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THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 25 No. 25 905-727-3300 | TheAuroran.com | FREE | Week of March 28, 2024

NOWRUZ CELEBRATION – The Royal Rose Gallery was a place of celebration on Saturday evening as the community came together to celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Among the attendees welcomed by organizers Mojgan Afshar and Maryam Aslanzad was Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP – and Ontario's Minister of Children, Community and Social Services – Michael Parsa. For more, see Page 12.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Break-and-Enter, theft victims call for Police to step up reporting, patrols

Residents question assertion "Aurora is safe"

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

"Aurora is safe," members of York Regional Police told residents at Town Hall on Thursday evening at a Community Safety forum hosted by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy – but area residents who have fallen victim to crime said they did not feel safe.

The Community Safety Town Hall was held March 21 and was attended by the MPP, Mayor Tom Mrakas, members of Council, and several members of the York Regional Police (YRP) who call Aurora home.

For MPP Gallagher Murphy, it was a chance for members of the public to hear directly from those "who are tackling crime right here in Aurora and Newmarket" and share safety

Continued on page 15

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY – World Down Syndrome Day was marked on March 21 with a special flag raising at Town Hall. Joining Mayor Tom Mrakas and Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland for the event were Daniel, Rudy, Hannah, Candie, and Carly.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

March 28, 2024

Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Tuesday, April 2	9:30 a.m.	Newmarket CC	Joint Council Committee (CYFS)
Tuesday, April 2	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, April 2	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Committee of the Whole
Monday, April 8	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Heritage Advisory Committee
Tuesday, April 9	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Finance Advisory Committee
Wednesday, April 10	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, April 11	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustmemt
Monday, April 15	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Environmental Advisory Committee
Tuesday, April 16	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Wednesday, April 17	10 a.m.	Holland Room	Community Recognition Review Advisory Committee
Wednesday, April 17	6:30 p.m.	Skylight Gallery and Tannery Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board (Public Meeting)
Wednesday, April 17	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board

***Committee of the Whole, Public Planning and Council meetings are available to the public in-person and via live stream on the Town's YouTube channel.**

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artist: Raul Arango Gomez - Geometric Harmony with the Spritual World

Raul Arango Gomez exhibits artwork that showcases Geometric Harmony with the Spiritual World. This display looks at the set of geometric patterns and shapes found in nature. Raul's work seeks to explore the meaning and significance of these shapes, connecting them to the spiritual world to discover the larger purpose they hold. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at **aurora.ca/SkylightGallery**. All artwork is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at **sreynolds@aurora.ca** if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful artwork piece.

Have your say! Choose the ideal location for a Community Reflection Space

We are looking for input from you on which location in Aurora is the most ideal for a community reflection space. The need for a dedicated public space was identified as part of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

A community reflection space is an area where members of our community can come together during difficult and tumultuous times regardless of location, cultural affiliation, and cause.

Visit **engageaurora.ca/ReflectionSpace** to find out more and choose your space! Deadline to complete the survey is **April 8**.

Fireworks are only permitted on Victoria Day and Canada Day weekends. Remember they are not allowed on public property, including parks, streets, and open spaces in Aurora. Additionally, fireworks can only be set off between dusk and 11 p.m. on these designated days. Let's ensure a safe and peaceful community for all. Learn more at **aurora.ca/Fireworks**.

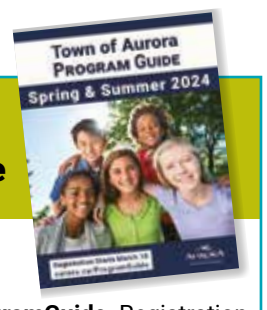
We've joined forces with Enviro World to promote water conservation. Secure your rain barrel online by **May 20, 2024**, and let's make a splash for a greener Aurora! Learn more at **aurora.ca/RainBarrel**.

Road Closure

The Westbound lane on Tyler Street will be closed from **April 1 to October 31** for structural steel installation of the Aurora United Church. Traffic will be one way in the eastbound direction from Temperance to Yonge Street.

Heavy equipment will be on-site. We appreciate your patience during this period. For more details, visit **aurora.ca/RoadClosures**.

Spring/Summer 2024 Program Guide

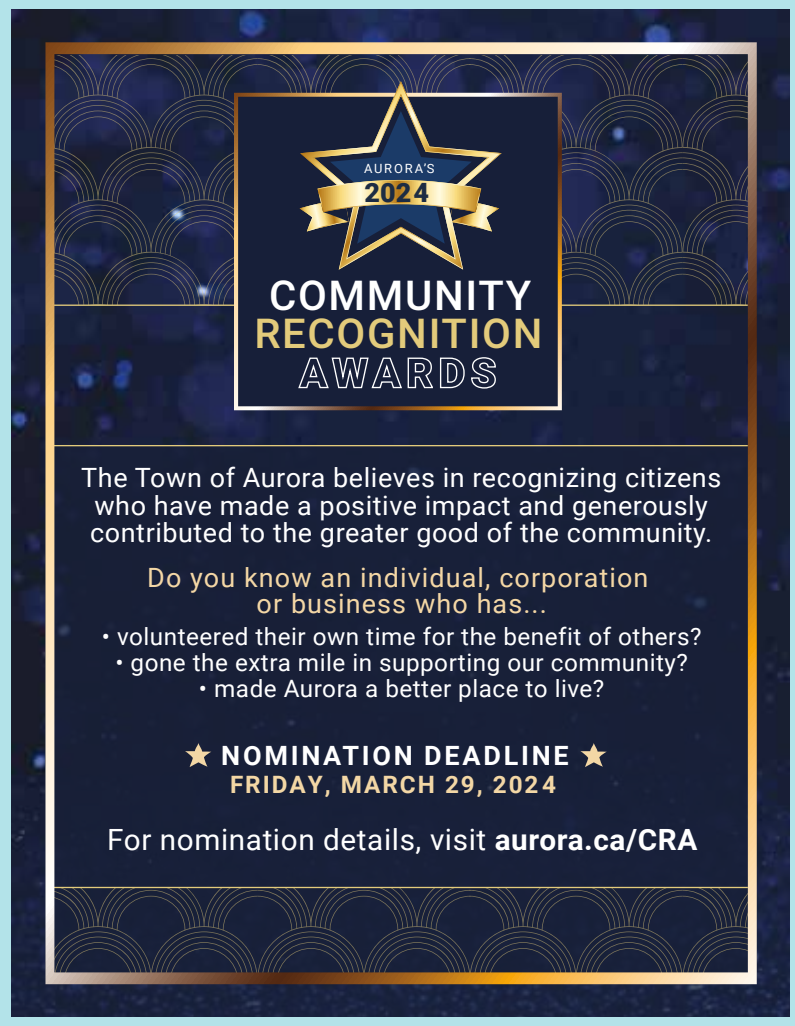


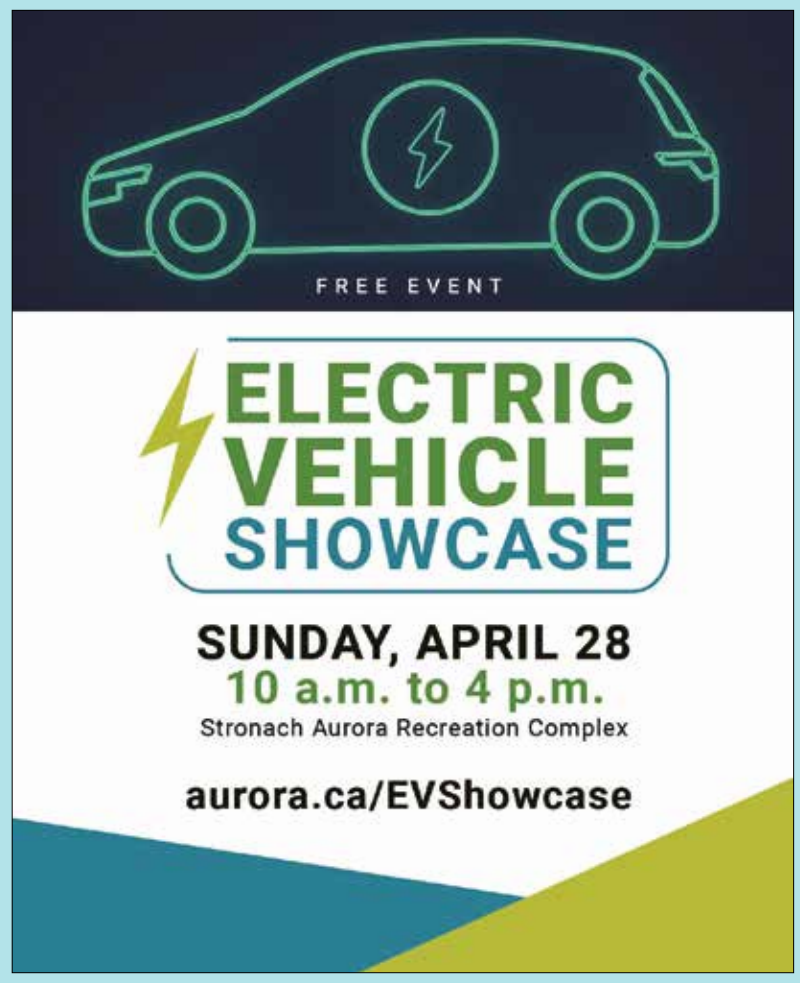
The Spring & Summer 2024 Program Guide is available to view online at **aurora.ca/ProgramGuide**. Registration is open for Recreation and Aquatic programs. View our interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C. or S.A.R.C.

Summer Camps 2024 Program Guide

The Summer Camps 2024 Program Guide is available to view online at **aurora.ca/SummerCamps**. Registration is open for Summer Camps programs. View our interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C. or S.A.R.C.

What's Happening





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Clean-Up Day will help beautify Aurora and bring community together

Pictured warming up at Kingsway Place for Aurora's upcoming Spring Community Clean-Up Event were John, Andrea and Peter. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Spring is in full swing, and if you're starting to turn your mind to a bit of seasonal cleaning, think big as Aurora gears up for the first of its twice-annual Community Clean-Up Day.

The Spring Community Clean-Up Day will take place Saturday, April 20, with Town Park as its nerve-centre.

Beginning at 8 a.m., registered participants can pick-up their cleaning kits at the Downtown Aurora greenspace and fan out to one of several "target" locations throughout the community to pick up what shouldn't be there.

Andrea Lee-Han, who has been participating in the Community Clean Up Days for the last three years, will once again be heading out on April 20 to beautify Aurora, not just with her own family, but with a number of residents she cares for at Kingsway Place Retirement Community on Murray Drive.

"It's nice that we can all be together on this one day to do this one task, but it is not just one day – every day we need to think about the earth, what we do, and making sure that we do have something left for the next generation," she says.

When she first began participating in days like these, she says she noticed a lot of high school kids were having trouble completing their community service hours and thought this was a great opportunity to get that done.

"I said to my kids, 'Come on out, it's a nice day, we're going to pick up garbage,' and they were like, 'Oh, okay,'" she says, affecting a groan and a chuckle. "It snowballed from there and I wanted to bring that to Kingsway. We didn't start at Kingsway in that first year, I thought, let's get them conditioned first to be able to pick something up from the floor from a lower level and be safe to navigate when they are outside in the community. Because we had COVID at the time everyone had to be masked, everyone had to be social-distanced, and this was an opportunity to do something outside."

"One of the things I kind of preach is we live in a community and we have to take care of our community. You don't want to live in garbage, you want to make sure that you're home. This is your home and when your home is clean you feel better about it and you also feel you're helping your neighbours, too," adds Lee-Han, noting that the area Kingsway and its residents and volunteers take on include the greenspaces around their residence and nearby schools. "We had high school students who came in with us, for the older ones I was able to leave them in certain areas, the Guides were there teaching them, too, so they could make sure they were understanding we are stewards of this earth and we need to take care of it if we want to have a future. That's my takeaway and I hope I instil that with the residents, too. If you take pride in your surroundings, hopefully that will transfer to whatever is inside the building will also be outside the building, too.

Target locations this month's Clean-Up Day include John West Way, Alex Brodie Drive, Vandorf Sideroad, River Ridge Boulevard, Earl Stewart Drive, Issacson Court, Henderson Drive between Yonge Street and Watts Meadow, Stone Road, First Commerce Drive, Desjardins Way, William Graham Drive, Old Bloomington Road, St. John's Sideroad, Industrial Parkway, Bayview Avenue, Yonge Street, Wellington Street, and all stormwater management ponds.

"Our community takes pride in maintaining a clean and beautiful environment," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "The annual spring cleanup is an excellent opportunity for residents to actively contribute to preserving the natural beauty of Aurora and fostering a sense of community pride."

To participate, individuals or groups can register at aurora.ca/Cleanup. Registration must be completed by Friday, April 19. Cleanup kits will be available for pickup at Town Park on the day of the event, while supplies last. Volunteers will have the option to choose their own cleanup location or select from a list of target areas provided on the Town's website.

Students participating in the cleanup will receive volunteer hours for their contribution to the community.

For more information on the Spring Community Cleanup or to register, please visit aurora.ca/Cleanup.

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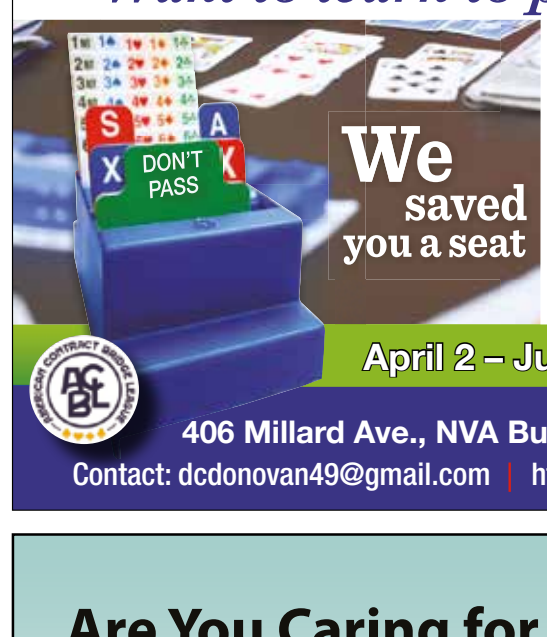

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Opposition to pipeline expansion

As a concerned citizen (and tax payer) in Ontario, I want to flag for others the most recent attempt by the Ford government to make a mockery of democracy.

They are seeking to reverse a decision made by the Ontario Energy Board, an independent body which has a mandate to serve the public interest, to instead focus on their own greedy interests. The legislation would force Ontarians to fund Enbridge's pipeline expansion project and keep us hooked on using fossil fuels (incorrectly referred to as "natural" gas).

Yet again, the Premier seems more concerned with furthering private (corporate) interests than in supporting and developing policies that focus on the general public!

If this bill passes, despite the attempts to dupe us with their propaganda, this will actually increase energy bills for Ontario residents while also increasing the province's greenhouse gas emissions. Are we going to avoid the effects we are seeing of climate change?! People may wonder how we can affordably heat our homes. It's time for this government to promote programs for switching to electric heat pumps – which provide lower monthly energy bills, way less pollution, and even cooling in the summer! "Folks", don't be fooled. Speak out by contacting your local MP and reminding them of their responsibility to work for us - and not subsidizing a fossil fuel corporation's expansion. There are realistic solutions to both our energy needs and the necessity of reducing province's greenhouse gas emissions! Ask this Conservative government to scrap the "Keeping Energy Costs Down Act" and get to work on enacting policies that help people not corporations.

Norma McClinton
Received Online

Correction

Last week's article, Enhanced pedestrian crossing approved for Aurora Heights Drive, also mentioned approval of a similar crossing on Hollandview Trail. The Hollandview Trail crossing in question has not yet been approved by Council; instead it was received by lawmakers for information. We regret the error.

THE AURORAN
www.TheAuroran.com
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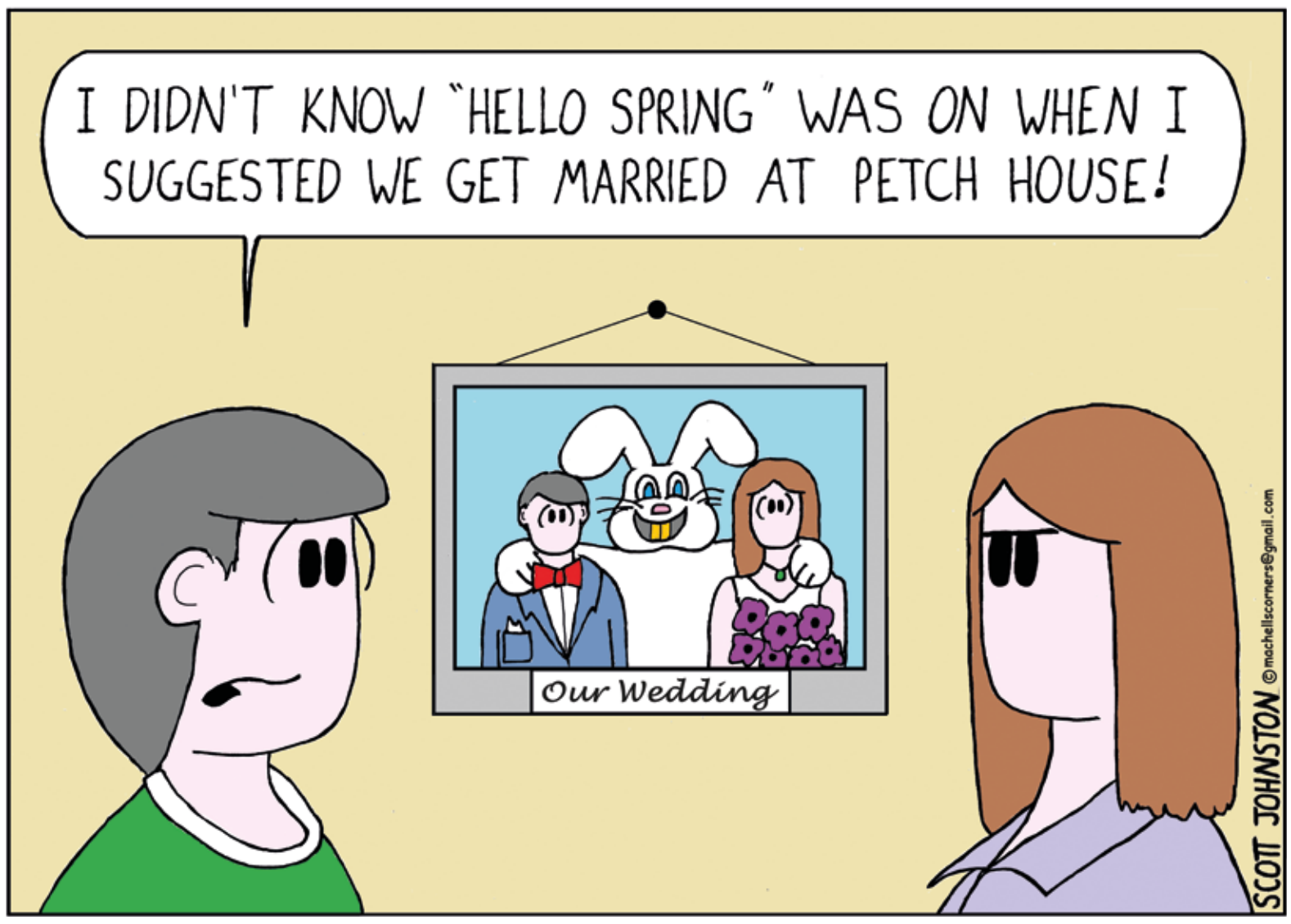
To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@lpcmedia.ca Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

Machell's Corners



An evaporating sense of humanity

BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

My first real job in a newsroom began with something of a whirlwind.

Reasonably fresh out of university, the job came about in a somewhat unexpected way and unfolded in a similar manner. Little was asked of me beyond my ability to make deadlines and, from there, it was directly into the eye of what was painted to be a storm.

From the outset, I had no shortage of well-wishers and community members at large making contact to give me "the real story" on the community and its so-called power-players, elected and otherwise.

Some of it was good, some of it… less so and unlikely, but as my first week wore on, I felt as though my eyes were growing wider and wider. Finding my feet, I was able to sift through the bulk of this detritus and forge ahead. But it soon became apparent that getting the "scoop" cut both ways.

Before too long, a leading politician of the day, who I first met on the second day of the gig, came up to me in a flurry of concern to ask if I was okay.

As far as I could tell I was fine and asked them why they had asked.

Apparently, due to a minor limp I've had since elementary school due to arthritis that decided to settle in a bit earlier than most, a story was circulating that I had been in some sort of terrible accident. I think we were both relieved that was not the case – I certainly know I was! – but nonetheless the rumour persisted for a good long while, bubbling up to the surface without any rhyme or reason.

Thankfully, as far as rumours go, it was a reasonably inconsequential one; something that I was able to brush off pretty quickly, with no lasting harm to myself or my family.

The same, I fear, cannot be said by the Princess of Wales as she continues in the early days of her cancer journey.

On Friday, the Princess announced to the world that the serious abdominal surgery she underwent in mid-January sadly, and after the fact, resulted in a cancer diagnosis. In her moving statement, she thanked people for the well-wishes she had received since her surgery was first announced and during her subsequent recovery out of the public eye.

"At the time, it was thought my condition was non-cancerous," she said. "The surgery was successful. However, tests after the operation found cancer had been present. My medical team therefore advised that I should undergo a course of preventative chemotherapy and I am now in the early stages of that treatment. This, of course, came as a huge shock, and William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family.

"As you can imagine, this has taken time. It has taken me time to recover from major surgery in order to start my treatment. But, most importantly, it has taken us time to explain everything to George, Charlotte and Louis in a way that is appropriate for them, and to reassure them that I am going to be okay….

"We hope that you will understand that, as a family, we now need some time, space, and privacy while I complete my treatment. My work has always brought me a deep sense of joy and I look forward to being back when I am able, but for now I must focus on making a full recovery. At this time, I am also thinking of all those whose lives have been affected by cancer. For everyone facing this disease, in whatever form, please do not lose faith or hope. You are not alone."

One can only hope they get as much time, space, and privacy as private individuals do during this difficult time – as it was certainly absent in the lead-up to Friday's announcement.

Since stepping back from the public eye shortly after the New Year for a then-undisclosed reason, Catherine and her family were subject to some of the most vile treatment on social media I've ever seen aimed at an apolitical public figure who, along with her family, have stived to be figures of unity more than anything else.

They were faced with countless alarming worst-case-scenario online rumours of her health, a particularly distressing turn of events for someone who has children growing up in the most tech-savvy generation we've yet seen; disheartening and outlandish claims about their personal lives; and even claims of things sinister and/or criminal afoot.

Each step they made was the subject of intense and off-the-charts scrutiny – suddenly, everyone and their uncle appointed themselves among the ranks of the great Photoshop savants and foremost AI experts of our time – all the while a very real family was going through an experience traumatic in itself, but trebled due to what I think can only be described as a lack of basic of consideration for one another – and, when it comes down to it, a lack of humanity and compassion not just for her, but everyone going through a private battle.

Despite going public with her diagnosis – an announcement some have argued she was coerced into by keyboard warriors in an effort to quell their increasingly unhinged ramblings – those culprits are still working overtime to try to prove their theories; or, quite unbelievably, trying to turn the blame back on the Prince and Princess of Wales for being less than forthcoming and leaving them a vacuum to fill.

Intense scrutiny bordering, in my view, on the ludicrous is nothing new when it comes to the Royal Family.

Catherine's late mother-in-law, Diana, Princess of Wales, certainly experienced it with tragic consequences. Her father-in-law's wife, Queen Camilla, experienced it as well. Her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Sussex, continues to experience abuse of her own, burnished with inarguable racial undertones; and now this.

Yet, this was something else again.

Some argue that, in the United Kingdom, the privileges enjoyed by members of the Royal Family are funded by the taxpayer – the intricacies of that claim can be the subject of a column all its own – and therefore (at best) the public has the right to know and/or (at worst) these individuals are public property.

While they are, in my opinion, public servants, they are not public property. They, just like any other individual, regardless of who pays for or maintains their lifestyle, have the right to wage private health battles as they see fit, particularly where minors are concerned.

Those who say otherwise need to get some fresh air.

Holding our public figures accountable for the work they do is integral to any democracy. Relentless bullying of a public figure to lay bare what was always clear from the outset to be a significant health concern does not fit the bill.

I can only hope that following Friday's announcement that these "concerned" parties, if only for a moment, put themselves in the Princess's shoes and consider their own life choices.

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To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@lpcmedia.ca Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

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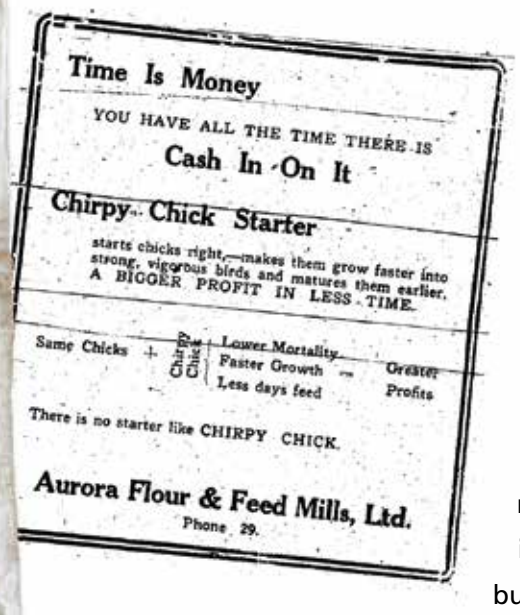
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THE PRINCIPLES OF AN ECONOMIC CHARTER OF RIGHTS

By Frank Stronach

Halt all hiring: an immediate fix for reining in unchecked government bureaucracy

Most Canadians would not be surprised to learn there are way too many civil servants in Ottawa.

But they would probably be shocked to learn just how top-heavy the Canadian bureaucracy really is. That's one of the eye-opening bits of information revealed at a House of Commons committee meeting last week featuring Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux.

According to Giroux, federal bureaucrats can report to as many as seven different levels of management within various government departments. When questioned whether seven layers of management was excessive or necessary, Giroux responded that "there is room to reduce."

Even the federal government, which is not known for fiscal discipline, said it could lop $3 billion per year in government administration over the next five years. But that only represents a paltry one percent reduction in total annual spending. Surely there's a lot more fat, duplication and waste that can be cut out of the budget without laying off any civil servants.

For the past several years, I've consistently advocated for government spending cuts of 5 per cent per year over a period of ten years, which would end up reducing government overhead by half within a decade. I've also suggested the creation of a task force comprised of retired business leaders who could assist in determining areas where the government could cut spending.

The Fraser Institute published a report last month showing how the federal government could balance the budget within a year simply by reducing government spending by 4.3 per cent – an amount very close to what I've proposed.

The proposed spending cut formula I put forward is one of seven common-sense principles I've advocated for the past year as part of a new Economic Charter of Rights to revive our economy and restore Canadian prosperity.

But it's not just the cost of excessive bureaucracy that Canadians object to. It's also the red tape and regulations that come with it, which end up making everything slower and more complicated than necessary.

The federal civil service now chews up over $67 billion per year in salaries, benefits and pensions – a record high amount. The escalating growth in payroll was termed "worrisome" by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Not only are there more civil servants than ever, but there's also more bureaucrats than ever taking home six-figure salaries. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation,

Continued on page 8

PARSA'S PERSPECTIVE

Michael Parsa, MPP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

As we gather with loved ones to celebrate the arrival of spring and the spirit of renewal, we're delighted to extend warm wishes for a joyous Easter and a blessed Passover to the wonderful residents of Aurora.

Through Easter dinners, Passover gatherings and traditional festivities, the Town of Aurora has a range of outstanding programs tailored to engage and inspire our young residents.

From enriching literacy workshops to fun-filled recreational activities and exciting day camps, there's something to spark the interest of every child as they embark on a journey of learning and laughter!

So, head on over to the website www.aurora.ca to explore all the wonderful opportunities awaiting your family this spring. Let's make this Easter and spring season a memorable one for everyone.

This month is also recognized as National Volunteer Month, highlighting the importance of giving back to our communities. Volunteering has a profound impact on the well-being of our neighbourhoods, and you can find ways to volunteer your time and talents to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

As your Member of Provincial Parliament, I am committed to representing your interests, addressing your concerns, and to ensure that our communities continue to thrive.

Your feedback, ideas, and perspectives are invaluable to me, and it is an honour to continue representing you at Queen's Park!

Wishing everyone a Happy Easter and a blessed Passover filled with joy, peace, and celebration.

Solar Eclipse Q&A

INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

As you've no doubt heard by now, weather-permitting, residents of Southern Ontario will be treated to a spectacular solar eclipse on Monday, April 8.

What's a solar eclipse?

This is when the moon passes directly between the Earth and Sun, casting a shadow across the small portion of the Earth. In most of the shadowed area the moon does not completely cover the Sun. However, there is a narrow band called the path of totality, where for a few minutes the Sun is completely blocked.

What's so special about the upcoming eclipse?

On average, a path of totality crosses over specific areas of the Earth only once every 375 years, which is pretty rare, so Southern Ontario is in for a treat.

Will Aurora be in the path of totality?

Sadly, no, but really close! In Ontario, the path encompasses the north shore of Lake Erie and the Niagara Peninsula, then cuts across Lake Ontario south of Toronto, coming ashore again around Port Hope, then hugs the north shore of eastern Lake Ontario and the St Lawrence River.

So, Aurorans won't see the eclipse?

While the total eclipse will only be visible in Ontario from the locations noted above, here in Aurora we will have a pretty spectacular partial or penumbral eclipse with the sun about 99% covered.

When does it occur?

Here in Aurora it will begin on Monday, April 8 at 2:05 pm, and run for 2 hours and 26 minutes, ending at 4:31 pm. The maximum (peak) coverage of the sun is at 3:19 pm.

What happens during the eclipse?

It will get steadily darker as it progresses, and at its maximum it will appear almost as if it's nighttime. An odd sensation for mid-afternoon!

Just south of us along the path of totality, for the few minutes when the Sun is completely covered, a 360-degree sunset may be visible, as will stars and planets. The hot area of gas around the Sun, called the corona, which is normally obscured by the brightness of the Sun, can also be seen.

How can I view it safely?

It is never safe to look directly at the Sun, unless you are wearing special ISO 12312-2 certified viewing glasses. These are available to purchase online, but have been selling out fast.

Another option is to construct a pinhole camera, which projects an image of the Sun onto a surface. These can be made from simple materials you likely have on hand at home, such as cardboard or card stock.

This is a great project to do with your children or grandchildren, many of whom will be off school that day. Directions for making one can be found online. You may want to make one up and experiment with it ahead of time, so you're not scrambling at the last minute.

Of course, images of the eclipse will also be all over the news and social media that day.

When's the next total eclipse visible from Aurora?

The good news is that if you miss it, you don't have to wait the average of 375 years for the next one to be visible around here. The bad news is that you need to mark your calendar for October 26, 2144.

Let's hope for sunny skies. Safe viewing, everyone!

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

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Would more lights in the local trails system improve community safety?

YES NO UNSURE

www.theauroran.com

Previous Poll

Did you travel outside of Ontario for March Break?

RESULTS TO DATE MARCH 26, 2024

YES	NO
17%	83%

Region calls for answers on Housing Accelerator Fund

Mayor welcomes infrastructure announcement

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Regional Council is calling for answers on why its so-called "Northern Six" municipalities' applications to the Federal Government's Housing Accelerator Fund were denied.

The motion, which was approved by Regional Council last week, was put forward by Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt, called on Federal Housing Minister Sean Fraser and the CMHC to "formally re-assess" the applications of the N6 – Aurora, Newmarket, King, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Georgina, with East Gwillimbury excepted – and to give further consideration to "advancing new Housing Accelerator investments in this year's budget."

The motion also asks the Feds to "prioritize municipalities with significant forecasted residential and employment growth like York Region and the N6 specifically."

"What really frustrated me with the process, and I don't disparage any municipality in the country that received this funding, but there is a municipality in Southwest Ontario of over 40,000 people, which is a little smaller than Whitchurch-Stouffville, but significant nonetheless, that received $4.5 million from the Federal Government to build 139 single family homes over the next three years and that is not insignificant funding to support a smaller municipality like Stouffville. We started 1,140 homes last year alone in our community. The fact we didn't get an explanation about what was wrong with our application kind of makes it frustrating in and of itself. We had a meeting with CMHC and they wouldn't tell us. I am hoping that with the weight of this Council supporting this resolution we can get answers and certainly look at supporting future applications."

While the motion received support at the Regional table, Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti questioned why the motion was there in the first place.

"There are a lot of grants that municipalities apply for…sometimes we get them, sometimes we don't, and I don't think we come running to the Region every time a local municipality doesn't get one of the grants. It is a little tough as well, and I want to make sure everyone made proper submissions…but I don't know the content of the individual applications and what [unsuccessful municipalities] put forward."

Mayor Scarpitti also said some of the messaging put out by mayors of unsuccessful York Region municipalities were "misleading" in "implying" the Feds overlooked York Region's housing program.

"They absolutely did not," he contended, adding that $148 million came to York Region as a whole. "Three municipalities in York Region that are providing the bulk of housing over the next 30 years did get funding."

In the end, however, he supported the motion, as did Richmond Hill Mayor David West.

Richmond Hill was a successful applicant, but he said the more successful York Region municipalities are in receiving funding, the further the Region can "move the needle" on housing targets.

"That's the message we need to be sending as elected officials to be able to say we need more of this kind of thing rather than less," he said. "This is the kind of program that needs to be replicated on a Provincial level as well because the kind of program we have under the Building Faster Fund is not particularly helpful in incentivizing in a way that would help us with the jurisdiction we have to actually be successful. This sends a message that we all stand stronger together.

"It's helpful to all of us if we're able to be successful."

Aurora, as announced earlier this month, was not successful in its funding. Although Mayor Tom Mrakas, Aurora's representative at the Regional table, did not take part in last week's discussions, he expressed his "dismay" with the decision at the outset, stating the Feds had "politicized" the process.

"It's disheartening to see them withhold taxpayer funds from municipalities with strong applications, while seemingly favouring those that align with their political agenda," he said. "This approach undermines the genuine efforts of those of us working tirelessly to address the housing crisis and achieve 'housing for all.' It's a disservice to communities in need and reflect a prioritization of optics over real solutions."

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy, however, stated Aurora's application was not "ambitious" enough with housing goals and Council's refusal of a men's transitional housing building in Aurora's south end did not send a "strong message to the people reviewing the application that Aurora was doing everything they could to provide homes to all residents."

INFRASTRUCTURE ANNOUNCEMENT WELCOMED

On Thursday, the Province announced funding of $1 billion through the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program to support communities with, as the name suggests, infrastructure programs related to housing.

While the announcement did not include an allocation of what municipalities like Aurora might see, Mayor Mrakas said it was "welcome news."

"This significant investment of tax dollars back into our communities will assist in covering the costs of building necessary infrastructure as we aim for responsible growth," said Mayor Mrakas in a statement.

"Many municipalities, including myself, have advocated for more predicable funding to support infrastructure needs as our communities expand. It's widely recognized that growth does not pay for growth. For every tax dollar collected, municipalities typically receive only 9 to 11 cents, despite being responsible for over 65 per cent of infrastructure. This unsustainable practice underscores the importance of the funds announced by the Province, marking a positive step towards ensuring our communities have the necessary infrastructure to continue thriving and growing. I will be [waiting] for the particulars of the newly-announced Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program to see how our Town stands to gain in accessing this critical funding."

WE HAVE INVENTORY

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30
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BUSINESS & FINANCE

"You all have the power to put your foot down and say we want this," says Regional Chair on affordable housing

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local municipalities all have the power to "put their foot down" and demand affordable and rental housing units from potential incoming developers, says York Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson.

Comments from Emmerson, who said York's nine municipalities and their representatives are "the boots on the ground" when it comes to addressing homelessness, came earlier this month at a Committee of the Whole meeting where Council members discussed the Region's draft 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

A blueprint to guide addressing the issue beginning next year though 2035, it's expected to be brought forward for Regional Council's adoption in the second quarter of 2025.

"Local municipalities are critical partners in advancing the priorities of Housing Solutions by enabling development of affordable housing options and responding to homelessness," said Regional staff in their update to Council. "Local municipalities will continue to be engaged through 2024 as the Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan, Community Housing Development Master Plan, Homelessness Service System Plan, and the next 10-year housing and homelessness plan are being developed."

Discussing the update, Regional reps agreed that more funding needs to come from the Federal and Provincial government to meet upcoming goals, but Newmarket Mayor John Taylor said time is of the essence to make concrete steps forward.

"We not only have a housing affordability crisis, but…just people [looking to] survive," he said. "I guarantee every member around this table has more people contacting them…who can't figure out how to make it until the next month. The reason I say that is because I think the data is very clear that is presented here, that is presented through some of the workshops we've done in the past, the number of people who are experiencing homelessness is growing… 'exponentially' might not be the right word – is there a bigger word than 'exponentially'? I think we need to get our heads around that. I know this plan will do some of that work.

"There is a lot we're doing, but I am going to say it…it's not even close to enough in the next three to five years."

Regional Council, he said, needs to have a "clear opportunity" before the next budget to vote on the amount of funding York will put towards transitional housing and shelter beds in the next three years.

"When those three years come and our parks have tents all over the place, we know that we had that chance to quickly do something. Is there some logic and an additional recommendation that staff bring back a short-term rapid implementation with housing options?" he asked. "We have very significant reserves. I have been a proponent of making sure we have sustainable financing going into the future…but the amount of money it would take for us to get…ahead of the game… wouldn't drastically impact our reserves.

"We need to look at it straight in the eye, decide to move it forward or not, so that when three years happens from now, we don't say, 'We didn't see that coming. We didn't have a chance to get ahead of that.'"

Emmerson agreed that Regional Council will have to "step up" at budget time, but said municipalities are the "boots on the ground" as well.

"We know what is happening on the streets and in our parks, in our municipalities," he said. "You can't let the Province and Feds off the hook. We can't. We've got to continue to fight. When developers come to your door, when they look at 500 units to be build, you've got to step up and say, 'Where can we get 30 affordable housing units or rental?' You have the ability when they come to your table… it is nothing to do with the Region. When it comes to a planning issue… you all have the power to put your foot down and say, 'We want this,' when you're going forward."

THE PRINCIPLES OF AN ECONOMIC CHARTER OF RIGHTS

From page 5

over 110,000 federal public servants made in excess of $100,000 in 2023. In short, not only is our bureaucracy growing by the day – it's also becoming more expensive.

Despite the swelling size of our civil service, it's important to note that bureaucrats should never be made the scapegoat for the financial mismanagement created by governments. It's not their fault spending has gotten out of control.

Regardless, the problem posed by our ever-expanding bureaucracy needs to be dealt with immediately. It's been put on the back burner for far too long.

In addition to reducing government spending on overhead by five per cent per year for ten years, we should implement an immediate and permanent hiring freeze when it comes to the civil service until the public sector payroll shrinks to a more sustainable level.

If the government official who's been put in charge of keeping an eye on our budget says there's room to reduce the size of our bureaucracy, then we should start reducing.

Not only will we save billions of dollars, but Canadians might also finally get a break from overzealous bureaucrats meddling in every aspect of our lives.

To learn more about how we can increase Canadian living standards, email me at info@economiccharter.ca.

Author Bio

Frank Stronach is the founder of Magna International Inc., one of Canada's largest global companies, and the Stronach Foundation for Economic Rights (www.economiccharter.ca).

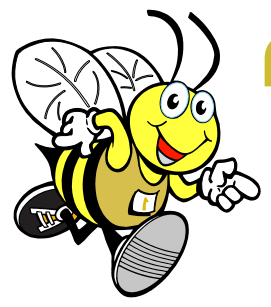
2024 REGISTRATION GUIDE for Kids

Small Ballers

"Kids having a ball and team building through sports." 18 months to 7 years old! Soccer, Hockey, Baseball, Basketball and Football – no tackling! Also other ball-based creative games that are team building.

Aurora Diggers

While keeping the game fun we are very proud of the teams that have won Provincial Championships, attended the Eastern Canadians and participated in National Competition.



Aurora Soccer

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Baby swim school! We are here to support and nurture your babe, from birth, in water. Our programme is carefully structured with a song and a smile! Biggest baby swim school in the world.

IEM Basketball

York Region's largest basketball organization for girls and boys. We emphasize the importance of athletic and personal development amongst its players to prepare them for their future, both in sport and beyond.

Amiri brings "ancient tradition and bold creativity" to Aurora with Cultural Centre performance

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As a musician, Amir Amiri is deeply rooted in Persian classical tradition, but what he produces is something altogether new – a blend of classical tradition through a modern lens.

A santur player, composer, and "cultural inventor," Amiri will bring his ground-breaking style to Aurora next Saturday, April 6, in a concert hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre at Trinity Anglican Church.

Set to be joined on stage by Nagmeh Farahmand, the Cultural Centre promises a "mesmerizing solo performance as the hammers delicately wander across the trapezoid zither box exploring tradition woven with Amiri's fresh ideas," and, on the part of Farahmand, "an acclaimed percussion showcase."

Amiri came to Canada from Iran in 1996, bringing with him the musical traditions of home which he was then able to interpret through what he describes as a "different cultural operating system."

Contributed photo
Amir Amiri

"It's an incredible concept to know what I know, which is deeply Persian classical music, and sift it through this rhythmic mesh," he says. "What comes out the other side is this sound organization that has been touched by my personal experience, which is rooted in Persian classical tradition. Is it Persian classical music? No. Is it modern music? Yes, but influenced by me and my experience.

"My work is a journey of East and West… where you are from, where you are, and where you're going to be. That point of reference is very important and that point of reference is that Iranian-ness to my work."

When you set out on any path, he says, you have the option of going in a straight line – but where you're from can sometimes dictate the length of that path. In a place like the Middle East where scores of smaller countries are concentrated in one geographic area, these straight lines can be very short.

"When you think of the Middle East as such a huge area… all of these places have their own vocabulary – of course, they all eat humus, but slightly different, and the music is the same. It's reflective of the food, the person. There is a thread that is very similar, but it also comes with that physicality, and that goes back to the rhythm."

Amiri likes these in-between spaces where cultures meet. When they do, they enrich each other, he says.

"It's the human experience and that doesn't have a boundary," he says. "We talk a lot these days about borders and things like that, and I am thinking maybe the cultural connection is not as important anymore; it's more the human connection. We need to start looking at the bigger picture. Everywhere in the world right now, we're missing something. There's some really bad stuff happening. My question to myself is, what can I do? What is my responsibility?

"Music in general has a capacity to defragment and this defragmentation comes into different parts of one's daily life as sort of groupings of allowed agreements… As an artist I appreciate when a human being decides to go to my concert. I think they have done their job. So, for me, I have been trusted by these years of knowledge through music, through classical music, traditional music… allowing this river of energy, allowing this experience to shape together… That is what the power of chamber music is about – music for a room. We're just together, I'm playing for you and you're listening. The mistress will do the rest of the job."

Adds the Aurora Cultural Centre: "Amiri is a master of the santur, a 72-string instrument dating from approximately 500 BCE. Surrounding himself with outstanding collaborators from the worlds of jazz, classical and world music, Amiri fearlessly transcends genres and borders, exquisitely transporting his ancient instrument into the musical conversations of our time.

"Since arriving in Canada in 1996, Amiri has created numerous ground-breaking ensembles including the Amir Amiri Ensemble, inspired by the fluidity of musical influences in Iran and featuring the hypnotic presence of a Whirling Dervish; and Ensemble Kimya, a Montreal-Paris collaboration, combining early classical and contemporary music from Europe, the Middle East and India. Perséides, his duo with double bass player Jean Félix Mailloux, was featured at the National Arts Centre's Sounds of Persia: Canada's New Music Masters in 2018, where Amiri was Artistic Director. His ensemble was showcased WOMEX 2021 in Porto, Portugal. Amir Amiri was awarded the 2003 CBC Artist of the Year from the Galaxie Rising Stars Program. He performs and tours with a vast spectrum of ensembles, enchanting with his signature down-to-earth style and profound connection with audiences."

Tickets for the performance are on-sale now at auroraculturalcentre.ca. Doors open at 6.45 p.m. for a 7.30 showtime.

CUSTOMER REVIEW

PERSIA MEAT SHOP 2

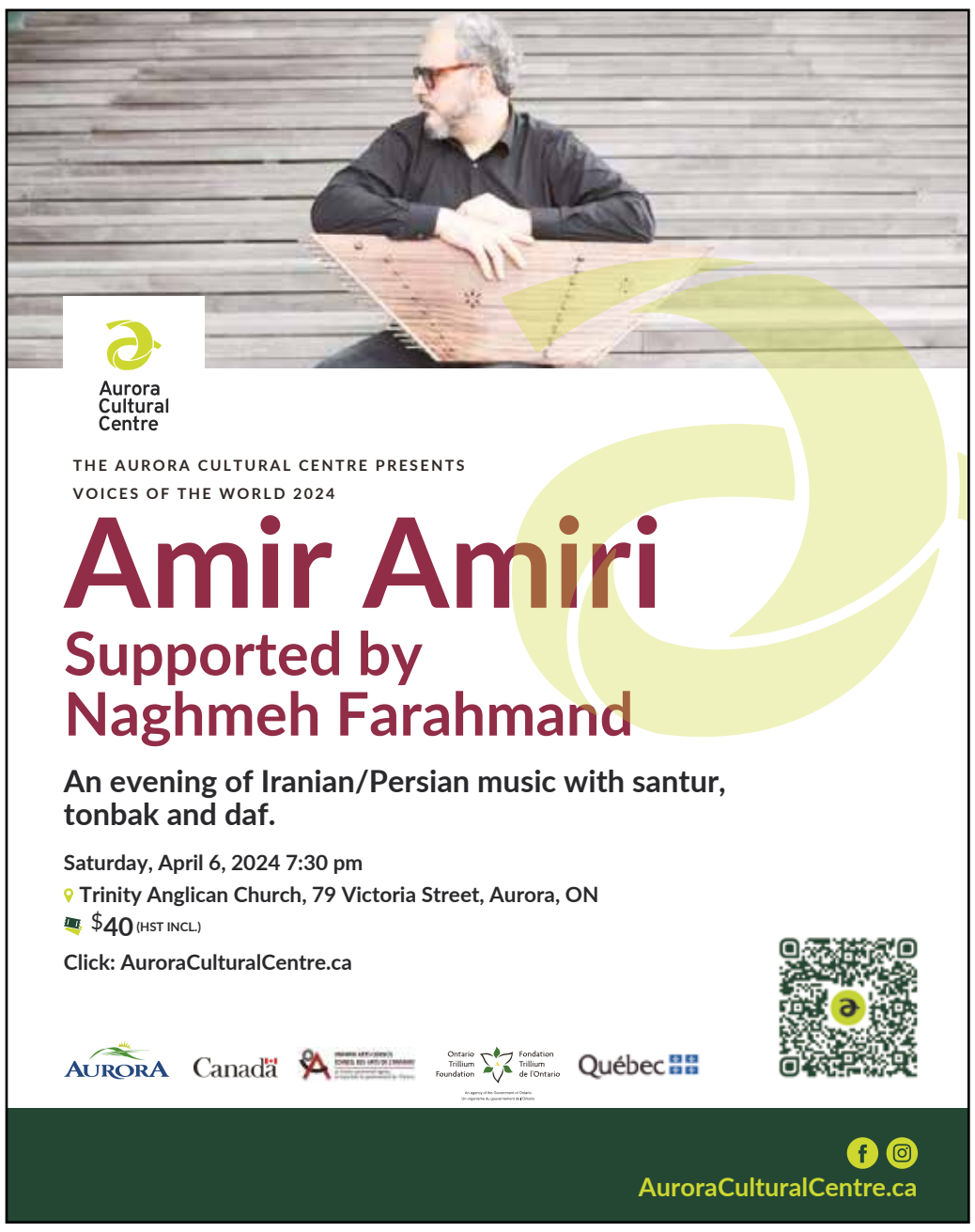
Nedávno jsem navštívila obchod s perským masem 2 v Newmarket Plaza. Bylo tam teplo a příjemně. Reza, majitel, byl hned po ruce a ochotně pomáhal. Výborné místo k nakupování. Vřele doporučuji!

Adella Svoboda

I recently visited the Persian Meat Shop 2 in the Newmarket Plaza. It was warm and inviting. Reza, the owner, was right there to help. An excellent place to shop. I highly recommend it!

OPEN MON–SAT

Newmarket Plaza | 130 Davis Dr. Unit 12 Newmarket | persiameatshop.com: (905) 895-9999



Chamber's 2024 Home & Living Show will make a "splash" at SARC

Gianluca and Arianna are pictured at last year's Home & Living show at the SARC.

Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Spring is here, and as residents' thoughts turn towards getting their homes ready for the warmer weather, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce is hard at work to showcase all the options – and local businesses that can help bring your vision to life.

The Chamber's annual Home & Living Show will return to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex April 20 – 21, taking over both arenas where there will be extra-special attractions for event-goers.

While this year's Home and Living Show will offer everything you've come to love about the annual event, the return to both arenas has allowed some fresh ideas take root.

"We're trying to elevate the Home Show," says Alison Mumford, Director of Operations for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. "Going back to both arenas is a big draw as one of our vendors and sponsors is Backyard Pools and Spa, which will take over an entire half of one of the arenas, bringing in pools and spas which will be filled up.

"Beyond that, part of the 'elevation in design' aspect is we're asking certain vendors, as part of our design space, actually curate different areas of the home: the garden, the garage, the dining room, living room, kitchen, etc., so it looks like more of a vignette, a place where you can walk through, and not just a booth."

Another facet of this year's planning, Mumford adds, was "bringing fresh eyes" that reflect the "air of elegance and affluence" that Aurora has and "making sure that is represented – not necessarily in affluence, but definitely upscale."

Helping bring this vision to life will be an array of new and returning vendors.

On hand to answer all your questions on contracting and interior design will be, among others, A4 Group Construction, Apollo Glass & Mirror, Ivish Interiors, Lifestyle Home Creations, The Millionaire's Daughter, Glidden Plumbing and Renovations, Student Works Painting, Homes 2B Design and Senso Design.

For landscaping, decks, and fencing, vendors include MKW Services, Pathways to Perennials, Resting Rock, Miller Compost, MPS Property Services, Barrie Newmarket Rubber Resurfacing, Hallscape, and Queensville Sod Farms.

Helping to let the sunshine in through windows, doors and sunrooms include Browning Windows & Doors, White Elm, Magic, Kempenfelt Windows & Doors, Renoasis, and Renewal by Andersen.

If you're looking for exterior services like roofing, pools, and heating and cooling systems, vendors like AllPro Roofing, Rydel Roofing, Leaffilter, Aurora Overhead Door, Backyard Pools & Spa, Seaway Pools & Beachcomber Hot Tubs, Summers & Smith, Best Climate Heating & Cooling, and Canco Climatecare will be there for you.

"There are still a handful of spaces left," says Mumford of booth availability. "We've had a big surge of people filling up this week."

With such a big surge of interest, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce is looking forward to welcoming residents to the SARC and, with free admission, courtesy of admission sponsor Summers & Smith, that just sweetens the deal.

"For new people, it is something to check out to get to know all the local businesses and find inspiration. There are always things you can do inside your home, outside your home – even if it is not this year, it's knowing who is available, who is around, and the level of expertise that is there," says Mumford. "There are over 10,000 square feet of curated design space, whether that is indoor or outdoor. Between different, various room designs, garden designs, a full deck being built, lots of trends being displayed, there is a lot to check out.

"For returning guests, I think there is a difference, especially with our design centre, the installations by Backyard Pools & Spa, and the different things you can see. There will be new entertainment, new food, lots of activities for kids to do, so I think it has a different feel. There's buzz about it, so I think it will be an exciting year!"

For more information, including a complete and up-to-date list of exhibitors, visit www.aurorachamber.on.ca/aurorahomeshow.

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- When and how to choose a retirement community
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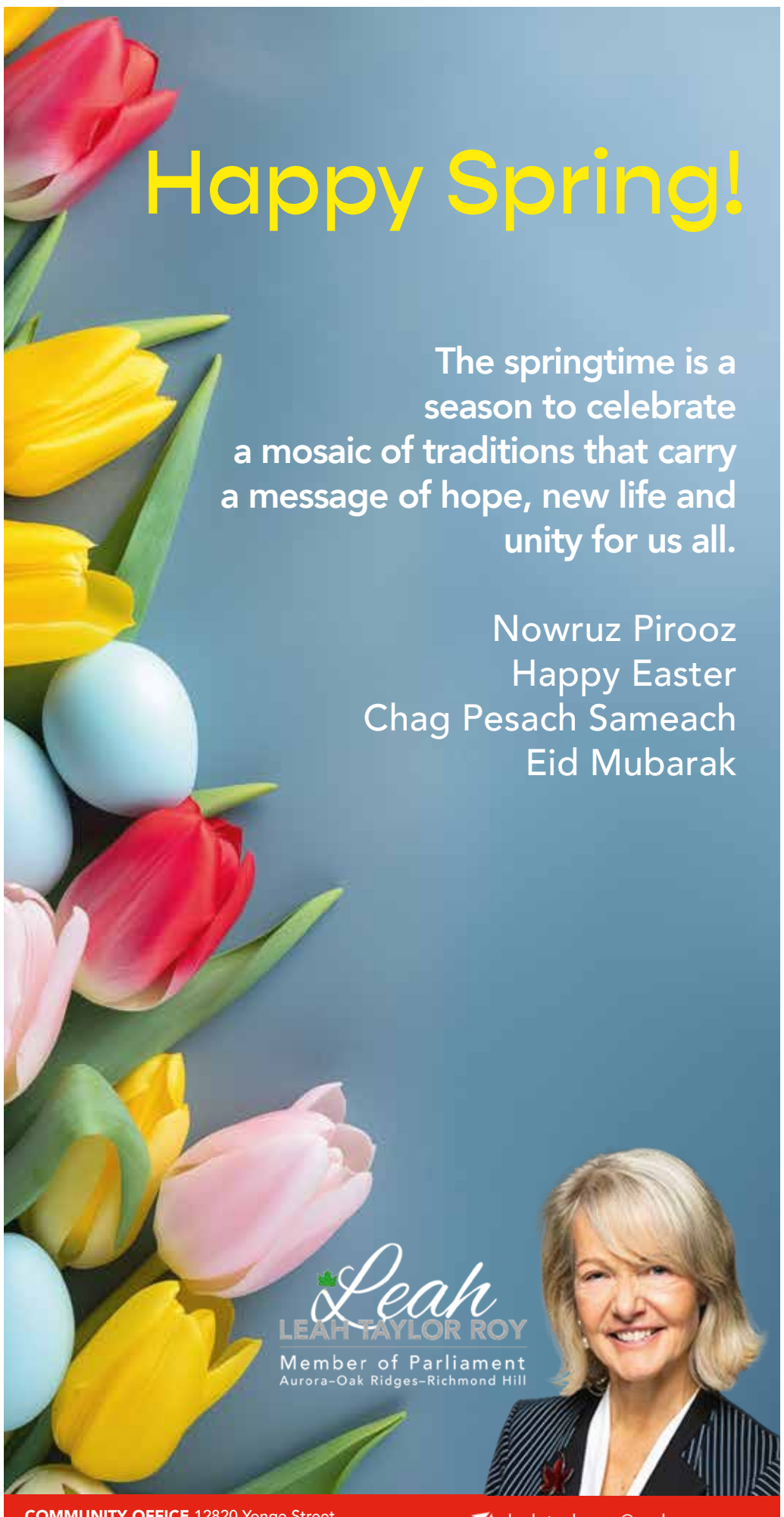
Celebrating Persian New Year at Nowruz gathering

Nowruz, the Persian New Year, was celebrated at Aurora's Royal Rose Gallery on Saturday, March 23, with a showcase of Persian culture, traditions and the spirit of renewal hosted by A4 Group Construction Services and Abundance Dream Inc. "Nowruz, which translates to 'New Day,' marks the beginning of spring and is celebrated by millions of people around the world, particularly in Iran and other Persian-speaking countries," said organizers. "It symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, the arrival of warmth after winter's chill, and the promise of new beginnings. It's a time of joy, unity, and hope as families gather to share meals, exchange gifts, and embrace the beauty of nature's rejuvenation." (TOP) Attending the celebration were Mayor Tom Mrakas, Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Maryam Aslanzad, Mojgan Afshar, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy, and MPP Michael Parsa. (BOTTOM) Afshar and Aslanzad are pictured with Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

Last week the Province made an announcement regarding the $1 billion Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program that will support core infrastructure projects for municipalities.

This is ahead of this week's Budget announcement and is indeed welcome news. This significant investment of tax dollars back into our communities will assist in covering the costs of building necessary infrastructure as we aim for responsible growth.

Many municipal leaders, including myself, have advocated for more predictable funding to support infrastructure needs as our communities expand.

It's widely recognized that growth does not pay for growth. For every tax dollar collected, municipalities typically receive only 9 to 11 cents, despite being responsible for over 65% of infrastructure.

Continued on page 21

Happy Easter
From Your Local Businesses

Embrace the Joy of Easter:
Renewed Faith, Brighter Days
Helen Paul
Avraam Neophytou Realtor
Neophytou Realtor
ROYAL LEPAGE CONNECT REALTY, BROKERAGE
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Celebrate the Joy of New Beginnings!"
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Wishing you a very Happy Easter
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RDHINGRA@ROYALLEPAGE.CA
WWW.DEALWITHDHINGRA.COM

"Bringing Joy and Unity to our Community this Easter"
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Member of Parliament Newmarket-Aurora
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Bubbles & Smiles is tasty way to support local seniors

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A feast for the senses will unfold at the historic Aurora Armoury on April 24 as CHATS – Community & Home Assistance to Seniors – hosts its second-annual Bubbles & Smiles event.

Formally, the second-annual "Bubbles & Smiles Sommelier Tutored Tasting & Culinary Experience," this year's event will feature a variety of champagnes and "bubbles from around the world" showcased by sommelier Ben Pilsky-Somers of Bossanova Wine & Beer and hors d'oeuvre pairings from the Armoury's Chef Soohyeong Lee.

Bubbles & Smiles is the brainchild of Colleen Jones, Past Vice Chair of CHATS' Board of Directors, who wanted to continue helping to fill in the gaps when it comes to local seniors' care.

"Like most seniors, my mom did not want to move from her home, but living on her own, without help, was no longer viable," said Jones. "Unfortunately, the community where she lived did not have the types of supports she needed."

In keeping with the theme, proceeds from the second-annual event will help enhance programs to address senior isolation and loneliness.

"We're finding the uptake on people coming back to in-person activities has been a lot slower than we would have thought," says CHATS CEO Christina Bisanz. "We're really trying to raise awareness that we have wellness programs in the community, that we have programs for diverse communities available, but that period of time where people stayed home and didn't engage, I think, is still continuing on at this time. We really want to be able to get out, perhaps offer some new programs in different communities where we haven't been present before and be able to serve our older adults with engaging activities that will get them out of isolation and address potential loneliness."

CHATS is currently exploring ways in which they can address what they describe as "NORC" models – Naturally-Occurring Retirement Communities – that have formed in other locations within Canada and the United States.

These would be programs implemented in buildings that have a significant population of seniors – more than 30 per cent – but are not necessarily senior-specific communities.

"Many of these buildings are privately-owned, but they have common rooms, large lobbies, areas for people to congregate and be socially-involved – there are different models and we're looking at NORC buildings in Aurora and Newmarket to see if there is potential for us to bring some programs into buildings and get people socially-engaged and active.

"An organization like CHATS, for example, would come in and organize social wellness programs – maybe a little light exercise. There could be a congregate meal that is served where people sit down and share [the experience]. In Halton, they have a PACE model – Progress for All-Inclusive Care of the Elderly. Those programs are even more robust in terms of also offering healthcare services that come into the building and have somebody on site who provides care coordination – helping older adults navigate care services and how to access care and understand where those services are available. Oasis, in Kingston, is a combination of social and healthcare and that is what we want to do just to start: to explore different models, understand how they are operating, what's involved."

There is also, she added, interest and support from members of the Northern York-South Simcoe Ontario Health Team to look at opportunities to partner with other groups.

"It's early days, but this is an area where we really think there is tremendous potential to get something started."

And every bubble and delicacy will help CHATS move forward.

Tickets for the April 24 event are on sale now at chatsbubblessmiles.ca.

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Vince's announces results of 2024 Toonies for Tummies campaign

By Neil Moore

Vince's continues its steadfast commitment to fighting hunger in our communities, raising $7,296 in the recent Toonies for Tummies (TFT) national campaign. This annual initiative, supported by Vince's customers and team members, contributes to the Grocery Foundation's efforts to ensure that no child goes to school hungry.

Over the last nine years, Vince's has contributed more than $38,000 to TFT. They are part of a growing community of nearly 1,500 grocery retailers across Canada supporting this vital cause, which is focused on nourishing the 1 in 3 children at risk of going to school on an empty stomach. This year, the campaign aims to raise $4 million, which will help provide approximately 2 million healthy meals to school-aged children in more than 3,000 programs.

Maria Ciarlandini, Vince's Community Support Ambassador, expressed her gratitude: "Thank you to every customer who donated a toonie and made this year's Toonies for Tummies campaign so successful."

The campaign ensures that 100 percent of donations made at participating stores and online directly support the Grocery Foundation's student nutrition partners. This year's beneficiaries, The Breakfast Club of Canada in Western and Atlantic Canada, and Student Nutrition Ontario offer judgment-free, inclusive programs, which are a key source of nutrition for many students. Beyond providing healthy meals, they also offer nutrition education and foster a supportive school community, helping students flourish throughout the day.

"The power of this program is that every toonie has an impact," said Grocery Foundation Executive Director Shaun McKenna. "Individual toonies can help nourish a child, and collectively, when we help an entire school or several schools, we are helping students and communities today and for the longer term. Breakfasts come with a welcoming smile, and they elevate a child's day both physically and emotionally. We are incredibly grateful to Vince's, to their store teams, and every donor who is part of helping dreams take flight and making essential nourishment within reach."

But Vince's commitment doesn't stop with the annual two-week February campaign. The independent grocer has expanded its support, through the Community Product Initiative (CPI), to continue fundraising for TFT throughout 2024. CPI involves all four stores, participating vendors, and, crucially, Vince's customers. This program selects various staple items (Community Products) throughout the year, and sets aside 15 percent of sales for the CPI beneficiary – which is Toonies for Tummies in 2024. Since its inception in 2018, Vince's Community Product Initiative has raised approximately $150,000 for several life-changing organizations, and looks forward to significant contributions in 2024.

"We are proud that we're able to make an even greater impact on this program in 2024," said Vince's President Giancarlo Trimarchi. "A big thanks to our customers for helping tackle child hunger. It's wonderful to see the difference we're making in kids' lives, boosting their nutrition, and helping them focus and succeed in school."

York Regional Police Deputy Chief Paulo Da Silva speaks at Thursday night's Town Hall meeting.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Theft victims call for Police to step up reporting, patrols

From page 1

initiatives, and for YRP Deputy Chief Paulo Da Silva the opportunity to share data and challenge residents on "what you have heard as opposed to what you know."

"Aurora is safe," said Da Silva. "We realize there is a lot of concern with what we see in the media and what we have heard or read, but I can't stress enough that Aurora is safe."

"We want you (the public) to have the one source of truth [that] is actually the data that is presented here," he continued, following an introduction to the YRP's Community Data Portal, which allows residents to go online and look at crime statistics in their communities, right down to the neighbourhood level.

This message was reiterated by YRP Detective Sergeant Sherwin Bachoo, who told residents he and his family moved from Brampton to Aurora for the safety this community offered.

"We are all safe – that's number one," said Bachoo. "I know everyone has been getting this information [from] the news, TV, TikTok, social media stuff, Instagram…you're getting bad information. The real information is I live in the community and I am telling you it is safe."

Trends related to break-and-enters and other forms of theft fluctuate throughout the year, he said, and as much as YRP patrols it is important for residents to "get to know your neighbours."

"They are the best crime prevention you can have," he said.

Assembled members of the YRP said these types of crimes are crimes of opportunity and it is important to "take that opportunity away" from criminals and would-be criminals, including being diligent about lighting, installing doorbell cameras which can provide invaluable information to police not just for the homes they are installed but the surrounding community as well, and even Faraday bags, offered by the police, to protect your key fobs from being targeted.

"Community safety is a shared responsibility," said Da Silva.

Community members, however, questioned just how accurate and up-to-date the information contained within the Community Data Portal was.

Stephanie McCleave, a resident of Aurora's northwest quadrant, told Police a number of break-ins in this part of the community were not reflected on the portal.

"Our numbers might seem small in comparison to what is going on elsewhere in the Region," she said, noting a series of break-ins from 2009, 2013, 2013, before ramping back up over the pandemic. "We want as a neighbourhood to get ahead of this before their experience becomes ours and that is the whole reason why we are bringing this up: we don't want to be sitting here whinging that we should have done something sooner; we want to work with police, the neighbourhood and the community to try and make that happen so we can get ahead of it. Once your house is broken into, your memories of your whole past in that home has become tarnished."

This was a view supported by resident Penney Reynolds who said her house was broken into in November while she was at her cottage. She came home on a Friday afternoon to find all the doors wide-open, drapes pulled shut, pictures pulled off walls – "they really trashed it."

"[My daughter] will not stay by herself in the house anymore, I don't blame her," said Reynolds, who said she and her neighbours have been sharing information on the break-ins in their community. "I see on your (YRP's) map some of them, but I don't see the one that was on Whispering Pine the week before Christmas, another one that was on Valley Crescent, Heathwood…

"The Police were very good about coming out, they wrote a report, the Constable said somebody would be checking the neighbourhood cameras; nobody ever checked because none of my neighbours has ever been approached… Forensics came in and said, 'I can't find any fingerprints in your house.' I'm not that great a housekeeper – I've got news for you, there are fingerprints that are there.

"Do I feel safe? I don't feel safe; I'm a victim."

Reynolds said she would like to see more police patrols within Aurora and for YRP officers to take neighbourhood streets on shift changes, rather than busy thoroughfares like Yonge and Wellington, when on their rounds to add increased community presence in a way that wouldn't impact Police budgets or time.

"We could be a leader in crime prevention," she concluded.

Measures suggested by McCleave included lights on local trail systems, for direct notification to residents when a crime occurs in their neighbourhoods, and potentially the use of drones for nighttime patrol.

Da Silva said he "understood" that communities were feeling unsafe and stressed he was in no way trying to "minimize" the impact crime has had on them.

"I want to reassure you that we hear you and we understand," he said. "If we know there are vulnerabilities there, then we can do certain things to make sure our officers are proactive in what they do."

He encouraged everyone to keep an eye on their community in an "informal" Neighbourhood Watch program.

"You don't need a formalized program; all you need are eyes and ears of the community to say, 'I know what is happening in my neighbourhood and I know that F150 shouldn't be there and I perhaps should pick up the phone [and make] the enquiry.'"

He also said patrols like the ones cited by McCleave were always what the YRP was looking for.

"Don't take the main streets – go through the neighbourhoods, that will make a big difference. I can tell you that is something we will take away and definitely enact. I hope the next time we meet, you can say that you actually saw a police officer not just once, but more than once."

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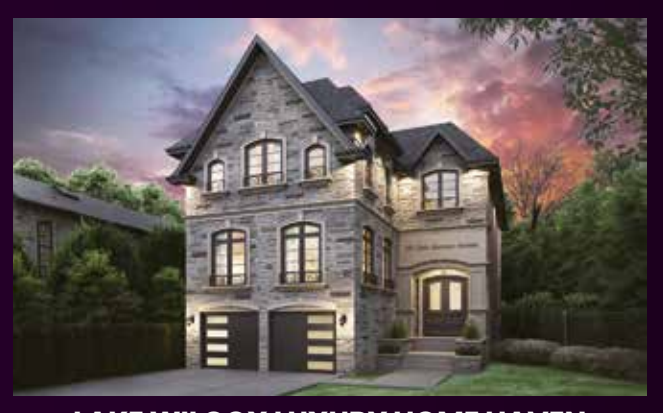

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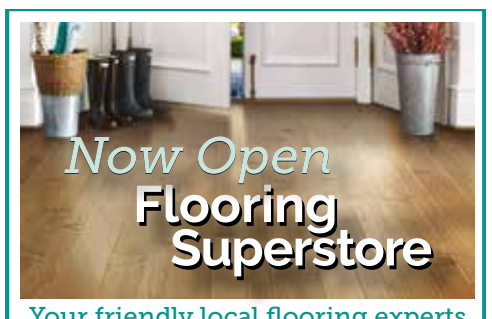

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A season-end interview with Aurora Tigers' Owner and Governor Jim Thomson

Contributed photo

Jim Thomson

Aurora Tigers' General Manager Sierra Costa departs hockey club to seek "different opportunities"

By Jim Stewart

It's been a turbulent season in Tiger Town and team owner Jim Thomson made headlines last week when he announced that his General Manager of two years, Sierra Costa, would be leaving the OJHL organization.

During a phone interview on Friday afternoon, Thomson provided context for Costa's end-of-season departure.

"It was a mutual decision where it was Sierra's time to move on—she's looking at different opportunities. She did a great job for us to build our roster and then un-build it when we made the decision to make the team younger and trade our older players to contenders. Sierra's departure was not a results-based decision."

Thomson applauded Costa's managerial qualities as demonstrated during her two-year career with the Tigers.

"Sierra is a wonderful young lady—organized, prepared, professional. The PWHL should take note of this young lady's commitment, hard work, and determination. There would be some great opportunities for Sierra in the PWHL."

Although Thomson's General Manager is leaving the organization, the former Los Angeles King is retaining his entire coaching staff.

Comprised of Head Coach Thomas Milne, Assistant Coach and Goalie Coach Dave Goverde, and Assistant Coaches James Thomson and Darcy Roy, this quartet of coaches soldiered bravely through what Shakespeare once described as a "winter of discontent."

Thomson explained his decision: "Our agreement with the coaching staff was to develop during tough times. Tom Milne's experience and success in the OJHL—his ability to develop systems and a team culture—are important skills for our Head Coach going forward. We'll reload our roster with a fresh start for the entire staff. It's similar to having Patrick Roy come in mid-season to coach a struggling Islanders club and staying to start a new season in the Fall to create a fresh start with his hockey club."

The fresh start will be welcomed by the young Tigers players who were thrown into a cauldron at Christmas, including Carson Littlejohn and Josh Frenette. Both players were prized acquisitions in the blockbuster trade that saw Tigers' leading scorer Ryan Evenhuis and Captains Peter Lopes and Ethan Lindsay sent to the contending Toronto Junior Canadiens.

Thomson noted that "Both Carson and Josh needed the opportunity to develop which they weren't going to get in Toronto."

"Both players will be crucial parts of the team, along with Matar, Oletic, Baston, Cervjakovs, Rispin, Longo, Castiglione, and Schiavone who all improved during a tough season. They all got their reps and experience. We're expecting this core to be good—to create opportunities to win every game."

Thomson added that his current and projected roster of the 2024-25 Tigers will be a playoff contender:

"This group gets us to the playoffs and we want to develop these kids into scholarship candidates. Getting these kids exposure to NCAA and USports schools will be a big focus for us. In ten years, we've secured over 30 scholarships for USports and NCAA Division 1 or Division 3 schools. Three of our current players are in the process of committing to NCAA scholarships."

Although it was one of the most challenging seasons in his decade of Tigers ownership, Thomson still relishes the opportunity to enter the Aurora Community Centre and be a central part of a hockey team's culture.

"Being a hockey player all my life, I still enjoy walking into the arena and being part of a team. It's satisfying seeing the kids play a lot—our young men had a lot of wins away from the wins column this past season. Only one team lifts the Buckland Cup.

"What did we do after 56 games to help this young group develop? It was so rewarding to see them go through and endure a tough season. There was lots of learning from the losses and the team got stronger as they fought through adversity. There was so much learning by this group and so much growth as they were challenged in so many hockey games by older teams. These were life lessons about development that they will need in a workplace someday."

One of the most pleasing developments that Thomson noted was the stability provided by 6'5" call-up goaltender Christopher Thompson who transitioned seamlessly from the PJHL Schomberg Cougars to the OJHL Tigers.

"Chris came in as a 19-year-old goaltender. He helped stabilize the roster position with his size and agility. Chris will be working with Goaltending Coach Dave Coverde during the offseason. He steadied the team during a really tough stretch of the schedule and made the team more competitive. Based on his work during the last month of the season, Chris deserves the opportunity to earn the #1 goaltending position on next year's team."

The 2023-24 Tigers finished eleventh in the OJHL's 12-team Eastern Conference with a 13-37-2-4 record for 32 points—four points behind the 10th-place Pickering Panthers and a distant 29 points behind 8th-place Stouffville who claimed the final playoff spot.

The 2024-25 Tigers will need to make a 30-point improvement from season to season to achieve their goal to be playoff contenders.

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March 2024

Jasmine Sampson

École secondaire catholique Renaissance

Jasmine Sampson is a standout grade 12 student-athlete at ESC Renaissance in Aurora and a worthy recipient of the Future Hall of Famer of the Month for March.

According to Zachari Deschatelets, Athletic Director at ESC Renaissance, "Jasmine's commitment to both her studies and her sport is truly commendable, reflecting not only a strong work ethic but also a passion for personal growth and achievement. Her accomplishments in volleyball and cross-country have not only brought accolades to our school but also serve as an inspiring example for her fellow students. Jasmine embodies the ideal balance between academics and athletics, making a lasting impact on our school community."

Jasmine demonstrates a remarkable blend of academic excellence and athletic prowess. As a dedicated team player, Jasmine exhibits leadership qualities both on and off the court and her positive and collaborative approach with her teammates were key to the school's participation at the 2024 OFSAA Girls' A Volleyball Championship this month in Elliot Lake, Ontario.

Now that the calendar has turned to spring, Jasmine has her sights set on participating on the badminton, ultimate frisbee and track and field teams for the Phénix to close out her high school career. Within her school environment, she enjoys taking the lead in organizing Intramurals at Renaissance and is a valued member of the school's Student Council.

Always on the go, Jasmine enjoys her employment as a lifeguard at the Magna Centre and the Ray Twinney Recreation Complex in Newmarket.

In the fall, Jasmine is targeting either Brock University (Physical Education) or the University of Guelph. In a perfect world, she would love to use her affinity for fitness, sports and recreation to become a physical education teacher in the future.

Congratulations and best of luck with your post-secondary academic and athletic goals, Jasmine!

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Aurora's Ryan Nembhard and the Gonzaga Bulldogs advance to "The Sweet Sixteen" as March Madness consumes local sports fans

By Jim Stewart

Point guard Ryan Nembhard and the NCAA Gonzaga Bulldogs are off to "The Sweet Sixteen" with a decisive 89-68 win over the #4-seeded Kansas Jayhawks in Salt Lake City on Saturday afternoon.

Nembhard's persistent performance versus the Jayhawks was noted by The Associated Press: "Making all the Bulldogs look good was Ryan Nembhard who blew off a rough shooting night (1 for 6) and finished with 12 assists."

The Aurora-born NCAA star broke Gonzaga's single-season assist record (235) on Saturday. Nembhard joined Gonzaga through the Transfer Portal in Summer, 2023 after playing two seasons for the Creighton University Blue Jays.

In Gonzaga's first game in the "March Madness" tournament on Thursday, Nembhard's 5th-seeded Bulldogs trounced McNeese State 86-65. The graduate of St. Jerome Elementary School in Aurora compiled 8 points, 9 assists, 2 rebounds, and 1 steal in the "Round of 64" win over the 12th-seeded Cowboys.

HOMETOWN TALENT THRIVING IN NBA AND NHL

In addition to Aurora-born Ryan Nembhard's achievements on the NCAA hard court in Salt Lake City, it's been a big week for two professional athletes born in Aurora.

Nembhard's older brother, Andrew, turned in a fine performance versus Golden State in San Francisco on Friday night.

The second-year Pacer point guard fired 17 points on a nice 7 for 11 shooting night as Indianapolis defeated the Warriors 123-111.

Playing alongside former Raptor Pascal Siakim, Nembhard distributed 5 assists and pulled down 5 rebounds versus Golden State. He was also the primary defender against Steph Curry who was held to 25 points on 6 for 18 shooting.

Nembhard—a former star with the Gonzaga Bulldogs – earned praise from Indianapolis Head Coach Rick Carlisle for his defensive work versus the NBA's greatest three-point shooter:

"Any time you hold Steph Curry to under 30 points in his building, you've done an amazing job."

In addition to Nembhard's amazing work in the NBA, Aurora-born Robert Thomas is leading the NHL's St. Louis Blues in scoring this season.

The veteran Blues centre appears headed to the best offensive production of his six-year career. A Stanley Cup champion with the Blues in 2019, Thomas has scored 23 goals and dished out 50 assists this season.

His 73-point total ranks him 21st in the NHL scoring race.

St. Louis is in a dog fight with Vegas for the last Wild Card spot in the Western Conference playoff race so Thomas will be playing very meaningful hockey over the next few weeks as the NHL regular season draws to a close.

He scored two goals versus the Ducks on March 17 to lead the Blues to a 4-2 victory.

It seems a cinch that Thomas will surpass his career-best offensive production set in 2021-22 when he collected 77 points on 20 goals and 57 assists during his fourth season in the league.

Thomas has spent his entire career with St. Louis—the team that drafted him 20th in Round 1 in 2017.

Keeping track of the expatriate Tigers: Ten former Tigers contributing to 2023-24 OJHL Playoff Teams

By Jim Stewart

The following ten players—rostered by the Junior A Tigers during the 2022-23 and/or 2023-24 seasons—were either traded or waived by the Aurora hockey club over the past two seasons and have contributed to their new teams' playoff runs this Spring.

Stanojevic, Lindsay, Van Weelie, Lopes, Crandall, Hampel, and Urzomarzo are thriving on strong Elite 8 teams who are competing in Round 2 of the OJHL playoffs:

1. Lucas Stanojevic—Forward—#19 Cobourg Cougars—1G and 2A in 5 playoff games;

2. Luke Hampel—Defense—#7 Trenton Golden Hawks—1G and 1A in 4 playoff games;

3. Ethan Lindsay—Forward—#12 Toronto Junior Canadiens—1G and 2 A in 7 playoff games;

4. Connor Van Weelie—Forward—#26 Toronto Junior Canadiens—3G and 6A in 7 playoff games;

5. Peter Lopes—Defense—#8 Toronto Junior Canadiens—1G and 0A in 7 playoff games;

6. Glen Crandall—Goalie—#72 Milton Menace—2W and a 1.23 GAA in 3 playoff games;

7. Sett Urzomarzo—Forward—#15 Milton Menace—2G and 1A in 4 playoff games;

8. Andrew Tsotsos—Forward—#7 Burlington Cougars—0G and 0A in 4 playoff games;

9. Carter Real—Forward—#16 Burlington Cougars—1G and 0A in 4 playoff games;

10. Jonah Ziskinder—Defense—#4 Brantford 99ers—0G and 0A in 4 playoff games.

Community volunteers needed for upcoming Southlake Run

Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The community is warming up for the 2024 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake on April 28, but volunteers are always needed to ensure the event continues to be a resounding success for Southlake Regional Health Centre and the communities it serves.

Volunteers are essential before and on event day, according to the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation, including stuffing race kits, plotting out wayfinding, sorting corrals on race day and, of course, cheering on participants.

Volunteer positions are available for anyone high school-age or older, but if you are a student, the time you contribute to the event will count towards community service hours.

"Anyone who is willing to come out and spend a morning to contribute would be a good volunteer," says Southlake Run board member John Firman, who first got involved with the event as a volunteer when it was hosted in Aurora nearly 15 years ago. "There is all kinds of stuff to do, so you don't have to be an athlete! All you need to be a good volunteer is the willingness to come out and help.

"There is not a lot of real expertise required. We have people helping hand out water on the run, we have people helping cheer people along, people who help out if there is entertainment somewhere, maybe helping set that up and clean up the food stations and things like that at the end of the Run – a variety of tasks. We encourage people to go to the Run for Southlake website and take a look at the opportunities that are available because we show them online as well."

Asked why people should consider volunteering, Firman stressed that although Southlake is based in Newmarket, it is Aurora's hospital as well – as well as for portions of northern York Region and south Simcoe County.

"Sadly, at some point in our life, we will need a hospital," he says. "I look at this as an investment in the future. When you think about all the things that aren't funded by the Province, whether it be something big and fancy like a CT scanner or the basics that we don't usually think of, like just an IV pole, the little things – all that is funded by fundraising and other revenue streams. To me, it's an investment in your future – you're investing in the day you may need those services yourself and you need to be there.

"This is our hospital. We as the community need to support it to make sure the hospital has all the resources we as individuals may need for ourselves and our families in the future. Any way you can support is valuable, whether it is volunteering, running yourself, or sponsoring someone else who is running. At the end of it, all of it goes to support our hospital and it needs our support. For people who are participating, the registration dollars really cover the costs for our event. That's where the fundraising piece is so important: that's the money that actually comes to the hospital. Once you've registered, all you've done is paid for the costs for the event and we really encourage everyone to do that extra step and do the fundraising to get their friends, neighbourhood and families to sponsor them so we can generate those dollars that are needed for the hospital itself."

For more information on the 2024 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, including volunteer opportunities, registration, and how to sponsor and support an individual or team, visit runforsouthlake.ca.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 30

Celebrate Easter with the Easter Bunny themselves today at the Town's annual Hello Spring event at the Aurora Seniors' Centre from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. $5 wristbands required purchased in advance. Explore various spring themed outdoor and interactive activities such as flowering planting, crafts, face painting, egg fishing, hopstacle course, story walk and more. You can even have your photo taken with the Easter Bunny! For more, visit aurora.ca/hellospring.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6

The Aurora Cultural Centre is thrilled to present dazzling santur musician Amir Amiri (CBC Artist of the Year – 2003 Galaxie Rising Stars) in performance. Born in Tehran and living in Canada since 1996, Amiri has reputation for transporting this ancient, 72-string instrument in the Persian musical tradition into a musical conversation for our time. Persian percussionist (tonbak, daf) Naghmeh Farahmand, who has toured in internationally and performed with Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, opens the show. Tickets $40 (HST incl). Show at 7:30 pm; location – Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria Street. For information, or to purchase, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca, or call the Box Office at 905 713-1818.

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

The Town of Aurora will host its annual Spring Cleanup Day today beginning at 8 a.m. in various locations throughout the Town. Targeted locations include: John West Way; Alex Brodie Drivel Vandorf Sideroad; River Ridge Boulevard; Earl Stewart Drive; Issacson Court; Henderson Drive *(Yonge Street to Watts Meadow)*; Stone Road; First Commerce Drive; Desjardins Way; William Graham Drive; Old Bloomington Road; St. John's Sideroad; Industrial Parkway North and South; Bayview; Yonge Street; Wellington Street East and West; All storm water management ponds. For registration and further information, visit aurora.ca/en/town-services/garbage-recycling-and-ewaste-events.aspx.

****

York Symphony Orchestra Presents: Classical Masterworks tonight at 8 p.m. Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria St, Aurora L4G 1R3. YSO's next concert features the overture to Rosamunde by Schubert followed by two of the great long-form pieces of the late classical period: Beethoven's "nearly Romantic" Third Piano Concerto, with soloist Isabel Misquitta-Yip, and Mendelssohn's inspiring Symphony No. 5, "The Reformation Symphony." Tickets at Eventbrite.ca or at the door.

SATURDAY, APRIL 27

The Aurora Cultural Centre presents multiple Juno and Canadian Folk Music Award nominee Julian Taylor in concert. "A unique and important voice on the Canadian Folk Music Scene" - The Globe & Mail. Supporting act Tania Joy opens the show. Tickets $40 (HST incl); show location NC Aurora Armoury, 89 Mosley St. Time 7:30 pm. For information, and to purchase visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca, or call the Box Office at 905 713-1818.

ONGOING

The Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts (#MCOYA24) exhibition featuring over 100 artworks from Aurora's graduating grade 12 artists. Gallery Hours Monday – Saturday, 8 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.; admission is at no charge. Be sure to check out the new offsite pop-up MCOYA installation of past student artworks from Aurora High School at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex! For information, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca.

****

The Aurora Cultural Centre is excited to introduce ASAP, a free weekly after school art program for high-school-aged youth in Aurora, hosted at the Centre's temporary gallery at Aurora Town Hall (second floor). Running every Thursday from February 22 – March 21, 2024, with drop-in hours between 4.30 – 6.30 p.m. With a goal to provide students of all backgrounds and identities with a consistent, reliable, and safe space to create freely, and build their own artistic community, any high school-aged student is welcome to drop in to work on art projects, meet other artistically-driven peers, gain advice from the professional Gallery team, or simply hang out. Please note that parking and entry to this program is through the Upper/North entrance of Aurora Town Hall only. For more information, visit AuroraCulturalentre.ca.

****

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

****

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

GETTING THINGS DONE

From page 12

This unsustainable practice underscores the importance of the funds announced by the Province, marking a positive step towards ensuring our communities have the necessary infrastructure to continue thriving and growing.

I will be waiting for the particulars of the newly announced Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program to see how our Town stands to gain in accessing this critical funding.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by email tmrakas@aurora.ca or by phone 905-726-4746. I am here for you.

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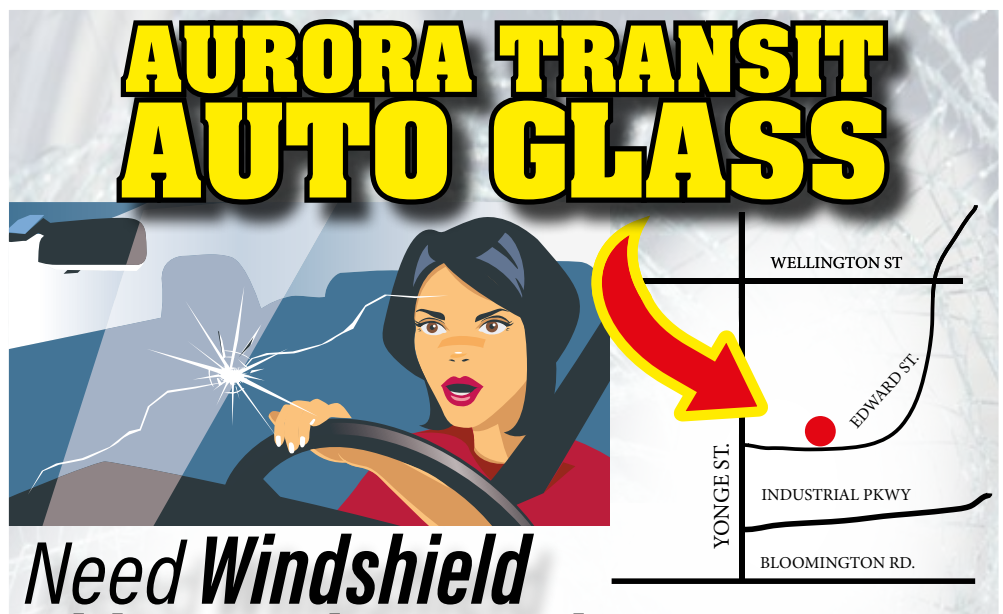

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OBITUARY

Jeanne Winter (MacDonald)

Passed away peacefully with family by her side on February 28, 2024, in her 89th year.

Jeanne joined her beloved husband Grant, cherished son Larry, and parents Laura Cain & Samuel Maitland MacDonald.

Beloved Mother to Glenn (Robin), Gary (Kelly), Colleen (Peter) & Gregory. Proud Grama to Falyn, Dara, Samantha, Karina, Kristine, Katie, Lindsay, Jesse, Cody & Callie, and special Gigi to many.

Jeanne was proud of her sports accomplishments, especially her teams' induction into the Newmarket hall of fame for 1953, 1955 and 1956 wins in the Ontario Provincial Championships. Jeanne was also a talented figure skater, which is where she initially caught Grant's eye.

A Celebration of Jeanne's life will be held March 30th. Join us anytime between 1 & 4pm at the Aurora Legion for a casual "Drop In" with family and friends.

Sincere thanks to the amazing care teams at Kingsway Place Retirement Residence, Home & Community Care and Margaret Bahen Hospice.

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