More people seeking mental health supports during pandemic than ever before: CMHA

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR

A five-week lockdown seemed manageable at the start of the global pandemic.

As these five weeks turned into months, and then a year, and even more, that manageability, for some, went out the window.

Now, as we approach the two-year anniversary of COVID-19’s arrival in Ontario, with Omicron and continued uncertainty, more people are accessing mental health supports than at any other time in the pandemic, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario).

A poll recently released by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) shows that one in four people (24 per cent) of Ontarians have sought help for mental health challenges, up from 17 per cent last winter and nine per cent almost two years ago.

Data from the poll also indicates that “people have had their ups and downs,” their levels of “mental health distress” are essentially on par to where they were at the start of the pandemic, particularly with stress, anxiety and depression.

“We’ve conducted four polls during the pandemic because we wanted to get a sense of how people are doing nearly two years into it,” said Camille

Continued on page 25

Remembering Aurora’s “Swan King”

Wildlife pioneer Harry Lumsden died at 98

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR

If you’ve ever looked out your window and spotted a flock of trumpeter swans flying overhead, you have Aurora resident Harry Lumsden to thank for that.

Less than 30 years ago, trumpeter swans were a rare sight in Aurora. Then Harry Lumsden – a life-long lover of birds and wildlife – began working with Ontario’s Ministry of Natural Resources to bring back trumpeter swans.

Harry’s work was instrumental in the re-introduction of trumpeter swans to Ontario.

Aurora resident Harry Lumsden was instrumental in the re-introduction of trumpeter swans to Ontario.

Continued on page 17
**TOWN OF AURORA**

**NOTICE BOARD**

February 17, 2022

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**Council & Committee Meetings**

**Date** | **Time** | **Location** | **Meeting**  
--- | --- | --- | ---  
Thursday, February 17 | 7 p.m. | Video Conference | Community Advisory Committee  
Tuesday, February 22 | 6:45 p.m. | Council Chambers | Council Closed Session (if required)  
Thursday, February 24 | 7 p.m. | Council Chambers | Council  
Wednesday, February 23 | 7 p.m. | Video Conference | Environmental Advisory Committee  
Tuesday, March 1 | 9:30 a.m. | TBO | Joint Council Committee  
Tuesday, March 1 | 9:45 p.m. | Council Chambers | Council Closed Session (if required)  
Tuesday, March 1 | 7 p.m. | Council Chambers | General Council  

*All meetings held electronically are as per Section 19.1 of the Town’s Procedures By-law No. 2288-15, as amended. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings will be available to the public via live streams only on the Town’s YouTube Channel. In-person public attendance at meetings is not permitted at this time.*

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**What’s Happening**

**Arctic Adventure**

Friday, February 18 – Saturday, February 19

Celebrate Family Day with a weekend full of adventures for the whole family.

**Black History Month**

March 1 – 31

Celebrate the diversity and culture and learn from many influential and accomplished individuals made by Reesh Corbetts.

aurora.ca/blackhistorymonth

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**Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition**

**Feature Artist:** Ramona Ricken - Urban Beauty in the GTA

For the month of February, Aurora’s Online Skylight Gallery is featuring works by artist Ramona Ricken. She takes you on an urban journey from the urban skyline to the tranquil gardens and landscapes, all inspired by scenes within the GTA. When keeping your eyes open, you can find beauty right in your own backyard. Which is a welcome reality from our fast-paced lifestyles and current world affairs. Through the use of acrylic paints in a variety of application methods, Ramona’s work is meant to stir a sense of wonder and in intention to relate a story through the perception of the viewer’s viewpoint. Colourful acrylics provoke unique thoughts and can ignite your imagination while simultaneously beautifying your home.

*All works are for sale, please contact Amanda Anulis at aurora@aurora.ca if you are interested in purchasing a piece. View this online gallery at aurora.ca/skylightgallery.

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**How to stop the spread of LDD**

To minimize the effects of Lymantria dispar dispar (LDD) for 2022, Town staff will be burning and screening egg masses off tree trunks in areas identified with significant egg masses. This will reduce the number of insects that will hatch in the spring. Residents are asked not to burn egg masses on their own trees as it is a dangerous and illegal damage the tree, this task should only be undertaken by trained firemen personnel.

**Spring & Summer 2022 Program Guide**

**Contact:** 905-726-4762 • #AuroraArtsAndCulture Aurora 2022

Visit www.aurora.ca/sprummer for the complete listing of activities and services. (Note: A few pages are related to the 2021 event.)

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**SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOWN**

**Official Plan Review Update**

Learn about the vision for the future. engaurea.ca/opr

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

The property tax bills have been mailed, please keep an eye on your mailbox, the statements due dates are February 22 and April 26.

If you have not received your tax bill by February 18, please email info@aurora.ca or call 905-727-1375 for a replacement copy. Please note, failure to receive a tax notice does not excuse a tenant from the responsibility for payment of taxes and does not relieve the owner of late payment charges.

Recreation at Home

It’s easy to stay actively engaged at home with more than 300 online resources available on our Recreation at Home webpage. There are activities for all ages. For more information visit aurora.ca/recreatehome.

Seniors Centre Without Walls (SCWW)

Seniors Centre Without Walls (SCWW) is a free community outreach program that allows adults and older adults to participate in seminars, fitness classes and games over the phone or through Zoom.

View a schedule of dates and topics online at aura.ca/scww.

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**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO PASS A BY-LAW TO DECLARE AS SURPLUS AND SELL MUNICIPAL LAND**

TAKEN NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Aurora (the “Town”) is providing notice of its intention to pass by-law, pursuant to The G.O. of 2018, on April 3, 2022, Intended to Sell Property under The Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.17, as By-Law No. 2022-123, for the purpose of disposing of surplus and vacant parcels of land described as:

• Part of P1053076.072 being Part 2 on 658.38201, with an approximate size of 0.23 square meters,

• Part of P13344-1303 being Part 1 on 659.38293, with an approximate size of 0.91 square meters,

The by-law will be brought forward to a future Council meeting and made available on the Town’s website, located at aurora.ca/corporalpropertynotices.

For further information, please contact Lisa Hausz, Acting Director, Planning and Development Services by email at lhausz@aurora.ca.

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**Aurora Town Hall**

100 John West Way, P.O. Box 1000, Aurora, ON, L4G 6J1 905-727-1375 • info@aurora.ca • aurora.ca

**Accessible Formats**

905-727-3123 ext. 4121 accessibility@aurora.ca

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**#AuroraArtsAndCulture**

aurora.ca/articladventure
Capacity limits in restaurants, other businesses lift as Province moves forward re-opening timelines

By Brock Weir

As we approach the further easing of restrictions in Ontario, while this is great news for our mental health and economy, we must remain cautious...so much worry...so much time...so much to do!

LOCAL STATS

As of Monday, February 14, Aurora was experiencing 13 confirmed active cases of COVID-19, according to York Region Public Health.

But, as the Region notes, this number is an under-estimate of the real number.

"With rapid transmission of Omicron and recent provincial changes in testing eligibility and case management, case counts and outbreak reporting through the COVID-19 in York Region interactive dashboard are an under-estimate of the true number of individuals with COVID-19 and outbreaks in York Region," the Region stated at the start of January, adding case counts should be treated with caution.

"Public Health units across Ontario are prioritizing case management of high-risk individuals and settings. Workplace outbreaks are no longer reported."

The Region is no longer reporting source of exposure for active cases. Since the start of the global pandemic, York Region Public Health had been able to confirm 4,149 PCR-confirmed cumulative cases of COVID-19 in Aurora as of February 14. 4,076 cases are now marked as resolved. There have been 60 fatalities attributed to the virus.

93.9 per cent of Aurora residents aged 5 and up have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, while 86.3 per cent had received two doses by the start of the week.

COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER DOSE AVAILABLE FOR INDIVIDUALS 12-17

As of Friday, February 18, 2022

Protect yourself and your family. We will continue to reopen.

Walk in to a clinic near you or book an appointment six months (168 days) after receipt of a second dose.

Are You Caring For An Older Loved One?

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• Physical therapy
• Meal planning and preparation
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To manage COVID-19 over the long-term, public health units...so much worry...so much time...so much to do!

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When all is said and done, what will be the story of the pandemic that will stick with you? What will be the images from mid-years from now if and when another new variant appears on our horizon? Who will be the people that you remember?

For the longest time, the stories, images and individuals I thought would stick with me the longest would be the positive ones. They were the stories that illustrated the best of us: how we came together towards a common cause; how we found new ways of expressing ourselves; and how we took stock of the world that has always been around us, whether it was getting out and exploring our neighbourhoods when our personal spheres had to temporarily contract due to our global health crisis, or putting renewed focus on the importance of shopping local.

It was the story of the former British “Land Girl” who answered the call during the Second World War and, as a non-marginalized, didn’t hesitate to do so once again, mobilizing her community to collect much needed items for a local food bank.

It was the story of a musically-passionate sliding duo who, one week, transformed their driveway into a drive-in concert for their friends and neighbours not only to collect items for that same food bank, but to raise awareness of the plight of frontliners like their niece mom.

It was the story of a student bagpiper who, in an effort to keep his skills intact, decided to take his instrument, leave the sound or hate it, onto his porch to perform a few songs every night at 7 p.m., in a show of solidarity with frontliners healthcare heroes battling the virus.

It was the story of two sitters, who, as the first COVID summer started to mind to a close, debating back and forth with their parents on whether to return to in-class learning or stick with virtual sessions. But, between long-running sessions of chain-saw, they took breaks to bring to fruition a crafty idea on how to make masks more comfortable for doctors, nurses, and teachers.

A few months ago, I was sure these would be the abiding images of my mind, this job going out the window of telling their stories, and even preserving them for future generations who might want to take a deep dive into how our forbears coped with a once-in-a-century event.

Yet, here we are: the scenes from Ottawa, Windsor, and numerous other Canadian cities etched into our minds. Those scenes that were burned around the world inscribing movements of their own cities around the globe’s intent on preserving the image of Covid-19 to end masks and vaccine mandates – or so they claimed, at least in the beginning. Don’t get me wrong, I understand the originally stated intent of the effort. We are all frustrated. We would all like to see this behind us. Colleagues, we might have different ideas on how we might get there.

Some might think following public health guidelines in an effort to drive down new cases might be the ticket, along with getting free vaccines to give us a fighting chance against something that is still such an unknown, upping our hand hygiene game, practicing social distancing, and generally practicing a little more consideration towards our fellow humans.

Others, I’m sure, are of the opinion that making a great to do a little, welcoming some truly bad actors (a minority, to be sure) to the fold, other could be see to keep them from using the workers that are on the job to help our healthy and safe; taking their kids, who need to get back into in-person learning, out of school for, what, three weeks now to join this cavalcade of “freedom” and using their own children, many too young to even begin unravelling the complexities of the issue, to block international travel is the better way forward.

Maybe it’s just me, but I still prefer the first path. At the risk of heaping on another image some might consider negative, our additional story I still remember – and I feel I will have to revisit as the pressure from the “commons” appears to be pressuring some of our Provincial leaders to expedite an end to our mask mandates – is another mom who was doing her best to shine a light on the good pandemic works being carried out by her children.

Reaching out to us with pride to underscore their idea, she shed away from taking any of the spotlight as I talked to the kids on their pain while she popped her head out the door a few times to interject a detail. She was one of the people who belong to a group that doesn’t seem to be getting the focus they once did: the immunocompromised.

Her particular condition rendered her unable to get a vaccine, unable to wear a mask without considerable respiratory issues, and, in the second wave of the pandemic, unable to venture too far outside her home, and almost certainly beyond her bubble, back-to-back battles with cancer.

As we fast forward into the veritable old west of learning to “live” with COVID now that we appear to be throwing up our hands to essentially give up the fight, how will our most vulnerable be able full to enjoy their lives, not to mention the freedoms that people in our major cities, and their five-year-olds, are ostensibly fighting for.

Whatever plan we get for this stage of the game, or whether it is no plan at all, I hope people are considerate of those who, as a result, will be unable to participate in society as they once were, perhaps ever will.

Freedom isn’t freedom unless there is freedom for all, and amid the cacophony that is coming out of the capital, that doesn’t seem to be a concept that has truly taken hold, and politicians and law enforcement officials that have been sucked into this unwise machination won’t be excepted.

As stated before, I would like to see the attention of the publisher prior to the following edition. Typographical errors that do not lessen the value of an image some might consider negative, publisher is not liable for slight changes or additions.
There's been a lot to celebrate in February so far, including Black History Month and the Chinese Lunar New Year. It's also the month of the Winter Olympics.

Let's continue to honour and celebrate the important roles of Black Canadians in building a prosperous, diverse and inclusive Canada.

Ms. Desmond inspired generations of Black Canadians after her, including her sister, Wanda Robson, who just recently passed away. Canadian lawyer, Lincoln Alexander, the first Black MP in the House of Commons and the Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine, the first Black woman MP shared the ways for Black Canadians who wanted to have a role in politics. These are only three of a long list of Black people who matched our country in so many ways.

This year, we celebrate Lunar New Year and the Year of the Tiger. The Tiger symbolizes strength, standing up against evil, and bravery. I think the Tiger is a perfect symbol for this time, as we are still facing many challenges. It is more important than ever to hold on to our strength and bravery. By working together, we can put this pandemic behind us and make stronger when united. These are the values that will get us through now and the lessons for us as we move forward in the future.

The Winter Olympics are happening and, according to CBC Radio, more than 30 teams (90 percent) of all Canadians have tuned in since the games started. I would like to congratulate our dedicated athletes, whether you won a metal or not. In fact, snowboarder Derek Livingston, at just 18, has been a Canadian sensation due to an injury sustained days before he was scheduled to depart. He has my admiration, not only for his dedication, but also for the way he ran away from the permit restrictions and lockdowns.

The Canadian government is also working hard to deal with COVID and to bring the pandemic to an end. I truly think that the best way forward is to continue to protect public health and safety while supporting our economy.

Canada has had one of the best outcomes worldwide since the beginning of this global pandemic, and we will continue to rely on science and our public health authorities to recommend changes to Federal guidelines in response to this continually changing virus.

The Canadian government is also committed to considering all forms of hate and racism. Hate and racism have no place in our country. Therefore, our government will continue to work to ensure that the Bill C-56, enacted. This bill amended Acts in the Criminal Code relating to hate propaganda, hate crimes and hate speech. We cannot let the government of the day say this is off, but that's understandable if you're looking for an environment where you can avoid or stop it.

Family Day! (February 21)

Family Day! (February 21)

You're out on top of the world, or at least, you will be if you climb that window at the end of your driveway.

The Auroran Horoscope

Scott Johnston

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Sharing with your neighbours will make you more popular, and you're also getting your share of the over 3,000 jobs that were lost since March 2020. This has been tremendous.

Leo

This year is off, but that's understandable if you're looking for an environment where you can avoid or stop it.

Aries (March 21 – April 19)

Your ruling planet is Mars, and this will allow you to be more active, so you may want to work out or engage in some form of physical activity.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

You're feeling a bit of a letdown today, but you're also feeling quite creative.

Gemini (May 21 – June 21)

You're feeling a bit of a letdown today, but you're also feeling quite creative.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

You're feeling a bit of a letdown today, but you're also feeling quite creative.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

You're feeling a bit of a letdown today, but you're also feeling quite creative.

Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

You're out on top of the world, or at least, you will be if you climb that window at the end of your driveway.

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

Pleasure surprises await you today, when your generous sun ray you find that the empty shell where your favorite product usually resides has been checked for the first time in weeks.

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

Spreading laughter is always the best medicine, so why don't you suggest to your spouse that they should run for Aurora Council in this year's election?
Political trailblazer inspires in virtual Black History Month gala

**BY BROCK WEIR**

Minister of the Crown, illustrated how the first Black woman to serve as a Federal Humfryes, who was among the speakers. members of Council, including Sandra Mayor Tom Mrakas, along with several from Premier Doug Ford, the participation of Black History Month.

"I was an elementary school principal, teaching social studies in Grade 7 and 8, and there was nothing in the textbook about African-Canadians, about Indigenous peoples, or what I considered important information for these students at that specific age group to understand the workings of society," said Ms. Augustine, who was the keynote speaker at the Aurora Black Community (ABC) Association’s virtual Black History Month Gala last week, joined on screen by ABC President Phiona Durrant, Mayor Tom Mrakas, MPP Michael Parsa, and MP Leah Taylor Roy.

"In her address, Ms. Augustine, who was the keynote speaker at a virtual gala hosted by the Aurora Black Community Association to mark the start of Black History Month.

"The virtual gala included greetings from Premier Doug Ford, the participation of Deputy Premier Christine Elliott, MP Irab Taylor Roy, MPP Michael Parsa, Mayor Tom Mrakas, along with several members of Council, including Sandra Humby, who was among the speakers."

By age 24, she had, she said, but in order to spur the political parties in the Bloc Quebecois and finding a balance with the rise of two new trade issues, tackling debt and deficit, and the system so they could understand what was happening with their children.

"We stepped out in 1971 in Canada as the first country in the world to say we are diverse, we are multicultural, multiracial – that is society we are in Canada, but those of us who were participating in all the areas in the society, we did not see ourselves included in so many different ways.

"Politics was just one area African-Canadians didn’t see themselves represented, but that was about to change through "constant struggle, constant protests, demonstrations, advocacy and activism," along with Augustin’s efforts from her seat in the House of Commons to have Black History Month recognized in Canada.

"The motion was a very simple one. The motion had nothing in there that anyone motion went right to the jugular. The motion had nothing in there that are not debatable. ‘No, this is debatable. You have to have what I considered a finished motion, what I was going to do the draw! – and ultimately made a motion in the house.

"I was told each time I went with tickets and I wasn’t winning, so I decided "courage" is the ability to find your voice, to speak up for others, and the ability to understand what is necessary and what is important. It took courage, but the motion ultimately passed.

"I wasn’t going to do the draw! – and ultimately made a motion in the house.

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"I was told each time I went with tickets and I wasn’t winning, so I decided "courage" is the ability to find your voice, to speak up for others, and the ability to understand what is necessary and what is important. It took courage, but the motion ultimately passed.
As teachers in local special education programs, Ashley Campobasso and Michelle Johnson know all too well that kids with exceptionalities enjoy the same activities as their “neurotypical” peers—but don’t often have the chance to do so.

“This is really the teachers recognize day in and day out, but now they have set out to do something about it,” Johnson and Campobasso recently launched “socialskilled,” an Aurora-based leisure center designed specifically for children living with autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, anxiety and other exceptionalities.

“The space, they say, provides “creating, recreational and sports programming...that helps kids build their confidence, improve their ability to make friends, and provides them with a sense of belonging.”

“Exceptional children sometimes find fitting into traditional recreational activities such as a soccer team or an arts class challenging or impossible,” they say.

Michelle Johnson and Ashley Campobasso.

“Exceptional children sometimes find fitting into traditional recreational activities such as a soccer team or an arts class challenging or impossible,” they say.

Michelle points to a number of programs offered by the Town, including art classes, science programs, and more that are divided by age and tailored for specific demographics. But many of these programs are inaccessible to kids with exceptionalities because they are drop-off programs and many kids need supports from skilled individuals.

“Our programs are going to be similar to that,” Michelle continues. “Fun with Friends is our kick-off staple program where we do a mixture of things like art, science and cooperative games. As well, we have a sensory space where there is more of a free flow, but also space for kids to take breaks and have some exploration as well. We’re going to be offering an art class, a science class, and gym space rented in the fall to do sports.”

The passion to develop socialskilled comes from their background working each day in their school with exceptional youngsters. Opening up the leisure space is something they have balanced with their full-time jobs – and doing so in a pandemic has been no easy task.

“We’re really tired!” says Michelle with a chuckle. “We’re teaching in a pandemic and starting a business in a pandemic.”

“And raising five children between us in a pandemic!” Ashley interjects.

“When you’re talking about things that are really weird and the way of the world, Michelle continues. “We’ve invested in the idea, we’re invested in these kids and these families, we’re making the time because it is important.”

They first dreamed of what is now socialskilled just before the pandemic. The more they talked about the possibilities, the more excited they were. When the pandemic arrived, they questioned whether the timing was right to go forward. But then they decided “there is no better time because kids right now are missing these opportunities [being out of home learning] and there are kids who may have had learning disabilities or anxiety that now haven’t been involved in anything for the better part of two years.”

“When you’re talking about kids that are five to eight, that’s a quarter of their lifespan,” says Michelle of their time out of school. “Although it is challenging, we’re realizing the need is even greater.”

What they hope to achieve, adds Ashley, is to normalize some of the strategies they use within their own programs to make a difference.

“These are not strategies that are rocket science,” she says. “If you know how to implement them properly, any parent can use them with their children, any child can participate in a fun activity...it’s just a matter of giving them that little extra support. Somehow along the line, their understanding is any child who has an exceptionalities requires a high level of therapeutic support in order to be successful. For us, we have come to realize that this is not always the case, often times you have kids who need a little bit extra. They need to know what things are going to happen and in what order. If you give them those things in that order and pair them with a verbal prompt, then they are okay. They just don’t do well with surprises and that is just one example.

“The child doesn’t have to have an official diagnosis to register for our programs. It can be any child that may have difficulty fitting into mainstream programming – social, communicative, emotional needs. They need extra support for whatever the reason. I don’t want us to get stuck on the reason; it is not just a school for programs for autism. It is for any child who has these types of needs and I think we’re trying to get away from the label and focus on what that person is, support those, and not have to worry about the why.”

For more on socialskilled, visit socialskilled.ca.
Candidates won’t be able to campaign in parks this municipal election

BY BROCK WEIR

This fall’s municipal election will look different than in years past. As the Town adopts a ward system, candidates will need to pick one of six wards they hope to represent and win over voters in their chosen neighbourhoods.

But if any potential candidate was hoping to make use of a local park to meet with their neighbours and potential constituents, they might be out of luck.

This month, Council is set to formalize a decision made on February 8 to disallow the use of municipal facilities, including parks, during the 2022 campaign.

In these circumstances, municipal facilities can include Town Hall, recreation centres, and Town-owned buildings. While Council was in favour of banning campaigning from these facilities, including parks into the mix proved to be more contentious.

“When I read that, what stood out to me was I thought it the parks ban] was there specifically because we’re moving into a ward system and if a candidate wanted to have a function at a park within their ward, they could rent that park facility and have that function in order to communicate with constituents in that ward,” said Councillor John Gallo. “I didn’t think there was any issue with that. I haven’t heard what the problem is. If it is equal access across the board, for every candidate and every candidate had the opportunity to rent the facility, I fail to see the negative if it is fair across the board.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas, who previously supported the ban, said he saw Councillor Gallo’s viewpoint. “Maybe there might not be a problem if you look at it from a parks perspective but the [clause] also looks at the Community Centre,” said Mayor Mrakas. “A parks scenario, I fail to see the negative if it is fair across the board.”

Mrakas added Councillor Michael Gallo. “I didn’t think there was any issue with that. I haven’t heard what the problem is. If it is equal access across the board, it is fair right across the board. If we’re going to allow the community centres there, we need to change a lot more than wording.”

Councillor Harold Kim, himself a veteran of the recent Federal election campaign, held a different viewpoint. While he said allowing the use of parks during a non-campaign period would be appropriate, having that option during a true campaign period was something else. “I don’t see how renting a Town space, including a park, and holding a campaign event is any different than having a sign at Town Park or any other Town facility or property," he said. “I cannot separate, in my mind, a park from any other Town property. I would not be in favour of the amendment. I thought the concern was raised during a non-campaign season. I think during campaign time I think we should be consistent with all Town property.”

Added Councillor Michael Thompson: “I am concerned about carving out parks. I am thinking of access for all. All of a sudden it would become a race to reserve the park as early as possible. Does everyone who is a candidate have equal access to it? Does it put staff in an awkward position whereby candidates may say that those incumbents have the inside track? I like the idea of specific dates for specific parks, and a little more rules and regulations around it, but it may be opening up a can of worms and I will take the time between now and Council to think about it.”

“It is a good idea to be able to have an opportunity to have that barbecue and have a meet and greet, but I think there needs to be some more work done on how we would manage that so it seems fair and equal to all, not just first come first served. I won’t be in favour of the motion as it stands.”

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AURORA
Aurora to pursue historical designation, protection of pet cemetery

**BY BROCK WEIR**

It languished under vegetation for years, becoming nearly forgotten in the process.

But it has seen new life as a dedicated team of local historians and history lovers work diligently with the Town of Aurora to uncover the stories contained on the site of what was once known as Happy Woodland Pet Cemetery.

A haven for local families – and families from much further afield – to lay to rest beloved pets and place lasting tributes in memory, the south Aurora cemetery is home to over 800 stones.

Teddy” is just one beloved pooch who found a final resting place in Aurora’s Happy Woodland Pet Cemetery.

“The Town has owned the pet cemetery since approximately 2011. In 2017, the Town allocated annual funds towards the protection of the site. Starting in 2018, the Town is poised to begin work on protecting and bringing national recognition to a very unique site.

The recommendation also includes an ask for money in the Town’s 2023 capital budget for permanent fencing to secure the site.

“Teddy” is just one beloved pooch who found a final resting place in Aurora’s Happy Woodland Pet Cemetery. (Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

Once fully restored, it is intended the site will be accessible to the public via a trail as it is otherwise surrounded by private property.

“In 2022, the focus will be to survey the property using an imaging tool for mapping burials and unmarked graves,” says Ms. McDougall. “This survey will also assist with confirming site boundaries. During recent work at the pet cemetery, it was observed that there are some stones visible beyond the pet cemetery property line. Completing the survey work in 2022 will be critical in identifying the true boundaries of the pet cemetery. Until this work is complete, erecting a permanent fence could result in plots or headstones being excluded from the collection.”

A permanent fence, it is noted, could cost in the neighborhood of $60,000.

“Confirming property boundaries will be critical to determine a more accurate cost estimate,” Ms. McDougall continued. “It is important to consider that even the permanent fence may not eliminate the risk of damage or theft, but it should provide some level of security. The fence will certainly provide a formal delineation of property boundaries. Based on the schedule of work planned for 2022, staff recommend bringing forward a capital request during the next budget deliberations for a permanent fence.

“In the interim, a temporary fence could be installed (construction fencing approximately $1,125/month rental), but this comes with some risks. Even though it may provide a barrier to the site, the temporary fence will need to be staked into the ground which could hit a headstone yet to be discovered and if the fence were to fall over, it could damage headstones. It is important to recognize that any fence (temporary or permanent) will not guarantee that someone won’t get in and cause damage. Staff would not recommend installing temporary fencing; it is believed that the risks outweigh the benefits.

“As an additional measure of security, staff will be installing wireless monitoring cameras, which will be able to monitor the site and send images to a device (much like a hunter’s camera). The cameras will serve as a deterrent for any mischievous behaviour and will capture footage if the stones have been moved. It may also serve as a tool for police if criminal behaviour is captured. The cost of the cameras is minimal and will be covered through the operating budget.”
Unique voices find their place in Cultural Centre’s visual arts season

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR

The Aurora Cultural Centre welcomed its first visitors into their temporary gallery space at Town Hall last week in a return to some degree of normalcy.

It was a chance for patrons to see the work of up-and-coming artists as local Grade 12 students filled the space as part of the Mayor’s Celebration of Youth Arts, which runs through March 21, and that is just the tip of the iceberg for the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Last week, the Centre announced their spring season, including a full array of visual arts programs. In addition to the Mayor’s Celebration of Youth Arts, an artists’ collective will take over the space from March 28 – April 22 for Upon Reflection – Portraits of Personal History, followed by Backstories: The Researching Artist as Traveller & Interviewer, featuring the work of Andrew Cheddie Sookrah, which runs through July 18.

“There’s just a level of excitement that cannot be quantified in terms of planning for this season and preparing,” says Ms. Nicolo. “There’s just a level of excitement that cannot be quantified in terms of planning for this season and preparing,” says Stephanie Nicolo, the Cultural Centre’s Acting Gallery Manager.

During the planning process, it was always a consideration that the public wouldn’t be able to come in person; there is still that element of our exhibitions, but where I choose the artists, I’m choosing works that have a delicacy that is best represented in person.”

The participating student artists rose to the challenge in this regard, creating works that span almost the complete gamut of themes and media. Topics explored by the Grade 12 students through their art includes Black Lives Matter, body dysmorphia, mental health, blood diamonds, and even the feeling of being isolated during a global pandemic.

“I would say there is a feeling of isolation throughout the works, including the topic of how the artist felt creating in isolation or living through restrictions and being told to stay home—there’s a very specific topic that came out of this exhibition and this year’s presentation,” says Ms. Nicolo.

When the youth move out, a variety of artists will move in for Upon Reflection – Portraits of Personal History, including photographers Eden Graham and Nicole Crozier, and Ebrin Bagheri who works in drawing and painting.

“The show is to investigate the concept of portraiture and how a portrait is presented and understood,” says Ms. Nicolo, noting that Bagheri’s work includes pieces done through unusual means, including the humble highlight pen, while Crozier takes a fashion-forward approach to her work.

“They’re not necessarily personal histories but comments on how individuals can create personal history or showcase personal history through clothing,” says Nicolo. “Her work is connected directly with fashion, so she has created these collages of fabric and clothing pieces. You can’t quite tell where the portrait is. You have a singular presentation on the image but you’re not quite sure where the person is.”

Next up is artist Andrew Cheddie Sookrah with his exhibition Backstories: The Researching Artist as Traveller and Interviewer.

“We’re doing quite a reflection on his creation and his portfolios,” says Ms. Nicolo. “We’ll be doing figurative works and landscapes as well as sculpture. His landscapes really are commenting on climate and the changes of climate and the importance of paying attention to that, including some iceberg paintings. Then he has created sculptures through porcelain of these icebergs. It is going to be a very interesting show that will really benefit in terms of having visitors come see it in person.

“We have made amazing connections with wonderful opportunities from across Ontario, across artists communities, and I look to those relationships to continue to grow some really interesting, thought-provoking and multilayered exhibitions. That is where I truly want to continue to provide the community of Aurora.”

“Killing it Weekly: Dupont & Symington” is just one piece from artist Andrew Cheddie Sookrah that will take pride of place in the Aurora Cultural Centre’s temporary gallery space this spring.
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Choose your own “Adventure” in Family Day fun

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Get ready for some wintery fun this weekend through Monday at Town Park, as the Town of Aurora hosts its traditional Arctic Adventure to mark Family Day.

This year’s Family Day extravaganza will include a mix of in-person and virtual activities over a four-day period, including more time to get out and enjoy traditional winter activities like skating, tubing and minicurling.

“It’s an Adventure, and there are a lot of things planned,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. “This year’s Arctic Adventure is looking more and more normal with the ‘new normal.’ Prior to COVID, it was always a one-day event usually right on the Family Day Monday. This year, we have expanded it to a four-day event both involving virtual and activities as well as in-person.”

In-person activities get underway this Friday at the Aurora Armoury, home to the Niagara College’s Canadian Food & Wine Institute with a night of painting and writing co-hosted by the Town and the Aurora Black Community Association.

“It’s going to be an evening celebrating Black excellence virtually and orally, and all those participating will be painting in a collaborative fashion in a very different technique of passing the canvas forward, symbolic of communities requiring a lot of hands and it being a culmination of effort,” says Ms. Ware, noting pre-registration is required for this event.

The fun continues on Saturday from 6 – 8 p.m. with an evening of entertainment at Town Park.

Participating performers include a Speaking of Wildlife animal show and the North Fire Circus with Dr. Draw.

“It’s a fire performance show with Dr. Draw and his extremely talented approach to creating original music using an electric violin,” says Ms. Ware. “We had a sampling of their work with the Christmas Market and it just rendered the park speechless. It is definitely a unique performance and a unique experience, and one we highly recommened coming down to the park and seeing.

“On Monday, we’re back in the park from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and we’re proud to have Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley to start our Family Day festivities with some songs and stories featuring what life was like for the real first families that were here well over 20,000 years ago.”

Following that experience, Speaking of Wildlife will return along with a team of buskers offering everything from fire juggling and hula hooping to aerial displays. Activities in the park will range from igloo building, to snow tubing and minicurling, to Nerf axe-throwing to barrel races.

“We’re trying to make it a very active day in celebration of the finale of the Olympics,” says Ms. Ware. “We have additional virtual activities like online paint nights, family trivia nights, and we do all this programming for you and your family gets to just spend time together, comfortable, in the cosiness of their homes.

“With Arctic Adventure being its signature name, we really try to plan the day with a variety of adventure. You can choose your own adventure in how you choose to spend time with your family during the Family Day Long Weekend. We spread it out in the hopes that more families in Aurora will gravitate towards a certain activity and, if not perhaps be interested in all the adventures available.”

For a full listing of all virtual and in-person elements to Arctic Adventure, including how to register for some of the activities, visit aurora.ca/arcticadventure.
It is a great day to celebrate the bonds and joy we share together. Happy Family Day!
Increased accessibility needed in transit plan, says Council

BY BROCK WEIR

York Region should put increased focus on accessibility when it comes to transit.

This was the message delivered by Aurora Council this month to representatives from the Region as they presented their 2022 Transportation Master Plan update to local lawmakers.

The updated Master Plan is intended to be a blueprint for the local lawmakers.

Transportation Master Plan update to local lawmakers.

Representatives from the Region, increased development for rapid transit, road improvements, and more.

It’s guided by five key focuses: safety of travel other than by car during rush hours, financial and environmental sustainability, and a review of the “role and function” of Regional corridors.

Presented by Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure Planning for the Region, alongside Lauren Crawford, York’s Manager of Transportation Long-Term Planning, Council received the update with particular focus on reducing car travel, expanding transportation options, and achieving equity.

“Transportation equity is a newer area for us and this really looks at providing transportation options that fit all lifestyles, financial situations, and abilities,” said Crawford. “This focus area will explore whether there’s an equal opportunity for access to transportation facilities and services for all travellers and whether or not new policies and initiatives are needed.

[Reducing car travel] looks at options that will allow travellers who are able and interested to use methods of travel other than by car during the busiest travel times...Reviewing the role and function of Regional corridors is intended to explore a number of important actions, including reviewing the ownership and maintenance of cycling facilities and street lighting; identifying the best way to safely accommodate walking, cycling, and never options such as e-scooters and e-bikes along Regional roads, evaluating the effectiveness of HOV and transit lanes, and whether or not the current six-lane policy need be updated.

Regarding the issue of equity, Titherington said equity went beyond transportation. It’s looking at “some of the inherent biases that might be in our network, not just for people who have accessibility issues or who may have issues with lifestyle or income, or other elements.

I think the first step is really defining what equity means,” he said. “We have a diversity policy at the Region in a general sense, but what does that mean with respect to our transportation system? We need to define what those problems are. There are certain people of certain backgrounds and abilities that have a harder challenge on our network, which is a mix of rural and urban, managing our network, but there might be other communities that have accessibility issues or disadvantages in our network.

For local Councillors, a key piece in this puzzle is ensuring connectivity.

In the case of Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who lives in Aurora’s southwest, she said it often takes up to an hour to use transit to access the Viva rapid network or to reach the GO Station.

“If you live on the west side of Yonge, whether you’re north or south of Wellington, and you want to take a York Region bus to GO Station, you’re looking at, depending on where you are in the loop, it takes about an hour to do the loop.”

Connectivity was also an issue for Councillor Rachel Gilliland who questioned Regional staff on what their plans were to increase connectivity for cyclists along Wellington Street, particularly between Yonge and Bathurst.

“I have been pretty loud about the connectivity of the cycling programs throughout Aurora and one of the big ones I especially hear from a lot of constituents is the connection [here],” she said. “My question to you, how long do you anticipate Auroraans will have to wait to have that east-to-west connectivity from Wellington and Yonge to Bathurst?”

This, is said Crawford, an area where the Region has conducted an environmental assessment.

“It’s certainly an area we have been talking to Metrolinx with, as well as Aurora staff, about their expansion of the Barrie GO line network, so I know that there will be some upcoming changes as part of Metrolinx’ work in the area. It is not an area that is on our plan at this point in time. We’re really looking to addressing the work that is needed for the GO expansion project.”

Added Titherington, “The cycling network will be built over time. Some of it will be built through development and we will be looking at partnerships for projects or partnerships where we can add cycle lanes, especially on the boulevard in certain areas.”

An additional issue raised by Councillor Gilliland was that of sidewalks on Bathurst, particularly near Aurora’s southern edge. This is an area frequently travelled by students attending both Cardinal Carter CHS and ESC Renaissance.

“There are limitations to kids getting a ride on a bus from a certain distance, which leaves a lot of students who have no choice but to walk on Bathurst Street to get to school,” she said, adding she saw it as an immediate need to be addressed for residents.

For Aurora Councillor Titherington, is the two-tiered approach taken by the Region and its nine municipalities, he said, even if they are on Regional roads. Potential sidewalks could be considered through road renewal programs, he concluded.
Coach, teacher faces sexual assault charges

Province announces new measures related to sexual abuse

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A 40-year-old man from Whitchurch-Stouffville, who has been a teacher in the York Region District School Board, is facing four counts of sexual assault and four counts of sexual interference with a person under the age of 16.

Accused is Kelvin Cheuk-Ho Lee.

"On February 9, 2022, Police began an investigation into a hockey coach after officers received information regarding a sexual assault victim," said Constable Maricia Armstrong of the York Regional Police. "Through the investigation, officers learned that the victim had been sexually assaulted while participating in private hockey lessons with the accused between 2016 and 2022, beginning when he was approximately eight years old.

"The accused had been coaching hockey throughout Ontario for many years and has been a camp director with Haliburton Hockey Haven since 2016. He’s also a teacher in the York Region District School Board, where he coaches sports and he is the Head Tennis Professional at the Markham Tennis Club."

Police say he was arrested on February 11 and held for a bail hearing.

The charges have not been proven.

NEW MEASURES FROM PROVINCE

The arrest came just days after the Ontario government announced new measures to address educators who have been involved in sexual abuse and “other serious criminal proceedings.”

The new measures, announced February 8 by Education Minister Stephen Lecce, include lifetime bans on any educator who has engaged in physical sexual relations with a student or who is involved in any way with child pornography.

This lifetime ban, says the Province, applies retroactively for “previous similar acts by teachers and early childhood educators provide funding for therapy and counselling to students and children who are victims of sexual abuse, a prohibited act involving pornography or prescribed sexual acts prohibited under the Criminal Code, and a requirement to make publicly available information about disciplinary decisions made by the Colleges’ Discipline Committee, including for less serious acts leading to reprimands and admonishments, on the OCT and CECE registers and websites on a permanent basis.”

“Every police force takes a zero-tolerance approach for anyone who would abuse or threaten children," said Lecce. "I ensured that any educator involved in this heinous criminality faces a life ban from working in any school or licensed child care program again, along with a permanent record on a public registry. We are going further by making information about criminal proceedings related to teachers and early childhood educators public with one aim: to protect the safety of Ontario’s children.”

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Elderly Fraud Seminar with the York Regional Police
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St. Patrick’s Day Tribute with Patricia Duffy
Thursday March 10th at 2 pm
Join us on the web for some St. Patrick’s Day Celebration fun, as we listen to fan favorites from the one and only “Patricia Duffy". Are you feeling lucky? Let’s get into the spirit and the one who is wearing the best attire for the celebration will win an exciting prize! Winner will be announced on the day of the event!

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Coaching the young players provides a change of scene from the daily grind of running the business, he says.

Kelvin Cheuk-Ho Lee

Members of the local band Tangent present a cheque to the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion last week following a fundraising concert held last fall. Tangent performed an array of numbers from the Tragically Hip songbook to benefit both the Region and the Chanie Wenjack Foundation. Here, bandmates Scott and Jim hand over their donation to the Legion’s Nancy Gradeen.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger
The pandemic has changed almost every facet of our lives, including how we use public transportation. In a rapidly changing world, the Region of York is looking at ways of delivering transit options that represent our current reality.

"[Our transit ridership] has been challenged through the pandemic," said Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation & Infrastructure for the Region. "One thing York Region Transit [as done] is introduced the Mobility on Request program. As a resident of Aurora myself, I know we had a trial run to the GO Station where there was almost an Uber service the YRT ran in specific zones around the GO Train that was allowing service to the GO Train in smaller vehicles. The Region is trying to match service and demand.

Titherington was responding to questions last week from Councillor Wendy Gaertner who said the Region puts “a lot of money” into the local transit systems, but many routes experience low ridership, and many buses go by with no riders at all.

"The challenge on many local routes is you just don’t get the demand as you do on some of our main lines," Titherington continued. "I tend to ride my bike over to Yonge Street to get on the Viva rather than waiting for my local routes. We are trying to match service with demand because transit is very expensive in areas that don’t have high demand."

The Mobility on Demand service is one the Region is looking at expanding, he said, using smaller buses to offset the cost of transit and “reduce empty buses and we will find buses where the demand is.”

"Hopefully we will see more of that going forward," he continued. "We’re blessed to have the GO Station and with the expansion of Go Service, two-way, all-day service, we’re really hoping that more people look at options to get to the GO station that are not their car."

Regardless of how it is done, Councillor Gaertner contended that it is an issue that needs to be figured out.

"I keep saying it year after year," she said. "I know it is challenging, but it has to be figured out. We’re paying a driver and we’re creating pollution. There are a lot of people who can walk or bicycle, but there are a lot of people who can’t, for disability issues, because they are older, or whatever reason."

Food Drive lets families help families Monday

Come to Town Park this Family Day, February 21, and help local families in the community with a drive benefiting the Aurora Food Pantry.

Spearheaded by Maddy Gilliland, who hosted a similar event last year on Valentine’s Day, the initiative will be at Town Park for this Monday’s Arctic Adventure from 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. to collect much-needed non-perishable food and monetary donations to the Aurora Food Bank.

Among the top current needs at the Food Pantry include rice (small or large bags), juice boxes, peanut-free snacks for kids, dried fruit in bags, salt, sugar, and flour.

The Food Pantry is already well-stocked on macaroni and cheese, pasta and peanut butter.

"It was really impromptu last year," says Maddy on last year’s Food Drive, adding she asked herself before heading out to Town Park last February 14 why giving drops off after the Holiday Season. "I was in shock with the truckloads of food we collected, so it was too good not to do it again, and we had to do it again because it is never too late to continue giving. "Aurora is a great community and I really value it. When COVID bit everyone [looked at] small businesses, and local, and I feel the more local you can get and support your community the more it feels. You could be helping your next-door neighbour, you could be helping someone across the street, a friend, and just not know it. I think the more local you get the more personal connection you feel.

"There is nothing better to do on Family Day than to help other families."
Remembering Harry Lumsden, Aurora’s “Swan King”

Harry Lumsden is pictured with trumpeter swans, an area of special focus for the last four decades of his life.

Contributed photo

Remembering Harry Lumsden, Aurora’s “Swan King”

From page 1

were nowhere to be found. It was a troubling reality that Lumsden set out to reverse and his successful efforts garnered him several honours, including the Order of Canada.

But more meaningful to him than awards was seeing his dream come to fruition.

By the time of his death at his Aurora residence on February 8, just one month shy of his 99th birthday, trumpeter swans had become a part of the natural landscape again, thanks largely to Lumsden’s efforts.

The trumpeter swan population in Ontario had been extirpated by the early 1900s, but was reintroduced on a small scale in the 1950s and 1960s. Lumsden’s first attempt was to import trumpeter swans from the United States, but this was unsuccessful. His next attempt was to import eggs from existing prairie populations and place them in the nests of Ontario’s mute swans. But mute swans were not Drake in colour and, even long after, they were all rejected by their parents.

A better solution was found by buying mute and trumpeter cygnets from private breeders and place them in the nests of Ontario’s mute swans. This was successful, and today there are more than 300 swans wintering in Aurora every year.

Lumsden was a man of great accomplishment and a life well lived, full of legacy, respected worldwide for his work in rehabilitating the trumpeter swan population in Ontario, a self-taught biologist/ornithologist, and a long-time friend of Lumsden’s who was heavily involved in his work.

After a year, the duo would pick up the trumpeter swans in Ontario and fly them home to Aurora. Lumsden and his wife, Lorraine, would then care for the swans, feeding them and providing them with a suitable environment.

In 1980, Lumsden was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada, and in 1985, he was named an officer of the Order of Ontario.

After his death, Lumsden’s work was continued by his daughter, Jennifer Lumsden, who has been involved in the organization for 30 years.

The organization, now called the Aurora municipality’s Swan Sanctuary, is a true not-for-profit charity with tax receipts, a board of directors, and we’re continuing to monitor the swans and sharing that information while encouraging other people to share the information.

In this way, Lumsden’s legacy in Ontario will endure, but there is more to be done, that would make Aurora a major sanctuary for the trumpeter swan population there will be lost. I think it would be interesting for the Town to think about moving the swan feeding of these swans to the Nature Reserve right across the road. If that was done, that would make Aurora a major tourist spot in the winter with a hell of a lot of people paying money to come and look at hundreds of swans in the winter.

Harry Lumsden is survived by his three children, Jennifer, Debbie, and Diana, and three grandchildren: Chris, Heather and Jake.
Knowledge is power, and youth readers in the community are finding plenty of sources of inspiration through Read Woke, a reading club that has been adopted by the Aurora Public Library.

The Library (APL) launched the program last year and it is designed to help readers 13+ connect with books on issues of racial and social injustice.

The word “Woke” means different things to different people, but for APL’s Jodi Marr, it is about raising awareness.

“The word “Woke” means different things to different people, but for APL’s Jodi Marr, it is about raising awareness.

“The word was brought up when we launched the program; one of our staff members said there is a lot of controversy around that word, but I felt confident using the word as per Cecily’s guidance and in alignment with the programs she’s developed.”

The base idea, she says, is to encourage people in this diverse community to “read as diversely as possible.”

“Diversity doesn’t have to be about race, it can be about mental health awareness, body acceptance, cultural dating expectations and all kinds of different things,” says Ms. Marr.

“Not everyone worships or looks the same. Despite our differences, we’re a lot alike. Reading is one of the best ways you can build empathy. Reading fiction helps build empathy and understanding towards a lot of other people because you hear and feel their stories in a different way when you read and take it in.”

Participating youth may do so through the online reading platform Beanstack, which the Library uses for all of its reading challenges and clubs. Through each book, readers can earn a variety of badges including: Black Voices; Diverse Abilities; First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices; Immigration, LGBTQ+ Voices; Mental Health; Poverty and Homelessness; Social Injustice; Voices of People of Colour; and Women’s Voices.

“266 books have been read on these topics and 280 badges have been earned, which are great statistics,” says Ms. Marr. “A lot of our other reading programs don’t have as much pickup as this one. It’s not a high-pressure program and you can choose what speaks to you.”

“We have a wonderful collection in the Library of diverse reads and our staff work diligently to ensure there are options for everyone to expand and read as diversely as possible. The fact that it is not a high-pressure program, you can read what you want, track it, and learn more on your own and that is a nice thing to do. This is a ‘start from the foundation’ program where you can learn as much as you can. Expand yourself and you will grow from there.”

For more information on Read Woke at the Aurora Public Library, visit auronpl.beanstack.org

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By Robert Belardi

The Tigers haven’t been quite themselves since returning to the ice at the beginning of February.

The month-long hiatus might not have been the kindest to our Jr. A boys. Their 1-5-1 record is unusual, especially after dropping both games this past week.

The Tigers have also had to muster through a few changes and injuries.

Star defenceman Will Smith was promoted to the Neoan City Madawenemos in the USHL. A few key players like captains Lucas Reev and Lee Chiang have faced some injuries.

But after the 5-4 loss against the Collingwood Colts and the 4-1 loss against the Oakville Blades, head coach Greg Johnston says he is not concerned at all.

“I have all the confidence in the world here.”

In speaking with head coach Greg Johnston on Monday, he said he used to love playing in the afternoon as a player.

“I used to love the afternoon games as a player. I think you show up to the rink, you’re sharp, you’re alert. You kind of get up and go through a routine,” Johnston said.

“I think it’s just a matter of you kind of get up, do your thing and before you know it you’re at the rink ready to play the game. There’s no kind of nervousness around and doing anything in between. So, whether that’s what it is or anything like that, I think the boys are sharp, not cloudy.”

Johnston said there are a few things the boys have to work on since returning to the ice. Attention to detail is the most important and he would like to see some improvements on the penalty kill.

This weekend is a massive weekend for the Aurora Tigers.

The boys take on the Number 1 team in the North Division, the Pickering Panthers, back-to-back Friday and Saturday.

Their home game in this Saturday at the Aurora Community Centre. Puck drop is at 5:00 pm.

CPL releases 2022 schedule

By Robert Belardi

Canadian Premier League fans won’t have to wait much longer until the start of the 2022/23 campaign.

The CPL released the official schedule last week, giving York United the honour to take part in the first game of the season.

The Nine Stripes will host the HFX Wanderers at York Lions Stadium on April 7, at 7:30 p.m.

From there until October 9, this 28-game season will see each team take on each other twice, hosting 14 matches and playing 14 matches on the road.

Each match will primarily take place over the weekends with the exception of 16 games overall that will take place throughout the week.

Just like last season, the top four clubs will progress into the playoffs. The semifinals will consist of a two-leg fixture with a home and away match. Whoever wins on aggregate will advance to a one-match CPL final.

All matches can be viewed on One Soccer.

Last season, local clubs York United advanced to the playoffs. The Nine Stripes were ousted by provincial rivals Forge FC.

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Residents reject disc golf course for Highland Gate park

Aurora will have to look elsewhere for a place to put a disc golf course after area ratepayers gave a thumbs-down to locating it in a new park in the Highland Gate community.

The decision came at the last General Committee meeting when council, who previously tasked Town Staff to consult with residents before they gave final approval, formally received a letter on behalf of the Highland Gate Ratepayers Association.

“The plan [for the park approved by Council in 2017] specifies walking trails, a playground, mediation circle and specialized benches that can also be used for fitness exercises,” said the ratepayers in a letter signed by Ad Hoc Park Committee members Jo-Anne Bartholomew, Bob Callow and Gordon Weit. “The design calls for naturalizing the area to promote biodiversity and to create a passive setting where nature would thrive.”

A disc golf course is not in keeping with the design, amenities or purpose of Highland Park, nor is it in the community in favour of its addition.

“We ask that the park design approved by Council be honoured and without further delay, that the Highland Park be removed from consideration as a location for any size disc golf course,” wrote the ratepayers in their letter.

A potential disc golf course for Aurora was floated by proponents of the sport who made a delegation to Council in January of 2021.

Disc golf involves a frisbee-like disc and players aim for upturned cones to make par. It was pitched as a safe and cost-effective way to expand sports opportunities in the community.

But this isn’t necessarily the end for disc golf in Aurora. Other opportunities are still being explored, according to Erin Hamilton, Sport & Community Development Specialist for the Town of Aurora.

“Community consultation, including education and a review of demand would align well with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan review process,” said Ms. Hamilton in her report to Council. “A review of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan is scheduled for 2022, which will require community consultation. To properly understand the desire and potential use for a disc golf course in the community consultation for this can be incorporated into the review of the Master Plan.

Information gathered through the consultation will provide staff with the necessary direction on whether a disc golf course should be located in an updated Parks & Recreation Master Plan. If the demand is demonstrated through consultation, potential locations can be identified based on the site specifications to meet the needs of the community. This would include the degree of difficulty and course length. Aligning the community consultation with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan review will also ensure staff can consider and review all elements simultaneously.”

Council is expected to ratify their decision to move the matter back to the Master Plan’s review process on February 22.
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from page 1
Quennie, CEO, CMHA Ontario. “Needless to say, we’re very concerned that the numbers are going in the wrong direction and people are not improving.”

While the CMHA said it is a positive sign that in four people are taking it upon themselves to seek support, 63 per cent of those polled said that existing mental health supports are helpful, a downturn from 77 per cent near the start of the pandemic.

“This is troubling as it may be an indication that people’s mental health challenges are more complex than they might’ve thought,” said Queennie. “Many people might be saying they’re fine but that’s not what we’re seeing in the data.”

Locally, at the CMHA of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS), they are encouraged that people, in their view, are becoming more comfortable in identifying that they need support.

“I think with the pandemic it has helped to normalize it, that this is impacting everyone’s mental health,” says Shauna Eisen, a manager at the CMHA-YRSS. “We’re not just seeing individuals who have a more severe mental illness, but individuals who may not have experienced mental illness before or any challenges experienced for the first time because of the pandemic. Because of what it has done with our social connections and allowing us to do the things that give us routine, structure, and keep us mentally well. I think that is the shift we have seen more people coming from different directions and hopefully feeling more comfortable in identifying that they need support.”

From the perspective of those working at the CMHA-YRSS, the pandemic has helped to find common ground between staff and clients because they’re all going through the pandemic together.

“I think we can really appreciate the CMHA fatigue and the hope and disappointments of going through the different waves,” says Eisen. “I think we’re seeing that with our clients, too. There can be points as we continue on that are further encouraging, a downturn from 77 per cent of those polled said that existing mental health supports are helpful, a downturn from 77 per cent near the start of the pandemic.

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Successive Provincial governments have denoted the lack of the “missing middle” of housing across communities in Ontario; that there is a desperate need for “grade density” of low-story mid-density housing options.

On the ground at the local level where planning has direct impact on the lives of residents, municipalities have been at the forefront of community specific public planning. And I can say that, in Aurora, we have been implementing zoning requirements specifically designed to meet provincial planning policy and provincial-level population targets.

Aurora has been encouraging the growth of the “missing middle” for years now, and it has been successful. Since 2017, the highest number of applications by built form – applied AND approved – are for apartments and townhouses. The lowest? Single family homes. What is missing though? Duplexes and triplexes. The kind of housing that families need – two and three bedroom units for young and growing families.

Our Official Plan (OP) has identified areas in our Town that are just prime for these kinds of developments, on transit routes, near amenities. But the problem is they simply aren’t being built. In the last five years, not one duplex has been built in Aurora, in fact not one has been approved for. We have developed policies through our OP that set the stage for growth that is appropriate for our community, respecting the character of our neighbourhoods while increasing density to provide much needed housing. Through our OP review, we will continue to develop policies that will foster the growth of a more diverse housing stock that will allow our future generations a place to call home in Aurora as well as enable our seniors to age in place. Through our community-informed Official Plan development, we will continue to find ways to allow more opportunities for more to come and live in Aurora and experience why we are such a great town.

So, while I can’t speak for other communities, I can say that in Aurora, the prevailing narrative about municipalities being a barrier to denser housing options is simply not supported by facts. It just isn’t true. What is true? Year after year, for decades, if you have any questions about this update, please contact me by email tmrakas@aurora.ca or by phone 905-726-4746. I am here for you.
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Bookworms & Co. Spotlight

By Loba Falla

“Between life and death there is a library, and within that library, the shelves go on forever. Every book provides a chance to try another life you could have lived. To see how things would be if you had made other choices... Would you have done anything different, if you had the chance to undo your regrets?”

For our first book feature, I have picked the Midnight Library by Matt Haig. This is a deeply personal book that will resonate with readers of all ages and walks of life.

Though an easy read of fiction about Nora, who believes she just isn’t cut out for life anymore, this book has redeemed itself as a philosophical look on life as well as perhaps a self-help guide.

If you have ever struggled with regrets and the what-ifs of life, then read this book and be sure to recommend it to others. The Midnight Library will play in your mind like a movie where you envision the parallel and perhaps some perpendicular lives of Nora played and replayed. It will make you reflect on your own life’s decisions and may help you gain fresh perspective and appreciation. As Nora reflects: “It is quite a revelation to discover that the place you wanted to escape to is the exact same place you escaped from. That the prison wasn’t the place, but the perspective.”

If we think about the power of words, the power to help us imagine, think and move us, then The Midnight Library would indeed be considered a powerful book. Life is about mindset, perspective and moving forward to see how it can develop and Matt Haig explores this beautifully in the Midnight Library.

Bookworms & Co. is located at the St. Andrews’ Shopping Centre, 2 Orchard Heights Boulevard, Unit 40. For more information, visit bookwormsco.com.

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• Sell advertising in our local community newspapers across numerous regions for maximum growth
• Be part of an ever growing team, developing new verticals and supplements for new revenue and increase opportunities

EXPECTATIONS:
• Have a positive attitude
• Willing to work hard and enjoy rewards in a team environment
• Willing to take chances and learn from your peers

DESIRED SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:
• Sales Driven
• Great Personal Skills
• Some Sales Skills Preferred but would be willing to train the right candidate
• Sales, Well with Difficulties and Budgets
• Organized with an Intermediate Knowledge of Microsoft Excel

COMPENSATION:
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1.5 L DOHC MIVEC 4-Cylinder Turbocharged Engine
18" Alloy Wheels
Forward Collision Mitigation (FCM)
8" Smartphone Link Display Audio with Android Auto™ & Apple CarPlay
Heated Front Seats
Standard Super All-Wheel Control (S-AWC) with Drive Mode Selector (NORMAL/SNOW/ GRAVEL)

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The 5-Star Overall Safety Rating is based on ratings by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration evaluation for the 2022 Eclipse Cross: https://www.nhtsa.gov/vehicle/2022/MITSUBISHI/ECLIPSE%20CROSS/SUV/FWD. Government 5-Star Safety Ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s New Car Assessment Program (NHTSA.gov). 4

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