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Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 26 No. 48 905-727-3300

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FREE

Week of September 11, 2025



New turf field will be lasting home for Aurora Barbarians rugby club

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

has a new place to call home.

Members of the local rugby organization were joined by members of Council, MP Costas Menegakis, and MPP Michael ages. Parsa, among others, for the official dedication of a new artificial turf field at towards the project, while supplying the

Sheppard's Bush on Saturday afternoon.

Built to World Rugby Standards, the field features LED lighting, a digital scoreboard, The Aurora Barbarians Football Club seating for up to 400 spectators, fullyequipped changerooms for the "Barbs" and the visiting team, and much more –

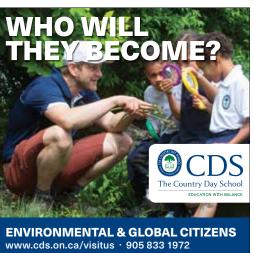
goal posts and changing rooms. The Town of Aurora provided the balance.

"For decades, the Barbarians have been at the heart of our sports community, building a sense of belonging, inspiring young athletes, and helping establish including flexibility for other sports for all Aurora as a true sports hub," said Mayor Mrakas, who was joined at the event by The Barbs contributed \$1 million Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Ward 4

Continued on page 20













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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

September 11, 2025



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Thursday, September 11	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Tuesday, September 16	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Finance Advisory Committee
Tuesday, September 16	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Public Planning
Wednesday, September 17	6:30 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board (6:30-7 p.m. Public Meeting) (Rescheduled from Sep 10)
Wednesday, September 17	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board
Thursday, September 18	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
Tuesday, September 23	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, September 23	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Wednesday, September 24	10 a.m.	Video Conference	Mayor's Golf Classic Funds Committe
Wednesday, September 24	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee
Thursday, September 25	10 a.m.	Video Conference	Aurora Appeal Tribunal/Property Standards Committee (if required)
Monday, October 6	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Heritage Advisory Committee
Tuesday, October 7	9:30 a.m.	Newmarket CC	Joint Council Committee (CYFS)
Wednesday, October 8	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, October 9	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment

*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 Artists: Artists of Aurora - Presented by The Royal Rose Gallery

This September, Royal Rose Gallery proudly presents a special exhibition showcasing the creative spirit of first-time members of the Aurora Group of Artists. Bringing together a diverse collection of works, this show celebrates fresh perspectives and emerging talent within our local arts community. Visitors will experience an inspiring range of styles and subjects, reflecting each artist's unique journey and voice. Join us in supporting and discovering these new members as they share their work with the public for the very first time. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE WASTE COLLECTION

Wednesday, September 24, 2025 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Aurora Public Library Lebovic Room - 1st Floor

aurora.ca/Waste





CYFS Annual Open House

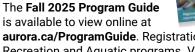
You're Invited!

Join Central York Fire Services for their Annual Open House on Saturday, September 20 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Station 4-5, located at 300 Earl Stewart Drive, Aurora. This family-friendly event is packed with fun activities, tasty food, and exciting demonstrations - perfect for all ages! Come meet your local firefighters, explore the station, and learn about fire safety in a hands-on, engaging way.

Save the date and bring the whole family!



Fall 2025 Program Guide



aurora.ca/ProgramGuide. Registration is open for Recreation and Aquatic programs. View the interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., S.A.R.C. or A.T.S.

Notice - S.A.R.C. Pool Closure

The S.A.R.C. Pool will be closed September 2 to 14 for annual maintenance. During this pool closure, lots of swim times will be available at the A.F.L.C. Pool. View the full swim schedule at aurora.ca/Aquatics.



aurora.ca/Cleanup

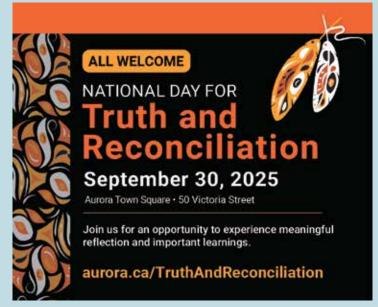


What's Happening









Aurora Town Hall

Accessible Formats











Police Chief calls for legislative change following rash of York Region crimes

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Federal and Provincial governments need to work together to get tough on crime, according to York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween.

The Police Chief called for action last week at a press conference at the YRP's Aurora headquarters. The conference related to two recent high-profile crimes in Vaughan and Richmond Hill.

The murder of Abdul Aleem Farooqi in Vaughan amid a home invasion Police described as "targeted" took place in the early hours of Sunday, August 31, while, the following morning, Police responded to an arson in Richmond Hill which left one 11-year-old girl dead and four others hospitalized.

McSween described these and other incidents as taking place during "a particularly violent few weeks in York Region, which is both concerning and, of course, disappointing to all of us."

"We understand the concern and attention these incidents have garnered," he said. "The York Regional Police and I personally am committed to keeping our community safe and providing support for these victims and their families. The gravity of these incidents will not be overlooked and each case will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, and those responsible will be held accountable.

"For those of you who are concerned about the spike in violent crime we saw in the last two weeks, we hear you and we are definitely listening.

taking proactive measures to prevent to the entire community, including violent crime wherever possible. We institutions and families, to ensure are increasing patrols in hotspot areas our kids have positive influences and across our Region. We're working with opportunities to keep them away from our team of crime analysts and our crime and on a path to success. And, partner agencies across the Greater if they do get into trouble, we need Toronto Area, and our investigators to ensure they're being rehabilitated are working diligently to arrest those effectively so they don't re-offend." responsible and ensure they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the going to be solved by further funding"

But, ensuring public safety is a "shared responsibility" and he called on members of the public to call police if they see something suspicious, and on upper levels of government to do their part as well.

actors in the criminal justice system to do their part in keeping violent offenders where they belong: off the Park. I've provided comments on streets," he said, calling for reforms bail reform, so have many of my to the bail system. "This is about risk management, hard stop. Each and every day, our officers risk their own personal safety to remove these moved the needle collectively because criminals from the streets and yet I of the violent incidents in our Region, becomes our issue, it's too late, so we we are arresting repeat offenders over need to do something about this issue and over again.... This is not about around bail and about keeping those broken and we need to ensure justice is be on the streets. If that's done, in served and violent criminals are not on its rawest form, if we were to keep our streets when they pose a significant those that are committing violent risk to all of our communities."

Another trend, he said, was a "spike" in violent crime committed by youths.

these criminal organizations, but, as

That's why York Regional Police is they say, it takes a village, and it's up

These issues, he contended, are "not or another task force, but instead by "the whole system working together and focusing on public safety as a key component and making it victimcentred, so we're focusing on victims and not over-relying on talking about accused people who are actually the "It means we need the help of all ones who are making the choices to victimize our community."

"I've been down at Queen's colleagues across the GTA, and here we are again talking about it, and it seems like in some cases...we have not this is not just a police issue," said am disappointed to report that many MacSween. "Unfortunately, when it politics. It's about safety. The system's people off the streets that shouldn't crimes, crimes related to firearms, off the streets when they should be, we would see reductions. We would see "As young people continue to be less victimization and less opportunity recruited and exploited by criminal to commit crimes against people who networks, York Regional Police is are simply trying to live their lives and working hard to disrupt and dismantle raise their families in York Region and beyond."

YRP Chief defends "compliance" message after string of high-profile crimes

BY BROCK WEIR

EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Comments from York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween on how residents can protect themselves amid a rash of recent crimes drew ire from community members last week - and a clarification on the part of the Chief.

Speaking out on recent highprofile crimes in Vaughan and Richmond Hill, MacSween was asked to comment on remarks made by Premier Doug Ford on the right to defend one's own home.

While McSween said he had "no concerns" with the Premier's recent comments, he said that unless laws change, "we know the best defence for most people is to comply."

"It sometimes can fall on deaf ears when members feel like they have to take matters into their own hands, and the only thing I'd say is, if we are going to rely on our community members to take matters into their own hands to solve this problem, we'll have all failed our community.

"I'll leave the political comments to the politicians and let them have those conversations, but for now, the laws are written [and] we'll follow those laws."

Ahead of the Chief fielding that question, the York Regional Police outlined a number of recommendations residents should follow "to remain vigilant of their surroundings."

These included: ensure your home surveillance systems are functioning and recording; ensure your home alarm systems are functioning and

Continued on page 6







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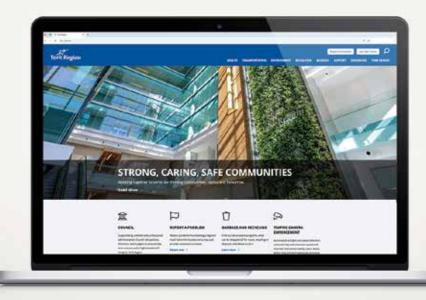
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Celebrating Trees and Community at the Aurora Arboretum

On Saturday, September 20, the Community Arboretum Aurora will welcome Canada's beloved tree advocate, Professor Pricklethorn, for a special event celebrating the wonder of trees and the importance of urban green spaces.

This event is free, family-friendly, and open to all — offering an interactive and entertaining experience that blends fun with environmental education. As a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization, we're proud to bring this kind of programming to Aurora and invite residents of all ages to join us under the canopy for an afternoon of connection, learning, and laughter.

Rain or shine, the event will run as planned (indoors at the Aurora Seniors Centre if needed).

To learn more or register, please visit: auroraarboretum.ca/participate/ events.

Aurora Community Arboretum

Region mourns the passing of former CAO Alan Wells

On behalf of York Regional Council and the residents of The Regional Municipality of York, I extend our deepest condolences on the passing of Alan Wells, York Region's former Chief Administrative Officer.

Mr. Wells joined York Region in 1975 as Director of Programs and Budgets. He went on to serve as Commissioner of Social Services, Deputy CAO and then Chief Administrative Officer from 1995 until his retirement in 2002. For more than 27 years, Alan's dedication and devotion to public service guided York Region through a time of tremendous growth, challenges and transformation.

As CAO, he led the organization through one of the most complex periods in municipal governance, marked by significant provincial downloading of services which included ambulance, social housing, child care, transit and provincial offences courts. He successfully led negotiations on long-term water supply, oversaw the Region's first Transportation Master Plan and championed initiatives such as the Water for Tomorrow program, the Region's Greening Strategy and protections for the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Known for his wisdom, integrity ability complex to master issues, Mr. Wells' steady leadership helped modernize York Region's administration, strengthen a focus on human services and lay the foundation for the modern, progressive Regional government we are today. His contributions will continue to benefit communities for generations to

We are deeply grateful for his service and lasting legacy. Our prayers are with his family, friends and all those who had the privilege of working alongside him.

at the York Region Administrative Centre in the Town of Newmarket have been lowered to halfmast in tribute to Alan Wells.

> Eric Jolliffe York Region Chairman and CEO

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



Commuting sometimes gets a bad rap but it needn't. Depending on how you commute, there are some opportunities to be had.

If you're not driving yourself to work, an hour or so on the bus or train can give you some time to plan for the day ahead, or unwind from the day that was. It gives you some time to polish off a book, catch up on emails, or simply to catch up with loved ones around the world, as I've seen so many on video calls doing just that.

When I became a more regular commuter in February of 2024, I dreaded the prospect, but soon came to enjoy the time with a good book, getting the day in order, or, on the occasional mornings that began at an ungodly hour, catching up on a few missed winks before the day began in

As anyone who takes transit can attest, however, mornings and evenings are not always quiet hours that allow for contemplation. Sometimes, it involves having what's sometimes described as the

On one of my first commutes from where I'm now living, my quiet time with a new novel was once interrupted by some sort of domestic squabble at the back of the vehicle. While the couple in question seemed to be enjoying their verbal sparring, which was occasionally punctuated by a thwack with a backpack in either direction, it was, of course, disruptive.

Attempts to kick the brawlers of the bus were unsuccessful, so they decided to shuffle the rest of us onto a waiting vehicle while transit officials stayed with the loving couple fish to try. until police arrived.

Outside of the commute, the GO Train ride home after spending some time in the city can be equally vivid.

While I'm yet to see a couple have an allout war in the Quiet Zone, I have, despite my best efforts, been privy to heated divorce negotiations, thanks to a boom-voiced lawyer sitting adjacent to me, and even a young boy who took the opportunity of the long ride to finally ask his parents where babies came from. Unfortunately, this question was voiced just moments before we arrived at my stop, so while I didn't get to hear what passes for "facts of life" talk these days, I hope the kid got the info he

Another curiosity unfolded earlier this year when I had to take the train back from Toronto on the same evening the Toronto Maple Leafs were eliminated from the

Hopes, as we know, were high amongst the more sports-minded of us, as they are Rye remarks



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

every single year, and it looked like the team was set to go the distance – until being felled in that evening's hurdle.

Needless to say, blood was boiling within some of my fellow passengers, many of whom were swathed from head to toe in blue and white Leafs swag, and there was "theatre of the living" unfold before your no shortage of colourful commentary on country, it's a nuanced conversation as the the ride back, including how only they whoever happened to be speaking – knew what would have righted the ship and taken the home team to the next level. Because,

> Same old, same old, but what really stuck with me was their vehemence, one ripping off his jersey upon getting off the train in York Region and stomping it into the pavement, and another threatening to burn his own jersey, in an effort to stick it to... someone.

The players? They probably had bigger

Management? See above.

MLSE? Well, they've already made a tidy profit from the garment, so chances are they probably wouldn't care.

If the jersey-bearer in question eventually took a match to his shirt, I hope he (a) he took it off first and (b) felt like his point was being made because it probably cost him upwards of a hundred bucks.

I wonder how much Premier Doug Ford's now infamous bottle of Crown Royal

Last week, the Premier caused a stir when, during a press conference in Kitchener, he dramatically poured out a large bottle of the Canadian rye whisky to protest the decision of their parent company, which operates plants out of Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, to close their Amherstburg and stunts.

"This is what I think about Crown Royal," he said, as he poured the liquid level can only take us so far. Hopefully, as with an arm stretching out in front of his Parliament and the Legislature gear up for podium, bearing the oft-seen "Protect

Ontario" banner.

The sound of the trickle against the pavement, coupled with applause from people standing behind him, didn't really speak to what he thought about the company in and of itself, but a recent report from CBC filled in many of the blanks.

"They're sitting around, just absolutely as smug as they come... they're hurting Ontario residents,' Ford said of the company following an unrelated announcement," the CBC reported. "A message to the CEO in France: you hurt my people, I'm going to hurt you. You're gonna feel the pain in February when these people don't have a paycheque.'

"I encourage all Canadians, all Ontarians, stand up for the people, because you don't know if you're next,' Ford said, adding the company was 'a few fries short of a Happy Meal,' and 'dumb as a bag of hammers' for the decision."

While it is important in the middle of a trade war for Canadians to let their wallets do the talking, in our interconnected company in question will keep its plants on either side of Ontario operational, with their headquarters remaining in the GTA. A call to boycott the product might feel good in Ontario, but do we really want to potentially harm workers in Quebec and Manitoba as well? We're all in the same trade boat here, after all.

Pouring out the bottle of rye was certainly a headline-grabbing move, but I couldn't help but think that as far as sending a message to the powers-that-be goes, it was about as effective as the young man on the train stomping his Leafs jersey in a fit of pique or the one who was threatening to set his ablaze.

They shelled out their dough for the jerseys, presumably the Premier or a wellwisher spent upwards of \$60 for the potent potable, and the money spent is still on the companies' bottom lines.

There were valid points made at that podium which were, from my perspective, sacrificed for the visual.

The entire country is fighting the same trade war.

It's a trade war that doesn't seem to be going anywhere, let alone showing any signs of letting up.

It's a fight that's certainly worth fighting, but, if we want to get anywhere, we need more than strongly-worded letters, slogans

The "Elbows Up" sentiment at the Federal level and photo-ops at the Provincial the fall session, we see real action resume.

$m{A}$ urora's Community Newspaper

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Publisher Emeritus

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email: administration@auroran.com

brock@lpcmedia.ca **ADVERTISING**

karen@lpcmedia.ca

zach@lpcmedia.ca **ADVERTISING** Diane Buchanan

GENERAL MANAGER

zach@lpcmedia.ca

heather@caledoncitizen.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER

cynthiap@lpcmedia.ca

TODAYS NEW HOMES

cynthiap@lpcmedia.ca **PHOTOGRAPHY**

CLASSIFIEDS

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER Sheila Ogram sheila@lpcmedia.ca

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EDITOR Brock Weir

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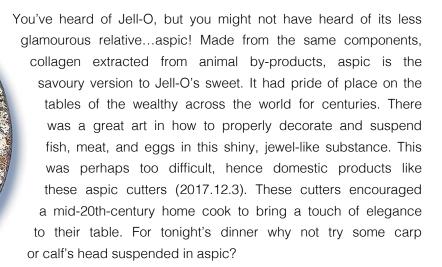


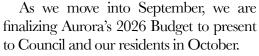
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The Aurora Museum & Archives is...

In Suspension!





The 2026 proposed budget delivers topquality services at exceptional value, with a fiscally responsible 2.9% tax increase keeping Aurora among the municipalities with the lowest tax rates in the GTHA.

This is the People's Budget: a carefully considered plan that meets the needs of today while planning for the future of our families. Over the summer, we heard from many of you through our budget survey, and your input helped shape this budget. Thank you for sharing your priorities with

Recently, an article about Brampton's infrastructure crisis caught my attention. After years of budget freezes—including who voted to give themselves a taxpayermultiple 0% tax increases—Brampton now faces a \$180 million shortfall just to maintain basic infrastructure like roads, bridges, and streetlights. Projects were deferred or cancelled, and long-term planning was ignored. Now, residents are paying the price for short-sighted politics.

municipal budgeting matters—not just for today, but for the long-term health and increase this term. sustainability of our communities.

increase is not fiscally responsible.



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor **Tom Mrakas**

called for a 0% tax increase this budget cycle. Notably, these are the same Councillors funded 42.6% compensation increase. They continue to request more spending in their own wards—more parks, amenities, and services—while failing to acknowledge how those investments are funded.

Thankfully, after hearing from residents, I vetoed the Councillors' proposed It's a stark reminder of why responsible compensation increase, ensuring Aurora taxpayers were not on the hook for a 42.6%

Aurora residents deserve honesty and That's why I have been clear: a 0% tax accountability—especially in decisions that affect the immediate and long-term Here in Aurora, some Councillors have financial health of our community.

Freezing taxes doesn't freeze costs. Every year, the cost of maintaining services and building for tomorrow goes up. Ignoring that only shifts the burden to the future, leaving future councils and residents to clean up the mess.

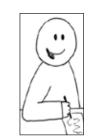
Thoughtful, forward-looking financial planning ensures we avoid the costly consequences of short-term decisions.

Aurora is consistently ranked one of the best places in Canada to live, work, and raise a family. That doesn't happen by accident—it comes from consistent, responsible investments in our Town. Together, we've supported responsible growth, expanded recreation, improved infrastructure, supported local businesses, and protected green spaces—all while keeping taxes among the lowest in the GTHAw.

That balance is achieved through sound fiscal planning.

As your Mayor, I remain committed to putting people before politics. I will continue to champion budgets that reflect your priorities, safeguard our progress, and ensure Aurora remains a vibrant, thriving community—now and for generations to

Thank you to the residents of Aurora for your continued support of a communityfirst vision—one we will keep building on well beyond 2026.



INSIDE AURORA Scott Johnston

Candid Cameras

It's back-to-school time, and as children get prepared for the new school year, drivers in Aurora also have something to prepare for; increased speed enforcement.

Over the summer, the Region has been hard at work installing permanent speed cameras on Wellington and Bloomington, between Bathurst and Yonge Streets.

There also appears to be one on Yonge near St Andrew's College.

All are located in school zones, and meant to provide an extra measure of encouragement for drivers to stick to the lower speed limits in these areas.

These cameras are in addition to the portable cameras that rotate through various areas of Town from time to time.

Based on my own observations, the permanent cameras have not replaced police radar traps. When I drove by the camera on Wellington the other day, which has been working now for a couple of weeks, I subsequently passed a cruiser with a radar gun hidden only about 200 metres away.

Very sneaky, York Region Police.

I assume the thought was that once folks passed the more obvious radar camera, they'd speed up, thinking they were "safe" from being caught.

To be fair, the new photo radar locations are not a big secret. For months there have been signs in these areas announcing they're coming, which have now been updated to confirm they are in place and active.

The exception to this may be the St. Andrews one, which has no signage, so may or may not be working.

These cameras are also being set up in Newmarket, Richmond Hill and other surrounding York Region communities, so it's not just Aurorans who are being targeted. It also means we aren't safe from being photographed if we pick up the speed after crossing out of Town.

As for the new local cameras, I'll be curious to see how Aurorans react to them.

The devices have only recently been brought online, so I doubt anyone's received any tickets yet in the mail, but that won't last long.

It will also be interesting to see how much of a "grace" amount over the limit one can go before being ticketed. For example, in a traditional radar trap, depending on the posted limit, drivers can often go about 10% over the limit before being ticketed.

But that amount varies up or down, and there's no way of knowing what it is.

At the extreme level, there have been a number of reports from Toronto of people being ticketed by permanent speed cameras for going only 1 kilometre over the limit. Yes, going 51 in a 50 zone will net you a fine.

A related consideration is that these cameras are set to allow higher speed limits before 7 a.m. and after 5 p.m. But how exact are the clocks in these things? Will the cameras still think it's before 5 p.m. at two minutes after, and nab you for going

I can see these factors resulting in an increase in folks checking to ensure that the clocks in their cars are accurate and their speedometers properly calibrated.

Hopefully, Aurorans won't react as drastically to the new cameras as our neighbours in Toronto, who in frustration have covered them up and even chopped

The way to avoid all this angst about potential tickets is the most obvious; when out driving in Town, obey the posted speed limits on all our streets.

Also, since any photo radar tickets are associated with the vehicle rather than the driver, you may want to ensure that you carefully vet any lead-footed family or friends who ask to borrow your car in future.

This economic story doesn't end well. Let's change it! OPINION

The natural world is foundational to every aspect of our lives. We all need food, air and water. But nature is not our sole underpinning; stories are also foundational. Without them, we wouldn't

be able to make sense of the world or

create meaning within it.

BY DAVID SUZUKI

Nature sustains human economies. More broadly speaking, economies are built on commonly held stories through which we agree on the means to exchange goods and services and ascribe value to products and labour. Economics is a societal story as are the narratives that propel it.

These narratives can infuse us with longing, contentment or fear (among other emotions). The ones that capitalize on longing or fear are often spun by those with something to gain from their proliferation — those in power seeking to justify their actions, or people selling things.

A successful narrative fuelling policymaking today is that environmental safeguards delay development and hinder extractive activities and are thus obstacles to "progress."

Examples abound. They include passage of British Columbia's Bill 15, the Infrastructure Projects Act, under which ventures "in the provincial interest" (such as mines and fracked gas activities) can be fast-tracked. Similarly, Bill C5, the federal Building Canada Act, enables expediting infrastructure deemed to be in the "national interest."

The recently passed Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act while granting unfettered power to Ontario's premier, cabinet and, by proxy, their "trusted proponents" to disregard environmental and other regulatory

measures in yet-to-be-determined "special" an act "respecting water, source water, economic zones" — including the Ring of Fire, an area of mineral deposits in northern Ontario on First Nations' traditional territories.

These pieces of legislation imply that upholding Indigenous rights also impedes economic progress, as each was designed with the potential to bypass standard processes for consultation, and none embeds Canada's international commitment to obtain free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous nations before approving development.

Politicians advancing these acts have adorned them with imagery of Canadian prosperity, strength and sovereignty in the face of economic uncertainty unleashed by the U.S. administration.

Economic instability provides fertile ground in which fear-based narratives can take hold. The floundering economy in Germany fomented Nazism, the story that subversives and radicals were responsible for the country's economic problems fuelled the military junta in Argentina, and Trump came to power in the U.S. after spinning tales of rigged systems and immigrants stealing jobs.

In Canada, the narrative that environmental protections should be ditched to fast-track resource extraction has been so successful that Ontario and Alberta's premiers wrote to the prime minister demanding that, to "counter the impacts of the United States trade policy," remaining federal environmental protection measures should be repealed including the Impact Assessment Act, discards the Endangered Species Act, Clean Electricity Regulations, Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act and Species at Risk Act. They even had the gall to demand that the federal

government "refrain from reintroducing"

drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on First Nation lands."

Indigenous land and rights defenders have been among the most vocal opponents of these deregulation initiatives. In Ontario, nine First Nations issued a legal challenge to strike down Ontario's Bill 5 and the federal Bill C5, arguing that, "delay results from Crown choices and unwieldy bureaucracies, not from First Nations," and asserting that, "Making changes now in some effort to 'streamline' (or ram through) projects, cannot be at the cost of First Nations, their rights, the Constitution and reconciliation."

We often buy into mainstream narratives without realizing it. Many people simply accept the story that regulations to protect the environment are an unnecessary hindrance, despite evidence that Canada's existing safeguards have been insufficient to halt or reverse biodiversity loss.

No one can force us to accept the stories spun by others. We are free to articulate stories of our own that counter those prioritizing short-term economic gains from resource extraction over longterm planning for a healthy future. Many of us share stories of Canada wherein Indigenous rights and responsibilities are upheld, and the knowledge that we can't have healthy economies without healthy ecosystems to support them is recognized. These stories don't merely reflect back a different reality; they help to shape a different future.

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with David Suzuki Foundation Boreal Project Manager Rachel Plotkin. Learn more at davidsuzuki.org

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



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CRISP AIR AT MARKET





The crisper air is a sign of the coming fall, but the Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair remains a hot shopping destination each Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., through to the end of October. (TOP) Brian made a play on a larger-than-life checker board. (ABOVE) Live music was offered at the band shell by James Brown. Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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YRP Chief defends "compliance" message after string of high-profile crimes

From page 3

audible; have a cell phone charged and available in case of emergency; of broader, nationwide conversations ensure you have sufficient lighting on about citizens' personal safety - I the exterior of your residence and that sight lines to entrance points are clear; the feelings of pain and anger boiling ensure all of your locking mechanisms to the surface in our community. And I are working and in good order; and be understand why people feel the need to a good neighbour and look out for each

The YRP also recommended having a safety plan shared with your family in matters into their own hands, it had the case of emergency, and this includes nothing to do with politics, or with ensuring all persons in a residence have concern over force used against the a readily-accessible cell phone; and perpetrators of home invasions. It making one's home "less attractive to was suggested as a tactic in the hopes becoming a target."

not to engage with the suspects or put lives cannot. up resistance. Comply with demands for your property that are being made to ensure additional violence is not targeted towards you or your family."

however, was criticized quickly out of further statement on Friday to clarify his stance.

of guidance I provided to citizens in their own safety, and the safety of their the event that they are faced with an loved ones."

armed intruder at their home," he said. "Following these crimes and in light understand this reaction. I understand fight back, and are dissatisfied with any direction to do otherwise.

"When I told citizens not to take of preserving lives, should citizens be "Don't keep excessive valuables confronted with an armed intruder. within your residence," they said. "Most When it comes to defending property, importantly, we're encouraging you material items can be replaced - but

"There is no one piece of advice to offer to citizens who are faced with an intruder in their home – but calling 9-1-1 immediately and avoiding The message of compliance, engagement with the suspects has proven to be an effective course of the gate, causing MacSween to issue a action. These situations are dynamic, chaotic, and difficult to assess in the moment. Ultimately, a citizen should do "Some took exception to a piece what they deem necessary to preserve



info@cabinetmagic.ca www.cabinetmagic.ca

Plans to improve look, function of Yonge Street Promenade take shape



Image courtesy of the Town of Aurora

September 25 Public Meeting will focus on streetscape improvements

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM

the Yonge Street Promenade from Wellington to Church Streets will be the focus of a September 25 open house at Aurora Town Square.

Revitalization of the Aurora Promenade has been a long-running topic of conversation throughout received budget approval to proceed the community, and streetscape improvements have been discussed for more than a decade.

Following public input this month, the plan will continue to take shape

downtown core will be "redesigned The concept is very preliminary and

with streetscape improvements" in key sections of the corridor "to enhance public space, integrate the downtown business core with the constructed Aurora Town Square, and address required rehabilitation of existing infrastructure."

under Elements consideration Streetscape improvements along include street light pole upgrades, sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, signage and entry feature, modifications to improve accessibility, street furniture and trees, and a look at both parking and traffic flow.

"Just recently in 2024 we finally with a detailed design for this project," says Garry Anggawinata, Municipal Engineer and Project Manager. "We're finally taking that conceptual plan and developing it until a full detailed design. before options are presented to Council. We're also assessing other opportunities According to the Town, the historic under this project that we can address.

iteration we'll be presenting.

in the traffic layout of the Yonge corridor. additional traffic lights and signals. It restrictions on some of the lanes just to alleviate traffic congestion. As well, the on-street parking. The first iteration components of the design."

September 25 meeting, as well as on as well. the Engage Aurora platform, will result in a "more refined vision of the about pedestrian walkability, how conceptional plan" and more detailed they find accessibility, especially if elements such as streetscape features you're walking round Town Square and landscaping will take shape in the and along Yonge Street. We want to future.

and see what the needs are in terms of area."

Ahead of the September 25 meeting, public realm."

"I think it's important for residents, business owners and anyone in the area who may be affected by this project says. "It democratizes the process a bit, so it's not just one engineer making all visit engageaurora.ca/streetscape.

I imagine we'll have multiple of these the decisions or one political individual kinds of events, but this will be the first making all the decisions on what to do and how to proceed with this project. I "For these conceptual plans, the think it's important to get feedback from main focus is basically improvement various different parties and different people to hear everyone's concerns, That basically hear everyone's ideas and thoughts involves modifications to some of the because there may be some good ideas lane configurations. Perhaps at busy and good feedback as well that maybe intersections, we might consider adding the Town or consultants didn't take some pedestrian crosswalks or some into consideration. It's important to get everyone involved and try to hear may involve imposing some turning from all the different groups and parties who may be impacted by the project. At the end of the day, our objective is we've also assessed parking spots and to have a final product that everyone tried to identify ways we can optimize can enjoy, that the Town and residents can be happy with, and that business basically involves mostly the traffic owners also, especially along the Yonge Street area that can have a space that Feedback on the designs at the fully optimizes the business operations,

"We're looking to hear from people hear about parking and what it's like "We're just trying to gauge the public driving through the area, how easy it is to find parking, or if they find that pedestrian walkways, parking spots and it's quite tricky and difficult. If there's things like that, and how we can make not enough parking spaces, we'd like the downtown area more attractive to hear more about that and find ways and integrate it with the Town Square that will help inform our design on what problems need to be addressed, what the major concerns are, as well as Anggawinata says public engagement driving through the area and what the sessions are important because projects traffic flow is like. If we hear enough like these "are for the community and complaints or concerns about traffic they are for the development of the congestion, for example, we can find ways to address that or prioritize those features."

For more information on the Yonge Street and stakeholders to have their say," he Promenade Plan so far, about the upcoming meeting, and how to provide feedback online,



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We look forward to meeting you soon!





BUSINESS FINANCE



Southlake Academic Family Health Team gets Provincial boost to connect with more Aurora patients

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

connect with primary care following a Provincial investment of nearly \$850,000 in the Southlake Academic Family Health Health Care Connect Wait List. Care Team.

Health Care team is based out of Aurora, phone. Newmarket, Bradford and Mount Albert, and the \$848,500 from Ontario's \$2.1 Billion Primary Care Action Plan will be Aurora-centric.

new primary care clinic," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy in a statement following last Wednesday's announcement. "This investment will connect thousands of residents to the care they need, close to home. By expanding access to family doctors, nurse practitioners, and interprofessional health providers, we're ensuring that people get the care they need, when they need it."

Health Team and the Northern York 300 new primary care teams will be South Simcoe Ontario Health Team added across the Province and will entail (NYSS OHT) will use these funds to open \$235 million in 2025-2026 alone that up a new primary care clinic at the end of will support 130 "new and expanded"

September.

Funding for the new clinic was granted after a call for proposals identified areas More Aurora patients will be able to with the highest number of residents not already connected to primary care. These numbers included those who were on the

Patients are now able to book The Southlake Academic Family appointments at the new clinic over the

"Access to timely, high-quality primary care is essential to keeping people and communities healthy," said Dr. David Makary, a physician with the Southlake "I'm thrilled to see the opening of this Academic Family Health Team, Co-Chair of the NYSS OHT and Vice President, Academics and Community Health at Southlake Health. "Thanks to the government's support, we're proud to open a new primary care clinic that will connect more people in Aurora to the care they need, close to home. Together, we're building healthier, stronger communities where everyone can access primary care."

As the Primary Care Action Plan The Southlake Academic Family continues to roll out, the Province says



Photo courtesy of MPP Gallagher Murphy

primary care teams in Ontario.

In 2024, Ontario invested \$110 million in primary care teams across the province, helping to connect 328,000 more people to primary care close to home.

rate of access to a regular health-care provider in the country," said Ontario Health Minister Sylvia Jones in a statement. "We are protecting Ontario's health-care system and people's access to convenient care by funding new and "We are continuing to build on our expanded primary care teams across government's record investments, which the province, helping connect everyone have helped secure Ontario the highest in Ontario to a primary care provider."

Aurora invites residents to shape the future of **Waste Collection**

Contributed by the Town of Aurora

a review of its waste collection contract Public Library in the Lebovic Room. and is seeking public input to help guide the future of waste and organics to provide input on what's working, services in support of a cleaner, more what could be improved, and what sustainable community.

service enhancements, such automated cart collection for garbage efficient, environmentally friendly, and and organics waste pickup and easier for residents to use. improvements to existing programs, their thoughts.

place on Wednesday, September 24, information, visit aurora.ca/Waste.

The Town of Aurora is undertaking from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Aurora

This is an opportunity for residents changes they would like to see in the As the Town explores potential future as the Town actively looks at as ways to make waste services more

Residents who are unable to attend residents are encouraged to attend an in person are encouraged to share upcoming Public Open House to share their feedback by completing the online survey at aurora.ca/Waste or by The Public Open House will take emailing waste@aurora.ca. For more







Cyclists set to say farewell to NewRoads' LakeRide

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A decade of making a significant pedal push at a time is set to come to a close on Sunday, September 21, as NewRoads Automotive Group hosts its an important part of the community." final LakeRide.

on by NewRoads in 2016, has raised to make it a reality were driven home by hundreds of thousands of dollars for Southlake Health's mental health programs and this year organizers are Iknow the important role that a peaceful hoping to close out the decade on a high note – raising \$250,000 for the cause.

"When we took on the ride, we committed to 10 years and that's just a nice round number to finish up on," says Rachel Hawtin, Community Liaison and Brand Manager at Health Assessment Unit." NewRoads. "[NewRoads President Michael Croxon] is really excited to give it our all for this last ride. It's been such an amazing journey to have done this. It's been a great way for us to get in and do more for our community as this is the biggest event we've run... and it's really taking ownership of this event to really fundraise for the mental health program at Southlake, and it makes you feel really good to make such an impact on the community."

The ride will begin at Newmarket's NewRoads Performing Arts Centre (505 Pickering Crescent) at 8 p.m.

World record-holding cyclist Ed Veal will once again be the ride leader, and participants can take select from Aurora Farmers' Market. a variety of cycling challenges – 10K, 20K, 45K, 80K, and 125K routes.

There will also be a raffle on the day of the race with a grand prize being an S-Works Aethos bicycle valued at \$17,000.

To register for the LakeRide, or to purchase raffle tickets, visit newroadslakeride.ca.

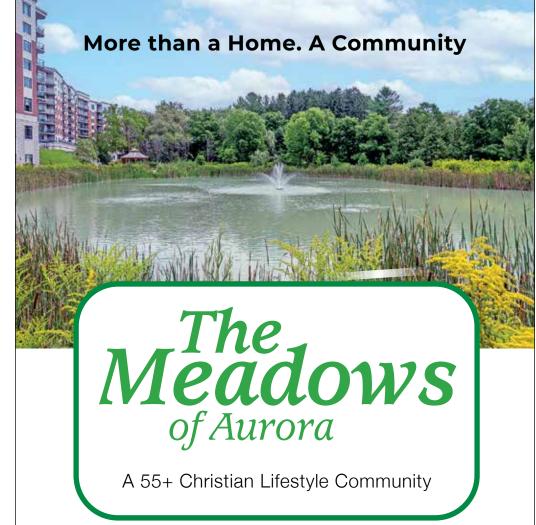
"Everything goes directly to the difference for local health care one hospital," says Hawtin. "This year, we want to raise \$250,000, but would love to go over that. It's a big goal but it's such

Theimportance of Southlake's mental The LakeRide, a challenge taken health programs, and NewRoads' effort Dr. Gaurav Mehta: "As Physician Lead in Southlake's Mental Health Program, and healing environment plays in enabling a patient to recover. Patients in our community who come to us for care are benefiting from our improved and expanded spaces, like The NewRoads Automotive Group Emergent Mental

> "This light-filled, purposefullydesigned space is tailored to meet the needs of mental health patients. I am so grateful to our partners at NewRoads and participants and donors of the NewRoads LakeRide for making this a reality for Southlake. Congratulations to all involved in the 10th anniversary of NewRoads LakeRide - we wish you another great year and thank you for your ongoing and incredible support of leading-edge mental health care, close to home."

> NewRoads is also a supporter of local food banks and this Saturday, September 15, is the kick-off for their annual Stuff a Truck fundraiser at the

> Over the course of the campaign, Farmers' Market patrons are invited to bring non-perishable foods to Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday to quite literally stuff a truck with items benefiting the Aurora Food Pantry.



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Behind The Bricks: AHS kicks off fall Speaker Series with Dr. Alison Norman and the Mohawk Institute

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

at the Mohawk Institute, Canada's virtually on Zoom. oldest and longest-operating residential schools.

working

Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, will present Behind The Bricks: The Life and Times of the The Aurora Historical Society Mohawk Institute, on Wednesday, is kicking off the fall season of its September 17, at Hillary House Speaker Series with a closer look National Historic Site at 7 p.m., and

The Mohawk Institute, located in Brantford, was a model for the Dr. Alison Norman, a historian larger residential school system and Crown-Indigenous Norman, an editor of the recently-



Dr. Alison Norman

Contributed photo

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published book Bricks", will speak not only on the Institute. institute itself, but its lasting impact on Indigenous education.

history for the last 20 years and I will of Indian Affairs at the time and a talk about my chapter in the book, lot of them were being taught by which is about how the residential Haudenosaunee women," she says. school identified children who would "In the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, that's be good teachers and trained these quite out of the ordinary. I was kids to become teachers, and then curious about how that happened. went on to teach in day schools on In other reserve communities in the reserve and in other First Nations Ontario and Canada, it's very, very communities," says Norman, who rare to have Indigenous teachers and describes herself as a "settler other residential schools were not historian."

in reconciliation and learning generally beyond Grade Eight. But, and helping the general public by in this school, it definitely was. bringing this history. I am sharing

initiated and led by Rick Hill." others who had been examining for decades now." what went on behind its walls from a historical perspective.

a book, but we came together to was a perfect way to mark National bring together knowledge and try Day for Truth & Reconciliation on to think about ways to share it," says Norman. "We created a blog, agreed to have their stories in the a little bit more." book."

And it's not just stories – it includes memoirs penned by those who lived talk and how to book your tickets, it, poems, and even visual art.

in education and that's part of what Series, please see Things You Ought to led her to dedicate her chapter Know on Page 21.

"Behind The to teachers who came out of the

"In the early 20th century, there were a lot of day schools in the "I've been a historian in Indigenous community run by the Department producing Indigenous teachers to go "I'm not Indigenous myself and work at day schools. Higher education I'm aware of the role I can play wasn't a goal for residential schools

"At the time, the school became stories that aren't my stories. It's known as the Indian Normal School not my community or my family. and Mohawk Institution. There's I'm not from Six Nations, but now this period when they're creating having done research for 20 years certificates, kids are graduating and in this community, I've learned a they're going on to teach in both lot, and I feel it's important for me reserve day schools and then also to contribute and to help share this other reserve schools in Ontario, history, especially as this project was which is pretty interesting.... When we think about residential schools, Rick - Richard Hill, Sr. - is an they are not places that lead to elder from Six Nations and Norman higher education, but occasionally says he's the man who made this they are. It's a place that, for a select book possible. He's worked for the group, a minority of the graduates Woodland Cultural Centre, as the go on to higher education and have Mohawk Institute is now known, and impactful careers in education and it has dedicated himself to working continues today. The community has with survivors, and reached out to been in control of their education

For the Aurora Historical Society, bringing Dr. Norman in to speak "We didn't come together for on the subject of residential schools September 30.

"It's important to make sure we're we brainstormed, and we contacted hitting on different aspects of history, other people who had written and especially on different aspects things [for collaboration]. The book of history that haven't been focused includes research by Haudenosaunee on a lot," says Kathleen Vahey of and non-Indigenous scholars, and the Aurora Historical Society. "I also by Haudenosaunee community think it's important to highlight members in a variety of ways. It Indigenous stories and stories of was important to have all of these minority communities. I feel our voices in the book. Rick has been Speaker Series is like a beginner step. doing interviews with survivors for It's an introduction, it's a local, easy probably decades and his chapter way for people to step into history in the book is really selections of that maybe they don't know, they're interviews with survivors who have not as familiar, and they want to get

For more on Dr. Norman's upcoming visit aurorahs.com. For a schedule of Norman has long had an interest upcoming installments in the Speaker



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Culture Days will be three-week showcase of arts, culture and heritage

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Arts, culture and heritage will be firmly in the spotlight this month as Aurora takes part in Culture Days.

Taking place from September 19 to October 12, the three-week series of events will showcase local historic sites through Doors Open, the music and dance of the cultures that call Aurora home as the Town hosts its annual Multicultural Festival, and much more as community groups like the Pine Tree Potters Guild, Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA), the Aurora Community Band and Borealis Big Band, and more put the finishing touches on programs.

Saturday, September 20 will kickstart a big weekend for Culture Days as the Aurora Multicultural Festival returns to Town Park from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, before moving to Aurora Town Square from 12.30 to 6 p.m.

"This exciting festival will include vibrant cultural performance shows, sample appetizers from around the world, an interactive Community Zone and fun activities for the whole family!" say organizers. "Experience how other cultures celebrate song and dance with a fully-packed entertainment line-up. And don't miss the free samples at Aurora Town Square, as we celebrate food from around the world."

Also on September 20, the York Chamber Ensemble will offer a free concert at the Aurora Public Library that will be "sure to captivate your ears and lift your spirits." The concert will get underway at 2 p.m. in the Library's "Living Room" space.

The Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA) will be at Town Hall on Saturday, September 20, and Sunday, September 21, with their 38th annual SOYRA Fall Art Show & Sale, while the Sunday will also see the return of Doors Open Aurora from 10 - 4 p.m. at various sites around the community.

"We're very excited to bring it back this year," says Nichole Campsall, Cultural Development Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. "There are various sites throughout Aurora that are participating and we will have quite a few activations at Town Square. A few of our cultural partners are also participating, so we're very excited—the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Aurora Public Library, Pine Tree Potters, are all part of Doors Open."

Doors Open, adds Phil Rose, Manager of Cultural Services for the Town of Aurora, has been a "fun project to work on" as the Aurora Museum & Archives has curated a variety of sites and activations for the schedule.

"A lot of the sites that we are making available for Doors Open, some of them are available to the public on a regular basis, but really the criteria for Doors Open is if you're allowing CULTURE DAYS

access to Heritage properties that aren't typically available to the public 364 days a year, that one day of the year is an opportunity to open those spaces."

Offerings on September 21 include a chance to watch members of the Pine Tree Potters Guild "bring the clay to life" at the Aurora Public Library from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; a woodcarving workshop hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and watercolour workshops for an array of ages throughout the day.

Closing out programs on September 21 is an open rehearsal from the Aurora Community Band, which members of the public are invited to attend in the Aurora Cultural Centre's Brevik Hall from 7 – 9 p.m. Another open rehearsal, this time by the Borealis Big Band, will take place on Wednesday, September 24, from 7.30 – 9.30 p.m. in the same location.

Rounding out the program so far, as new events are being added all the time, is a free intro to ballroom dance hosted by T&S Dance Club at Aurora Town Square at various times on Friday, September 26; the unveiling of a new community mural, Unity on Canvas: Painting our Community Story, on Monday, October 6, at 6 p.m. at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex; and the "Fall Faves" event at Mirkopoulos Platia – Aurora Town Square's outdoor space - on Saturday, October 11 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, featuring outdoor games, a story time with the Aurora Public Library, line dancing with New Age Country Entertainment, and more.

"We are excited to bring back our Fall Faves Festival," says Campsall. "Last year, as part of the [Aurora Town Square] grand opening, we had our free family event here in the outdoor square and we had a pumpkin carving-themed story time with the Aurora Public Library, there were photo ops and outdoor games, and we're very excited to bring that back this year. It's on the Saturday of Thanksgiving, so it is a great way to celebrate fall."

As the programs come together, organizers are eager to showcase all the cultural elements Aurora has to offer,

particularly as the Town's Cultural Action Plan and Public Art Policy continue to take shape.

"I think culture, starting with the letter 'C' really stands for community and as we develop [programs] it's really brainstorming what the community is already doing well and it really defines collaboration with the programming the Town is doing and marrying that up with what the community organizations are also doing," says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. "In terms of our specific programming, we routinely look for gaps, gaps in services, gaps in offerings, but culture is ever-evolving. It'll never be completed, it'll never be a one-and-done, so because of that, that's what makes it a creative canvas each year to look at; what did we do last year, what can we do differently this year, and then what are our partners doing so, again, we can focus on any gaps."

Adds Campsall: "It's a unique representation of Aurora in that we have the participation from all of our

cultural partners. When Shelley says you don't know what to expect, they look at their expertise and what they have to offer and that's where they build what their programming is going to be. I think that's just such a neat thing to see. It shows you what there really is here in Aurora, that you might not already know is here. The community can really look at visual arts, performing arts, heritage. There's so much to do here!"

For an up-to-date list of Culture Days programs, including a full schedule for the Multicultural Festival and list of sites and activities associated with Doors Open, visit aurora.ca/culturedays.



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Yonge Street was hopping with Canadian patriotism on Saturday afternoon and evening as the Town of Aurora hosted Maple Leaf Fever, a new spin on their traditional Saturday Night Fever event, which sees Yonge Street closed from Wellington Street to Mosley Street in a showcase of music, shopping, art, food, and fun.

(OPPOSITE) Taking over the main stage were After the Gold Rush, A Tribute to Neil Young; Shania Twin – A Tribute to Shania Twain; and From the Hip – A Tribute to the Tragically Hip.

(THIS PAGE) Among those enjoying the festivities were (TOP ROW) Maggie, Robin, Jean, Bonnie, and Anna; Kia kept the maple leaf waving high. (SECOND ROW) Mayor Mrakas checked in with barbers from Duke's Castle; Will, Alita and Legend. (THIRD ROW) Jenny and Helen brought some four-legged friends with them; Aurora-based singers The Beresfords met up with From the Hip. (Fourth Row) Sean and Natassia.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger





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Keep being you Love your ears

Pickering College cuts the ribbon on 50,000 square foot West Lake House



Dr. Cinde Lock, Head of School, is pictured with speakers at the opening of West Lake House last Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR EDITOR LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

50,000 square foot facility that includes for the challenges that lay ahead. classrooms, labs, studios, a library, an

assembly hall, and more.

Gallagher Murphy and Newmarket to be given every opportunity to pick up Mayor John Taylor were among the those challenges, use collaboration, use dignitaries in attendance on September 2 as the Newmarket-based independent some of those great global challenges. If school began a brand-new chapter in its they are going to do that, we as schools, more than 180-year history.

dreaming, planning and perseverance," said Head of School Dr. Cinde Lock, who said it was an "extraordinary and involved in the community, but to milestone" for the school.

Construction of the new building has been a "roller coaster" ride, she said, touches to complete on the inside, it is of amazing stuff that's in there more than ready to welcome students.

at ways that students will interact with each other, that the community will beautiful space can bring for our school and everyone involved."

Mirella Morra, Chair of Pickering school here behind you." College's Board of Directors, said last week's event was not just the opening possibilities was a group of Pickering of a new space in West Lake House, it College students past and present, was "bringing history forward" as the name pays tribute to the school's earliest of the class of 1951, whose mother was beginnings as West Lake Boarding a Pickering College student at the turn School in Prince Edward County in

continues to shape our future here in Daisy. Newmarket," she said. "This facility, home to music and art studios, a drama possibility this space brings and the classroom, a grand assembly hall, chance it gives students to discover science labs, CHOP-FM—Newmarket's new passions: Shiny new science labs community radio station—and junior that will allow us to explore, beautiful school classrooms, is a place where imagination will take flight, where and gathering spaces where our school creativity and collaboration will thrive, community can really connect," said and where future generations of

without the vision, generosity, and to finish, and as I head into my final patience of our donors. You truly have year, I'm excited to make memories extraordinary takes time, care and students will create for years to come."

commitment. Today, we celebrate the results of that shared dedication."

This dedication was also celebrated It was a historic day for Pickering by Mayor Taylor who said the new West College last Tuesday as they formally Lake House will only further Pickering opened West Lake House, a new College's mission to prepare students

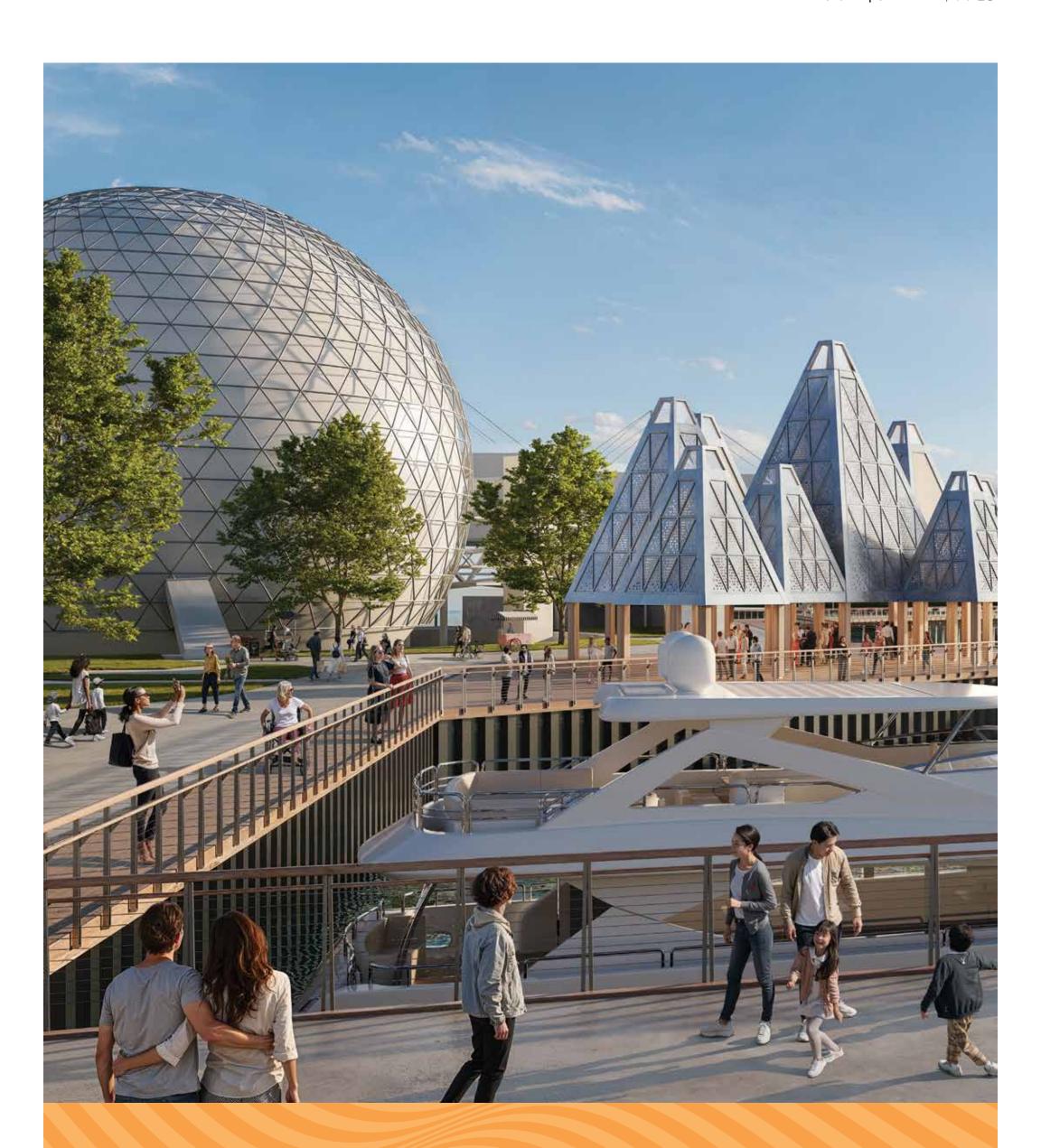
"There are huge challenges in our world today and our students need to be Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn prepared for that," he said. "They need creativity, use technology to help solve as parents, as communities, have to give "This building represents years of them the tools to do it – and this is a big, big step forward for Pickering College in its efforts to not only be integrated think and lead globally."

Addressing students, he added: "This is essentially four walls - four and while there are still a few finishing pretty amazing walls and there's lots but what's really going to happen in "It's not just classrooms, it's there is up to you. Use this incredible opportunities for learning," she told the opportunity that's being given to you to assembled crowd ahead of the ribbon- collaborate with your fellow students, to cutting and site tour. "You're looking think about the world globally, to think about the world locally, and to come together to make Newmarket, Ontario, come together, and just imagine all this Canada, and the world a better place. You have the tools, you have the ability, you have the support of an incredible

Driving home the point of student ranging from Roger Warren, a graduate of the twentieth century, to Arianna, who is set to be a member of the class "We celebrate how that legacy of 2026, and middle school student

"What excites me most is the art studios to bring out our creativity, Arianna. "It's not about the spaces students will discover their full potential. themselves, but the opportunities they "Now, none of this would have open up. I feel so fortunate to have happened or would have been possible watched this transformation from start stood with us throughout this journey. here myself with friends and classmates You understood that building something and to see the ones that generations of





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Saturday, October 18, 2025

10:00 a.m. JK to Grade 5 families

11:00 a.m. Sphere Program (Grades 4 & 5)

1:00 p.m. Grade 6 to 12 families

Register: www.pickeringcollege.on.ca/auroran

"Our three children have flourished both academically and personally. The small class sizes, combined with the focus on academics and building people of good character has made our decision to join the Pickering College community one of the best decisions of our life. This community is truly a special place."





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The Auroran.com

Week of September 11, 2025

Aurora Junior Tigers' rookie goalie Jayden Rhee makes 36 saves in 2-0 blanking of Newmarket Hurricanes



Newmarket Mayor John Taylor presided over the ceremonial face-off at the Ray Twinney Complex on Saturday to kick off the OJHL Season for Newmarket and Aurora. The Tigers edged the Hurricanes 2 – 0 to win Round 1 of the Battle of Yonge Street.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

Cayden Smith Anrijs and Bundzenieks tallied third period power up by the pomp and circumstance as well play goals and Jayden Rhee made thirtysix saves in his OJHL debut to lead the Aurora Junior Tigers to a 2-0 win fans per game at the Scotiabank Pond over the Newmarket Hurricanes at the Ray Twinney Rec Centre on Saturday

Junior hockey returned to Newmarket with a flourish after a six-year absence and over 1,082 fans pushed through assembled. the turnstiles to see the transplanted into the latest manifestation of the played the home side evenly for forty beloved Hurricanes.

Newmarket's party band, The Jones, between periods from Section H of an arena that has housed AHL, OHL, and OJHL teams during its rich forty-year final frame as the acrobatic netminder

The Battle of Yonge Street was reborn on Saturday and Sportsnet's John Bartlett, serving as the Emcee and PA announcer, gave the matinee game more resonance and gravitas.

reworked their familiar "rouge, bleu, et A dangerous and dirty knee-to-knee blanc" into new home blue Hurricane check that went unpunished on the jerseys with red numbers while the same play tested the Tigers' discipline. Tigers were decked out in their traditional white, yellow, and black road Newmarket pay for its truculence. jerseys.

regional rivals. They included a formal the five founders of the Newmarket 87's-Hurricanes'

was dropped for real and the 2025-26 OJHL season opened for both squads.

The Hurricanes were clearly pumped as the almost 1,100 fans in attendance after toiling in front of less than 100 last season in Downsview.

The Canes tried to run the visitors through the boards and rink with six big open ice hits in the first five minutes of play—much to the delight of the locals

The Tigers withstood the opening Toronto Junior Canadiens transformed barrage of brutality by their hosts and minutes. Game One for both teams A festive atmosphere was created turned into an old-fashioned goalie duel by the Hurricanes' management with featuring the puck-stopping talents of Max Grovestine for the Hurricanes and entertaining fans before the game and Rhee who turned aside 17 and 19 shots, respectively, after two periods of play.

> However, Rhee stole the show in the made 18 saves to foil the hard-charging home side while the Tigers scored on two of their six shots against Grovestine to eke out the road win.

The Canes got a wee bit cantankerous at 12:16 of the final frame when The rebranded Junior Canadiens Andrew Lanni got the gate for slashing.

Aurora's ensuing power play made

Cayden Smith buried the biscuit A rich array of opening festivities past a sprawled Grovestine at 8:10preceded the game between the skillfully converting Anrijs Bundzeniek's pass who had been set up by Captain banner-raising that acknowledged Simon Howard on a nice tic-tac-toe passing play. The articulate Tigers' franchise—Charlie leader, who led the club in scoring last Macoun, Jim Wells, Sr, Gerry Ertl, Ken season, described the game winner: Storie, and John Burt. A red carpet "We created pressure and great puck ceremonial faceoff was presided over movement on the power play. Anrijs's by Mayor John Taylor, then the puck pass created space and Cayden's great

hands finished it off."

Rhee made a timely save just seconds after the power play marker and followed up with a huge acrobatic stop at 10:18 to preserve the visitors' precarious lead. Tigers' Head Coach Darcy Roy called a timeout to steady his squad after Rhee's heroics, but the Canes appeared even more testy after the strategy meeting by Aurora.

Eight seconds after the timeout, Hurricanes' forward Kristian Lamanna rammed Rhee into the back of his net and the transgressor was called for interference with the goaltender.

Simultaneously, Joseph Macchione became unhinged and joined Lamanna in the sin bin for unsportsmanlike conduct.

The opportunistic Tigers capitalized on their 5-on-3 opportunity and Bundzeniek banged in a rebound on the doorstep twenty-five seconds into the power play—poetic justice for Lamanna running Rhee.

The turning point of the game took place with the Tigers on a 4-on-3 power play.

Hurricanes' penalty killer Brett Bouchard pounced on an Aurora miscue at the blue line, raced toward Rhee on a breakaway, managed a shot that was saved by the nimble netminder, but it was deemed that the Newmarket attacker merited a penalty shot with 7:40 left on the clock.

Bouchard attacked off the right wing, but the unflappable Rhee flashed the leather—coolly catching the low snap shot. The rookie 'tender made three successive blocker saves at 5:45, 4:56, and 3:55 and withstood sustained

pressure by the home side when the Hurricanes pulled Grovestine for an extra attacker with 2:39 left on the

Captain Simon Howard described goaltender's spectacular performance: "To step in as a 17-yearold into his first junior game—it was an impressive first performance. He was a highly-touted goalie with the 18U Don Mills Flyers last year and probably half of this win goes to him."

Howard described the importance of the Tigers getting off to a good start this season: "It's crucial. We made it our focus from day one of our main camp. Darcy expected us to get off to a great start this year and we had a players' meeting to go over what we expected of ourselves, especially coming in for this game. Since we have more depth and size this year, we'll be more competitive. The team has recruited really well. There was no way we were going to lose our first six games of the season as we did last year."

When asked about the Tigers' impressive 2-0 record over two seasons at Ray Twinney including last year's dramatic victory over the playoffbound Junior Canadiens, Howard responded: "We were a much younger team last year and that was probably our biggest win of the year. This year, we'll be working to disrupt a lot of teams and today, we disrupted the Hurricanes and ruined their party."

The two squads will renew acquaintances on Saturday, September 13 when the Tigers host the Hurricanes. Puck drop at the ACC will be 7 p.m.





York Oldtimers Hockey Association marks its 50th Anniversary



A ceremonial puck drop on December 7, 2018, when Hockey Day in Canada came to Aurora. Pictured here are Steve McCune, Bruce Russell, Mayor Mraklas, and YOHL convenor Stephen Forsey. Contributed photo

BY JIM STEWART

Stephen Forsey has been a York kept adding divisions. The best part of Oldtimers Association Hockey administrator for twenty years and it's under his watch that the venerable hockey league will mark its fiftieth anniversary during the upcoming season.

Forsey acknowledged that the York Oldtimers Hockey Association (YOHA) did not create the first team of oldtimer hockey players in Town.

"Tom McPherson, an Aurora lawyer, has the distinction of starting the first Old Timers team in Ontario in 1967. He called his group the Aurora Church Dodgers because their ice time was at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings. However, by 1975, Aurora needed more than one team as the population of veteran hockey players in the region grew."

The long-time Emcee of Sport Aurora's annual Volunteer Recognition Breakfast reflected on his connection to the volunteer founder of the YOHA: "I took over for Alex Ansell. He started the league in 1975 for players over the age of 35. As Alex reached 45, a 45+ division administered the league for a combined Games over the years. Our association 50 years. It's been fun to be part of. I was also recognized during the Hockey started playing in the 35+ division and Day in Canada celebrations when Aurora I've loved playing hockey with the guys was recognized as a Hockeytown. I was and having two skates a week with them." Forsey, who is entering his second Ceremonies."

season in the 60+ division, has witnessed the remarkable growth of the YOHA.

association and we're spread out over four municipalities. As an adult recreational league, it's one of the larger ones in include a Celebratory Tournament, Ontario. We'd like to attract more guys there's a big push to organize an annual to our 35+ league and build on our current four teams which play on Friday nights at the Leisure Complex. There's the anniversary." no playoff structure. We don't want that good time.

"Our 70+ league is unique in that it still has four teams in it and they've had seasons."

of positive comments about continuity the distinction of competing very well of leadership in that Alex and I have in the Ontario and Canadian Senior proud to help preside over the Opening

The personable spokesman for the YOHA offered a sneak preview of some "We have over 350 players in the of the 50th Anniversary ceremonies that will be forthcoming.

> "Some of our upcoming events will golf tournament, and there will be celebratory swag available soon to mark

As we exited our booth at Wicked level of competition to be an impediment Eats, Forsey segued from the upcoming to guys coming out to play and having a 50th Anniversary festivities to disclosing his goal-scoring prowess as an OldTimer: "I'm a 50-goal scorer. Over seven



and finally the "Provincial OMHA Championships" A record of 52-6-3

was added. As the guys got older, we

being an administrator for the Oldtimers

is giving back. There have been a lot

290 goals for and just 80 goals against with a total of 656 points. The team went undefeated 5-0 to win the OMHAs beating, Kingston Canadians 7-2, Milton Winterhawks 3-1, Oakville Rangers 3-2, a semi-final nail biter with triple OT 2-1, Over North Durham Warriors, then shouting out Caledon Hawks 2-0. Congratulations Team!

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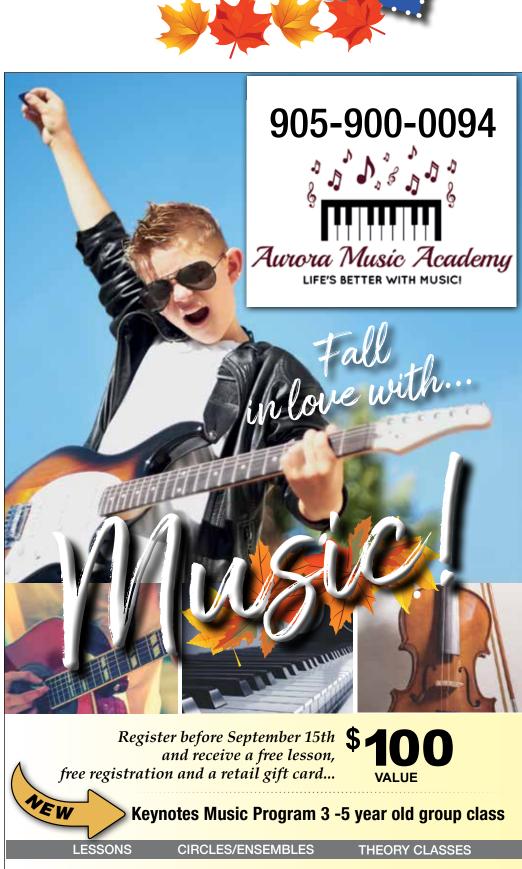
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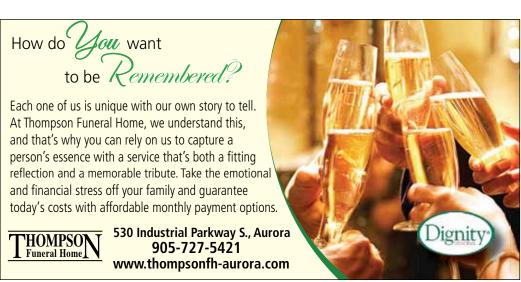
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RESERVE

New turf field will be lasting home for Aurora Barbarians rugby club



Myles Spencer of Rugby Ontario presents a certificate of appreciation to Aurora Barbarians' co-presidents Steve Hall and Khalil Ajram as Mayor Mrakas looks on. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger









From page 1 Councillor Michael Thompson, and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. "Your impact has been remarkable. You supported the development of countless athletes, with several going on to represent Canada on the world stage, and, in fact, four Barbarians are currently competing at the Women's World Cup. That's an achievement we can all take pride in."

The Club, Mayor Mrakas added, has also produced Hall of Famers, including Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee Marco Di Girolamo.

"What an incredible legacy and one Aurora can truly be proud of," the Mayor continued. "When it came time to build this new field, the Barbarians stepped up in an extraordinary way, contributing \$1 million to this project, along with the change rooms and the goal posts. Now that kind of commitment speaks volumes about your dedication not just to rugby, but to Aurora as a whole. I want to sincerely thank the Barbarians' leadership team and every single member for their support in making this project a success.

"What makes this facility even more valuable is its versatility. In addition to being the new home of the Barbarians, it has been designed to welcome many other community uses as well. That means more kids, more families, and more residents will benefit from this investment in recreation. For me as Mayor, that's what matters most.

Working alongside dedicated community partners like the Barbarians to create opportunities that serve our whole Town.

"Today we celebrate a partnership that has made Aurora stronger, and we're not just opening a field, we're opening the door to countless new memories, achievements, and moments of pride in our community. Thank you all for being here to celebrate this milestone together."

The milestone was also noted by Barbarians Co-President Khalil Ajram, who said the new hub at Sheppard's Bush was "made possible due to the legacy of Fletcher's Fields," the Markham-based sports facility which was shuttered last year.

"We'll always honour Fletcher's forever," he said. "Aurora now has seven turf fields and a dome. Aurora is open for sport. So, thank you, Town of Aurora."

Also participating in the opening ceremony was Myles Spencer, representing Rugby Ontario.

Spencer said the event represented a "fantastic opportunity for not only the Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club, but for the Town of Aurora [and] for the growth and prosperity of sport" in the community.

"We need these facilities for our sport, which is a growing sport in this province and across this country," he said. "To have a rugby-specific pitch right here in the Town of Aurora, just outside of Toronto... that's important. We need facilities like these to continue to pop up.

"This is made possible by the legacy of a very, very important, very, very historic rugby-specific facility that reached 60 years in this province, Fletcher's Fields. And if it wasn't for the legacy of, again, the individuals that came together back in the late 50s, early 60s, with an idea that we had the future in mind for this sport, and here we are, 65 years later, opening another rugby pitch because of what was made possible by Fletcher's Fields. I think that's incredible."

The new facility has been designed to support both rugby and senior and junior soccer.

The Aurora Barbarians' roots in the community stretch back to 1950 with Aurora RFC and Toronto Barbarians RFC, which eventually merged in 2002.

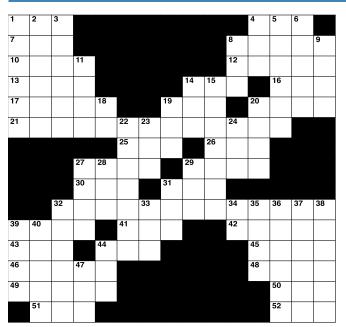
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Utilitarian fashion accessory
- 4. Engine additive 7. Macaws
- 8. Listens to
- 10. Self-righteously moralistic person
- 12. Made of wood
- 13. Chinese lute
- 14. Beginning military rank 16. Indicates near
- 17. Ties the score 19. Chum 20. Long ago

27. Tennis great Arthur

- 25. Midway between northeast and east 26. Make fun of
- 29. Construction location
- 30. Cow's noise
- 31. Blue
- 32. One of the Fab Four
- 39. Formula 1 team
- 41. Dash
- 42. Lifting device 43. Basics
- 44. Keyboard key
- 45. Old Irish alphabet 46. Shaking of the Earth's surface
- 48. Covered stadium
- 49. Sword handles 50. Longing or yearning 51. Creators' social network 52. Boxing's GOAT

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Occur 2. Show up
- 3. Capital of Taiwan
- 4. Ocean
- 5. Givers and
- 6. Gets ready

15. American state

18. Sensor hub

22. Witnesses

24. Type of meal

23. Singular

19. Before

8. Ad 9. Fit of irritation

20. The boundary of a surface

- 11. Criminal organization Exclamation that denotes disgust

- 34. Cola brand 35. Stepped on

32. Calm down

- 33. Partner to cheese
- 36. Japanese city 37. Type of coating
- 38. A citizen of Yemen 39. Popular breakfast item, corned beef

28. Former French coin of low value

29. A bag-like structure in an animal

31. Schenectady County Airport

- 40. On a line at right angles
- to a ship's length
- 44. First responders 47. Short-term memory

THiNGS... you ought to know

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

The Aurora Farmers' Market returns to Town Park Reconciliation. Alison Norman is a historian working today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Aurora Historical Society will host a Victorian Harvest Tea today at 12 noon and 2.30 p.m. at Hillary House National Historic Site. (\$35 pp) It's our 6th Annual Victorian Harvest Tea at Hillary House National Historic Site! Happening on Saturday, September 13, choose between two seatings: 12:00 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. Join us on our stunning grounds this Fall season to enjoy an afternoon tea that includes sandwiches, scones, and desserts. Wander around our historic house museum after tea service and get to know a unique heritage property in Aurora.

Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website here: aurorahs.com/victorian-harvest-tea-2025.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

The AHS Speaker Series continues this evening at today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. 7 p.m. with Behind the Bricks: The Life and Times of the Mohawk Institute with Alison Norman. Held at Hillary House National Historic Site and virtually over Zoom. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS members, or \$12.50 for non-members. The Mohawk Institute, located in Brantford, ON, was a model for the larger residential school system, and learning about its history helps us work towards reconciliation. Join us for a talk by historian Alison Norman who will speak about the history of Canada's oldest and longest running residential school, just in time

for September 30th, National Day for Truth and as Pickering's fated rebel, Peter Matthews, did." at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. She has also taught through various lifelong learning organizations. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website here: aurorahs.com/life-and-timesmohawk-institute.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

The Town of Aurora will host its annual Multicultural Festival at Aurora Town Park from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and at Aurora Town Square from 12.30 - 6 p.m. Highlights include music, dancing and cultural displays from around the world, activities based around the theme of "spice" and a screening of the documentary Honeyland. For a full lineup, visit www. aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival.

The Aurora Farmers' Market returns to Town Park

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

The Aurora Historical Society's Speaker Series continues this evening at 7 p.m. with Pickering & the 1837 Rebellion with Katrina Pyke. Held at Hillary House National Historic Site and virtually over Zoom. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS members, or \$12.50 for non-members. "Explore the events that lead to the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837. Join Katrina as she shares an interactive exploration of Pickering's involvement in the uprising and challenges you consider if you would have risked your life for liberty

Katrina Pyke has worked in the museum field for over 30 years. She has an MA in Public History and a passion for researching and sharing fun and exciting Support AbuseHurts' Delivering Hope Full Circle aspects of our storied past. Tickets can be purchased Program textile recycling and donation program. on at www.aurorahs.com or by calling 905-727-8991

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

The Aurora Historical Society's Speaker Series items, increasing the need for more outlets being continues this evening at 7 p.m. with Barn-Raising, Threshing, & Quilting Bees: The Stories that Farm Diaries Tell with Cathy Wilson. Held at Hillary House National Historic Site and virtually over Zoom. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS members, or \$12.50 for nonmembers. "Cathy Wilson shares her recent book, Being Neighbours, about barn raisings and quilting bees in Ontario. She takes the audience into families' daily lives to uncover the subtle social politics of mutual dependency, the expectations neighbours had of each other, their relationships, and ways of managing conflict and crisis. Catharine Wilson is a Professor Emerita of History at the University of Guelph and Founder and Director of the Rural Diary Archive. Tickets can be purchased on at www. aurorahs.com or by calling 905-727-8991.

ONGOING

Partagez le Francais: Ce groupe accueille les ADULTES have an appointment, we cannot accept your / 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

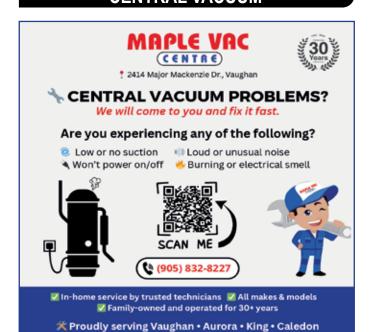
visiting meetup.com/Partagez-le-francais. For more information, email partagez.york@outlook.com.

In the current COVID climate, a greater number of people are wanting to donate or get rid of unwanted 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 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.

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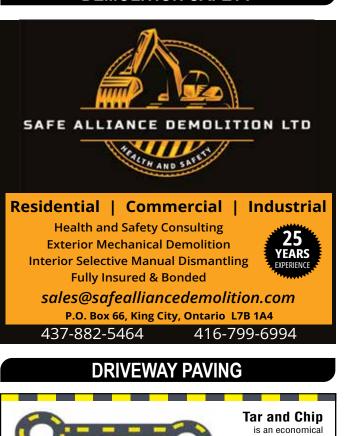
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SENIORS' ACTIVE LIVING FAIR













- The Aurora Seniors' Centre was a hub of activity on Saturday as the Town hosted its annual Seniors' Active Living Fair. Held throughout the morning and afternoon, the Fair included guest speakers and more than 50 vendors. (Top Row) Attendees were greeted by Marilyn and Jo. Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy meets with Brian and Dianne Harrison. (Middle Row) Liz represented Kingsway Place; Akram informed residents about Hear Canada; (Third Row) Rose and Carolynn represented Hope House Hospice; grilling up some food for the attendees were members of the Aurora Optimist Club. Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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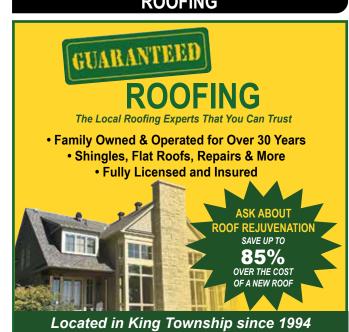
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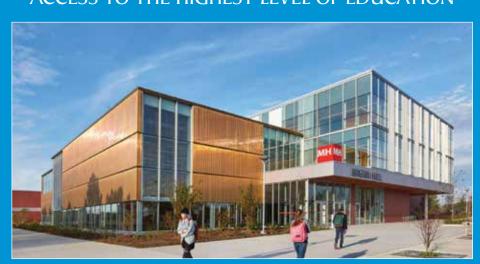
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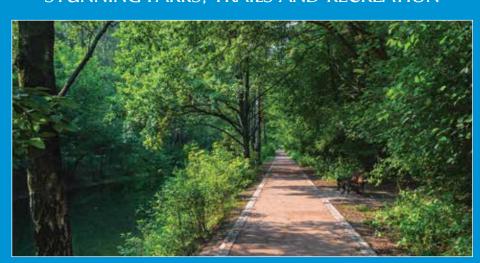
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PROGRESS EDITION

Presenting the AURORA Progress Edition

An annual report highlighting local businesses in Aurora



mall businesses are the backbone of our economy, and while success can be measured in sales, the impact of businesses on the communities they serve can sometimes be harder to gauge.

As they mark their fifty-fifth anniversary, there can be little doubt on the impact Omars Shoes has had on Aurora and surrounding communities. On May 20, a sold-out crowd filled the Royal Venetian Mansion when the popular store hosted Omar's Shoes Fashion Thru the Ages, a fashion show which served as a belated celebration of the store's 50th anniversary, a milestone had to be put on hold due to the global pandemic.

The event saw community leaders – including Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas and King Mayor Steve Pellegrini – strut their stuff on the runway, modelling complete outfits that can be found in-store, and more than \$70,000 raised for Southlake Health in the single evening.

The impressive figure raised that evening specifically supported Southlake's Men's Health Programs, a cause particularly close to the Khamissa family as store co-owner Raz, son of the eponymous founder Omar, continues his battle with prostate cancer.

"We were so overwhelmed by the response from the local community, people that have shopped with us and supported us for so many years," says Raz, who co-owns the store with wife Mae and daughter Saarah. "When we first talked about the show, we said we would be thrilled if we raised \$20,000, and 200 people would be way more than I expected, but, in the end, we were sold out."

BY BROCK WEIF



OMARS SHOES
CELEBRATES
55 YEARS
OF SERVING
COMMUNITY

Financially, all their expectaztions were exceeded – but, perhaps most importantly, has been the opportunity for continued engagement on a topic many men find difficult to discuss.

"It brought great awareness to men's health and since we put it out there, almost on a daily basis we've had someone come to us with their own story," says Mae. "I think it has really opened things up to make it something comfortable to talk about – just like in the days when women didn't talk about breast cancer as it was such a taboo thing; we need to get men's health there to that point as well."

Adds Saarah: "We're definitely overwhelmed by how successful it was. Just seeing all the people in the room felt incredible, too – the people in your community, old friends, new friends, it was kind of a gathering of the community, people we have known for so many years, and people who came in just to celebrate with us."

For the family, it is a testament to the idea that if you support the community, the community, in turn, will support you. That's a guiding approach for Omars for 55 years and will continue to be well beyond this milestone year.

"We're still excited to carry on celebrating 55 years, so we will have some in-store events happening through the fall and while we're sad to see summer go, we're looking forward to the fall season, new fashion trends, and new things coming into the store," says Saarah, with Raz noting many of the brands showcased at the fashion show, several of which are proudly Canadian, are still top sellers in their full-service Bayview Avenue shop.

"Service is a big reason people come to see us," Raz continues. "We can carry great products, and you can find some of that product in other places, but getting someone who is friendly, personable, and wants to help you find the right item with the right size – that's a big thing that, unfortunately, has become the thing you don't see. But not here – that's a big reason people come to us."



BY BROCK WEIR

conomic uncertainty has meant many Canadians booked staycations over the summer, rather than travelling abroad – and, if they're looking to make real estate investments, buyers are looking close to home as well.

This is a trend that has been noticed by Royal LePage's Key Advantage Team and they have recently expanded their team to include new and established realtors who have demonstrated track records in key areas.

New team members Alicia Van Lankveld, previously of Royal LePage Lakes of Muskoka, and long-time area realtor Betty Durocher, bring new areas of expertise to the organization.

Van Lankveld, a resident of Schomberg, serves King, Tottenham and New Tecumseth, while still embracing her roots in Cottage Country. Durocher allows Key Advantage to best serve Francophone and bilingual clients, while also drawing upon her expertise in seniors' builds and the real estate needs of older community members.

At this uncertain time, the Key Advantage Team is now best positioned to serve all facets of the community.

"We experienced probably one of the slower spring real estate markets that we've had since the 1990s from a sales standpoint, and I think that's really just the result of consumer confidence. Buyers are feeling a little bit uncertain," says Key Advantage Co-founder Lindsay Strom. "It's still a good time for sellers to generate good sales. While pricing is down since 2022, and we may not see that pricing again, the trend in Aurora from 2019 to where we are today is still up by six per cent overall."

But it's also a good time for buyers, she adds, as there is nearly 30 per cent more inventory on the market.

"You currently have the opportunity to go out and view more properties. There is also an opportunity for

Key Advantage expands team to serve community

conditions, if you want to satisfy things like a home inspection or financing, versus previous markets where multiple offers and going firm were very commonplace. I think it is really important to keep in mind what your real estate goals are, and working closely with your advisor to make sure that you are aligned "

The Key Advantage Team knows that a house is much more than a building; it's a home – a place where you're supposed to feel safe, secure and protected. But they're also conscious that, for some, that sense of place can be a luxury.

As such, Strom is among a team of realtors who will be setting out this fall for a 100-km trek through the jungles of Cambodia to raise funds for the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.

As the date of departure nears, Strom is focused on training and fundraising – building off \$5,000 she raised earlier this year at an Italian-themed evening hosted at Westview Golf Course.

"As realtors, we realize home isn't always a safe space for everybody," she says. "A house is not a home unless it can be a safe space and the shelters in our area desperately need these resources. It's a cause that's very close to us as realtors. I've been doing a lot of preparation for this trek — a ton of walking, breaking in the boots — there will be no comforts of home, no cell service, and admittedly I'm intimidated."

Powering her forward, she says, is having kids of her own and wanting to be a "good example for them." But that's not all.

"When I think of my daughter and some of the things we

see in the work that we do with the shelter, it is never a scenario I would want her to find herself in. Helping to educate people on what healthy relationships look like and help break the stigma and break the cycle is really important to me."

















Their Legacy. Our Future.

A YEAR OF CHAMPIONS, COMMUNITY, AND CELEBRATION

The past year has been nothing short of extraordinary for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame (ASHoF) — a year filled with milestone moments, continued celebrations, and deeper connections with our community than ever before.

From highly attended events that brought the town together, to new programs that are inspiring the next generation of athletes, we've been busy honouring our sporting culture while creating fresh opportunities for residents to engage with our shared sports heritage.

Whether it's watching history being made at our Annual Induction Celebration Evening, cheering on local athletes at community festivals, discovering our upgraded displays at the SARC, or connecting with us at the golf course, every moment this year has reinforced why Aurora's sports story is so special.

With each event, we've celebrated not just athletic achievements, but the values of teamwork, perseverance, community pride, and positive attitude that define our town.

And we're just getting started.

Our Annual Celebrity Golf Classic Keeps Growing and Getting Better

Our 3rd Annual Celebrity Golf Classic at Pheasant Run Golf Club saw a record 100+ golfers hit the greens, raising more funds than last year. This year, we donated \$750 to Sport Aurora's All Kids Can Play program, giving more young people the chance to participate in sport.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

Visitors to the Stronach Aurora Recreational Complex (SARC) — home of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame — are now greeted by a brand-new WayFinder and Digital Screen. These additions offer interactive navigation and year-round updates, thanks to the expertise of Future Signs MultiMedia Displays.

Extending Our Community Reach We've continued to connect with the community in creative ways:

- AFLC Display Case: Rotating exhibits twice a year, with the next refresh showcasing the Class of 2025.
- Aurora Chamber Street Festival: A hit booth featuring caricature art.
- Canada Day at Lambert Wilson
 Park: Table Tennis challenge with
 Grace Wong and the debut of our new
 Maple Leaf T-shirt.

Mid-Summer BBQ Builds Community Connections

This summer we hosted our first-ever Mid-Summer BBQ at the brand-new Slabtown Armoury, and it was a fantastic success. Over 85 guests joined us to celebrate the season—Hall of Famers, volunteers, sponsors, partners, and community





leaders all coming together under one roof. Delicious BBQ was served, drinks flowed from the outdoor bar, and the evening was filled with conversation, laughter, and new connections.

Looking Ahead – 12th Annual Induction Celebration

The excitement is already building for our 12th Annual Induction Celebration Evening, where we will once again gather to recognize the best of Aurora's sporting community. This year's class is shaping up to be one of the most memorable yet, featuring a truly diverse line-up of inductees — including our first-ever Football athlete and an accomplished Runner — alongside other remarkable individuals who have left their mark on sport locally, nationally, and internationally.

Guests can expect a night filled with inspiring stories, tributes, and the opportunity to connect with past inductees, community leaders, and fellow supporters of sport culture.

Tickets will go on sale soon, and we encourage everyone to secure their spot early — this is an event you won't want to miss. Watch aurorashof.ca, follow our social media channels, and keep an eye on The Auroran for updates and announcements as we count down to an unforgettable evening honouring our Class of 2025.

Thank You, Aurora

Everything we have accomplished — and everything still to come — is only possible because of you, the people of Aurora.

To our incredible volunteers, who give their time, energy, and expertise to make every program and event a success; to our generous sponsors, whose support fuels our vision; and to our community members, who show up, cheer us on, and share in our pride — thank you.

Every handshake at any of the community events, every cheer at the Induction Celebration Evening, every story shared about a hometown hero — these moments connect us and remind us why sport is such a powerful part of our community fabric.

We look forward to another year of building connections, honouring excellence, and inspiring the champions of tomorrow. With your continued support, the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame will keep preserving our sporting legacy and creating opportunities for generations to come.

Here's to another year of making history — together.



2025 STORY

Our customers wanted to feel confident that when they chose a Canadian brand, they really understood what that meant.

he past year has been a remarkable chapter in the story of Oakridge Fashions. For decades, the boutique has been dedicated to offering its customers a carefully curated selection of stylish, high-quality clothing and accessories. From European designers to Canadian creators, Oakridge has always sought to blend international inspiration with local excellence. Yet 2025 ushered in a shift that not only influenced the Canadian fashion landscape but also became a defining moment for Oakridge

In early 2025, a wave of patriotism swept across Canada. It wasn't subtle—it was a decisive cultural shift that touched nearly every aspect of daily life, including how Canadians thought about fashion. "Buy Canadian" became a rallying cry, and customers were suddenly more interested than ever in where their clothing was made, who designed it, and whether the companies behind the labels were rooted in Canada.

For Oakridge Fashions, this shift was not entirely new terrain. Supporting the Canadian fashion industry has always been a core part of the store's identity. The boutique has long carried an impressive roster of Canadian brands, both established and emerging, and has been proud to share their work with its loyal clientele. But this year, that commitment took on a new urgency and clarity. Customers weren't just interested in what looked good they wanted to know the story behind their clothing. Was it Canadian-owned? Canadiandesigned? Was it Canadian manufactured right here at home?

This curiosity sparked an important educational journey. Oakridge quickly realized that customers were eager for clarity and guidance, but that the answers weren't always straightforward. The Canadian fashion landscape is diverse, and the relationship between ownership, design, and production varies from brand to brand. Some are proudly Canadian-owned but manufacture abroad. Others are internationally owned yet have Canadian-based designers shaping the collections. Still others represent the full circle: Canadian ownership, design, and production within the country. Helping customers navigate these distinctions became both a responsibility and an opportunity for Oakridge Fashions.

To meet this need, Oakridge launched a new initiative: a regular video series called Celebrating Canadian Fashion. The series was designed not only to showcase the Canadian labels carried in-store but also to educate customers about what makes a brand "Canadian." Each video highlighted the history, values, and unique contributions of Canadian designers and companies, while also celebrating the artistry and craftsmanship behind their work.



As Oakridge's Owner, Deb Clark explained, "Our customers wanted to feel confident that when they chose a Canadian brand, they really understood what that meant. For us, it became about giving them the tools and knowledge to celebrate Canadian fashion with pride."

The response was immediate and enthusiastic. Customers expressed their appreciation for the clarity the videos offered and for the chance to learn more about the Canadian fashion industry. For many, it was a source of pride to wear and support Canadian brands, and Oakridge's videos gave them the knowledge to make those choices with confidence.

The success of the video series soon drew attention beyond the boutique's customer base. In a proud milestone for the Oakridge team, they were invited onto Global TV's Morning News Program to present a segment on Canadian fashion. The appearance provided a wide platform to discuss an issue that had suddenly become front and center in the lives of Canadian consumers: how to recognize and support Canadian fashion brands.

Reflecting on the moment, Ms. Clark noted, "Being able to share this conversation on the Global platform was such an honour. It showed us that Canadians everywhere were asking the same questions our own customers were asking, and it felt incredible to be part of that dialogue."

This recognition marked an exciting moment for Oakridge, one that underscored the boutique's role as both a trusted retailer and an advocate for Canadian fashion. Yet even amid this focus on celebrating Canadian design, Oakridge has remained true to its broader mission. The boutique continues to carry a wide variety of brands from around the world, ensuring that its customers can enjoy the breadth of choice, style, and quality they've come to expect. Oakridge believes that fashion is a global conversation, and international influences remain an important part of its identity.

Still, 2025 has brought an unmistakable emphasis on Canadian fashion. What was once a quiet, steady commitment has now become a more deliberate and visible part of Oakridge's story. For the team, this isn't about narrowing the boutique's vision but about deepening itplacing a spotlight on Canadian talent while continuing to celebrate the global nature of style. It's a balance Oakridge has always struck, but one that resonates even more strongly in today's climate of renewed national pride.

"We've always carried Canadian brands," said Ms. Clark "But this year, we've made it a priority to celebrate them in a bigger way. It's about shining a light on the incredible talent we have in this country, while still offering our customers the global variety they love."

As Oakridge Fashions looks ahead, the lessons of this past year are clear. Customers care deeply about the origins of the clothes they wear. They want transparency, authenticity, and the chance to support values that align with their own. By responding to this shift with openness and creativity, Oakridge has not only strengthened its bond with its community but also reaffirmed its place as a leader in Canadian retail.

In the end, Oakridge Fashions' journey over the past year can be summed up in one phrase: celebrating Canadian fashion. It is a celebration rooted in pride, in education, and in a belief that fashion is not just about what we wear but also about who we are as a community and a country. And while the boutique will continue to showcase beautiful collections from around the world, its heart will remain firmly committed to lifting up Canadian designsomething it has always done, just a little more so now.

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CIAO SALON & SPA A full service salon in a bright and friendly place

It is Aurora's newest hair salon and spa and it offers full service by a qualified and creative staff

who are experienced and provide exceptional service in a sparkling clean and brightly lit space.

BY BRIAN LOCKHART



alon owner, Shaun Caramanico, may have just opened the salon, but he brings a lifetime of experience in the industry along with his staff who are all long-time associates and experts in what they do.

Shaun learned the industry from a young age when he started assisting in his father's hair salon in Stouffville. Eventually the salon, named Fame International Salon and Spa, expanded to Aurora and found an entirely new client base.

"I grew up in the industry," Shaun explained. "My Dad used to wake me up on Saturday mornings and drive me into work to do the laundry, sweep floors, clean up, and get coffees. I was doing shampoos at 12-years-old."

After learning a lot about the business, Shaun continued on to hair dressing school and was certified, then went on to advanced courses to hone his skills, including the world famous Vidal Sassoon course in California.

Shaun worked at several businesses in the area including working as a partner in another salon. He made the decision to open CIAO Salon & Spa when the timing was right and he found the perfect Yonge Street location.

CIAO Salon & Spa is a full-service salon that caters to clients in a professional and friendly manner so everyone feels comfortable when they arrive. There are five hairdressers and three colour technicians on staff, and everyone keeps up with the latest trends in hairstyles. Two of the technicians specialize in colouring hair, while one also does styling as well.

Quite often a client will feel a special connection to one hairdresser and always request their service during a visit.

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NE CORNER YONGE "We offer free consultations," Shaun explained. "Some people come in here just because they are looking for a new hairdresser, and we'll just sit down and talk. We offer shampoos and blowdries, hair cutting, and up-dos. We also offer nail services, like manicures and pedicures."

Haircuts and styling include expert consultations, precision cuts, and personalized styling for your best look. Whether you are looking for a bold new look or just a subtle trim, a talented hairstylist will help you achieve the look you desire.

Hair styling can include colouring. CIAO Salon & Spa uses high-quality AVEDA products to create hues that complement your skin tone and style. You can get highlights or a full colour transformation for a whole new look.

You can treat yourself to some extra special pampering in the spa. Relax and rejuvenate with a spa treatment. This includes everything from pedicures and manicures to invigorating facials.

Clients appreciate the services offered at CIAO Salon & Spa and enjoy the friendly atmosphere and the experience of the staff to give them the look they would like to achieve.

"We are really a continuation of what my Mom and Dad went through, over 40-plus years," Shaun said. "We have a long-term staff with some who have been with us for over ten years. Our staff are happy, and that's good for us because we are doing something right as an employer. We want to get the word out that we are still here, that we are a family business and really enjoy meeting with new clients and keeping them happy."

Walk-ins are accepted, however, you may have to wait for an appointment if there are people ahead of you.

HEATING & COOLING

BY NEIL MOORE

or just over a century, T.H. Oliver Heating & Cooling has been keeping local homes comfortable – evolving as an early adopter of the oil burner of the 1920s to today's smart thermostats and modulating hybrid systems. Founded in 1924 by T.H. (Howard) Oliver, a technology enthusiast ahead of his time, the company has built its reputation on staying at the forefront of change.

Since taking the reins in 1999, Steven Desjardins has carried forward T.H. Oliver's legacy of innovation. "It was important to our founder to be on the cutting edge of what was available in heating and cooling," he said. "We are doing the same today."

Heat pumps, for example, are changing the way homeowners think about comfort and efficiency. Unlike conventional furnaces that strictly burn fossil fuels, heat pumps draw heat from the outside air – even in colder weather – using advanced inverter compressors developed by Daikin.

Many homeowners are choosing "dual-fuel" hybrid systems that combine a heat pump with a gas furnace. The heat pump handles heating and cooling for most of the year, while the furnace takes over only in the coldest conditions. With the Daikin FIT system and a programmable Wi-Fi thermostat, homeowners can control not just heating and cooling, but also scheduling, set points, and even indoor air quality.

"The Daikin One system gives you control – allowing you flexibility to find the right balance between indoor comfort and lowering your carbon footprint," explained Desjardins. He noted that future systems may even adjust automatically based on factors like energy prices (gas vs electric) or off-peak hours, helping homeowners save money.

But it's not just about efficiency, it's about

SMARTER HEATING & COOLING FOR *every* SEASON



Steven Desjardins

T.H. Oliver's legacy of innovation:

"It was important to our founder to be on the cutting edge of what was available in heating and cooling."

We are doing the same today!

comfort in every season. In summer, heat pumps strip excess moisture from the air, so rooms feel cooler without driving the thermostat way down. In winter, adding humidity has the reverse effect, making the air feel warmer without cranking up the heat. Either way, you stay comfortable while using less energy.

Smart thermostats have added another layer of



convenience. Some models now integrate with Alexa or Google, so you can raise humidity or adjust the temperature with a voice command from your favourite chair. Desjardins notes that homeowners don't always take full advantage of these features, even though small changes can make a big difference.

Another leap forward is modulating technology. Older systems were either running at full blast or completely off, creating temperature swings. Newer modulating systems operate at slower speeds, gradually warming or cooling, and circulating air more evenly. "When it's modulating, it runs longer cycles, which allows the heated or cooled air to circulate better – and even out the temperature between rooms – making your home feel more comfortable," explained Desjardins.

Thermostat placement can also affect comfort. "The thermostat itself may be in a location that is not your main living area, where you have a cold air return," he noted. "So it's trying to get a reading from that room, not taking into account there are rooms closer to the furnace that are hotter, and some that are colder. These new systems can even have multiple sensors to help balance indoor temperatures."

Beyond technology, T.H. Oliver remains known for its service. The company installs, repairs, and maintains a wide range of equipment: gas furnaces, central air conditioners, humidifiers, HRVs, air cleaners, and fireplaces. They also provide duct cleaning, which has become increasingly important as homeowners pay

closer attention to indoor air quality.

As it moves through its second century, T.H. Oliver Heating & Cooling remains focused on what matters most: giving homeowners flexible options to stay comfortable in every season, with systems that are smarter, more efficient, and built for the future.



To Your Dreams"

As another summer draws to an end, signs of a new season surround us. Leaves starting to change colour, students heading back to school, days getting shorter and nights getting cooler. It's a good time for reflection with yet another season behind us.

"Being fortunate to spend time on the lake with my family this summer has been one of the greatest pleasures in my life," Monica reflects. "Taking time to plant flowers, marvel at the stunning sunsets and bright super moons reflecting on the water and visits with friends have finally provided me with the balance in life we all deserve."

Monica attributes this newfound balance to an equally balanced Real Estate market having successfully served her clients for the past 36 years in the Nationally Elite Top Tier in her profession.

"We have experienced a slight cooling this year with a modest 5% decrease in residential home prices but buyers have continued to benefit from more choices with an increase in inventory and therefore reducing the intensity of bidding wars that characterized the market in previous years. This shift has led to a more stable environment where both buyers and sellers can navigate the market with greater confidence."







"Interest rates have been a significant factor influencing the housing market in York Region, thus impacting affordability for many potential buyers and leading to a more cautious approach. We are starting to see the positive impact from the two rate cuts in June & July and expect a further decline in the Bank of Canada rates in the coming months. We expect sales to accelerate as buyers benefit from the lower monthly mortgage payments."

It only makes sense to weigh your options if you can take advantage of the lower prices & higher inventory to offset the interest rates.

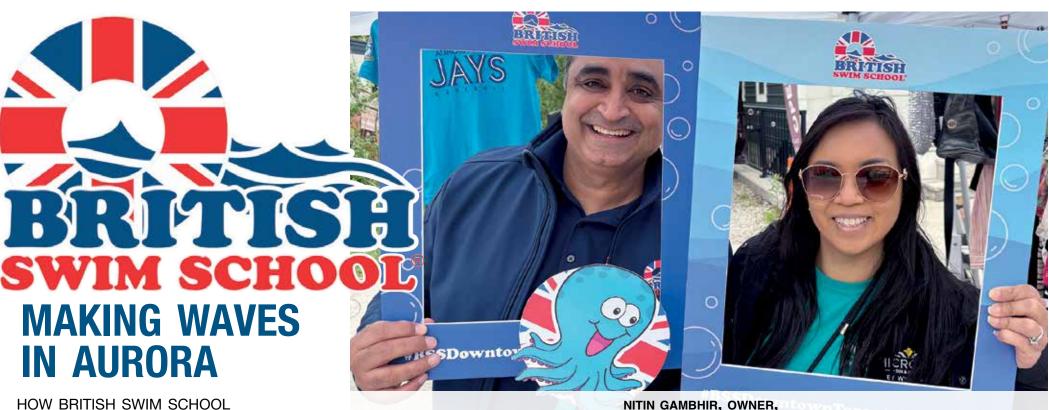
Monica has learned it all comes down to finding that perfect balance and the benefits it can bring in all aspects of our lives. "Enjoy it when

"Nothing makes me happier then to continue Opening Doors To Your Dreams!"



& AMANDA VESTERFELT, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE MICROTEL INN & SUITES IN AURORA

You can contact Monica Stohr at Royal LePage Your Community Realty | 416 618-1714



HOW BRITISH SWIM SCHOOL IS TEACHING LIFESAVING SKILLS AND BUILDING CONFIDENCE

IN THE WATER



Bringing British Swim School to Aurora was about more than opening a business. For Nitin Gambhir, it was personal. As a father, he knows how critical it is for children to feel safe and confident in the water. And as an avid swimmer, he wants to share his love for the water with his son.

During the pandemic, he struggled to find a program that worked for him—his son wasn't comfortable in pools, and many lessons didn't meet him where he was. That experience led Nitin to British Swim School, a program that puts survival skills first and adapts to each child's needs.

What makes British Swim School unique is its "survival-first" approach. Before teaching strokes, we ensure swimmers learn to float independently on their backs—a simple but lifesaving skill that allows them to rest, breathe, and call for help in an emergency.

Once safety is mastered, we build stroke development, so students become strong, capable swimmers.

The impact of this approach was made clear this summer when one parent shared how their 18-month-old accidentally fell into a backyard pool. After just six weeks of lessons, she stayed calm, held her breath, and was safe until help arrived. Stories like this remind me why we do what we do—it's about preparing families for the unexpected.

Aurora has been the perfect place to grow this mission. We began with one pool at the Microtel Inn & Suites and have since expanded to LA Fitness Aurora - and now even in LA Fitness Markham. All locations provide a warm, year-round environment where infants, children, and adults of all abilities can learn at their own pace. Our caring instructors celebrate every milestone, whether it's a toddler floating on their own or an adult swimming laps with confidence.

We welcome swimmers as young as three months, along with school-aged children and adults. Small group lessons allow for individual attention in a fun, social setting. Families also appreciate our flexible schedules, with weekday and weekend options to fit busy lives.

Nitin is proud to have brought British Swim School to Aurora and grateful to the families who have trusted us over the past 18 months. Together, we're building confidence, safety, and a lifelong love of the water—one safe swimmer at a time.

LOCATIONS

Microtel Inn & Suites 180 Goulding Ave (South of Farm Boy plaza) LA Fitness Aurora 15650 Bayview Ave (Bayview & St John's Sideroad) LA Fitness Markham 8555 Woodbine Ave (Woodbine & Hwy 7)

ENROLL TODAY!

Call us at **905-917-4557**

or visit **britishswimschool.com/markham-aurora** to secure your spot.

AURORA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF BUSINESS SUPPORT

45 Years Strong: The Aurora Chamber celebrates record membership, sold-out events, and impactful programs supporting local businesses, youth, and the community



Picured above from left to right: Alison and Bennett Mumford, Sandra Watson, Shayla Lockhurst Crich, Joanne Toth, Deb Wilson

Telebrating our 45th year in business The Aurora Chamber of Commerce continues to build momentum, closing another successful year with record-high membership and over 40 events hosted. Major highlights included sold-out signature events such as the Street Festival, Women's Summit, Golf Tournament, and the Mayor's Luncheon, which drew over 300 attendees.

Focused on innovative support for local businesses, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce has carved out a unique reputation within the Chamber network. A key initiative has been the targeted support of female entrepreneurs through programs like the Women's Mastermind, Women of Influence (WIN) Luncheons, and the Women's Summit. Further, we partnered with BDC to lead a workshop series, Scaling Success, designed for established businesses looking to grow or diversify their operations and many of our local businesses took advantage of this program.

The Chamber's Business Engaging Youth & Scholarship Program continues to flourish. In

2025, three local students were awarded \$5,000 scholarships—each pursuing careers in business, manufacturing, and skilled trades. The Chamber also launched a new event, Business Engaging Youth, connecting 200 high school students with local companies in trades and manufacturing, offering a firsthand look at local career opportunities. This event returns on October 8 at the Royal Venetian Mansion.

To further support business growth, the Chamber awarded four \$2,500 grants to companies in the RiseUp and ScaleUp phases of their businesses, as well as a \$5,000 media grant, sponsored by Addison Marketing Solutions, to enhance one business's online presence. These grants will again be presented at the Business Excellence Celebration: "Celebrating Our Leaders - Past, Present, and Future!" on October 23 at the Royal Venetian. During the year we have been featuring our Legacy Leaders on social media and in our newsletters!

New initiatives are launching this fall, including the Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Group for members under 40. Additionally, the Aurora Chamber Entrepreneurs (ACE) program has expanded into two cohorts, running from September to January and February to June. If interested, speak to Shayla Lockhurst about joining the next cohort.

The Chamber members continue to support local charitable organizations and this year a portion of our proceeds from the WIN lunches went to support Abuse Hurts. Donations collected from our members at the AGM and the Holiday Party went to support the York Region Food Network and the Aurora Food Pantry through the York Region Police Association. Almost \$5,000 was donated to these worthy causes by our members this year.

The Chamber remains committed to dynamic leadership, fresh ideas, and unwavering support for its members. For more information or to get involved, contact Debra Wilson, Interim Executive Director, Sandra Watson, Events Manager, Shayla Lockhurst Crich, Member Relations Ambassador at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

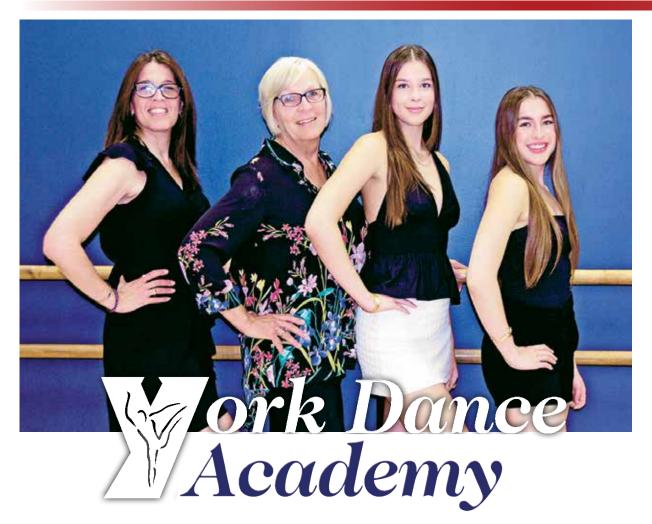
s Artistic Director at York Dance Academy, Angela determines program content and oversees faculty and guest instructors. She has trained and mentored many students over the years

who have pursued careers in dance or opened their own studios. Angela's daughter, Lisa Ogston, is the general manager who overseas the admin team and her two grand-daughters, Karley and Taryn, both

"There are many positive things children can learn from dance that stay with them for life," Angela explained. "First of all, they become physically fit while making friends who share like minded activity. Competitive dance fosters important life skills such as time management and teamwork, while boosting self-esteem and confidence through

grew up dancing competitively at the studio.

regular performances in front of live audiences."



EXPERIENCE THE BENEFITS & JOY OF LEARNING TO DANCE

BY BRIAN LOCKHART



York Dance Academy also welcomes many adults who have returned to dance and enjoy its physical, social, and fitness benefits. "People are starting to realize that dance can be an excellent form of fitness," Angela said. "If you're not the type to hit the gym and lift weights, try a tap or ballet class instead. You'll gain the same physical benefits while having fun. If you love something, why give it up? Dance can be your form of exercise for life."

York Dance Academy, celebrating it's 40th year in business in 2026, offers a wide range of classes for individuals aged three and up. Special "Early Childhood Dance" classes are designed for children ages 3-5. Other classes offered from the age of 6 to adult include ballet, jazz, acro, tap, hip-hop, musical theatre, lyrical, and modern contemporary.

For adults with a special occasion coming up, like a wedding, adult dance classes can teach you how to move gracefully on the dance floor with confidence. These classes also cover the etiquette of social dancing so you can participate in social events and dance the night away. Private lessons are also offered for those who prefer to learn one on one with an instructor.

> "We have a great team here," Angela said. "Many of our instructors can teach multiple dance disciplines, while others specialize in one particular style. Our teachers have diverse backgrounds in dance, which enriches the learning experience for all students."

Dancing is one of the oldest forms of expression. It transcends cultural boundaries, brings people together, and requires no spoken language to be appreciated and understood.

Taking dance classes offers a wide range of benefits for both physical and mental well-being, including physical fitness and cognitive function. Dancing enhances cardiovascular health, strength, flexibility, and balance, while also promoting mental clarity, stress reduction, and increased self-esteem. Additionally, dance classes provide opportunities for social interaction and creative expression.

At York Dance Academy, owner Angela Tucker brings a lifetime of experience as a dancer and dance teacher to her studios. Angela began her dance career at a very young age, training in Ballet, Jazz, Ballroom, and Latin Dance. She performed with a professional dance group before accepting a position at Seneca College, where she helped develop their dance and fitness programs.

York Dance Academys has three convenient locations in York Region:

Aurora: 305 Industrial Parkway S., Unit 19. Tel: 905-726-1241 Newmarket: 17665 Leslie St., Unit 28, Tel: 905-836-4939 Stouffville: 30 Innovator Ave., Unit 1, Tel: 905-640-6082

> For more information, visit their website at www.yorkdance.com



Pickering College takes students out of the classroom and into nature

3Y BROCK WEIR

Students are more in touch than ever before with the issues facing our world, and now, at Pickering College, learners in Grades 4 and 5 are breaking out of the classroom "SPHERE" and reconnecting with nature to develop real-world solutions for real-world problems.

SPHERE, a new learning program launched by the Newmarket-based independent school, akes Junior School students from their traditional Bayview Avenue campus to their Blue & Silver Farm in Stouffville to tap into their "natural curiosity and enthusiasm to try new things."

"We've had a lot of interest from both current and prospective parents around two things: nore purposeful time outdoors for their children, eally looking at environmental and outdoor challenges, and also a more purposeful use of echnology," says Julia Hunt, Assistant Head of School, Strategic Initiatives, at Pickering College.

"Our parents don't want their children to be consumers, they want them to be producers, hey want them to be creators. We conducted extensive research two years ago to determine what we could do to meet these demands, which we know are beneficial for young people o learn. What type of program could we develop, and how could we use our resources at Pickering College to launch something really very special?"

Enter SPHERE, which aims to empower students o use technology to solve environmental and agricultural challenges. Students who are now beginning this program are "diving right into agro-tech," says Hunt, and will use cutting-edge echnology to develop solutions to agricultural-telated environmental challenges being faced both locally and globally.

Areas of exploration include Plants vs. Machines, Robotics, and Gardening and Harvesting – including the development of new rrigation systems, created through a 3D-printer and other technologies, which will be tested on site, and successes shared with area farms and gardeners.

"Everything is purposeful, everything is authentic, and it has a real use," says Hunt. 'Kids feel really connected to their learning, hat what they're doing is real and useful, and thelps them develop those high-level tech skills, out for real reasons.







"Grades 4 and 5 is such an amazing age.

Students are old enough and so competent that they can learn this new technology and interdisciplinary approach fairly easily. They're critical thinkers, they're thoughtful, they're curious, and they're excited. This is just the ideal age to have a program like this, where they have the agency to help direct the questions that they want to answer, and we have these incredible educators leading this program who are really in a place to help the kids do the things they come up with."

And they have plenty of space to brainstorm.

Pickering College acquired the 75-acre Blue & Silver Farm following a bequest from a retired teacher who worked at the school for 53 years. He left the property to the school in 2021 and they formally took over stewardship in April of 2023.

Once all the details were finalized, the question asked not just amongst the faculty, but among parents, students, and community members alike, was how to use the property to everyone's best advantage.

"We really see the property over time building up this campus to teach people about regeneration – not just about sustainability, not staying status quo, but regenerating purposefully, regenerating Kids aren't just learning about the world—they're shaping its future, one real-world solution at a time.

property, and thinking about what needs to be done to make sure it is regenerated for many generations to come," says Hunt. "We're taking small, but very purposeful steps at this property, keeping in line with our vision. One of the things that we are doing with the SPHERE program is, by having a class of students where this is their main campus, we are creating an atmosphere where they will use it more, which will, in turn, create opportunities for the rest of the school to use it more. When the SPHERE students put in irrigation systems for the garden it will create a bigger garden that all the other students can use as well."

Since Pickering College acquired the farm, they have installed a sizeable greenhouse, which expands the growing season for young learners, a learning garden, and even a meadow area where students can fuel their minds – the result of some strategically-placed barbecues and pizza ovens!

Pickering College plans to expand the SPHERE program over time, but Hunt says they've had an "amazing response" to the program so far.

"It's one thing to have focus groups and have people say, 'Great idea!' but when it comes to actually signing their child up for it, we were thrilled to see how many existing families did so for this school year and how many new families have joined the program as well," says Hunt, adding that, in addition to enrollment numbers, another key indicator of success is the development of community partnerships.

"The SPHERE program is going to be very community-based and each project will have a number of different partners connected," says Hunt. "Another measurable is the feedback we get from those partners in terms of the work the kids are doing with them."

The students' curricula, Hunt stresses, meets all the requirements set out by the Ministry of Education, but takes these requirements to the next level

"We have the big picture, we know what teachers need to cover and they will help guide students through those channels, but in terms of how students want to demonstrate that learning, they will have a lot of agency over that," says Hunt. "We know structure is important at this age, but so are agency and purpose. When students care deeply about their learning and see it as real and meaningful, they're motivated to engage and create—because it truly matters."





AURORA HOME HARDWARE ... from small projects to BUILDING CENTRE new home construction, they have it all!



hether you require hardware to help with a simple home repair or power tools for a bigger project, Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre has what you need to get the job done.

An all-Canadian company, Home Hardware has been around since 1964 and has grown to almost 1,100 stores across the country. It is the trusted Canadian hardware store where customers know they will get value for their dollar and expert service and advice.

Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre has expanded beyond the role of a traditional hardware store.

It has three areas to serve customers:

- There is the retail side that offers every type of hardware and tools you will need for any project.
- The showroom features home improvement and decor such as custom kitchens, bathrooms, doors and windows.
- In the building supply area, they have the materials needed to build an entire house.

Customers visiting the retail side of the business will find everything they need for home comfort, repairs, and convenience.

Whether you need special power tools for a home project or just nuts and bolts to put your project together, you will find everything you require. There is outdoor power equipment to keep you property looking its best.

If it is the outdoors where you like to spend time, the store has camping supplies, barbecues, and products to enhance your backyard deck. There is a full line of pool supplies to keep your pool clean and maintained.





Many customers visit the building supply area for more advanced home projects like building a backyard deck or finishing a basement to create a new living space.

Professional contractors rely on Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre to get the materials they require for their construction needs.

"We are a building centre and we have all the materials you will need for a construction project," explained Aurora Home Hardware and Building Centre General Manager, John Barfitt. "You could build an entire house from here. We supply everything a house would need. In addition to our regular walk-in customers we serve builders, general contractors, and trades people who get their building supplies here. We sell a lot of lumber and specialty building materials."

In the showroom, you can view the products available for home enhancement. This includes flooring, bathrooms, kitchens, windows and doors.

A home renovation specialist will consult with customers who are making a decision about a major change or enhancement to their home. They can arrange for installation as well.

"We have staff installers who do all of our work," John explained. "Our kitchen installers specialize in custom cabinetry and trim work, and are ready to create the kitchen of your dreams. Most of the installations we do are from referrals from other customers we have done work for. Customers come in and speak to one of our specialists, and quite often we will be able to give them a quote right away. We will send someone out to do a site visit and check the details and finalize the cost with the customer. Most of our customers live in York Region and like our central location."

Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre employs around 60 individuals who greet customers in a friendly and welcoming manner. Many of the employees are trained as specialists and are fully knowledgeable in the products they represent.

The store features everything you need in home decor and comfort, and the tools and supplies you need to tackle any project.



Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre is conveniently located at 289 Wellington Street East. Visit the website at www.homehardware.ca to learn more & search for products.

GALLERY

< CONTEMPORARY ART>



Katie Micak

One of the highlights of visiting Micak Contemporary Art Gallery in St. Andrew's Shopping Centre was meeting the gallery's warm and welcoming owner, Katie Micak.

During my guided tour, I was struck by Katie's vision, expertise, and engaging presence. She began as an artist, earning a BFA from Western University and an MFA in Video Art from Syracuse University - experiences that sparked her dynamic

Starting in 2008, Katie directed an art and music venue in Syracuse, NY, before moving to New York City, where she worked as an artist assistant, curatorial researcher, television producer, and even sold video art.

Katie has also worked with the prestigious Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., directed Toronto's Propeller Gallery, oversaw the City of Mississauga's

Aurora's Newest Gallery **Bringing World- Class** Art & Community Together.

Living Arts Centre exhibitions and artist residencies, and launched Vector Festivalan internationally recognized digital art event she curated for years. Alongside these roles, she has taught visual art courses at several universities and worked as an independent curator for institutions across Canada.

Returning to her hometown of Aurora last year, Katie opened Micak Gallery in November 2024, describing the business as the culmination of her 20 years of experience.

Her goal is to bring exciting artwork to Aurora while connecting the community to her global network of artists and advisors, with whom she actively works with to develop and expand the gallery's offerings.

Visitors will be struck by the variety of art on display across two floors and three galleries.

From soaring skies and serene landscapes to delicate portraits and bold abstractions, there is something to capture every eye.

Katie has also partnered with Cape Dorset Fine Arts to showcase stone carvings, prints, and drawings from the renowned Kinngait Co-operative of Inuit artists in Nunavut, making the entire Cape Dorset catalogue available to local clients. The gallery's eclectic mix offers an uplifting experience, reflecting Katie's vision of bringing together established artists with emerging local talent.

All of Micak Gallery's artworks are available for purchase, including paintings, photographs, ceramics, glass, textiles, art books, and digital art. The Gallery's boutique features handcrafted, one-of-a-kind gifts reflecting the gallery's focus on unique artistic voices.

Katie takes a personal approach to art sales, one rooted in connection rather than transaction.

"I believe in art, and I believe original, beautiful artwork can transform a space-it can shift the energy of a room, boost your mood, and become part of your daily life."

For Katie, art is inseparable from memory and meaning.

"If you think about it, art becomes the backdrop of our photographs and memories. Collections tell the story of who we are, where we've been, and how we hope to be seen. It's what we pass down to our children."

Her philosophy is simple yet heartfelt: "My goal is to connect clients with art that brings lasting joy. For me, watching someone connect with art is like seeing them fall in love."

Notably, Katie's main goal is ethereal in nature: "I just want to create a magical place where people can find that special piece. I'm also hoping to support local creatives and build a space where people can enjoy more than visual art. Keep an eye out for upcoming events!"

Micak Gallery's upcoming exhibitions will showcase new artists and potential collectible works. Soft Focus explores blurry edges and big feelings, while **Becoming** presents a new series of abstract paintings by homegrown talent Laura Wood.

.....

Closing the season, New Mythologies examines the intersections of history and imagination, featuring artworks that blend historical techniques with contemporary ideas. Each exhibition includes an artist talk and a public reception, that are free to attend.

Micak Contemporary Art Gallery is in the St. Andrew's Village Shopping Centre in the heart of Aurora at Yonge St. and Orchard Heights Boulevard. Look for the neon pink >ART< sign! Micak Gallery is open regularly Tuesday- Saturday 11am- 5pm.

To book a personalized tour, school field trip, rent the gallery for a special occasion, or to submit your workshop or event idea to Aurora's newest art gallery, contact Katie at 905-726-9063, email info@micakgallery.com.

> Learn more at www.micakgallery.com and follow @micakgallery

BY BROCK WEIR



made many fond memories at The Residences on Yonge when the landmark building was once the Town's only hotel. Now the home of one of our community's leading boutique seniors residences, it offers Independent Supportive Living, Assisted Living, plus a helping hand when memories begin to

Memory Care is one of the latest offerings at the 105-suite The Residences on Yonge, which opened to residents last year. While memory care was not among the first phases planned by The Residences, Sales Consultant Donna Hanson says there has been significant community demand.

"We provide customized

care for each of our residents and we do so from independent living right through to palliative end-of-life care, so there's comfort and security in knowing that once you move into our community, as your care needs change, we change with you," she says. "There is a community need for assisted living and for memory care. We have a Montessori approach to Memory Care, that means we do personalized care plans tailored to each resident. The Montessori-type activities encompass a couple of different components that we integrate in all of our programming. That program could be person-centered care, meaning individualized-type activities tailored to their interests and their abilities.

"As part of the onboarding for each resident, we always do a kind of bit of a 'tell us about yourself,' so whenever our staff is interacting with that resident, we try to engage them by drawing on a bit of their life history – moments in time that are relevant to them. Our living space is designed to be safe, accessible and stimulating."

The core package at The Residences on Yonge inclusive of meals, housekeeping, and laundry, well as medication administration. They have a 24-7 rotation of staff combining Nursing and Personal Support Workers, and they also boast a healthy activity calendar combines social, creative and wellness activities, whether it's with residents in the assisted

living and memory care programs, or those who are living independently.

"We focus on strengths, emphasizing abilities promoting a positive self-image and encouraging participation in our group activities," says Hanson of creating resident programs. "Then there are gradual challenges that we do have, activities that are designed to be challenging yet achievable. For some, a simple thing is taking apart a puzzle

and, from memory, building it back up again. Part of all of that is wrapped around routine and structure. Consistency is a big key for when you're driving a memory care program, while encouraging independence, and we always are very supportive of family engagement."

Families of residents often live close by and The Residences has been dedicated to engaging the community as



STRETCH LAB AURORA 🌞 NEWMARKET

Photos by Jeremie Dupont

To stretch, or not to stretch?

Many people endanger their short and longterm health by not establishing an effective stretching routine and proactive regimen to stave off injuries which decrease flexibility and mobility over the long term.

The range of professional services available at Aurora's StretchLab at 15975 Bayview Avenue, Unit 3, takes the guesswork out of proper stretching, physical maintenance routines, and recovery regimens.

The dedicated staff members at the nearly year-old studio are making a demonstrable impact on community members who are bouncing back from a wide range of injuries suffered in sports mishaps to missteps due to aging to chronic conditions that afflict so many in our "maturing" population.



Owners Adam Bernatt, Franchise Partner/Co-Owner, and Lisa Weekes, joined by Steven Levitt, Aurora's own Champion Home Baker.

The dynamic husband-wife ownership duo of Adam Bernatt and Lisa Weekes offer warm greetings to visitors as they enter their sun-drenched, upbeat studio filled with sparkling clean, comfortable stretch beds and more than a dozen clients getting relief through individualized programs from new aches or pains to chronic health issues.

Bernatt offered insights into the best part

of operating his helpful business at St. John's Sideroad and Bayview.

"So many local residents have expressed their genuine appreciation about no longer having to consider travelling to Toronto for assisted stretching. It is a source of pride for Lisa and I that we've opened the first dedicated assisted stretching studio in York Region in Aurora, and we've seen first-hand how the community has welcomed us with open arms. It's been incredibly rewarding."

Weekes noted "the opportunity to bring additional wellness to the community, and for them to feel at home when they come in for assisted stretching, is very satisfying."

"We're providing one-on-one assisted stretching. It's customized to the individual's mobility and flexibility," says Weekes. "In the future, we'd like to branch out into group stretching. Helping people feel better and providing them with relief is such a benefit to this line of work. We feel a connection to the community and many of our clients have even told us that they like the 1:1 assisted stretching services provided by StretchLab better than physio or chiro sessions. We felt that connection to community during our Grand Opening that was attended by both the Mayors of Aurora and Newmarket."



Lead Flexologist Kristen Large providing Aurora Mayor Tom

In addition to the local impact his studio is having, Bernatt noted the international reach of StretchLab

"The company was started over ten years ago and has since expanded into a global brand. It was launched in Canada in late 2022 in downtown Toronto, with the Aurora location

opening in late 2024. There are six locations now in the Greater Toronto Area, anchoring a national presence with locations in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg. The Canadian-owned and operated locations are part of a 500-location. global network."

He elaborated on the techniques at the heart of the treatments that customers receive at StretchLab: "It's really related to the overall concept of stretching as a modality on its own. People are coming for a dedicated stretch on a weekly basis. Our stretching methodology is Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation, more commonly known as 'push-and-release'. It refers to a stretching and rehabilitation technique that involves passively stretching a muscle, then having the person contract that same muscle, and then stretching it again to achieve a greater range of motion. PNF techniques are used by athletes and in clinical settings to improve muscle flexibility, strength, and a person's overall range of motion, often for injury rehabilitation or performance enhancement. This effectiveness of PNF and assisted stretching is reflected by the varying needs of our clients - from 15-year-old athletes playing a range of sports-basketball, hockey, swimming—to 75-year-olds with Parkinson's and Stroke Recovery Regimens. Our exceptionally experienced and trained staff offer the most effective strategies and we go deep into your muscles to bring about relief and affect related muscle groups that are also at the heart of the pain and lack of flexibility that customers are experiencing."

Bernatt also discussed how StretchLab is going out into the community, sharing the



"We've been attending and demonstrating at community events, including Polo for Heart, the Aurora Street Festival and Golf events held to support the Aurora Sports Golf Hall of Fame & Pickering College, among others. Assisted stretching can be discussed extensively, but it truly needs to be experienced to get a true and accurate idea of how it will positively impact you."

Bernatt introduced me to Kristen Large, who brings thirty years of experience to her role of oversight for the stretching team, and is the embodiment of StretchLab's credo "Live

Large, who has been with StretchLab since opening nearly a year ago, acknowledged that "so many people are becoming aware of their longevity. We help people with what they want as they age. We're encouraging flexibility and ease of mobility to go along with longevity."

Bernatt extolled the veteran and professional presence of Large: "Kristen leads our team and she brings new techniques to the table. She's coaching our staff and she's consulting with our clients. She collaborates with staff to bring new ideas from their kinesiology, chiropractic and osteopathic backgrounds."

Weekes complements our closing, fourway conversation by noting that "the entire philosophy of StretchLab is health and wellness for all."

Large provided a gentle, non-intimidating on-the-spot diagnosis of my prospective health challenges and she showed me the cutting edge, AI technology that is exclusive to StretchLab.

fascinating diagnostic demarcated as MAPS-an acronym for Mobility, Activation, Posture, and Symmetry was deployed to root out flexibility and mobility restrictions and impingements while I engaged in deep knee bends. The results were remarkably accurate with many of the problems related to my love of golf and some prior sports injuries as a recreational basketball and hockey player.

MAPS pointed out the areas that would need more immediate attention and a prospective program was set up. The whole process took less than ten minutes and was delivered in a personal, caring, and helpful manner. I have strong faith in the processes used at StretchLab after meeting the congenial and professional staff, working through an engaging diagnostic process, and seeing the look of relief on all members getting stretched on the studio's comfy tables.

It's evident that the triumvirate of Adam Bernatt, Lisa Weekes and Kristen Largealong with the rest of the amazing staff at StretchLab-will be enhancing the health, wellness, flexibility, and mobility of our community for years to come.

StretchLab Aurora Newmarket 15975 Bayview Ave., Unit 3 289-984-0510 auroranewmarket@stretchlab.com

METROWIDEPAVING.CA

THE TRUSTED EXPERTS IN PAVING CONCRETE AND DECORATIVE STONEWORK

BY BRIAN LOCKHART

hen it's time for home repairs, projects, or renovations, it can be difficult to find a contractor who you can trust to provide the services and quality of work you expect for your home.

A driveway is a key feature of the appearance of any home, and whether you want asphalt, concrete, or interlocking stone, a properly finished driveway is a huge part of your home's curb appeal.

Metro Wide Paving delivers superior work by experts, and best of all, they deliver according to strict scheduling, on time, and on budget.

A family owned and operated company since 1986, Metro Wide Paving provides the highest level of customer service. This attention to customer satisfaction means they have achieved a notable distinction within the industry and have gained

the trust of many customers who then recommend them to family and friends when they need paving or stone work.

"We are a full-service paving and hardscaping company," explained Jason Hiorth, Metro Wide Paving Director of Sales and Marketing. "Hardscaping is interlock, concrete, flagstone, and retaining walls. Landscaping can be divided into softscaping, which is grass, and shrubs and trees, and hardscaping, which is your hard surfaces, and that is what we do."

Metro Wide Paving serves both residential and commercial customers and works all around the GTA and occasionally beyond if there is a large-scale project that needs completion.

Residential projects can be anything from resurfacing driveway to a full replacement.

"For driveways, we do a lot of 'remove and replace," Jason explained. "It's a full-service removal. We will regrade the substrate and the granular base, complete compaction, and then do the installation."

Metro Wide Paving specialized crews for excavation, asphalt, concrete and interlock work. This means they have become experts in what they do and will execute exactly what your job requires.

"We have an asphalt division, and we have a concrete and interlock division," Jason said of how they work. "When paving, we lay three inches of asphalt and we compact that with our heavy machines, and that results in around two and a quarter inches compacted."

To pave a driveway, the area is prepped and compacted to create a

base. This is then left for several weeks to ensure there are no soft spots and the driveway is ready to be paved.

Because they are so efficient and knowledgeable in what they are doing, they can normally return and complete a driveway in around two hours.

"It's an intricate ballet of six or seven guys all performing their own tasks at the same time," Jason said. "We have an experienced crew with many of our guys having decades of experience."

Metro Wide Paving services include patios, curbs, walkways and pathways, concrete pads, porches, steps, exposed aggregate, and footings and foundations.

They have the tools and knowledge to get these heavy jobs done right and they stand by their work with full confidence.

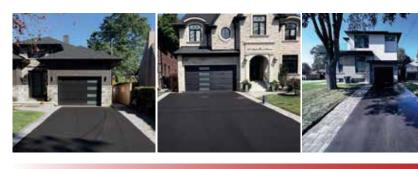
"We do what we say we are going to do," Jason said. "Our estimates tend to be more in-depth than what other companies are providing. I provide an estimate and it is a very clear what our clients receive for the value for their dollar. From a pricing standpoint, we are never the highest and rarely the lowest. Our clients tell us that our good customer service separated us from the rest, and that fact that we explained in detail what was going to happen, how it was going to happen, and the amount of material needed was very important to them."

It is this attention to detail, transparent customer service, and the expert quality of work that makes Metro Wide Paving a company that can be trusted, is reliable, and will create a beautiful addition to your property.



You can learn more about Metro Wide Paving and see some examples of their work on the website at www.metrowidepaving.ca.

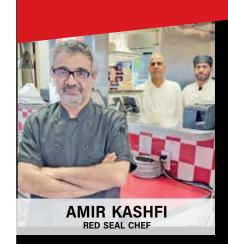
You can contact them via email on the website or by telephone at 416-626-5675.







Aurora's beloved Bunchberry Diner has entered an exciting new chapter under the ownership of Amir Kashfi, a Red Seal Chef with over 40 years of culinary experience in Canada, USA and Italy.



e has built an impressive career with many of Canada's top restaurant and food service companies, serving as an Operations Manager and Trainer while opening new Swiss Chalet and IKEA locations across Canada, and later as an Executive Chef at several retirement residences across the GTA. He is also a proud member of the United States Chef Association.

Despite his nationwide experience in some of Canada's largest cities, Amir takes great pride in owning and operating the Bunchberry Diner in Aurora:

"I enjoy bringing all these experiences to Bunchberry Diner. I live in Aurora—my home is only a five-minute walk from the restaurant. Aurora is a quiet town with a great atmosphere for running a business. When I bought Bunchberry, I assured the former owner that I would carry on the quality of food and service the diner has always been known for."

One of the diner's longstanding hallmarks is its warm, attentive Amir described his service. approach:

"I tell my staff to think about how they can make someone's day better. They're not just servers—they check presentation, engage with customers, and make sure every meal is an excellent experience from start to finish."

Amir is equally committed to supporting York Region suppliers.

buy local whenever possible. Our slogan at Bunchberry is From Farm to Table. My steaks come from local farms, as do our eggs. We purchase over fourteen cases of eggs every week. People love our scrambled eggs, our hearty three-egg breakfasts, and our fouregg omelets. We serve generous portions and remain one of the most affordable diners around."

The restaurant's convenient location is another plus. "Customers appreciate the ample parking and proximity to the GO station. We're also excited to welcome new residents from the condo being built across the street."

Even with growth on the horizon, Amir's customer base remains loyal.

"We have families from Bradford and Keswick who pass plenty of breakfast places on their way here, but they come to us for the food, service, and generous portions. Some have even asked me to open another Bunchberry in their town, and we're considering expanding

into Newmarket." The diner's charm even caught the eye of a Quebec City film crew who used Bunchberry as a set for their French-language movie earlier this summer. Amir is also proud of the groups who gather regularly: "We've hosted celebrations of 20-25 people, three graduation groups of forty, and this fall we'll welcome back two large groups of retired teachers for their annual breakfast."

To keep things fresh, Amir will

debut a new menu this September. "We'll be offering more dinner selections, new lunch sandwiches, and breakfast favorites like bagels and croissants that our customers have been asking for. Plus, we're introducing three daily specials: Mondays-two can dine for \$22 with 8-ounce burgers and fries. Tuesdays-kids eat free. Wednesdays—seniors receive 15% off plus a free dessert between 4-8 PM. It's more variety, with the same quality and generous portionsand still priced lower than other breakfast spots in town."

As we chatted, I enjoyed a steaming cup of Earl Grey tea



alongside French Toast topped with fresh strawberries-served by Liz, whose warm and attentive service embodies the spirit of the diner.

Some great things never change in Aurora. Under the skillful leadership of Amir Kashfi, the Bunchberry Diner remains a classic go-to destination for great food, friendly service, and generous portions.

As Amir summed it up:

"Aurora has always loved this diner, and I want to give even more back—more quality, more value, and more reasons to come back again and again." Amir



BY BRIAN LOCKHART

A trusted and experienced Mortgage Broker

Sciulli

'As a mortgage broker, I can work with alternative lenders such as B' banks, Credit Unions, and private lenders, this allows for a lot more variety in terms of opportunities!"

fter years of working hard and saving, you have finally managed to achieve your goal of having enough money for a down payment and you know it's time to enter the real estate market.

Whether you are buying your first home or transitioning to another place to live, finding a suitable mortgage that will meet your needs and accommodate your current financial situation is an important step in the process.

Most home buyers will need to apply for a mortgage in order to buy a house. Finding a mortgage can be a long and complicated process. Many potential home buyers have very limited experience or knowledge of how to get a mortgage and what to look for.

Visiting your local bank is an obvious choice for many people, however, there are many other options available.

> A Certified Mortgage Broker will help you find a mortgage that is suitable for your current financial situation and eliminate the process of you having to spend time and effort by visiting several financial institutions.

Mark Sciulli is a Certified Mortgage Broker with Rock Mortgage Company and has the experience and expertise to guide you to a successful outcome when you are seeking financing for a new home.

In an ever-changing housing market and mortgage industry, Mark knows how to adapt to market trends and offers a variety of choices to meet the individual needs of his clients.

He helps clients with purchases, both residential and commercial, refinancing, HELOC, pre-approvals, construction financing, and solutions for those who have bad credit.

Whether you are buying your first home or planning to build your custom dream home, Mark can help you and explain all the options.

> "Most people do have a general understanding of what a mortgage is," Mark explained. "It is my job to help people by explaining alternative forms of a mortgage. This is different than when you walk into a bank and get a standard mortgage from a financial institution."

Visiting a bank or other financial institution to inquire about getting a mortgage may be a choice for some consumers, however, there are several drawbacks involved with visiting your bank and speaking to that institution's loan officer.

A bank will only offer you the products they have at that particular time. This leaves a consumer with very limited options and this may not be the best choice for your current financial situation or long-term goals.

"As a mortgage broker, I can work with alternative lenders such as 'B' banks,

credit unions, and private lenders," Mark explained. "This allows for a lot more variety in terms of opportunities. If you walk into a bank branch, they will just ask about what you claimed in taxes, along with paystubs and job letters – it's very standard. The employees at the banks are trained only on the products that bank has available."

Mark has the ability to work with different financial institutions that offer these alternative choices with more opportunities that may fit his client's needs and financial situation.

"For example, we could work with a 'B' bank. They are registered banks but their qualification standards are different," Mark added. "I'm not trying to sell a certain product. I want to find the best product for my client. I explain what each financial institution is offering and the client can select the best one for them. The most important thing is the conversation I have with a client where I learn their goals. I don't have a loyalty to a specific bank. I'm looking for the best product that will suit my client."

If your current mortgage is up for renewal, or you a looking to do some debt consolidation, Mark can provide solutions to help you find a better alternative to your current mortgage or find ways to combine all your current debts into one package to make your life easier.

He can also assist with a Home Equity Line (HELOC). This way of tapping into your home's equity can be a very powerful financial tool that can be used for home renovations or purchasing a rental property.

Mark's services extend to the construction industry and he helps small builders achieve their goals. This can include things like a small subdivision project or renovation projects.

"When you come to me, you have a lot of options," Mark explained. "I like to tell people that knowledge is power, so the more you know and the more information you have places you in a better position moving forward and you can make an informed decision. At our brokerage, we strive for transparency in the figures. We provide you with options and you can go home and discuss it with your family and decide which one will work for you."

Not only does Mark help clients find the best mortgage opportunity for them, he saves clients a lot of time and effort. If you search for a mortgage on your own, you will be spending considerable time and effort making appointments and visiting different financial institutions.

Mark eliminates all that legwork and provides the information you need without having to visit different banks.

A respected and trusted member of the financial industry in the region, Mark has many satisfied clients who have appreciated his knowledge and experience and recommend his services to family and friends.

Mark works out of the Rock Mortgage Company office in Stouffville, at 1-38 Innovator Ave.

> You can learn more by visiting his website at www.mortgagemanmark.ca. He may be reached by phone at 416-710-3661.



PHARMASAVE **AURORA**

SUPERIOR CUSTOMER CARE & PERSONALIZED SERVICE AT YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY

BY BRIAN LOCKHART



& GEORGE GUNOVSKI

t Pharmasave Aurora, located at 126 Wellington St. W. Pharmacists Karim Khamis and George Gunovski have been serving the community since 1997 with a deep commitment to personalized service.

Opening in 1997, Karim and George have served the community for almost three decades and were the first Pharmasave to open in Ontario, at a time when the Pharmasave chain was in its infancy in Ontario. They have created an atmosphere of trust in a familiar setting for their customers.

"We don't want to be just a place to pick up a prescription," George explained. "We want it to be a place for wellness, health education, and medication safety. Helping people who have some major health conditions means compassion is also important. Trust is a big part of what we offer. We're all about personal service. We know most of our customers by name and we know their medical conditions. Because of that, we can provide a more personalized service."

Many customers visit the pharmacy on a regular basis to have their prescriptions refilled. Karim and George strive to get to know their customers and make them feel welcome as well as provide the knowledge that makes them feel confident, they have

received good advice."

we know them by their first name," Karim said. "The Ontario Pharmasave region is now 550 stores, and we have a strong supportive team region. Pharmasave empowers Pharmacy owners like us to maintain our independence while benefitting from a strong network of

Recent legislation has provided "When many of our customers arrive, pharmacists with the opportunity to expand their service when it comes to Pharmacists are now able to diagnose certain minor ailments such as pink eye and prescribe a medication to heal it. As a result, many people now visit a pharmacy for help with a minor problem rather

helping customers with minor ailments.

As experienced and professional Pharmacists, Pharmasave Aurora has been a preceptor site for University of Toronto. Fourth year interns studying to become pharmacists took their placement at Pharmasave Aurora under the mentorship of Karim and George to gain valuable Pharmacy experience. Proudly many of them are now Pharmasave owners.

The pharmacy is currently undergoing a renovation to revitalize, modernize, and make the customer experience even more friendly and vibrant. A communityminded business, Pharmasave Aurora gives back to the community and has been an active sponsor of hockey and soccer teams in Aurora.

Aurora Pharmasave provides superior customer care with personalized service in a welcoming environment.



like-minded professionals."

"As part of the program we have a new e-Care app that allows users to manage their prescriptions and request refills online. Also, you can send a new prescription that you got from your doctor through the app. If required, the attending physician can be contacted for clarification or information before you arrive at the pharmacy."

than visit a doctor or an emergency room. This has helped alleviate the pressure placed in hospitals and doctors' offices while allowing them to attend to patients requiring more urgent care.

In addition, Pharmasave Aurora is a certified injection site, offering injections for Flu, Covid, and other approved vaccines. It was the first certified pharmacy injection site in Aurora.

PHARMASAVE AURORA

is conveniently located at 126 Wellington Street W., in Aurora You can call them at 905-841-2133

FROM HARVEST TO HOME:

SWEET DUTCHESS SERVES UP SEASONAL FLAVORS & ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

BY BROCK WEIR

ome might dread the arrival of crisp air that comes with autumn – but, at Aurora's Sweet Dutchess Kitchen and Café, it's a time where creativity abounds as the harvest rolls in.

Fresh off their summertime Around the World Dinner Series, which treated customers to an everchanging rotation of meals each weekend inspired by the flavours of Spain, France, Portugal and Indonesia, to name just a few, Chef Marcia Dellepoort is hard at work crafting a unique fall menu, set to launch September 23, inspired by the seasonal flavours of the fall – think apples and squash.

"Our menus are always very seasonal," says Marcia, who co-owns the St. Andrew's Village-based restaurant with husband Rob Velenik.

Sweet Dutchess was initially envisioned by the couple as an ice cream and candy shop, but quickly evolved into something more. Now in its fourth year of operation, Sweet Dutchess not only boasts their popular dining room and patio, which now offers dinner service on both Friday and Saturday evenings, but a popular marketplace featuring an array of products from around the globe.

"Our tagline is 'Worldly Food with a Touch of Dutch' and that's what we try to deliver," says Rob. "We source unique items, we are passionate about quality, and we love sharing our finds!"

Those finds are showcased regularly in Sweet Dutchess' restaurant and that, says Marcia, is what keeps customers coming back for more.

"We want our clientele coming every Friday and Saturday and being excited to come - because it's only two days a week and we'll have four or five appetizers, and four or five mains, so you can't really work your way through the whole menu like you would in another restaurant," she says."It has to be fresh!"

Both Marcia and Rob pride themselves on bringing new things to the



Sweet Dutchess recently hosted an exotic car show, and plan to have even more events in the future to engage the community.



KITCHEN & CAFÉ

where house-made prepared foods, including soups, take pride of place alongside the international fare. Their prepared foods are made on-site in their peanut-

and tree nut-free kitchen, which exclusively uses butter and extra-virgin olive oil, an extension of their restaurant vision, which aims to accommodate all nutritional needs and dietary restrictions, and many of their pre-made frozen entrées are gluten free as well.

They not only want to satisfy taste-buds but spark

The prepared and frozen meals allow you to take a bit of Sweet Dutchess wherever you go, as does their full-scale in-house catering service which can meet all needs, small and large, whether you're looking to take a delicious charcuterie board as a host gift, take the stress out of the holidays with a full menu for your family, or craft a memorable day for hundreds.

"We're working more on what we do and making it even better," says Rob, noting they also curate corporate gift baskets. "We're a restaurant and a boutique grocery store, but we do full-service catering as well. We do off-site catering, catering pick-ups, and always have a catering menu for pick-up around Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, for families of six or more. We do everything from a pickup of a charcuterie board or a fruit tray, right to putting a tent in your backyard, full-service staff, bartenders, entertainment.

"Whatever is needed, we've done it all, and with respect to what we can do, the possibilities are endless!"

TO EXPLORE ALL THE POSSIBILITIES SWEET DUTCHESS HAS FOR YOUR KITCHEN, YOUR EVENT, AND YOUR TASTEBUDS, VISIT THEM AT 2 ORCHARD HEIGHTS BOULEVARD, SUITE 23, ON THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF YONGE STREET, OR VISIT THEM AT SWEETDUTCHESS.CA.



Expert service and quality glass repairs for all types of vehicles

It can happen pretty quickly.

You're travelling down a street or highway, and a stone can fly up from another passing vehicle, striking your car and leaving a chip in the windshield.

It won't be long before that small chip becomes a large crack and the integrity of your vehicle is compromised.

Finding a reliable and trusted glass replacement company that delivers quality products and expert service can be a challenge.

Aurora Transit Auto Glass Inc. is the premier auto glass replacement centre in the region that provides professional auto glass replacement service with quality OEM and OEE glass.

Business owner Hernan Rose began working with auto glass after a successful career in the automotive industry.

"I've always enjoyed working in the auto industry, I've always liked the car business and sales," Hernan said. "I owned my own car dealership for several years and I really enjoyed it."

Involved in the automotive industry for over 30 years, he started at a shop on Yonge Street and was there for five years. He then opened Woodbine Auto in Gormley. Moving to 15296 Yonge Street in Aurora, he was there for 17 years before moving to the present Allaura Boulevard location where he has successfully operated for five years.

Learning the auto industry and gaining experience, he eventually specialized and transitioned to auto glass replacement.

"I have always been in Aurora and I have a good client base," Hernan explained. "I believe in quality work. I'm not the cheapest glass guy in the world - and I don't want to be. I think people should be respected and provided the correct and proper job. That has always been my intention and that's the way I have always treated customers. Because of that, I have a good and steady clientele."

The reason Hernan says he is not "the cheapest" and doesn't want to be, is based on the fact that he always uses Original Equipment Manufacture (OEM) and Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEE) products.

This means the glass he uses was manufactured for, and designed to fit the car that needs the glass replacement.

Automotive companies do not manufacture glass, tires, or many other components of a vehicle. However, they do have manufacturers who produce those products specifically for a make and model of a vehicle.

This means a new aftermarket windshield will not have the same structural integrity as OEM and OEE designed glass.

When installed on a new vehicle, the windshield is designed to be part of the structural integrity of the design. It helps protect passengers in the event of a rollover.

The sealing compound which holds a windshield in place is an important part of the process of windshield installation.

Hernan and his team use a superior compound to ensure the window is properly sealed.

"We use the best urethane," Hernan explained.



You're travelling down a street or highway, and a stone can fly up from another passing vehicle, striking your car and leaving a chip in the windshield. It won't be long before that small chip becomes a large crack and the integrity of your

"You can buy the cheaper urethane that takes eight or ten hours to dry. The urethane we use is the best you can get. When I put it in, I know it's the best for the customer. It dries properly and we know it's not going to leak. When we install auto glass we are very particular about not damaging the pinchweld. Everything we do is warranted."

This trust in the products he uses to repair and replace glass inspired the company logo,

'Doing it right, saves lives.'

Aurora Transit Auto Glass services all makes and models of cars and trucks. Whether you drive a domestic sedan or an imported sports car, they can do a glass replacement.



I put in a new windshield like I'm installing it in my own car

This includes windshields, doors, and rear windows. If you have a minor stone chip in the windshield, Aurora Transit Auto Glass can repair the damage and stop that chip from spreading into a larger crack.

Aurora Transit Auto Glass provides mobile service if you are unable to bring your vehicle to the shop.

Skilled technicians can come to you and provide onthe-spot repairs, replacement, and mobile re-calibration.

The mobile team is fully equipped to handle all types of auto glass damage from sealing minor chips and cracks to replacing damaged windshields with factoryapproved glass.

Over the years, customers have requested other services for their vehicles when in the shop.

All Work Guaranteed

Aurora Transit Auto Glass also does car and truck repairs and maintenance.

This includes oil changes, brakes, and other necessary routine maintenance to keep your vehicle operating safely and efficiently.

As the automotive industry evolves, Hernan and his team keep on top of the new technology that is being used to make automobiles safer. This includes cameras and on-board radar systems.

Every time one of these systems is repaired or replaced, the unit must be re-calibrated to ensure they are working properly.

"New cars have a lot of different systems to keep that car going," Hernan explained. "We are doing the calibration of all these systems. The future is really the calibration of these cars. With every front-facing camera, when we replace a windshield we have to re-calibrate

A windshield crack as a result of a stone chip or other accident may require you to go through your insurance company for the repair.

Hernan knows this can sometimes be a challenge. At Aurora Transit Auto Glass, Hernan takes care of all that for you. He will take your documents and contact the insurance company and save you the hassle of dealing with them.

"My clients know they get the best possible job. I don't cut corners. Everyone who works here does the same we do the best possible job. I put in a new windshield like I'm installing it in my own car".

Friendly on-site or mobile service by skilled technicians We'll work directly with your insurance company!





creative marketing agency.

Based out of a pink office in the Wellington Business Centre, Socials & Stilettos is known for their unique ability to elevate businesses and build iconic brands through social media, marketing, and PR - with the aim of keeping audiences "coming back for more." Socials & Stilettos' pink-themed branding serves as "a great representation of the same energy people can look forward to when working with us" says Megann. Socials & Stilettos prides itself on thinking outside of the box and defying expectations, and doing so with what Megann describes as "dream team energy."

"There's so much intention and love behind every single thing that we do, all backed by the incredible strategies and skill sets our team brings to the table." she says

One of the many things that sets Socials & Stilettos apart is their commitment to a collaborative approach.

ingredient was missing, it wouldn't have the same delicious taste. Being an extension of a business is one of the most important pieces to being a dream team. One of the things our clients love the most about us is whether it be remotely or they come into our office, it doesn't feel like they have handed things off to another team. We care about their business the same way they do."

When clients come into their office, one of the features Socials & Stilettos particularly prides itself on where so much of the magic happens. "There's really no limitation on how we can make this space work for any specific industry or niche," says Megann. "A lot of times, businesses have to travel to the city to be able to get a blank canvas where content can be created for their products or services. The Conten't Lab is a great solution for businesses that are ready to elevate their brand visuals with high-quality content creation." They recently welcomed Aurora's very own GRCo Grill to the space for an entire shoot designed to spotlight their new menu items.

That is just one example of what they can do for local businesses. Socials & Stilettos has also played a role in elevating large, international brands, such as the software company Adobe.

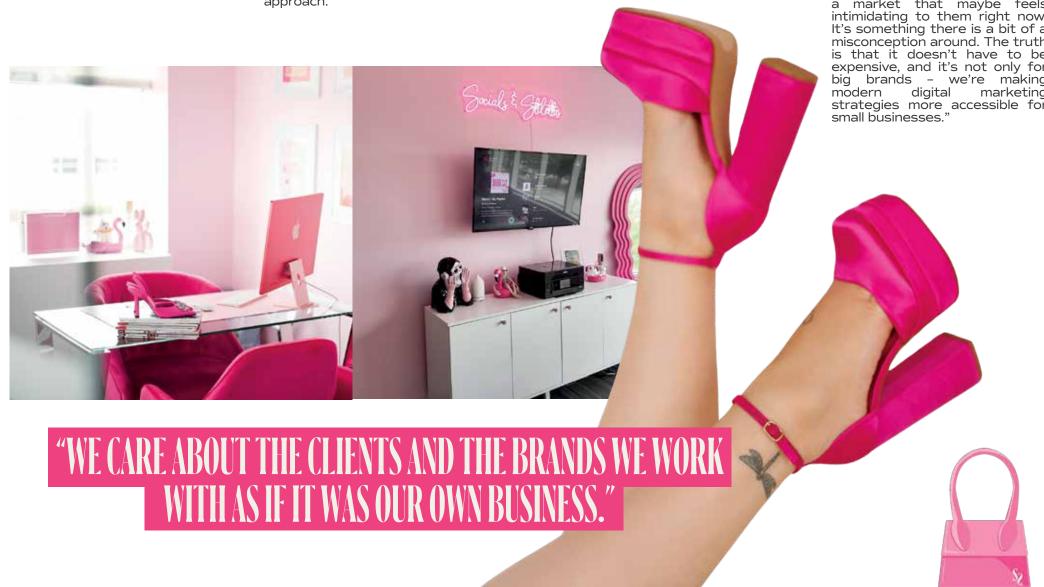
are so many different businesses online, and one of the best ways to create an audience or a customer base that is truly loyal is bringing in that community aspect," says Megann. "One of the ways we do this is through community management, where we're basically humanizing a brand. That looks like creating a space where it's not just about promoting a product or service, it's about creating content customers can relate to and makes them feel seen."

As Socials & Stilettos goes from strength to strength, they are committed to supporting the local community by lending a "helping hand to small businesses.

"I think there is a space where local businesses often struggle with creating something that's bigger and more impactful for a broader demographic," says Megann. "That's what we're really passionate about showing that it's possible. We're here for the people who also have those big visions."

"As we continue to grow, we're developing a talent agency portion to what we're doing. This isn't only to support brands, but to support content creators too. That's coming later this year and is going to create a whole new level of opportunities for small business owners to tap into

a market that maybe feels intimidating to them right now. It's something there is a bit of a misconception around. The truth is that it doesn't have to be expensive, and it's not only for big brands - we're making modern digital marketing strategies more accessible for small businesses.'







ames and Kali Griniaris opened Poached Dreams Diner on June 9 in the Wellington Business Centre, just east of Industrial Parkway, and celebrated their spacious restaurant's Grand Opening on June 15 with dignitaries including Mayor Tom Mrakas in attendance.

James acknowledges that since those first two weeks of operation, "We've had a lot of traffic and we have lots of room to accommodate them. We have seating capacity of 150 in-house and 100 on the patio."

It is this abundance of space that Kali believes in the difference between PD Diner and other area restaurants.

"Location and space are big factors for us. When we had the old restaurant in Toronto, we couldn't accommodate big groups-we just didn't have the capacity. In this new location, we're

looking forward to accommodating big parties and events," according to Kali.

James and Kali were born and raised in Toronto, but have resided in Aurora since 2019. Kali

has found that the best part of operating PD Diner "is speaking to all the new people that are supporting our restaurant. They've supported us so strongly in the early days of our business. We're present as owners so we can meet all our customers and get to know them by name. We love people and love hosting, especially accommodating their requests. We like to welcome our customers as if they were visiting our own home."

Even though the restaurant is teeming with customers, the Poached Dreams Diner is in a state of becoming. After ten weeks of operation, James advises me that the beautifully-appointed dining area "is not the final look. We just wanted to open in June and get rolling. We'll have a retail space set up near the entrance of the restaurant, and we're starting to host big birthday parties and planning some major events for the Fall."

The dynamic husband and wife duo are also looking forward to accommodating local teachers and students when St. Maximilian Kolbe CHS reopens next door and nearby GW Williams SS opens its new building on Bayview. James notes that "We'll have a ton of lunch options for them. For students, we'll have special rates and teachers will have their set discount as well. We're now catering, too, and can't wait to be part of school events and all the special moments in between! When



POACHE



JAMES AND KALI GRINIARIS

A DINER WITH A DIFFERENCE

a team brings home a big win, we'd love to be part of the celebration! Our 1,500 sq. ft. kitchen is ready to welcome the whole crew. And if you have an idea, bring it to us - we'll make it happen."

Kali adds, "Our all-day breakfast has been very popular. We even have customers who get a sudden craving for Eggs Benny at 7 p.m. Over time, we've built a loyal crowd that comes in around 7.30 or 8 at night just to enjoy their favorite breakfast classics - many of them can't resist the Lumberjack Platter that features three eggs, home fries, Peameal Bacon, French Toast or pancake, and a choice of two side meats - ham, bacon, or sausages-as well as two slices of toast. Our popular breakfast items have helped drive our loyalty program, which has been a big success after only eight weeks. We've had an amazing response, with many customers already earning and redeeming points. Members collect 1 point for every \$3 spent, plus 10 bonus points just for signing up, and people are genuinely excited about it! Guests light up when they see how quickly the points add up toward future meals.

We're also excited to give back to the community by sponsoring local rep and school sports teams starting this fall."

Another unique element that one discovers at Poached Dreams Diner is a fidget bin for kids. Kali notes that "We have seven-year-old twin boys and one of them is on the spectrum. I make sure

> we keep a bin full of fidget toys for kids to play with while they're waiting for their food. It keeps them occupied, and as restaurant owners and parents, we're always looking for ways to meet the finer needs of our customers."

The friendly staff of PD Diner sated my all-day breakfast needs as a first-time customer and I was taken by the generous portions of food that were placed in front of me. The Lumberjack Platter could feed two adults.

This gustatory gladiator took on the platter and the platter won. The leftover home fries, two slices of turkey bacon, and two slices of ham were delicious as Tuesday's lunch after 18 holes of golf. My bottomless cup of Earl Grey tea was a nice complement to so much protein on three plates: four half slices of ham, four slices of lean turkey bacon, three large eggs over easy, two slices of tasty Peameal bacon, and two slices of rye toast to sop up the egg yolk. A delightful finish to the meal: a slice of sweet bread French Toast smothered in syrup.

My all-day breakfast dreams came true at Poached Dreams Diner on Monday afternoon.

To book an event or make reservations, call, text, or email James Griniaris at 647-338-6223 or james.griniaris@gmail.com. Poached Dreams Diner is located at 230 Wellington Street East, Aurora, Ontario L4G 1J5.



MENSWEAR

1-255 Industrial Pkwy S Aurora, ON L4G 3V5

Style comes with Substance in Community



BY BROCK WEIR

s people continue the transition back to working at the office, perhaps after as many as five years, men might be looking for some fresh threads for the big return. Mike Rathke, owner of MR Menswear, the popular men's boutique on Industrial Parkway South, has been assisting men in building fashionable and functional wardrobes for nearly 40 years.

The store has all your necessities, from clothing for formal events, to business casual, weekend apparel, outerwear, and anything in between.

While Rathke always welcomes customers warmly to his store - along with a hot shot of espresso - you will be able to see many of MR Menswear's signature looks this fall as he hosts his biennial Whisky, Wine & Menswear Fashion Show on October 30 at Newmarket's NewRoads Performing Arts Centre.



The event will benefit the Southlake Regional Cancer Centre, a cause very close to Rathke's heart.

As a young man, Mike had a dream to open a men's apparel store by the age of 25.

At the age of 19, however, he was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour. After almost eight years in recovery and 10 years back in the menswear line, he set out to achieve his dream, opening MR Menswear in 2007.

In 2017, weeks after celebrating more than 30 years in the business and beating cancer at the inaugural fashion show, he was diagnosed once again and prepared for another battle.

When the community found out, they quickly came together to save Mike's business, a move he and his family remain grateful for after yet another conquest.

"Unfortunately, there's not enough good stories; I am one, and it feels good to give back," says Mike, adding October's event will share the flipside of his cancer journey: poignant words from his mother, speaking about the realities of being a parent of a teen going through such a difficult battle, from his then-girlfriend and now wife, who fought alongside him, as well as from their two daughters who were with him in the second fight every step of the way.

"Every single one of us has a family member or a close friend that could be battling cancer right now, or even earlier this year, and we have to come through for everybody," Rathke says, recalling an impromptu chat with a couple of new customers recently who noticed information on the upcoming show in store.

When he explained the show and its cause, it turned out two of their sons, both in their 30s, were on their own cancer journeys and didn't hesitate to pick up tickets.

For more information on this year's Whisky, Wine & Menswear, and to get your tickets, scan the QR code here.









ST. ANNE'S SCHOOL

enters milestone year of growth in Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR



St. Anne's School is guided by a simple, but all-important mission:

"empowering girls to be courageous learners and compassionate citizens who live and lead with wisdom."

It has been the school's guiding philosophy since its inception, long before they formalized their Mission Statement in December – but, as a new school year begins, they will soon see their mission truly in action as they prepare for their first graduating class to head out into the world.

"This is one of those moments we have been planning for; we recognize how unique this group of individuals has been in shaping the school's history," says Sabrina D'Angelo, St. Anne's Head of School, underscoring the importance of the first graduating class of Cygnets in the school's fledgling history. "They are the trailblazers – the girls and families who really took a leap of faith in St. Anne's School, shaping its leadership, embracing its offerings, and creating opportunities for those who will follow.

"As we prepare to graduate our first group of students, there is so much pride as the school's foundation was built on their participation and belief in what St. Anne's has become. What a unique opportunity to be part of developing a mission statement and creating a long-lasting legacy for generations of girls."

St. Anne's, York Region's only all-girls independent school, started with a group of 38 young girls in 2022 and, in this milestone 2025-2026 school year, they are welcoming 300 Cygnets to their St. John's Sideroad campus, spanning Grades 5 – 12, the same range of students offered by their partner school, St. Andrew's College.

It is exponential growth by just about any measure, and one that will continue to be guided by their new five-year strategic plan.

The plan, says D'Angelo, guides St. Anne's as they move out of their "foundational years" and look at opportunities to take girls' education to the next level.



St. Anne's is proud to be a leader in its STEAM programs - Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math - which have typically been areas where girls are underrepresented, as well as programs and courses to give girls the tools they need to be "strong role models and strong mentors" in life.

"We recognize the need for girls to have strong role models, strong mentors, but also the opportunity to develop their leadership skills in a way that they would not be able to do in a co-ed setting," says D'Angelo. "We're really leveraging the power we have from a female leadership perspective to be able to start at Grade 5 to hone some of those fundamental skills."

St. Anne's Strategic Plan, In Flight, includes significant plans for future growth.

This week, for instance, the St. Anne's community joined the Town of Aurora and Shining Hill Group for the grand opening of Thelma Fielding Park, which includes a new artificial turf field, multi-use courts,

Growth is also taking place within the school itself, including the development of a new kitchen facility which will allow the school to offer in-house food services, after several years of being well-served by a catering company.

playground, splashpad, pickleball courts, washroom facilities, and 27 parking spaces, which has been a joint venture between the school and the municipality. The new facility will not only give the Cygnets a new space to develop their athletic skills but enhance academic programming and community outreach, not to mention a highlight to school

They also recently launched their "Nest" campaign, a capital fundraising endeavour that will result in a new 26,000 square foot auditorium and regulation-size gymnasium for the campus.

"It's our one missing link," says D'Angelo. "We have a small gym on site, but it does not allow us to host games or tournaments. We're really looking forward to showcasing our athletic prowess on our own campus and having our community come together to watch our girls compete in our extensive athletics programs! It's an area where we can bring our community together and where we can continue to build sisterhood, which is really a priority in our development."

The fundraising campaign continues apace, with D'Angelo noting that one of the challenges with being a newer school is having a comparatively small donor or alumni base to draw upon.

As they grow, however, the blocks of that future foundation are falling into place.

"While fundraising always requires dedication, we are fortunate to leverage the strength of our partnership with St. Andrew's College. With its 126-year legacy, including 100 years in Aurora in 2026, and the strong connections and supporters that come with it, we have a unique opportunity to build this history and create an enduring future for St. Anne's," she says. "With a high percentage of crossover families between the school campuses, sons at SAC and daughters at SAS, the strength of our schools and unique programming is a benefit to many York Region families.

"We recognize how important it is to have strong ties within the Aurora, Newmarket and York Region communities. If there are people who are interested in girls' education, female leadership development, and providing for young women, we are keen to further develop important community partnerships.

"This is an exciting time in the history of our school to be moving into our fourth year with 300 students enrolled from Grades 5 through 12. We want to share that excitement with the community and encourage those interested in learning more about our school to attend an upcoming Open House or simply visit the campus during Doors Open Aurora this fall for a more extensive peek at the campus and its facilities. We welcome people to drop in and see what's going on behind the gate!" says D'Angelo.