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THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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theauroran.com

FREE Week of January 17, 2019



SWIM TO SURVIVE – Grade 3 students Michaela, Arthur and Anick were among the first groups to take the plunge at the SARC on Thursday in the Swim to Survive program, an initiative of Sport Aurora and The Lifesaving Society in conjunction with the Town of Aurora. The program aims to teach kids the fundamentals of water safety based on three simple words: Roll, Tread, and Swim. For more, see Page 9.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Windrow clearing could cost upwards of \$1.5 million

Staff cite cost, logistics against end-of-driveway clearing

By Brock Weir

The frustration that comes with clearing your driveway after a heavy snowfall only

Cool Blues to keep Aurora warm this winter

By Brock Weir

Some cool sounds are just around the corner to keep Aurorans warm this winter.

Preparations are now underway for a full month of blues, leading up to the annual Aurora Winter Blues Festival, which will culminate Friday, March 15 and Saturday, March 16 with two full nights of performances at Theatre Aurora.

Continued on page 10

to have your access to the road cut off by a new snowy hurdle at the hands of a passing snow plow is almost as integral to the Canadian experience as maple syrup and peameal bacon, but it could cost taxpayers over \$1.5 million if Aurora wants to make windrows a thing of the past.

These are the findings of municipal staff who are set to provide a report to Council this week recommending against a windrow clearing program in the Town of Aurora.

According to Jim Tree, Aurora's

Acting Manager of Roads and Water, clearing Aurora's estimated 18,900 private driveways of windrows could clock in at over \$1.5 million, but that is not counting the capital costs of securing the equipment to make it happen.

"Costs do not include the capital costs that would be incurred in purchasing the specialized equipment required to facilitate the program," said Mr. Tree. "In addition, it would be necessary to contract the service out as it is done in several other

Continued on page 7

AUROBOTS ARE UP AND RUNNING



The AUROBOTS, the new robotics team at Aurora High School, are up and running in the New Year. Pictured above, Mayor Tom Mrakas visited the school to meet members of the team. (Left to Right) Erin, Head of Fundraising for the team, Amanda, Founder, and Shirley, Head of Business. For more, see Page 3.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Project manager will oversee development of Hallmark Lands

By Brock Weir

The transformation of Aurora's Hallmark Lands into a hub for baseball will be overseen by a project manager, staff have assured Council.

The confirmation came from Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Operational Services, who also said planning for the two senior baseball diamonds approved for the site near Industrial Parkway South and Vandorf Road was soon set to begin.

"We're in the process of acquiring a landscape architect through the procurement process, at which point we will get into the design elements of Hallmark and we hope to start construction in the spring," said Mr. Downey.

With this in mind, Council members

questioned the oversight process that will steer the baseball diamond construction to completion.

Project management is an issue that plagued the last Council terms when it came to large scale projects, particularly the Joint Operations Centre, as well as renovations at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

"We have an oversight process and it is actually multi-departmental at this point because we have implemented a project manager who is also doing oversight on the corporate level with regards to projects, so we're reporting to that individual on a regular basis," said Mr. Downey, responding to questions from Councillor Wendy Gaertner on what's in place "to make sure we don't get into any trouble."

"Once the project is commenced," Mr. Downey continued, "the

We're in the process of acquiring a landscape architect through the procurement process, at which point we will get into the design elements of Hallmark and we hope to start construction in the spring

administration of that project falls within the landscape architect, or the designer of the project, and it is overseen by our staff. They have been within operations as well as staff within corporate services."

Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Corporate Services, added a project manager has been "recently recruited" on a two-year contract.

"[This project manager] is developing a standard methodology for project management and she

is reaching out to the individual departments and has oversight of our production management portfolio," she said, adding that funding for a project manager was taken from capital funds allocated for various projects to make it happen.

Council decided after a lengthy debate last summer to transform a parcel of land in behind the former Hallmark building into a destination for baseball.

After striking what many local lawmakers said was a "compromise" in addressing the needs of both the baseball and soccer communities by building one senior diamond and one multipurpose field on the site, plans were changed to build two diamonds after Parks & Rec staff found a multipurpose field would not fit on the land and still face the ideal direction.



UBREAKIFIX EXPANDS TO AURORA – Aurora's newest tech repair centre, uBreakiFix, welcomed Mayor Tom Mrakas to their grand opening on January 7. Located at 83 First Commerce Drive, uBreakiFix "services anything with a power button" including smartphones, game consoles, tablets, computers, drones, hoverboards and much more. Joining the Mayor for the ceremonial ribbon cutting were Manar Kattan, Taleen and Johnny Kattan, owner Shoukri Kattan, Talia Kattan, who gave flowers to Mayor Mrakas, owner Johnny Kattan, Matt Aquino, Alexander, Chris and Manar Kattan.

Auroran photo by Doug Sherritt



SNOWFLAKE BALL – York 9 FC coach Jimmy Brennan and daughter London were among the familiar faces at the popular annual Snowflake Father/Daughter Ball. Now in its fourth year at Highland Automotive Professionals, the event has raised thousands of dollars for Girls Inc. of York Region.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Aurobot students to go into "deep space" with first robot build



Mayor Tom Mrakas stopped by Aurora High School recently to congratulate the Aurobots, the school's new robotics team, as they head in to the New Year with a mission.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

"It really means quite a lot because just getting started and getting the kits for the basic robot parts is around \$8,500 and then there is the whole cost of production," says Amanda. "Not all the teams do this, but we wanted to make ours free so anyone can join. Most teams make their members pay to be on the team, buy their own shirts and safety goggles, but we decided we wanted to make our team available to anyone, regardless of their financial standing, so we decided to pay for all their shirts, all their entrance fees and all of that. Having all our generous sponsors really helped with that."

To learn more about the Aurobots, see what they're working on, or provide sponsorship opportunities, follow them on Instagram @frc7456 or email frc7456@gmail.com.

By Brock Weir

Aurora High School students are preparing to "boldly go" into 2019 with some creative new ideas.

Now that school has resumed, over 80 Aurora High School (AHS) students will get down to business, joining the ranks of St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School with their inaugural robotics club.

The fledgling Aurobots recently received encouragement from Mayor Tom Mrakas as they prepared their build season, which will continue over six weeks.

"We have a lot of anticipation," says Amanda Bishop, Grade 11, founder of the Aurobots. "Our engineering and programming side has been trying to teach all the kids who don't really know programming to get them up to speed, as well as brainstorm what the requirements of robots [in competition] have been in previous years, trying to come up with ways on how we can build. On the business side, they have been doing a really great job of fundraising by going to local businesses, presenting to them, and getting quite a few sponsors for us."

At this point, the Robotics Team has little idea of what will be in store for them when they set out for competitions in the FIRST Robotics League; all they know is the theme is "Deep Space" and, in this case, the sky isn't necessarily the limit.

Founding students began laying the groundwork for the club as soon as the school year began in September. After putting up posters all around AHS, there was an immediate response and excitement, says Amanda. The club offers something for everyone regardless of interest.

"There is a goal for everyone in this team: there is the programming and engineering component, which is building the robot, but even for people who aren't interested in engineering

at all, and who don't like sciences and math, we still have our business side and our design side, which are both really important and really great roles to be in for our team.

"Of our 80 students, around 53 per cent are women. In head positions, we have over 80 per cent women, which is great, because it is generally quite hard to get girls interested in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) field and things like extra curriculars that involve STEM. I was really happy with that turnout and how much excitement there is for this kind of team at Aurora High."

The team has also received generous community support in its first few months, receiving sponsorships from Magna and Almac.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Residents should be proud of Mayor, Council on stance, says Oak Ridges resident

Aurora residents should be proud of newly-elected Mayor Tom Mrakas and the Town Council for saying no to the wide-open assault on the environment implicit in Premier Ford's development policy.

With the support of less than 25% of Ontario's eligible voters, the no-longer "progressive" Conservative Party has unleashed an attack on local democracy, education, health care, public transit, low-income and contract workers, vulnerable minorities and the natural environment.

Claiming to be "for the people," he is now engaged in a range of extreme measures that will have devastating consequences for decades to come. And, unlike his domineering ideological soul-mate in the American White House, Ford's "adults in the room," notably Christine Elliott, MPP (Newmarket-Aurora) and Caroline Mulroney, MPP (York-Simcoe) are being pusillanimously deferential to the bully premier.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Richmond Hill, a "conservative" cabal is siding with the Premier and betraying their duty to act in the public interest by blatant acts of self-promotion, mercilessly attacking dissidents and colluding with the enemies of green spaces and the Oak Ridges moraine. Good for Aurora! Shame on Richmond Hill.

Howard A. Doughy
Oak Ridges

Sport Aurora disputes Council comments on Sport Plan

(Re: Council looks beyond Sport Aurora for sports initiatives, January 3)

The first line of this story suggests that Council "could" be looking beyond Sport Aurora for delivery of sports programs, citing that staff have been asked to report on "alternate delivery models." Yet, it is reported that staff recommended the Sport Plan delivery agreement be extended. Town staff is diligent in their recommendations and they know what Sport Aurora has done, but are now being asked to consider an alternate delivery model.

From the Town's website, the Sport Plan is introduced; "The Town of Aurora has prepared a Sport Plan to encourage greater collaboration with community partners and make use of existing facilities over the next five years." Yet the decision made by Town Council seems to be contrary.

Sport Aurora is an inclusive organization that represents 40 sport organizations and has a democratically-elected Board to guide their directions; one of which has been the Aurora Sports Plan delivery for the past three years.

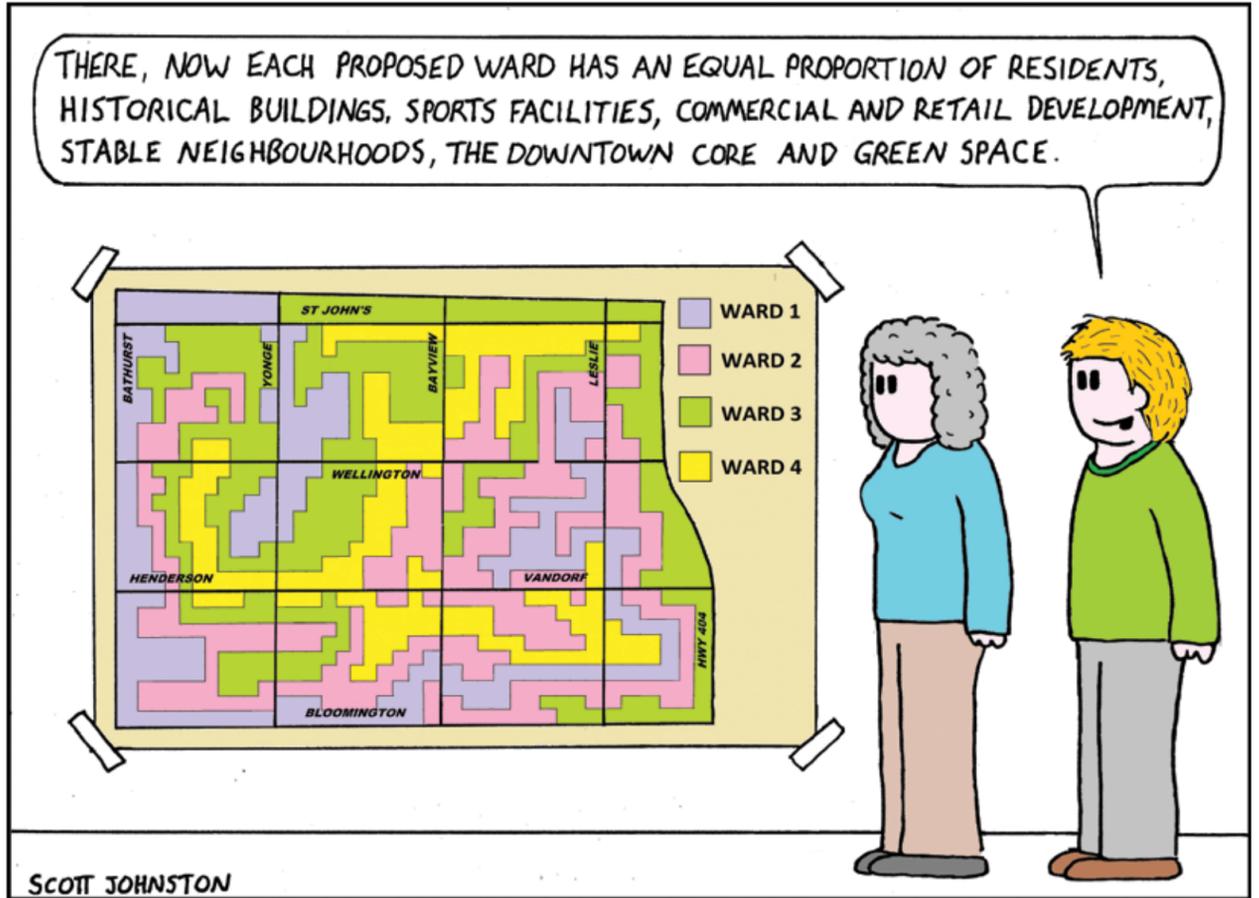
Sport Aurora's performance has been closely monitored by Town staff through monthly meetings and quarterly reports. Town staff has deemed that all key performance indicators, that they originally set, have been met.

The Year-4 programs reported in the article; women and girls in sport, persons with disabilities, older adults, low-income accessibility, cultural-diversity and sport tourism, are well under way. Recommendations have been made by Sport Aurora after extensive consultations with many stakeholders in the Community. Committees have been formed and directions are already established. But they will stop because the Town "pressed pause."

Councilors Gilliland and Humfries

Continued on page 5

Machell's Corners



SCOTT JOHNSTON

Think of the children! If it's convenient

I often worry about the youth of today. Some of you – youth and not-so-youthful alike – might be rolling your eyes right now, but in the interest of full disclosure, I think it should be pointed out right here and now that I am still in the first half of my thirties. So, for the naysayers, I'm old enough for my own youth to be well in the rear-view mirror, but it's not so far back as to not remember what being a youth was like.

Some, however, seem to forget more quickly than others.

And the reasons they forget at a greater speed has nothing to do with an individual feeling the march of time at a different pace, or a particularly rapid tick-tock on whatever it is they used to call a "biological clock," but in many instances it is usually a matter of expediency, at best, and, at worst, one of wilful ignorance.

People who knew me in elementary school and high school are another demographic reading this column potentially rolling their eyes right now. I was the proverbial "dork" growing up, a viewpoint that people were all too eager to point out as the dorkdom was in full swing.

Growing up with a brother ten years older than myself, a brother who didn't live with us full-time until I was in my teens, a lot of my time was spent with adults and, for better or worse, I usually gravitated towards the adults in a social situation rather than hanging out with my peers.

Maybe this has given me additional perspective on the subject, or maybe I'm trying to subconsciously make up for lost time, but I think in this day and age more consideration needs to be given to the young people of today. And, yes, I feel exceedingly old just writing that.

There seems to be a disconnect with lawmakers in the upper levels of government between protecting future generations – invariably and folksily referred to as "our children and grandchildren" no matter what programs are being discussed – and the purse strings they've tasked themselves with tightening.

Last fall, for instance, Ontarians were greeted by alarming reports from Queen's Park on just what the Province's fiscal situation is.

From the outset, and rightly so, there were calls for spending to be reigned in and some programs be reviewed ostensibly to protect the province from going further into the red. Of course, when government brass touted this obvious necessity, it was couched in the time-tested phrase that

such measures were integral in stopping "our children and grandchildren" and future generations down the line from being saddled with the debt of today.

On its face, it is something that is hard to argue and I won't be doing that in this column space, but this sentiment doesn't quite hold water when pumping the brakes on a program or initiative to combat a spending spiral results in "our children and grandchildren" and indeed their futures being the first demo caught in the crosshairs.

Take our education system, for instance. It is usually the case that the first programs to go are ones that are not directly related to the core subjects of math, English and science. Arts funding goes out the window, despite clear evidence that arts programs – and "arts" as a term is used very loosely here – are integral not only to the development of the child, but in engaging and stimulating the minds of youth in ways more traditional textbook subjects cannot. Thus, they play a key part in broadening their respective worldviews for today's global society.

Outside of tightening the purse strings, it is hard to reconcile concern about the future "our children and grandchildren" will be left with when one considers the proposed rollback of health and sexual education lessons in this Province. It is certainly difficult to reconcile this movement with the negative impact this will have directly on the youth who are allegedly at the forefront of this decision-making process.

Such moves, if they are indeed born to fruition, will have the ignominious honour of rolling back the clock two decades to prepare "our children and grandchildren" for navigating a world that no longer exists for, perhaps, the trade-off of sparing the blushes of parents who would prefer to not address real-world around the dinner table when their kids get home from school.

Then, we have the thorny world of carbon – whether you want to call it

a "carbon tax", "carbon pricing" or whatever term you're most comfortable using, whether you are pro or con.

This is an issue that will be on the lips of many – if they are not already – as the various parties jostling to form government after the Federal Election state their cases for voters.

At the start of this election cycle, the Province got into the act by reiterating its position against the Federal Carbon Tax stating they were "standing up for families and businesses."

"Ontario's Government for the People is standing up for families and businesses that will be hurt by the combined impact of the federal government's job-killing carbon tax and Canada Pension Plan enhancement, both of which come into force today," said the Government in a press release on New Year's Day.

There is little in the release, however, to indicate just how opposing such measures is standing up for families. Businesses, yes, but families, decidedly no.

A few weeks previous to the January 1 statement, the Province said it would be releasing its plan to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions for public comment beginning this month, a plan, they said, that would "regulate industry without imposing the Federal government's carbon tax, which threatens Ontario jobs and the ability of our industries to compete internationally."

While the Made-in-Ontario approach that the Government is offering positively identifies climate change as a reality, I hope in time that a more concrete action plan is submitted for public approval. The plan, as it stands now, outlines some actions that are on the table, as well as a pathway to future actions, but a significant portion of the document pertains to how Ontarians can adapt for the reality of climate change rather than what the government is planning to do to be proactive.

The idea that a carbon tax might have an adverse effect on families today might indeed hold water, but thoughts should be spared for the families of tomorrow.

In the interests of safe-guarding "our children and grandchildren" down the line and truly prioritizing their future rather than our present, perhaps there's money in the budget that can be earmarked for a set of adjustable water wings for every Ontario newborn to protect against what seems to be a climate change inevitability thanks to inaction.

Maybe, just maybe, it is more practical to come up with concrete solutions.



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

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Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

recognized the value of Sport Aurora and voted against the pause and against the notion that other delivery models be considered. The loss of momentum is problematic as contractors are let go and numerous Committees with valued volunteers are “paused” or even abandoned.

Volunteers are an asset that should not be wasted. The other four Councilors and the Mayor disagreed with this logic and voted to “pause.”

The article reports that “assurances” were made that Sport Aurora’s cornerstone programs such as Breakfast of Champions, Sport Volunteer Recognition Lunch and the All Kids Can Play Program would continue without this “cash infusion.”

This is not necessarily actually true. Those properties are Sport Aurora’s. They will only continue provided that resources are procured as needed. Sponsorships and donors are always welcomed for such important Sport Aurora Programs. They will survive because they matter.

Mayor Mrakas suggested that there has been “some conversation” regarding moving to a Sport Council or “Sport Board”.

No conversation has been had with Sport Aurora. And there is no reference in the Sport Plan about a “Sport Board”. Sport Aurora has reviewed best practices in other municipal jurisdictions regarding the development of a Sport Council and they appear in the Reports. In the Aurora Sport Plan, a Sport Council is described, suggesting that the Town “reconstitute Sport Aurora into a Sport Council with an expanded mandate”.

On the theme of reports being unread (or not understood) is the comment made by Councillor Gallo that there wasn’t a clear message of what was being achieved through Sport Plan delivery by Sport Aurora. The implication was that somehow Sport Aurora had failed to deliver. Staff reported that Sport Aurora had met every deliverable.

Likewise his “funding lines were blurred” comment about Activate Aurora is curious. The funding lines are crystal clear. Sport Aurora received a \$749,500.00 provincial grant to advance a number of initiatives and it was reported that no Town funding was or has been used for those programs.

In fact, some of those provincial funds have been used to train Town recreation staff and up-skill Town personnel at no cost to the Town. In addition, provincial grant funds have been used to pay for those newly up-skilled staff to deliver some of our Programs; helping youth become more physically literate. We believe it is important that our Council ensure they are diligent and accurate when publicly commenting and during decision-making.

Sport Aurora applauds the Town for wanting to be directly involved with the Sport Plan and take responsibility in laying a strong foundation for sport. Until now, their role has been to build and permit much needed facilities. According to the Sport Plan, the Town charges sport organizations \$2M annually to use those facilities. Implementing the Sport Plan would be a positive step towards sport development and using just a fraction of those permit fees to build a strong foundation for sport seems prudent. Sport Aurora remains ready to collaborate as a community partner.

The Sport Aurora Board of Directors.

THIS WEEK’S NEW POLL

Would you be willing to pay a higher tax rate for windrow clearing?

Yes No Unsure

Go to www.theauroran.com to vote!

Previous poll results
Have you used public transit (York Region Transit, GO) in the past 12 months?

RESULTS TO DATE January 15, 2019	YES	NO
	43%	57%

The Aurora Museum & Archives is reminding you...

To visit the current travelling exhibit before it leaves town!

Our current exhibition, Play Hard, Fight Hard: Sport & The Canadian Military, features over 200+ artefacts that are on loan from the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame and the Military Museums. If you have not had a chance to see the exhibit, then you better hurry – it closes January 23!



Happy New Year!



MP’S REPORT

Leona Alleslev, MP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

As we look forward to the year ahead and get our economic house in order, increasingly the conversation turns to the failings of our current federal tax system. Overwhelmingly, the message is clear; Canadians feel our tax system is fundamentally unfair and broken.

Tax Structure – Modern & Competitive

Canada’s tax structure hasn’t been substantially reformed since the 1970s, but since then we have seen major changes in the foundations it was built on such as family income structures, the nature of work with almost one third of our working population precariously employed, and the erosion of defined benefit pensions or any pension at all.

Additionally, our tax structure affects our competitiveness as corporations use it as criteria when determining where to establish or expand their business. Canadian top combined personal income tax rates now exceed 50 per cent in seven provinces and Canadian provinces comprise nine of the 10 jurisdictions with the highest combined personal income tax rates in Canada and the U.S.

Our tax structure must be modernized to reflect Canadian society today and to position us to be competitive internationally.

Implementation of Taxes & Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

Just how broken is our tax system? In the last two years, the Auditor General of Canada has produced highly critical reports of the CRA. The following are some of the finding in the two reports filed by the Auditor General of Canada in 2017 and 2018

CRA provided taxpayers with **very limited access to its call centre services**, including both the

automated self-service system and call centre agents.

CRA blocked more than half of the calls it received (about 29 million out of 53.5 million) because it could not handle the volume. Blocked calls were those that did not reach either an agent or the automated self-service system. Instead, they were given either a busy signal or a message to go to the website or call back later.

Between March 2016 and March 2017, CRA **answered only 36 percent of the calls** it received—32 percent were answered by an agent, and 4 percent went to the automated self-service system and lasted at least a minute. On average, callers made three or four call attempts per week. However, even after several attempts, callers did not always reach either an agent or the automated self-service system.

When agents responded to tax questions as part of the report, they gave wrong information almost 30 percent of the time. This meant that the actual rate of agent errors was significantly higher than the CRA’s own test results.

CRA did not consistently apply tax rules when it audited or reviewed taxpayers’ files, even though the Taxpayer Bill of Rights includes

the right to have the law applied consistently.

Taxpayers in one region waited an average of 7 months longer than those in another region for the Agency to complete an audit. In one region, it took the Agency more than 40 weeks to process taxpayers’ requests for adjustments, while in another region, the Agency took 12 weeks.

Comprehensive Tax Reform is not for the faint of heart. It is more than just tinkering with one tax credit or lowering one tax bracket. It requires an in-depth restructuring that not only takes into account the changes in the nature of work and society since the 1970s, but also addresses the current state of the global economy and the necessary measures for Canada to be competitive.

To regain the confidence of Canadians reforming our tax structure and ensuring it is efficiently and consistently applied by CRA must be a priority of the federal government. Complex problems in a complex time require complex solutions.

If you haven’t already, please complete my survey on Canada’s Top 10 Federal Priorities for 2019 here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/85R5Y3Q I want to hear from you what you think the Federal Government should focus its attention on.

Please join me at my New Year’s Levee Open House on Saturday January 19 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm.

My team and I are always here to help! Feel free to contact me by e-mail: Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca, phone: (905) 773-8358, or drop by my office at 12820 Yonge St., suite 202 in Richmond Hill.

2019 – A Look Ahead



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

signs put up in 2018 featuring giant leatherback turtles are supplemented with signs depicting aardvarks, koalas and pygmy hippos.

May – Following the introduction of healthier food in municipal buildings in 2018, the Town launches Phase 2, which includes adding kale and broccoli as options in the vending machines.

June – As the species whose presence has the greatest impact on our Town, the Emerald Ash Borer is named Aurora’s official animal.

July – As was the case when they were held in the GTA in 2015, Aurora is once again shut out of hosting events for the Pan Am Games, although this time there’s a justifiable reason, as they’re being held this year in Lima, Peru.

August - As GO train frequency rises, decreases in commuting time are offset by increases in the time necessary to find a parking space anywhere near the station.

August - A study of the Town adopting a ward system suggests that Aurora should be divided into 8 wards,

meaning the addition of the two councillor positions eliminated in the last election.

September – Having used all of the Town’s hydro reserves to fund Library Square and the armoury rebuild prompts someone to suggest a simple solution to recoup the funds: selling off both assets when their redevelopment is completed.

October – Candidates in the Federal election try to target those who will actually get out and vote, but no one knows which 30% of eligible voters that will be.

November - Aurorans rejoice that it should be at least three years until the next municipal, provincial or federal election.

November – A contest to come up with a new name for Library Square results in the winning suggestion of “Library Circle”.

December – Global warming calls into question the continued relevance of the snow and ice-related achievements on the mural at Yonge and Wellington.

December – The first hotel in Aurora in many years opens just steps from the downtown core – about 8,120 steps.

December – A shortage of evergreens for Christmas trees similar to that experienced in 2018 results in Aurorans being forced to decorate cannabis plants instead.

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

Earlier this month we reviewed what happened in 2018 in Aurora. Now, let’s look ahead to what may await us this year.

January – Opponents give up trying to eliminate train whistles at level crossings, and instead focus on replacing them with a more pleasant sound, like the tones that emanate from the lottery machine when your winning ticket is scanned.

February - Several properties on Yonge Street receive heritage designation, ensuring their continued existence, but not ensuring increases in foot traffic for the businesses that are based in them.

February - A record crop of pot holes in Town results in an asphalt shortage.

March – A pilot project is introduced for Town snowploughs to remove windrows at the end of residents’ driveways... from April to October.

March – A poll of residents suggests the main advantage they see of the new smaller council is that when they want to complain about something, they only need to contact up to 7 people, instead of the previous 9.

April – The award for the most visible and prominent business sign on Yonge Street is once again given to the Howard Johnson’s hotel, which closed almost 5 years ago.

April - Seeing opportunities for ecotourism in Town, the animal crossing

The Fabric of our Lives – Museum looks at birth, marriage and death through textiles

By Brock Weir

If you've ever flipped through the family album and groaned at some of the things you or a loved one wore in the past – be it a bridal gown or a suit worn for a particularly special occasion – you know firsthand how fashion can be a snapshot in time.

For the Aurora Museum and Archives, however, fashion can mean so much more; just a few garments can tell the story of a whole life, or a whole community, and it is this idea they are set to explore this spring in a new exhibition Births, Marriages and Deaths.

Curated by Museum Studies students from the University of Toronto, the exhibit aims to illustrate the fabric of Aurora's history through garments associated with the major milestones of a person's life, through beautifully preserved christening and wedding gowns, uniforms, period mourning clothes and much more.

The exhibition is the brainchild of Rachel Dice, a U of T student who has worked as a summer intern at the Aurora Museum of Archives. Joining the museum team, she jumped at the chance to work on textiles preserved in the collection, a passion she had since she was a child watching her

mother, who owns a fashion design school.

Ms. Dice's area of expertise is actually historical literature, but when she got her hands on these local textiles, the creative juices began to flow.

"By the end of [working with the textiles as an intern] we realised we had a lot more stuff than we thought," says Ms. Dice. "We thought it would be really cool to put them on display. As for themes, we weren't really sure how to show the most number of our textile collections under one comprehensive idea, so that was when we all started working together on themes like life, death and all those fun and not-so-fun occasions in between. A lot of the clothing we have here is the best clothing people would have owned, things you wouldn't have worn all the time, which is how they managed to survive to come to us. We wanted to show that off with as much information about Aurora and its history as we could."

Joined by fellow students Carolyn Ben and Jessica Ho, they set an additional goal for themselves: narrating an exhibit through objects alone.

"Textiles invoke the presence of the person who wore them when you see them up on a stand," says Ms. Ben. "They are very personal. They tell a bigger story.



University of Toronto Museum Studies students Rachel Dice, Carolyn Ben and Jessica Ho are hard at work telling the story of Aurora through clothes ahead of a new exhibition that will launch this spring at the Aurora Museum & Archives. INSET: Double wedding of Florence Mulloy to Clare Clifford Harman and Olive May Mulloy to James Strachan in July 1913. This photo was taken outside the Mulloy home on Wellington Street East just north of Victoria, the façade of which was recently reconstructed to form the entrance of a new apartment complex on the site.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

When you have a wedding dress on display, you can see the bride on her wedding day, but [in the museum] you can also see the cards of sympathy for her husband dying 50 years later and you can trace the family through all those special occasions." Ms. Ho and Ms. Ben came into the project not quite as familiar with the stores within the Aurora Museum & Archives as Ms. Dice, but they were soon hard at work going through hundreds of pieces carefully stored in innumerable boxes.

They uncovered a story through a christening gown about a local librarian who adopted a little girl who may or may not have been her niece. Intrigued by what they describe as this "missing link" they uncovered a story that just kept unfolding like a "spider's web."

The guest curators say they each found birth, marriage and death equally interesting in their own right, the rites – and indeed the commercialization – surrounding death was particularly intriguing.

"Death is a little bit difficult to portray because our practices around death have really changed quite a bit over the years, especially over the two World Wars," says Ms. Dice. "We have some really cool mourning items and practices, including a wreath of flowers made of coiled and embroidered hair of the dead. It was a very common thing with mourning jewellery and making stuff out of your loved one's hair."

Adds Ms. Ben: "Death was a huge industry. If you went to Eaton's, they would have a whole section on mourning clothes.

If someone died, you had to wear non-stop black for over a year. Some women just never bothered to go out of it because someone else would die and they would be back in black again. We have a lot of beautiful condolence notes of people who died, we have information about their funerals, which is really interesting."

Ms. Ho, on the other hand, is a champion of the marriage component in the exhibition.

"Different wedding outfits really show the personalities of the person," she says. "It is a time to get the family together for an occasion that is about the whole family."

One area that is slightly lacking in the collection, she adds, are uniforms and other garments associated with the First World War. The trio of curators have a few theories on why that is; the prevailing one being that after the reality of the First World War – then known as simply The Great War as it was unlike anything they had ever experienced to that point – set in, people wanted no memory of it. They wanted it gone and saved very little. This extends beyond uniforms to the everyday clothing of that period which, at a time of shortage, were often cut down into rags and put to other uses.

"We want to tell a story about Aurora's past," says Ms. Dice. "If they come out of here knowing something more about their local heritage and history, even if it is about a specific person or some gossip about an adopted daughter or just an idea of the way christening gowns have changed, but not really, I think we would have done a good job."

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End-of-driveway clearing proposal could prove costly for municipality

From page 1

municipalities due to the limited staff and equipment resources currently available. As such, it is a very reasonable assumption that the annual costs of a full windrow removal program, could exceed \$1,500,000.”

Windrow clearing has been a hot topic in Aurora, heating up significantly over the last winter, carrying through the 2018 Municipal Election campaign. These discussions, however, have not been limited to Aurora and many York Region municipalities, according to Mr. Tree, have looked into establishing similar programs. Thus far, the City of Vaughan is the only municipality in the Region to make it happen, clearing an estimated 80,000 driveways.

“The winter weather event that happened April 13 – 15, 2018, was one of the most significant ever recorded in that the combination of well below normal temperatures and the heavy accumulation of ice pellets over a very prolonged 48-hour period made for some very unique and unprecedented road conditions,” said Mr. Tree. “As a result, it became very necessary to plow the roads multiple times over a three-day period to remove an accumulation of up to 10 centimetres of frozen ice pellets throughout the municipality. Unfortunately, this led to significant frozen ice being deposited at the entrance to virtually every private driveway in Town and rendering many driveways impassable.”

As a result of this, Mr. Tree added that Access Aurora (those fielding service calls and concerns at Town Hall) received 172 complaints from residents over the clearing of their windrow.

“In cases where there was a pressing medical urgency, Operations staff was able to assist; however, these requests were minimal and had no significant impact on our resources or primary responsibilities,” said Mr. Tree. “Similar to Members of Council, our frontline Operations staff are well-positioned to understand many of the

issues or problems facing our residents as staff are directly involved in the day to day operations, many of which have an impact on people’s lives. The 172 complaints received represents less than 0.91 per cent of all property owners and only .03 per cent of Aurora’s estimated 62,000 population. It is not assumed that the balance of homeowners and residents were satisfied with the Town’s service level in this event, or that this single statistic is sufficient evidence to guide a decision on whether or not to implement a windrow clearing program; however, staff believe this finding should be considered in the larger picture surrounding this issue.”

Filling in the gaps in this larger picture are potential conflicts with the placement and removal of garbage and recycling with windrow clearing equipment and how a windrow clearing program for seniors or “medically challenged” residents would be validated.

“This process can be complicated and perhaps intrusive as very often a medical certificate must be obtained from the applicant’s physician stating that the individual is not able to exert themselves,” said Mr. Tree. “While this may appear to satisfy the application process, it should not be considered to be effective in all cases and very often depending on the situation, a physician’s note is not unreasonably withheld. Based on other municipalities’ experiences in this regard, a sworn statement may also be required stating that there are no other able-bodied occupants residing in the subject property.”

Council members will consider the matter at this week’s General Committee, with their decision on whether to accept staff’s recommendations to forego windrow clearing, proceed with the initiatives, or delay their decision for another day, ratified at the January 22 Council meeting.

Whatever the decision later this month, it is not likely to be the last time local lawmakers or residents alike will consider

the issue, with Mr. Tree’s report leaving the door open for further public consultation.

Vaughan’s decision to pick up windrow clearing, he notes, came after a municipal

plebiscite was held and residents voted in favour of both the program and the increase in costs, increasing the tax rate by upwards of two per cent.

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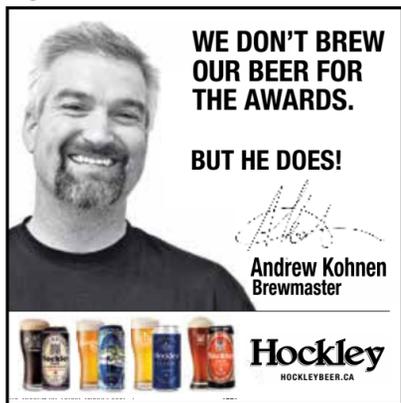
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Construction on next phase of seniors residence underway, but neighbours worry about noise

By Brock Weir

Work on the next phase of a seniors' housing complex in east Aurora will continue after neighbouring residents raised concerns of ongoing noise late into the night.

Council has approved a noise exemption request from York Region Christian Seniors Homes at 440 William Graham Drive, off Leslie Street, just north of Wellington, that will allow construction for the pouring and finishing of cast-in-place concrete slabs necessary for the seven-storey

building.

"Concrete finishing for cast-in-place construction is common practice and requires significant time for the required end product," said Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Corporate Services, in a report to Council. "The [construction of the slabs] requires significant time to achieve a quality product. The [pouring] of a large slab can take several hours which will occur during the day. The concrete then requires time to cure and properly set. Once the concrete has set enough to walk on it, the power trowelling can commence. The trowelling will occur in

the evening and into the early morning hours.

"The expected timeframe for completion of the slabs is September of 2019."

Their request, she added, was standard practice and has occurred in Aurora on many recent large-scale builds, including the Centro condominium development at Yonge and Centre Streets.

"During the construction of Centro, a similar request was made to Council through a delegation," she continued. "At the time, Council delegated the authority to staff to approve the ongoing noise exemption for the duration of the construction project. A process was established with the construction company when they provided Notice to the Town on a regular basis of when the finishing of the slabs would be occurring. Ongoing communication was key to ensuring the Town and surrounding residents were aware of the construction activities."

Nevertheless, the noise exemption application saw both opponents and proponents make their respective cases to Council.

Opposing the application was area resident Paul Reid who said he and his neighbours had concerns not only with noise into the night but the duration of the work. He asked for the application to be rejected outright in favour of having the builders carry out their work within the parameters of Aurora's existing noise bylaws.

The following week, the pro-camp had their say, with the York Region Christian Seniors Homes represented at the podium by Larry Dekkema. Mr. Dekkema fleshed out the plan for Council and provided details on the specific times they expected to be carrying out their work.

Based on the information before them, Council voted to grant the noise exemption request, but the decision was not unanimous.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she was "speechless" at the move.

"It is very concerning to me that we will be granting a process that is going to go for eleven months [and] cause noise after 7 p.m. until, perhaps, 3 a.m.," she said. "I don't think it is fair to the residents. I think we're allowing construction companies to profit either financially or through convenience at the expense of our residents."

The Councillor questioned whether or not it was possible for the concrete to arrive on site earlier or, at the very least, that work commence earlier in the day, but she was told by Ms. van Leeuwen that concrete was a "finicky process" and it was not possible to alter the schedule.

"I am voting against this in principle because we're just asking way too

I am not concerned about the noise level because I have heard them in Downtown Toronto and I really don't know if there is an alternative. If we're allowing multi-storey buildings, they really have no other choice but to do this

much from our residents in order to build a structure that may or may not benefit the community, but is certainly not benefiting the residents," said Councillor Gaertner.

Other lawmakers, however, said they were comfortable moving forward and did not believe it would cause excessive noise in the surrounding community.

"I am very familiar with this process and the noise it make," said Councillor John Gallo. "I didn't have a problem with it last week. I had more of an issue with the ancillary noise prior to seven or after 11. This is not the first time we're doing this [and] buildings I am sure will be coming down the pipe [that] will require this. I am not concerned about the noise level because I have heard them in Downtown Toronto and I really don't know if there is an alternative. If we're allowing multi-storey buildings, they really have no other choice but to do this."

Added Councillor Harold Kim: "I don't recall any residents coming to Council complaining about Phase 1. I am pretty satisfied [from that experience] that it will continue to have the same process in place for Phase 2."

Councillor Michael Thompson said he too was satisfied, but sought assurances that bylaw officers were prepared to be on site to ensure compliance with noise standards. Ms. van Leeuwen said bylaw officers had been on site "continuously" in the lead-up to Council's decision and they were satisfied with compliance.

"It has been stated already that this is standard practice for a building of this magnitude," said Councillor Thompson. "We approved this building, so I will be supporting what is in front of me."

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Swim to Survive teaches Grade 3 students the fundamentals of water safety



Vanessa Moore's Grade 3 class from St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School were the first to take the plunge in the 2019 Swim to Survive program, which kicked off Thursday afternoon at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

By Brock Weir

Roll. Tread. Swim.

Just three little words can help give kids the basic skills they need to survive an unexpected fall into water, according to Sport Aurora and the Lifesaving Society, who launched a new season of the Swim to Survive program Thursday afternoon at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC).

Among the first to get their feedback this year were the Grade 3 students of Vanessa Moore of St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School, who made the trip to the SARC to help fill in the blanks between those three words: Roll into deep water; Tread water for one minute, Swim 50 metres.

"They have been so excited about this – beyond words excited," said Ms. Moore, watching the students as they were split into groups, each with an instructor, based on their respective skill levels in the water. "They have been very curious about it because they don't really know what to expect."

For Sport Aurora, Activate Aurora, and the Lifesaving Society, it is all about awareness.

Swim to Survive was first launched as a joint initiative last spring and made

available to both local school boards. While the Lifesaving Society has previously operated this program both within and beyond York Region, a grant was pursued by Sport Aurora to help offset the cost of delivery while the Town donated the required pool time.

In Aurora, 10 elementary schools are involved, for a total of 420 Grade 3 students who will be learning these survival skills over the next four months.

"There are three major components in this Swim to Survive, which is rolling into the water; treading and swimming," says Adrian Wong, Recreation Supervisor for Aquatics and Fitness, for the Town of Aurora. "For the most part, the Swim to Survive standard is Roll into the Water, which is an unexpected fall into the water and being able to fall into the water safely, similar to how in other sports you learn how to fall safely. Then you learn how to tread for one minute and that is to essentially figure out your orientation and where you're at, so whether you fall off a boat, whether you fall into a backyard pool, figure out where there is a point of safety and then you would swim 50 metres.

"Most drowning cases happen fairly close to shore within 50 metres and I think that is based on statistics and they have

created the Swim to Survive Standard. If you can do all of these skills, roll and then tread and then swim in the following sequence, you will be safer. You can pass the standard and if you were to fall into the water you will be able to self rescue."

Mr. Wong comes by his passion for the program honestly. He describes his student self as "that awkward 10-year-old kid who really didn't know how to swim and had to put a life jacket on for everything." As new Canadians, he says his parents weren't aware that swimming lessons were an option and he credits a school swim program that redirected him and set him on a path to becoming a lifeguard.

Building kids' awareness of these skills at a Grade 3 level is fundamental to the program, notes Sport Aurora's Ron Weese. Experts, he says, look at this as an "important time to get children involved and engaged in water activities" while teaching them how to be safe in and around the water.

"It is a time when children are most inquisitive about water," says Mr. Weese. "The reason why Sport Aurora and Activate Aurora is in here is to promote physical activity in all environments and water is a very important environment. We hope out of this they will be able to swim, they won't be afraid of the water; they can get in and out of the water safely,

and then maybe they will start a learn to swim program, or participate with the ducks or another competitive swim program. At the end of the day, if that kid is invited to a pool party, you want them to participate fully and feel comfortable and confident."

Adds Mr. Wong: "In terms of drowning statistics, children ten and under are considered to be a high risk. Looking at Grade 3, it is an optimal time and opportunity where we would get them engaged so hopefully we will be able to make a difference that way."

While Swim to Survive's philosophy can be summed up in three words, Mr. Wong says the program's measure of success can be summed up in just one: "Awareness."

"The whole point of Swim to Survive is to build awareness. It is not realistic necessarily to expect that someone is going to come in and within three one-hour periods turn into a stellar swimmer who will be able to save lives, save themselves and whatnot, but this is an exposure program," he says. "We will be handing out certificates at the end of the three-day sessions that will essentially say whether or not they pass the standard. If not, it has a redirecting mechanism and we recommend you go to swim lessons to continue on your journey of learning how to swim."

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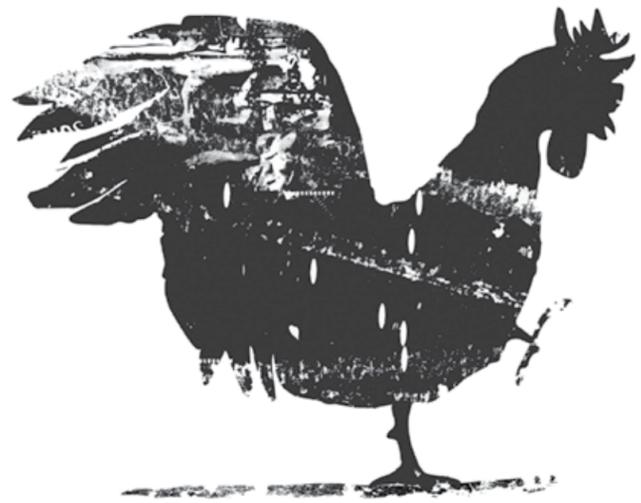


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Arts & CULTURE

Month-long Blues Fest program kicks off with February pop-ups

From page 1

Headlining this year's festival is an all-Ontario slate of talent, with JW-Jones and the Jerome Godboo Band taking the stage on March 15, followed the next evening by Soulstack and the

Johnny Max Band.

"I think everyone will be very pleased with the format this year," says Greg Smith of Music Aurora, the organizing body behind the Aurora Winter Blues Festival, which was founded nine years



Music Aurora's Stewart MacLaren, Diane Buchanan and Greg Smith have begun the countdown to the 2019 Aurora Winter Blues Festival. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

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ago by Aurora couple Jamie Macdonald and Helen Gushue. "This year, the format will be two bands per night [from the previous three] and this was based on feedback we got from both patrons as well as the bands themselves that they were just kind of getting into the groove by the time their sets were done. The people were starting to really love the band and then it was just cut off and switched to someone else. I think this will be a good change."

JW-Jones is a Canadian Billboard Top 100 Blues Artist and Juno-nominated artist celebrated for his high-energy shows. Toronto-based singer and harmonica player Jerome Godboo is a returning favourite to the festival who has lent his talents to albums by everyone from Ronnie Hawkins to Jeff Healy.

Saturday headliner Soulstack is billed as "delivering a visceral experience; one of the seasoned musicians playing the music of their roots with authentic realism." They will be followed by Johnny Max, "a soulful singer and brilliant entertainer who has audiences thoroughly enjoying each show" with his blend of Stax/Volt, Atlantic, Funk and Blues.

"These groups of musicians will show a contemporary Blues feel," says Music Aurora's Stewart MacLaren. "Some people's image of Blues might be of slower-based, twelve-bar repetitive stuff, but this will be more of the tempo the younger crowd enjoy. People will be dancing, relaxing and having a good time."

Helping to facilitate this atmosphere of dancing is a venue change back to Theatre Aurora after a two-year stint at St. Andrew's College. Theatre Aurora is a smaller venue, say organizers, but its Henderson Drive location lends itself more to a party atmosphere.

"It is smaller, more intimate, and it has more of a Blues feel," says Mr. Smith. "It allows people to get up into the aisles and dance. There is more of a party and more of an experience for patrons, as opposed to what we've had over the last couple of years."

In previous years, proceeds from the Aurora Winter Blues Festival have been split between CHATS (Community &

Home Assistance to Seniors) and Blue Door Shelters. This year, however, the Music Aurora Board has gone a different route, focusing the philanthropic part of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival on Music Aurora's Youth in Music program, which aims to give aspiring young musicians the chance to get their hands on musical instruments, afford lessons, and even have the chance to land paid gigs, something that is particularly challenging to teens and older youth looking to just get a foot in the door.

"CHATS and Blue Doors have been wonderful partners over the past couple of years, but we decided for this year going forward right now, we're going to look at funding for our Youth in Music program, giving youth opportunities to showcase their talents," says Mr. Smith.

The community will see these opportunities in action as early as Sunday, February 10 at 33 1/3 Records at Bayview and Hollidge, which will host the first of a series of pop-up performances across the community throughout February and March, each featuring local youth musicians.

"All youth musicians are getting paid gigs," says Mr. Smith. "We try to encourage young musicians to realise that they invest a lot of time and money into their craft and if they plan to be a musician somewhere down the road that there has to be a bit of a payout to cover that cost."

These pop-up performances will have an added poignancy following the death of John Abel last month. The former Deputy Mayor of Aurora was an active member of Music Aurora and instrumental in both the growth of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival as a destination, and in making these pop-up performances happen.

In addition to these pop-up performances, a further warm-up act to the main event will be the annual Blues Bash kick-off which will take place on the evening of Saturday, March 2, featuring the Bywater Blues Band.

For more information on the Aurora Winter Blues Festival, a schedule of pop-up performances with featured artists, and how to get your ticket for the 2019 Blues Bash, visit musicaurora.ca/blues-festival.

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FREE Week of January 17, 2019

Tigers crowned by Royals to fall in OJHL standings



Aurora's Trevor Grasby is chased by Markham's Zac Sirota in the Tigers' 3 - 2 loss to the Royals on Saturday.
Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte

By Jake Courtepatte

The OJHL North division has a new king.

After months atop the division, the Aurora Tigers have been ousted by the Markham Royals, two sides seemingly going in opposite directions with the Tigers marred in their worst slump of the year.

They met Saturday night in what would be the most important matchup of the year for both the Tigers and Royals, square at 44 points apiece in the standings.

It was Aurora's Joseph Mizzi who struck first, the league's leading scorer finishing off a passing play with Brock

Hill and Jacob Ball just over a minute into regulation.

Payton Schaly made it 2 - 0 for the Tigers with his third of the year before the first buzzer, though Markham notched the only two goals of the season period to send it to the third tied at twos.

With both sides seemingly poised to go to overtime, the third and deciding goal off the stick of Markham's Zac Sirota in the final 21 seconds proved heartbreaking for the Tigers, with just thirteen games left on the schedule and each extra point so crucial.

It marked the fifth regulation loss in a row for the Tigers, who haven't picked up a point since December 21.

The Aurora squad was fresh off of

a close 3 - 2 loss to the league-leading Oakville Blades on Friday night, where they were also sunk with a late goal in the third period, this one beating goaltender Lucas Durante with just over five minutes on the clock.

Mizzi and Markus Paterson had the goals for Aurora, while Durante made 32 stops. Despite a strong showing over his last three games, the keeper acquired from the Mississauga Chargers in December has been stuck in a slump of his own, with just one win to show for his efforts in a Tigers' uniform.

Owner Jim Thomson and his team did make a move this week to beef up the blue line, adding defenseman Dilan Peters to the roster, a big six-foot-six body from Sarnia. He has no points in two games played so far in a Tigers' uniform.

The Royals, meanwhile, are trending in the right direction: wins in five of their last six games has officially completed their long climb up the standings ladder, up by a game over the Tigers with a record of 20-14-2-4.

The Newmarket Hurricanes follow closely behind, just three points back of Aurora, and with a game in hand.

The Tigers played a rare Tuesday afternoon game against the Buffalo Jr. Sabres in a "student's day" deal, before returning to the ice this Saturday at the

Aurora Community Centre to host the Pickering Panthers.

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

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Express defenseman joins Team Ontario

By Jake Courtepatte

There are many reasons the Minor Midget York-Simcoe Express have shot up the UnderArmour OMHA rankings as of late, and Jacob Holmes is certainly one of them.

The talented blueliner was one of four players chosen from the OMHA to compete for Team Ontario at the upcoming 2019 Canada Winter Games, held in late February and only coming around once every four years.

Holmes is joined by fellow blueliner Connor Punnett and forwards Ethan Larmand and Cole Patey, all from the North Central Predators. They will represent the province at the Games in Red Deer, Alberta.

"We are proud of all of the players selected and wish Jacob, Connor, Ethan and Cole the best of luck as they represent the OMHA and Team Ontario at the Canada Winter Games," said Ian Taylor, Executive Director of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association.

Only 20 players from across the

province are chosen for the roster, with the OMHA representatives joining those picked from Hockey Eastern Ontario, Hockey Northwestern Ontario, and the Ontario Hockey Federation.

"The Ontario Minor Hockey Association has a long and proud tradition of developing some of the top hockey talent in the world," said Taylor. "This event will be a step in identifying and developing the next crop of elite players in Ontario."

Described by his OMHA player page as "built strong and sturdy," the Express captain has impressed OHL scouts this season with his skating skills.

He will be eligible for the OHL Selection Draft in 2019, and the NHL Entry Draft in 2021.

Bringing a strong net-front presence to a team looking to repeat as gold medal winners, having defeated Team Alberta in Prince George, B.C. in 2015, Holmes will have the opportunity to showcase his talent along with best under-16 skaters in the nation.

Continued on page 12

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Saints well represented on Team Ontario football

By Jake Courtepatte

It may not have been the final score he was looking for, but Nathan Falconi can now say he scored a touchdown at AT&T Stadium.

The St. Andrew's College student joined Team Ontario last week at the 2019 International Bowl against Team USA at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas.

The only major for the Canadian squad in a 61 – 7 defeat, the up-and-coming recruit in the class of 2020 still said he had “an absolutely amazing experience.”

The highly-touted receiver/quarterback told canadafotballchat.com late last year he has been working hard to put his name in the mouth of scouts.

“I have been training to make myself stronger and faster and have been



St. Andrew's College's Nathan Falconi (pictured) and Brendan Dilworth represented Team Ontario at the 2019 International Bowl in Arlington, Texas last weekend.

Photo courtesy of Len Gurr

working with a QB coach to improve my football and throwing.”

Starting as a running back in his first season of football at the age of eight, Falconi switched to quarterback in his second season...a move that has paid off in dividends, winning the first of seven Most Valuable Player awards that have come his way.

“If I had a chance to speak to all the scouts out there right now, I would describe my playing type as dual-threat QB, that works hard on and off the field and by being a leader to my teammates. No matter where I am on the field or position, I give nothing less than one-hundred percent and work just as hard to improve mentally and physically.”

His long resume, including a pair of MVP nods while on the Saints Jr. Varsity squad in 2017 and the Varsity squad in 2018, was instrumental in

Falconi being chosen as a team captain for the Bowl.

Joining Falconi on the Arlington, Texas field was SAC teammate Brendan Dilworth, a centre/defensive back for the Saints for the past three seasons.

The six-foot-two, 265-lb. Dilworth said it is his physicality that gives him the edge to earn such prestigious opportunities.

“The thing I love about playing centre and defensive tackle is...just the aggression and drive required to win one battle at a time using both physicality, mental strength, and technique.”

Dilworth will also join Falconi in the class of 2020.

SAC Varsity coach Len Gurr tweeted out that he was “extremely proud” of both Falconi and Dilworth, adding “the future is extremely bright” for the players.

Pre-Tournament Camp set for February

From page 11

And his chances are good: Team Ontario has earned five gold medals, one silver medal and two bronze medals in the last 13 Canada Winter Games.

Players will gather for a Pre-Tournament Camp February 11 to 14 at the Mastercard Centre for Hockey Excellence in Toronto as they begin preparations to defend the gold medal.

The Games themselves will be held from February 15 until March 3, 2019.

With scouts visiting major games and tournaments across Ontario since the season opened in September, Head of Ontario Hockey League Central Scouting, Darrell Woodley, thinks he has the right squad for the job.

“We are excited about the players we have named to Team Ontario. The selection process was extremely difficult, but I believe we have a team that is highly skilled and will push the pace at the Canada Winter Games,” said Woodley

Holmes' Express home club sits top in their division in the OMHA, holding onto a record of 16-8-7.

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Website upgrade aimed at increasing online municipal services

By Brock We

A \$70,000 upgrade to the Town of Aurora's website is aimed to increase online services available to residents.

Council gave the formal green light to the upgrade project at the last Council meeting, paving the way for a project that was tentatively approved in last year's budget.

According to Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith, the Town's Manager of Corporate Communications, the upgraded website would increase online services and tools available to residents, make it more user-friendly, increase security, and better position the Town to promote programs that generate revenue.

"During the 2018 Capital Budget deliberations, Council provided conditional approval of \$70,000 to redevelop the Town of Aurora website," said Ms. Mackenzie-Smith. "The capital budget request came as a result of Council expressing the need for website improvements as a result of comments from residents."

According to her report, the current municipal website was built in 2015 for \$70,000, built in conjunction with a

similar website for the Town of Aurora, and hosted by the latter.

The result was a website with "multiple challenges" relating to not only usability and navigation, but also back-end technology.

"[Based on feedback], the website is not mobile device responsive and requires a third-party service to display website content in a way that is accessible to mobile devices," she said. "This service does not work seamlessly for all devices and prevents many website pages and tools from being viewed and used in the appropriate manner when viewed on a mobile device."

"The Town website is one of our primary methods of communication with our community. On a monthly basis, the site sees between 26,000 and 30,000 users with more than 40,000 sessions between them. Approximately 68 per cent of visitors are returning visitors, with 32 per cent being new visitors. The site receives more than 100,000 page views per month with the average user visiting two to three pages for two to three minutes. Approximately one-quarter of all website traffic is via mobile device."

Addressing this issue, a new search function was added to the website

last year, she said, and there was consideration given to upgrading the site in 2018, but it was decided to hold off due to "resourcing strains" as well as making changes to the website in the midst of introducing electronic voting.

Once the new website is completed and launched, it will feature a news tool to allow residents to sign up for news alerts, mechanisms to allow the Town to better communicate emergencies such as extreme weather events with residents, integrate social media, and make Place Speak, an app allowing residents to red flag areas of concern across Aurora, more prominent.

For many Council members, a new website has been a long time coming.

"I [have been] extremely frustrated with the current system for many years,

actually, in terms of searchability," said Councillor John Gallo, before making a suggestion on what he would like to see featured. "There are times where there are reports on the website that are scanned in as images and when you're doing that you can't search for text. It makes things very frustrating if you're trying to do a word search, you know it is there, and it just doesn't pop up. It's a process we shouldn't be doing. I am very happy to see what we're doing there and I am really looking forward to the end result."

Added Councillor Rachel Gilliland: "I am super-excited about this because I have one heck of a time trying to find things on our website. I am really happy we're having this upgrade happen."

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TIME TRAVELLERS DIARY



EDWARD CHARLES WOODROOF

By Erika Baird
 Executive Director/Curator,
 Hillary House National Historic Site

Edward Charles 'Chas' Woodroof was born exactly 134 years ago, on January 21, 1885 to William and Elizabeth Woodroof of Chelmsford, England. He grew up in Chelmsford at 24 New Writtle Street with his five sisters, and one brother.

At age 24, he left his hometown to embark on a life journey to Halifax, Canada leaving on the S.S. Virginian, ported in Liverpool, England, March 1909.

He settled near the village of Schomberg, where he would begin a new life. He spent the first few years of life in Canada working on the dairy farm of Ed Lloyd.

On April 6, 1915, seven years after his arrival to Canada, Woodroof enlisted and joined the Canadian Armed Forces. This was typical of many British immigrants to Canada, who saw joining the military as a free trip home, as all of the Canadian forces were first stationed in England before heading to the front.

At War

He boarded the S.S. Hesperian, ported in Quebec, and arrived in Europe in October 1915. Trained as a scout and a sniper, his time spent in the war was heroic. Diagnosed with bronchitis at the beginning of his journey, he returned to his unit determined to fight.

His heroism began on June 2, 1916 during the Battle of Mount Sorrel.

The Germans mounted an attack by artillery, flamethrowers, and infantry, only 56 men returning out of nearly 700. During this attack Woodroof was one of the 56 men whose duty was to provide intelligence on the battle situation and bring out the wounded. These he accomplished in the face of great adversity and he was promoted to Corporal in June and to Sergeant in August.

He was able to keep his humble attitude and continue effectively, fighting in the Battle of the Somme, where he was wounded by shrapnel on September 12 at Mourquet Farm, but remained at duty and was later found. He recovered in time to rejoin the battalion below Vimy Ridge in October, and was promoted to company Sergeant Major.

During the Battle of Vimy Ridge, he was wounded by a large piece of shell fragment that tore through his thigh, fracturing his femur. The wound proved fatal, although the exact date of his death is undetermined, as his body was not found until after the battle.

Edward Charles 'Chas' Woodroof will be remembered by these distinctive features, which consisted of a set of gold teeth (except the front two) his heroic heart that he carried throughout the First World War, and his name which will remain engraved for years to come on the Aurora Cenotaph.

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MP felt she was “running out of time” ahead of floor-crossing

By Brock Weir

When Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev crossed the floor at the end of last summer, she said she felt a sense of urgency and, elaborating on that sense at the end of the year, she said she felt she was running out of time to complete her personal checklist for Aurora’s south riding.

At the end of a tumultuous year, and at the start of an election year, Ms. Alleslev said securing the country’s economy remained at the top of the list, specifically “positioning” it to be a successful one not only for the next couple of years, but also the next 150.

“I have seen foreign capital leaving the country,” she says. “We have seen large, multinational companies that are deciding not to continue, let alone expand, in Canadian jurisdictions. I have worked for Bombardier, I have worked for IBM and I know those companies compete with IBM Austria, IBM China, IBM UK. So, why is GM Canada not winning that new green technology auto manufacturing assembly line? GM is still going to build those new technology cars, so why did they choose not to build them here in Canada? If GM is making that choice, you can be sure that any number of other companies are making those same choices. We just don’t know about them yet.”

Steel and aluminium tariffs levied on Canada by the United States

government are “punishing” industries and are having a significant impact on large Canadian-based companies as they forecast for the future.

“It’s the government’s job to be preparing and forecasting for the next six to twelve months from now,” says Ms. Alleslev. “You’re navigating the ship for where we want to go in 12 months, not where we were.” This sense of longer-range planning, she says, is something she gets from the residents of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill “on a daily basis”, along with what she describes as the “government’s ability to run the country.”

“When I talk about running the country, I am talking about the delivery of Federal government services,” she says. “Essentially, we’re at a place where I hear on a daily basis how long it takes to get anything processed through government, how difficult it is to deal with the CRA, not just enquiring about your taxes, but dealing with the status. You have to tell five million government people that someone has died and they still don’t get the memo. People are just overwhelmingly frustrated with their inability to get just basic things out of the government. They tell me they can pay their bills with an app, see everything they have paid over the phone, but they have no way of getting an answer from Revenue Canada, they have no idea whether or not they have received their money. They have no idea if their file has been reviewed. And that’s just the CRA, but we can extrapolate that basically to any government department. When people lose confidence in the government’s ability to just basically deliver the Federal Government services that the government is responsible for delivering, you have a big problem.”

Taxes are also a top of mind issue. “It’s not that people want lower taxes, per se, but they want less complicated taxes” and want to know their dollars are delivering “concrete results” across the country, not just in the riding.

“The [want to know their taxes will result in] allowing their kids to have full-time jobs, allow them to have confidence in pensions, allow them to have businesses or jurisdictions, multinational global corporations that choose our jurisdictions to grow in. Taxes and tax reform have jumped to the top of the list, as have things around immigration. Even though it is not something that makes the media, cybersecurity does because people are recognizing now all the hacks and all the places where their identity is compromised, or people have come to me where they have had small amounts of money stolen from their bank account or just gone missing.

“Pipelines are also a big deal, even in Ontario. [People ask] why are we buying oil from Saudi Arabia and

Venezuela, where their environmental processes are far less rigid, where their human rights and democratic structure is something to be questioned, but we have our own, we’re losing money, we’re giving money to regimes that are not environmental and not human rights, and Canada is suffering economically, simply when we don’t need to because we have the capacity to look after ourselves. Why are we not looking after ourselves? I think that is a legitimate question.”

On the subject of human rights, Ms. Alleslev says she takes pride in the “strides” Canada has taken in this regard in the last few decades. Prior to making her decision to cross the floor from the Liberal Government to the Conservative Opposition, Ms. Alleslev said these issues came up in the “three-hour” conversation she had with Conservative leader Andrew Scheer that helped solidify her decision.

“I think everything is about perspective,” she says. “I think that we, as a nation, have made incredibly great strides in the LGBTQ2 and other social programs, and the Conservative party has no intention of rolling those back. Those are [some] of the critical things I had a three-hour conversation with Andrew Scheer around, and he said, ‘those are important, they are where they are and we have made great progress.’ I don’t believe now that those things are the most critical things that something needs to change. Those things are exactly the way we should be.

“We live in a great country, we have human rights, we have done some great things, especially around my view the military and LGBTQ2 and making it so that the people who were charged in the military for being gay and stuff like that, that has been completely addressed and are in the process of being addressed, so we have done a great job on the social issues and we have a great country on social issues. The things that we now need to turn our attention to are the things that are much more critical at this point because they are jeopardizing people’s ability to have a roof over their head and put food on the table. This is about where we need to go, not so much where we’ve been.

“My social perspective hasn’t changed. I am still the person that I was as a Liberal and as a Conservative, certainly from a social perspective, and that is also what people in our riding have told me. Those things are good, there is always work to do, but in terms of the crisis or the critical things that will make a difference to where we want to be, those are on the right track and the Conservative party has no intention policy-wise, as they have said to me, of changing those things.”

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SPEAKEASY

Jane Taylor & Reccia Mandelcorn

The relationship between viewer and art was thematic to this month's Speakeasy. Guests Nelia Pacheco, Aurora Film Circuit, and Nancy Newman, Society of York Region Artists, spoke about how art challenges us to think, engage and feel.

Nelia chairs the Aurora Film Circuit. One of Aurora's premiere cultural treasures, the AFC is a volunteer initiative committed to enhancing art and culture in Aurora with transformative cinematic experiences.

Working with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) the AFC has been bringing critically acclaimed Canadian and International films to Aurora since 2006.

As a member of the programming committee, Nelia selects the films to be screened. As she quickly learned, selection cannot be just about what she would personally like to view. Balancing community sensibilities and interest for the "feel good" entertainment films with the darker, more controversial films, can be a juggling act.

For Nelia, if viewers leave an AFC screening a little more thoughtful, entertained, engaged and occasionally, even perhaps provoked, then they have grown through the magic of filmmaking.

The AFC's eight-film season runs January to November. Season subscriptions for 2019 have sold out, but 50 single tickets are available at the Aurora Public Library for each screening. For more information about the Aurora Film Circuit and upcoming screenings, please visit aurorafilmcircuit.ca.

This January, the Aurora Cultural Centre is curating a juried exhibition of the Society of York Region Artists. The show, *From Memory*, features 38 members of this vibrant local artist collective. As part of the month-long celebration, the gallery team has collaborated with the artists in a series of informative and entertaining "Ways of Seeing" art events. The first event is a walkabout with watercolour artist, Nancy Newman.

For artists, a walkabout in a gallery is a familiar activity, but for the non-artist, this might seem somewhat intimidating. Nancy explained how, through critical thinking, thought and conversation around a piece of art doesn't require an advanced degree; in fact, engaging with art is accessible from childhood on.

Nancy hopes that viewers will interact beyond casually walking by a piece of art. The walkabout will give a foundation for ongoing interpretation of art, encouraging the viewer to experience intent, colour, form and design, developing a greater understanding of the nature of art and of themselves.

The Walkabout with Nancy Newman takes place at the Aurora Cultural Centre Wednesday, January 16, from 6 – 7 pm, and is offered at no charge.

Rounding out the visual arts scene is Rick Armstrong's photography exhibit, *Highway 510 Labrador: 21 days in my truck*. Rick has driven across the country photographing the landscapes of Canada as he experiences them in the moment. Highway 510 Labrador is a loving tribute to photography and to our country. On exhibit at the Colleen Abbott Gallery, Aurora Public Library, through February 10.

On the music scene, don't miss out on the first 2019 Great Artist Music Series with pianist, Charles Richard-Hamelin, on Friday, January 18.

Special pre-concert talk with Rick Philips. Plus, warm up on a cold January night with classical jazz standards when John Sheard presents a tribute to the great Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. With special guests Donovan Locke, Kalya Ramu and Michael Louis Johnson, Friday, January 25 will be an evening to remember. Tickets available through auroraculturalcentre.ca.

Also happening at Aurora Public Library is a Youth Coffee House featuring teens from The Arts Music Store on Saturday, January 26 at 2 pm. Come out and support local emerging talent. Information on performing in the open mic segment is available through the Library at aurorapl.ca.

With so much going on in our own community, 2019 promises to be a

year of fabulous cultural experiences. Happy New Year Aurora!

Jane Taylor is Communications & Events Manager at the Aurora Cultural Centre, and Reccia Mandelcorn is Manager of Community Collaboration at Aurora Public Library. They co-host The Speakeasy on the first Wednesday of each month on 102.7 CHOP-FM.

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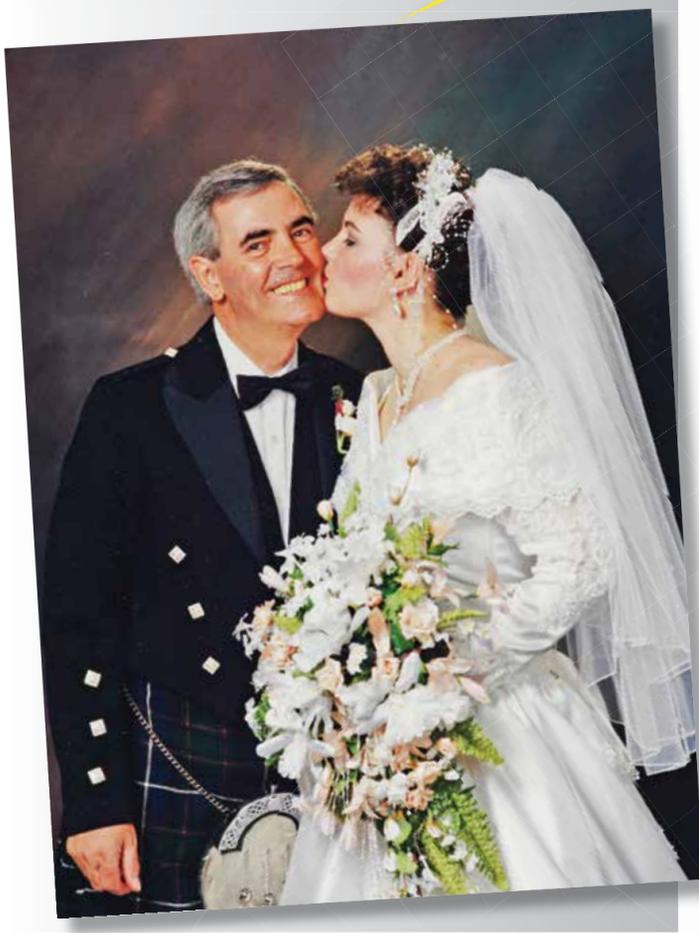
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Question:

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My father passed away in a hospital palliative care unit. In this medical environment I strove to surround him with the comforts of home to provide a peaceful and familiar environment. How very different my family's experience would have been had Dad instead been in the homey environment of the Margaret Bahen Hospice. An environment conducive to fostering the heart-felt conversations and quiet times we all needed in order to gain what closure we could during his remaining time.

I think about how much more of myself and my energy I would have been able to give my Dad. How much less he would have worried about me (as the sole caregiver to him and my Mum who was also ill) given the stress I was under meeting the needs of my parents as well as my own family.

I fully support the efforts of Hospice to support and ease this journey for families and ask that you think about showing your support to such a valuable community resource as well.

Pauline

DONOR

I'm Bella,

I've been able to visit Hospice a few times to bring a smile to people who need it most.

When people aren't able to get out of bed, I just cuddle quietly in my pouch and they pet my soft fur. Sometimes I see kids who are visiting and I jump around and they laugh.

People tell me they are used to seeing Visiting Therapy Dogs at Hospice but they've never seen a kangaroo!

I'm just glad that I can bring a little bit of joy and comfort to my new friends at Hospice where they celebrate LIVING each and every day.

Bella

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Scotch tasting offers rare treat for a good cause

By Brock Weir

If you've ever wanted to taste what makes a \$300 bottle of scotch a \$300 bottle of scotch without breaking the bank, you can have an opportunity to do just that next week, all for a good cause.

CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors) will host their second annual An Evening of Scotch Tasting this coming Thursday, January 24, at 7 p.m. at their Aurora headquarters.

Led by local scotch expert Keith Scott, ticket-holders will be able to sample five fine scotches and whiskeys, including a very special bottle aged 35 years from the 2017 Northern Borders Rare Collection.

"This is a sold-out event every year," says Rhonda Flanagan, CHATS' Director of Development. "Sometimes buying a ticket to a gala can be a lot more money, along with a lot more money for a golf tournament. An Evening of Scotch Tasting is reasonably priced and, for the scotch or whisky lover, you might be able to try some scotches that might not otherwise be in your budget."

Ms. Flanagan attended the event last year as an observer, as someone who doesn't "appreciate scotch as much as

the next person", but she has it on good authority from her scotch-loving spouse and his friends that a good time was had by all.

"He loved it and they are all coming back again this year, bringing more friends," says Ms. Flanagan. "They have told so many people about it and it is catching on because this year we have a gold sponsor for the first time in Magna and we're very excited. We're hopeful this night will sell out once again."

Priced at \$75 per person, a limited amount of tickets were still available at press time.

Proceeds from each ticket sold will go back into CHATS programming, which serves residents of York Region and South Simcoe.

"Proceeds will go towards a number of programs, but specifically towards subsidies for our programs," says Ms. Flanagan. "For example, we offer subsidies for our transportation services, for some of our adult day programs, for our Meals on Wheels, our homemaking services, and that kind of thing. A lot of our clients are low-income and a number of them are isolated, so this type of fundraising event allows us to help people who could not pay for CHATS services to still use these services and make them available for everyone."

For more tickets and further information on CHATS' An Evening of Scotch Tasting, visit www.chats.on.ca/scotch tasting or contact Angela Endicott at 905-713-3373 x6093 or via email at aendicott@chats.on.ca.

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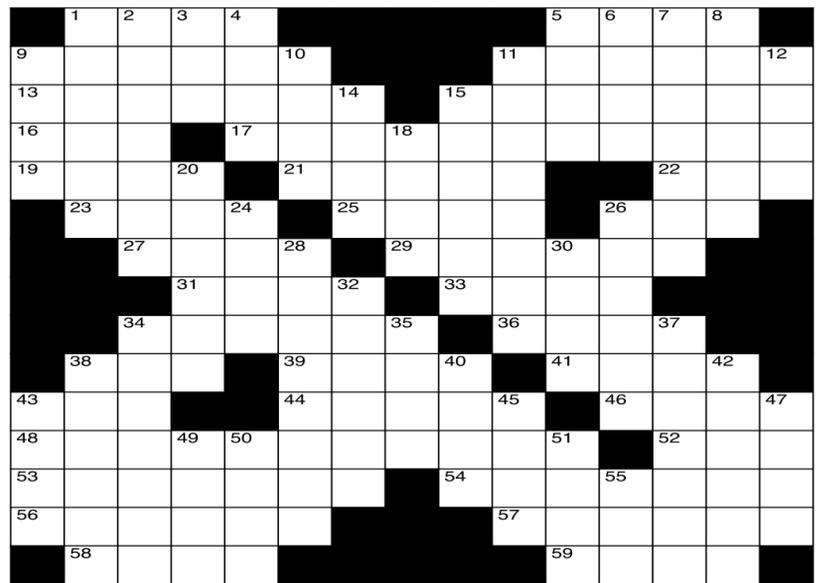
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CLUES ACROSS

- One-time Levi's CEO
- Emperor of Russia
- Islamic theology scholar
- Hammer with a large, wooden head
- Food
- Can be combined
- Midway between east and southeast
- Governs a noun or pronoun
- Gorilla
- Type of trap
- "Unforgettable" singer
- Atomic #10
- Practice fight
- US gov't branch
- Female deer
- Remarks meant for the audience
- Undergarments

- Prevent from seeing
- Masked
- "A Suitable Boy" novelist
- Invisible gaseous substance
- Sour
- County in New Mexico
- No seats available
- Pulitzer-winning composer
- Fit or irritation
- The ability to move objects through thought
- Skywalker mentor ___-Wan Kenobi
- Herbal medicine seed
- "Zero Dark Thirty" director Bigelow
- Preferences
- Soundly
- One precedes another
- Au revours

CLUES DOWN

- Famed explorer
- Transferred property to
- Clerical vestment
- Free-swimming marine invertebrate
- Cab
- Thin piece of wood
- Persons without pigment in their skin
- Fill again
- Submissive
- His and ___
- Sources of stress
- Shelter
- French commune
- Boggy ground
- Old man
- Peanut
- Michael Corleone's enforcer
- Geological formations
- Wages
- Insect repellent
- Unit of time
- Musician
- Not good
- Esteemed one
- Structures
- Where workers sit
- Women who foretell the future
- Quantitative fact
- Missing soldiers
- Diminutive
- This (Spanish)
- Hold on to
- Thrust a knife into
- Hengyang Bajialing Airport

THINGS YOU OUGHT TO KNOW

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17

Canadian Blood Services will host a blood donor clinic today from 2:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Aurora Legion (105 Industrial Parkway North). Start the New Year off right and make a difference in the life of a hospital patient in need of blood. Donate today!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20

PARTAGEZ LE FRANCAIS – A free French language conversation group will take place this afternoon at Country Style Deli/Bistro, 14980 Yonge Street, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. This free group welcomes adults (from francophone to beginners) looking to put their French-language conversation skills into action. Francophones and stronger speakers are encouraged to share their French language skills with less strong speakers. For more information, visit bit.ly/partagez-fr.

MONDAY, JANUARY 21

Canadian Blood Services will host a blood donor clinic today from 2:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Aurora Legion (105 Industrial Parkway North). Start the New Year off right and make a difference in the life of a hospital patient in need of blood. Donate today!

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22

The CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women) Aurora/Newmarket will hold their monthly meeting today at 1 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion (105 Industrial Parkway North, Aurora). CFUW Aurora/Newmarket is a women's organization engaged in empowering women's lives through friendship, education, outreach and advocacy. All women in York Region are welcome at our January monthly meeting. Featuring speaker, Alex Andras on the topic: "Transitions: The Experience of Being Transgendered". Alex Andras is an educator, motivational speaker, musician and LGBTQ rights activist. Alex is currently making his way towards a PhD in Social Work, sharing his story and moving rooms of people as he speaks about the discrimination and difficulties he has faced as a transgender man growing up in a society that didn't acknowledge him. For more information, visit www.cfuwauroranewmarket.com/Upcoming-Events.html.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce will hold an After 5 Business Social today at Air Riderz Trampoline Park (250 Don Hillcock Drive, Unit 1) from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. A casual evening of networking. If you plan to jump into this event, please dress appropriately. Registration closes January 22. For more information, call the Chamber at 905-727-7262.

CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors) invites you to join them for an encore presentation of last year's sold-out An Evening of Scotch Tasting tonight from 7 – 9 p.m. at their head office (1-240 Edward Street). Local scotch expert Keith Scott will be sampling five fine scotches, including a very special bottle aged 35 years from the 2017 Northern Borders Rare Collection. You will be taken on a journey through the regions and history that make each bottle distinct. Tickets are \$75 per person. For more information, visit www.chats.on.ca/fundraising-events.

SPEAKER SERIES – The Aurora Historical Society's Speaker Series presents Geoffrey Reaume tonight with A History of Disability from Ancient Times to Present. 7 – 9 p.m. at Hillary House National Historic Site (15372 Yonge Street). Tickets are \$7 each (\$5 for Aurora Historical Society members). To reserve your seat, call 905-727-8991 or email leigha.cooney@aurorahs.com.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce will host The Business Plan:

A Hands-On Series this morning at the Aurora Public Library from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Do you have a business idea or are you an existing business trying to redefine your plan? The Business Plan: A Hands-On Series will help fill in the gaps. Series topics include: Business Plan Development, Branding & Marketing, Financial Models for Business Management, Customer Relationship Management, Social Media, Storytelling to Engage Customers, Protection of Information and Cyber Security. For more information, call The Chamber at 905-727-7262 or email Sandra Watson at s.watson@aurorachamber.on.ca.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3

PARTAGEZ LE FRANCAIS – A free French language conversation group will take place this afternoon at Country Style Deli/Bistro, 14980 Yonge Street, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. This free group welcomes adults (from francophone to beginners) looking to put their French-language conversation skills into action. Francophones and stronger speakers are encouraged to share their French language skills with less strong speakers. For more information, visit bit.ly/partagez-fr.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

MONEY TALKS SERIES – Interest Rates: Huge Effect on Our Purchasing Power. This free, informal monthly education/conversation group shares unbiased knowledge about the investment environment and about financial planning. Presentation followed by group conversation. No financial products or services will be offered or sold (directly or indirectly). People employed in the financial services industry are welcome to attend and contribute, but not to engage in the promotion of any products, companies or services. For more information, contact the Aurora Public Library's Adult Information Desk at 905-727-9494 x275.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

The PROBUS Club of Aurora holds their monthly meeting today from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Parkway North, Aurora. The fun speaker today is Singer/Entertainer, Joe Thomson! 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.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17

PARTAGEZ LE FRANCAIS – A free French language conversation group will take place this afternoon at Country Style Deli/Bistro, 14980 Yonge Street, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. This free group welcomes adults (from francophone to beginners) looking to put their French-language conversation skills into action. Francophones and stronger speakers are encouraged to share their French language skills with less strong speakers. For more information, visit bit.ly/partagez-fr.

FEBRUARY 23 – 24

York Symphony Orchestra will host "A Night at the Opera." Join the Symphony for a concert of opera favourites. Experience the splendor of voice and orchestra as only opera can express. Saturday, February 23 at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora. Sunday, February 24 at Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. For tickets and showtimes, call 416-410-0860.

SUNDAY, MARCH 3

PARTAGEZ LE FRANCAIS – A free French language conversation group will take place this afternoon at Country Style Deli/Bistro, 14980 Yonge Street, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. This free group welcomes adults (from francophone to beginners) looking to put their French-language conversation skills into action. Francophones and stronger speakers are encouraged to share their French language skills with less strong speakers. For more information, visit bit.ly/partagez-fr.

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Whodunnit overs intrigue, laughs and a bit of stage fright at Theatre Aurora

By Brock Weir

“Challenge accepted.”

That’s what Linda Stott says went through her mind when she read a review called Bettine Manktelow’s play *Proscenophobia* as “a nice piece of fluff.”

Ms. Stott says she saw something much different, and the first-time director is determined to bring this deceptively multifaceted play to life next week at Theatre Aurora as part of its 60th anniversary season.

Theatre Aurora’s milestone season is built around the theme “the life of a theatre” and *Proscenophobia* fits the bill like a glove, being directly translated to mean “stage fright,” an essential, if unwanted, part of any actor’s journey.

The play is described as a “clever whodunnit” all taking place in the dressing room of a community theatre during the production of a thriller.

The play within the play stars Addie, a fading star who is attempting a comeback. Here, she is understudied by her best friend Millie, but the two women share more than just a love for the theatre; they were both married to the same theatrical empresario who left one woman for the other.

“Addie and Millie are both aging and are fighting the sexism that happens in some acting worlds,” explains Ms. Stott. “Addie is desperately trying to get that one last hurrah, that one big comeback. It took years for Addie and Millie’s friendship to come back together and when we join them their friendship is going from strength



Theatre Aurora rehearses their upcoming production, which opens next Thursday, January 24.

Contributed photo

to strength. At the last minute, Millie needs to fill in for Addie and instead of the gun that was part of the play shooting a blank, a real bullet goes off and Millie is killed.”

“That’s all in the first half of the play!” adds Ms. Stott with a laugh, noting the second act looks at the ins and outs of how all this unfolded.

Was it an accident?

Was it a suicide?

Was this Millie’s way out?

Was it her grand finale as an actress?

Or, was it murder?

“I read this play for the first time as an actor and thought it was clever,” says Ms. Stott. “Then, I read it again and thought it would be cool to direct. I started reading it over and over again and moving pieces were appearing in my head. I realised I was developing a vision for a play. I wrote down my vision and submitted it to

Theatre Aurora.”

Ms. Stott comes to Theatre Aurora with a major in Theatre Studies, but, in the years since earning her degree, there was a time when she shied away from the performing arts. Her ambition at the outset was to be a teacher, but she quickly found out that teaching a group of kids wasn’t the best fit.

“I was very introverted and shy as a child, painfully so,” she says, “with a lot of self-esteem issues. I was in a French immersion program and we had to do these little skits, and one I played a clown and all of a sudden the room started to laugh, and there was that high! The audience was laughing at what I just did and I realised I could present myself as somebody else and be really comfortable with it and get that feedback from the audience, which I think draws many of us to the art form.

“I loved examining plays and taking

them apart. That’s how my professors prepared for a play and I missed that kind of analysis as it was something I really, really loved and craved. Here, with *Proscenophobia*, we dedicated our first five rehearsals to table work, which is a significant amount of time for a play that is 90 minutes. We spent our first rehearsals developing the timelines of all the characters and how they interact, the history of each one, what their true feelings are. It was amazing because on that sixth rehearsal we started blocking and the actors got up and it felt easy. All of a sudden, we had these wonderful, amazing choices being made by the actors because they are so intimate with their characters.”

Although *Proscenophobia* is a bona fide whodunnit, Ms. Stott says it is a whodunnit that comes with a real lesson upon the big reveal. That lesson intrigued her, and she says she is sure it will intrigue the people who come out to see the show this coming Thursday, January 24.

“The way the ending is written and presented, you can’t help but keep thinking about it and forcing the audience to think and escape. I lived with this play for seven months and I am still laughing. It’s a very enjoyable night out and it is going to leave you with a thinker at the end. It just so happens to be a really poignant message and one I think we can all apply in different parts of our own lives.”

Proscenophobia opens at Theatre Aurora next Thursday, January 24, at 8 p.m., running on select dates and times through Saturday, February 2. For tickets and further information, visit www.theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.

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OBITUARY

BARBARA WINNIFRED MCGOWAN 1931 - 2019



With great sadness, we announce the passing of Barbara Winnifred McGowan, 87, of Aurora, Ontario. She left us peacefully surrounded by her sons and family at home in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, on January 8th, 2019.

Barbara was born October 15th, 1931, in Oshawa, Ontario, and married the late Ron McGowan in 1959. She was the loving and devoted mother of Jay (Marisha), Pitt Meadows, BC and Mark (Deborah), New Glasgow, NS, and cherished time with her grandchildren Mallory, Sam and Andrew, and great-grandchildren Delilah and Ophelia. Barbara was also deeply grateful to have been reunited with her son Greg Johnston (Monica) of Beaumont, Alberta, and his children, Evan and Adam.

She is predeceased by her parents, Fred and Jessie (Everett) Russell, her husband Ron McGowan, brother Don Russell, and sister Jackie Keene (Brian). She is survived by her sister Shirley Trott (Arthur) of Ottawa, Ontario, and by her children, grand children and great grand-children, as well as dear friends and family who supported her during her brief illness.

Barbara was proud of her time in the Queen’s York Rangers, Reserves Unit, where she reached the rank of Sergeant and learned to drive a tank. She also worked for many years in the newspaper and printing industry, managing the production of the Aurora Banner and the Alliston Herald. She finished her career working as an administrator at the Union Villa Home Society, where she developed strong bonds of friendship and support with her coworkers and the residents.

Barbara was an active member of Theatre Aurora for much of her life, performing in and supporting many productions. She also filled many roles on the executive and is a past president. Barbara was a dedicated volunteer who believed passionately about helping those in need. She had a wide circle of lifelong friends who will remember her for her warmth, her humour and her unconditional love.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or support your local Food Bank.

A celebration of life is planned for the spring in Aurora, Ontario.

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