itself, identifying unique qualities and characteristics within each defined stable neighbourhood, identifying the impacts of infill development (with an emphasis on large-scale development "concerning to residents") and, in the end, outlining possible policies and amendments that can govern infill moving forward.

"It should be noted that the internal control bylaw is intended to restrict larger scale developments that are out of character in a neighbourhood but [the bylaw] will also have the effect of restricting even minor forms of development that would not conform with the provisions of the Town's Zoning Bylaw. There will likely be instances where minor variances will be appropriate, such as minor setbacks to accessory buildings, such as garden sheds, or due to the historic nature of an existing building, a variance to recognize the condition which has long existed and has no impact.

"In these instances, staff propose a Variance Proposal to be brought forward for Council consideration to allow the processing of an exception to the bylaw."

POLITICS AS USUAL

Alison Collins-Mrakas

Transit Options

As a daily transit user, the announcement of all day two way GO train service was certainly welcome news.

As folks who take transit will know, prior to this service change, getting downtown during the week during off peak hours – so any time after 8 am in Aurora – or back home – anytime before 3:40 pm from Union to Aurora – was a less than ideal experience.

You had the option of taking a bus from the Union terminal, which left once an hour and took about an hour in good traffic, to get to Aurora. Not that bad really but it would often be jam packed, with people standing in the aisle the entire ride. Also, there's no bathroom on the bus which has led to some interesting escapades shall we say.

The other option you had was to take the subway to Finch and then take the VIVA Blue all the way to Aurora – a decidedly unpleasant option. First, it takes forever – and second? Well, suffice to say, if you jam people like cattle into buses you are going to trigger some rather uncivilized behaviour.

So, all-day two-way train service is like going from ground chuck to filet mignon. Pretty darn amazing.

All day two way train service to Aurora. Fantastic!

I am a details kind of person. I like to know the what, the why and the how of everything. So when the announcement was made I of course eagerly examined the new schedule to see what changes had been made.

Imagine my dismay when I realized, it isn't all-day two-way train service.

Even without the daily schedule changes (and more on that in a minute), the actual schedule as printed makes clear that we do not have all-day two-way service.

There are no trains going south between the hours of 2:40 and 8:40 daily. If you want to go downtown during that period you have to take a bus. So folks who expected to take the train downtown to see a show will be disappointed to know that you are still going to have to take a bus. And anyone who has tried to take GO to a Jays game on a Friday afternoon will know that those buses are insanely packed... So, not good news.

And, there are no trains going north to Aurora in the morning until 9:40. Anyone downtown hoping to go to Aurora for work by GO train are still out of luck. They will be trapped on the DVP like the rest of those poor souls.

What we do have is enhanced GO train service. Again, a good thing, but it isn't what is advertised.

Why make an announcement about a service that cannot actually be currently provided? We know the extra tracks aren't laid yet, so those freight trains that currently occupy the tracks during the mid-day aren't going anywhere, so why pretend otherwise?

I get the alerts on my phone (an excellent service offered by GO. It lets you know the status of your train.) Every day I get multiple alerts telling me the 11,12,1 and/or 2 p.m. trains from Aurora have been cancelled due to freight train traffic. Aurorans will have to take a shuttle bus to Maple and get on the GO train there.

What should have been a really good news story – and improved and enhanced transit options for Aurorans is a really good news story – is now soured by the reality of a bit of a bait and switch.

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REGISTERED RECES REQUIRED for local school aged child care centres in Aurora. Must have experience working with children ages 4-12 years. Available for part time split shift Monday to Friday 7 - 9 am and 3 - 6:30 pm. Please contact Marisa at amongfriendsdaycarecentres@hotmail.com.

HANDYMAN REQUIRED FOR PART-TIME general work around a south Aurora home. Electrical, plumbing, painting, etc... Phone: 416-292-1189 Email: dgannicott@gannicott.com

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY LOOKING for experienced, knowledgable, on-site supervisor for the York Region area. Please email resume to: stepheno@intercityrealty.com fax: 905-597-0493 office: 905-597-0227.

ABATE RABBIT PACKERS meat processing facility from Arthur immediately requires 16 Wholesale and Retail Butchers with a minimum of 2 to 3 years of direct hands on experience in meat cutting and processing. Duties include cutting and sectioning of meat, skinning and removing blemishes, deboning rabbits and chickens, cutting meat into specialized cuts and preparing for wholesale and retail sales. HS diploma or equivalent required. Positions offered are permanent full time and salary is $16.00/hr for 42.5 hrs a week, OT after 44 hrs a week. Please apply in person at 7597 Jones Baseline in Arthur, via email at joea@abatepackers.com, via fax at 1-519-848-2793 or via phone at 1-519-848-2107.

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He took what he could from there and ventured to Scotland, Cornwall, and ultimately to Krefeld, Germany, working in the same brewery that had belonged to his ancestors. He came home to Canada for Hockley.

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Andrew Kohnen
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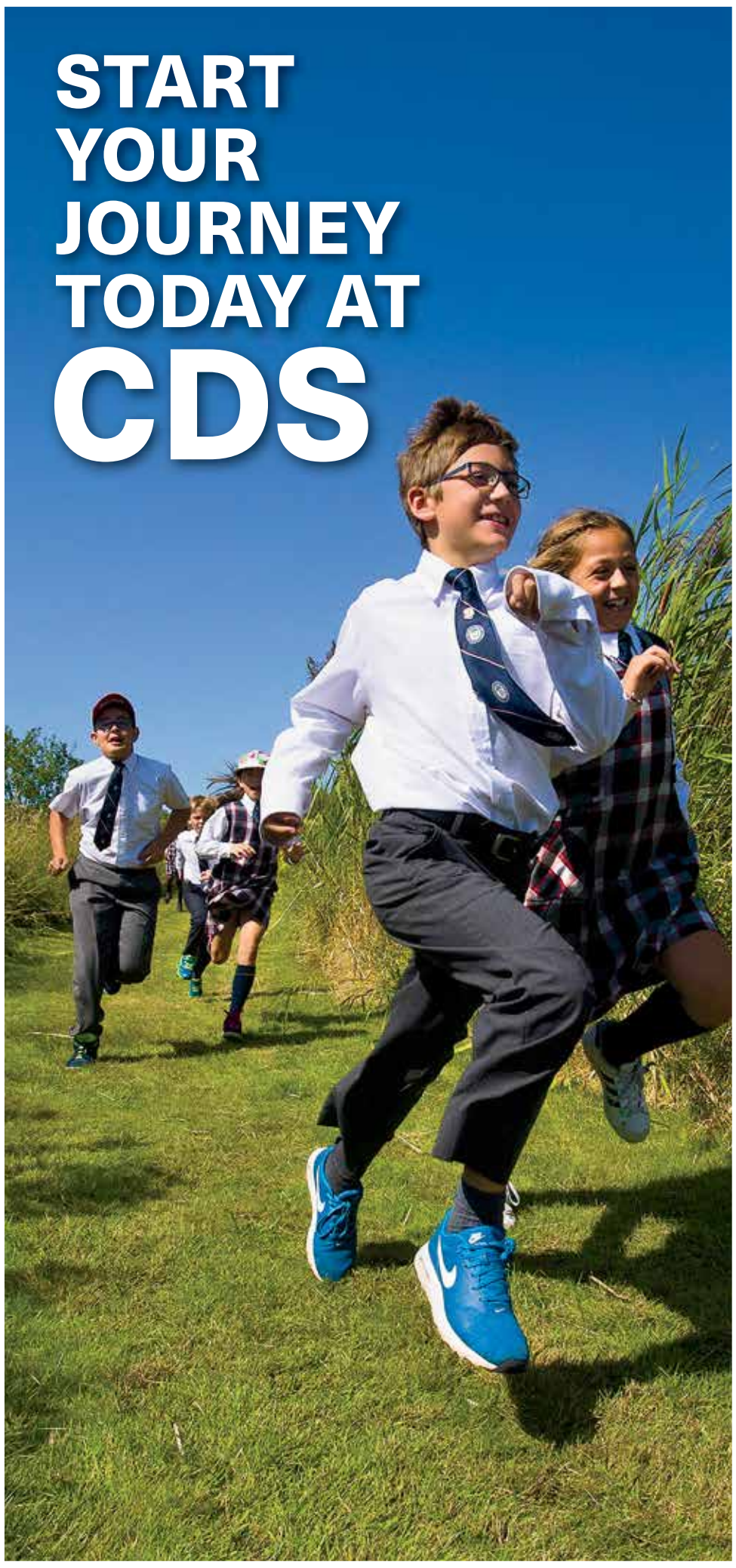

The Country Day School has been part of the fabric of King since 1972. While our facilities and population have grown significantly since then, our faculty and staff continue to provide the same warm and nurturing atmosphere that has always defined CDS. It is within this wonderful sense of community that our students thrive and learn. Come see for yourself what we mean by an *education with balance.*

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770
STUDENTS ENROLLED
IN GRADES JK-12

100
ACRE CAMPUS
IN KING

17
AVERAGE
CLASS SIZE

79
CDS GRADUATES IN THE
CLASS OF 2017

99%
UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE
FOR THE CLASS OF 2017

66
ATHLETIC TEAMS COMPETE
ACROSS 20 SPORTS

3
DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS
EACH YEAR

40+
CLUBS AND
EXTRACURRICULARS

365
DAYS OF SUMMER IN
THE SPORTS DOME

1500
ALUMNI
WORLDWIDE

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The Country Day School is committed to offering a superior educational experience that is sensitive to the needs of each student, enables learning and equips students for life.

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