

TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

January 29, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Week of February 2	No meetings		
Monday, February 9	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Heritage Advisory Committee
Tuesday, February 10	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, February 10	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Committee of the Whole
Wednesday, February 11	10 a.m.	Holland Room	Community Recognition Review Advisory Committee
Wednesday, February 11	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, February 12	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Tuesday, February 17	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Finance Advisory Committee
Tuesday, February 17	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Public Planning
Wednesday, February 18	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board

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

What's Happening

AURORA'S 2026 ARCTIC ADVENTURE

Celebrate Family Day Weekend
Free fun for everyone!

Saturday, February 14 | 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Aurora Town Square - 50 Victoria Street

Marquee Theatrical Productions Show
Speaking of Wildlife Show
Crafts, Pottery Demos & More!

Monday, February 16 | 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Aurora Town Park - 49 Wells Street

Winter Adventures- Inflatables, Ice Carvings, Activities
Speaking of Wildlife and Canadian Lumberjack Shows
Fire Buskers & more!

Details and schedules at
aurora.ca/ArcticAdventure
Some activities are weather dependent.

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: **Tom Wray - Journeys**

This photography exhibition takes you on a visual journey through four unique and awe-inspiring destinations. The view through the lens captures the distinctive beauty, culture, and natural wonders that define these places. The journey begins in Canada - but there is so much more to discover - this is but a glimpse. In Iceland, otherworldly glaciers and volcanic landscapes create surreal atmospheric scenes. From Iceland to the romantic charm and historic grandeur of France, to the lush green hills and dramatic coastlines of Ireland, and finally to the vast, rugged wilderness of Canada, this exhibition invites viewers to explore a rich tapestry of natural and urban landscapes. Stark contrasts between fire and ice, where volcanic craters, cascading waterfalls, and the northern lights are immortalized in powerful imagery. This exhibition is a celebration of the diverse beauty found across continents, a testament to the power of photography to capture not just places, but the soul of the land itself. 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.

RENEW AND LICENSE
YOUR PETS ONLINE

All dogs and cats in the Town of Aurora must be licensed under Animal Services By-law Number 6197-19.

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aurora.ca/PetLicense

Winter 2026
Program Guide

The **Winter 2026 Program Guide** is available to view online at 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.

2026 Summer
Camps Program
Guide

The 2026 Summer Camps Program Guide will be available to view online starting on **February 10**. Registration dates are posted online at aurora.ca/SummerCamps. 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.



2026 Aquatic Leadership Courses

Aquatic Leadership registration is now open for all seasons of our 2026 Aquatic Leadership courses. Full details at aurora.ca/AquaticLeadership. Register online or pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., S.A.R.C. or A.T.S.



February 23, 6:30 p.m.

MUSEUM MONDAYS

Discover the hidden stories and spaces of your community museum in this exclusive guided tour and Q&A, all ages welcome.

Registration (\$10):
aurora.ca/WhatsOn



EGYPTIAN BELLY DANCE

March 2, 6 to 8 p.m.

Learn authentic belly dance techniques in a welcoming, inclusive environment.

A great workout perfect for beginners and experienced dancers, ages 10+.

Register:
aurora.ca/WhatsOn



Aurora Town Hall

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Accessible Formats

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Hospice, community celebrate opening of Wellness, Grief, and Caregiving Hub



Richmond Hill Mayor David West, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, and Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas joined the Hope House team for Friday afternoon's celebration.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Hope House Hospice, formerly Hospice King-Aurora, marked the start of a brand-new chapter in its storied history of community service with the opening of their new Wellness, Grief, and Caregiving Hub on Friday afternoon.

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Richmond Hill Mayor David West were on hand for the celebration, which also included an opportunity for Hope House to share the success of a recent two-year Provincial grant.

“Over my 18 years here at Hope House, I have seen this organization grow and thrive because of the dedication and valuable contributions of our staff and our amazing volunteers, and, of course, because of the support of our community – local, regional, provincial and federal,” said Hope House Executive Director Heidi Bonner.

“We are gathering here today to celebrate the opening of our Wellness, Grief and Caregiving Hub. It’s a special place where we invite our community to visit – a place that is welcoming, a safe place to land during a very difficult time. We want all to know that you don’t have to journey alone through illness and grief, and that Hope House is always here to support.”

One such programming area that will activate the new Wellness, Grief, and Caregiving Hub is Hope House’s HUUG (Help Us Understand Grief) program, which was developed through a two-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

First awarded to Hope House in 2024, the grant funding was used to develop a program to help children, youth and families who are experiencing a serious illness, anticipating a death, or grieving a death.

Bonner says the resulting program saw a 192 per cent increase in referrals in the first year and, as the two-year grant wrapped, referrals received during

the period “is more than the combined referrals we’ve received for the previous six years.”

“The program continues to grow because the need for this type of support continues to grow,” said Bonner. “The impact of our HUUG program will be felt for generations to come. We support young people now when they need it the most. Then, as they grow, they remember the support and the strategies that they’ve been given to survive what they have gone through.”

The value of the HUUG program was further highlighted by Julia Zinn, Hope House’s Counsellor for Children, Youth, and Families.

“It’s an honour to be at the forefront of this work and to help establish this program, which is the only one of its kind in all of York Region,” she said. “At Hope House, our vision is that nobody journeys alone through serious illness, end-of-life, or grief and that includes children. However, one in 14 children will experience the death of a parent or sibling before their 18th birthday and 93 per cent of children will experience a death that’s significant to them before their 18th birthday as well. That’s 93 per cent of children who are going through these hard things and often they’re going through them alone.”

Grief experienced by children is often under-recognized and under-supported, she said, with a prevailing school of thought being that they’re young and will bounce back.

“But we all know that’s not true, and that’s why programs like HUUG are so important...and we are endlessly grateful for the funding from [Trillium] that has allowed us to establish this program and demonstrate its importance here in the community so that we can continue it for years and years to come,” she continued. “[The program] will continue to support children, youth, and families who are experiencing serious illness, end of life, or grief. Our goal is really to normalize these experiences. We know that this isn’t a statistic of very few children. It’s a statistical norm that folks are going

through this. We want to normalize the thoughts, the feelings, all those experiences that play into that for these families, and also do so in a way that is familiar and more comfortable for kids.”

Among the activities included in the HUUG program include arts and crafts, games, such as “Question Jenga” that help kids get to know each other and feel comfortable. One-on-one counselling is also offered, while parents can also be involved in the program, where counsellors can impart the tools they need to support kids who are also going through challenging times.

“I’m the local MPP here, but I’m also Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services...when you think of the impact of this program on young people, whether they’re dealing with a serious illness or a death in the family, and the

support that you and your staff through the HUUG program provide, it goes a long way,” said MPP Parsa.

Added Mayor Mrakas: “This is a phenomenal place to be opening here in the Town of Aurora. This hub is going to provide a place for people to have supports, connection, and to be able to learn through the grieving process and also through illnesses. I’m hearing about the stories about children that are grieving and losing a parent, and whenever you lose a parent, whether you’re a child or you’re an adult – I lost my dad last year, a very difficult time, but being able to get through it was being able to talk to people about it, so I can only imagine what it’s like for a child to lose a parent and what they have to deal with, so I thank each and every one of you for all the work that you guys do.”

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SUPPORTING IRANIAN COMMUNITY – On Sunday, hundreds filled Newmarket’s Riverwalk Commons for a rally in support of the Iranian people, where local MPPs Michael Parsa and Dawn Gallagher Murphy were among the speakers. “Thank you to Canadians from coast to coast to coast for sharing their love and support and for standing up for justice,” said Parsa. “Members of the United Nations Assembly, you have one job to do, and that is to protect the people. Stand up. Time for talk is over. As we speak, people are back on the streets again, even knowing that this regime will murder them. But they’re not giving up for democracy. Don’t give up on the people of Iran.” Parsa and Mayor Tom Mrakas are set to host another rally in support of the Iranian community this Wednesday, January 28, at Town Hall beginning at 3 p.m. All are welcome.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Five Things to Know about New Recycling Program: Environmental Defence

It’s a new year, and Ontario’s new program for households who get curbside recycling pickup has begun. Here are five things you should know about it:

Producers are now responsible, not your municipality.

The contents of your recycling bin are now fully the responsibility of the companies that sell you packaged goods and paper products, no longer your municipal government. These companies now manage the collection, sorting and recycling or disposal of the cans, boxes and bags that go into your bin. Despite the shift in responsibility, collection should continue basically as before. This change came from the provincial government, to make producers of all the packaging and products responsible for it from cradle to grave. In principle, this is a good idea, because municipalities and their residents have been subsidizing this throwaway economy for far too long.

Put all packaging in the bin.

Another positive is that we need to worry less about what type of material we put in our bin, as long as it is packaging and paper products (such as flyers, envelopes and magazines). You can stop paying attention to the confusing – and often misleading – numbers and arrows on plastic containers. Whether these companies can recycle all this stuff is now their problem. So, make sure to put all your bags, pouches, food tins, vinegar bottles, boxes, envelopes, clamshell containers, etc., into your bin. The only exception is alcohol containers and packaging, which are handled in Ontario’s successful deposit return program (more on this below).

You can still help reduce contamination.

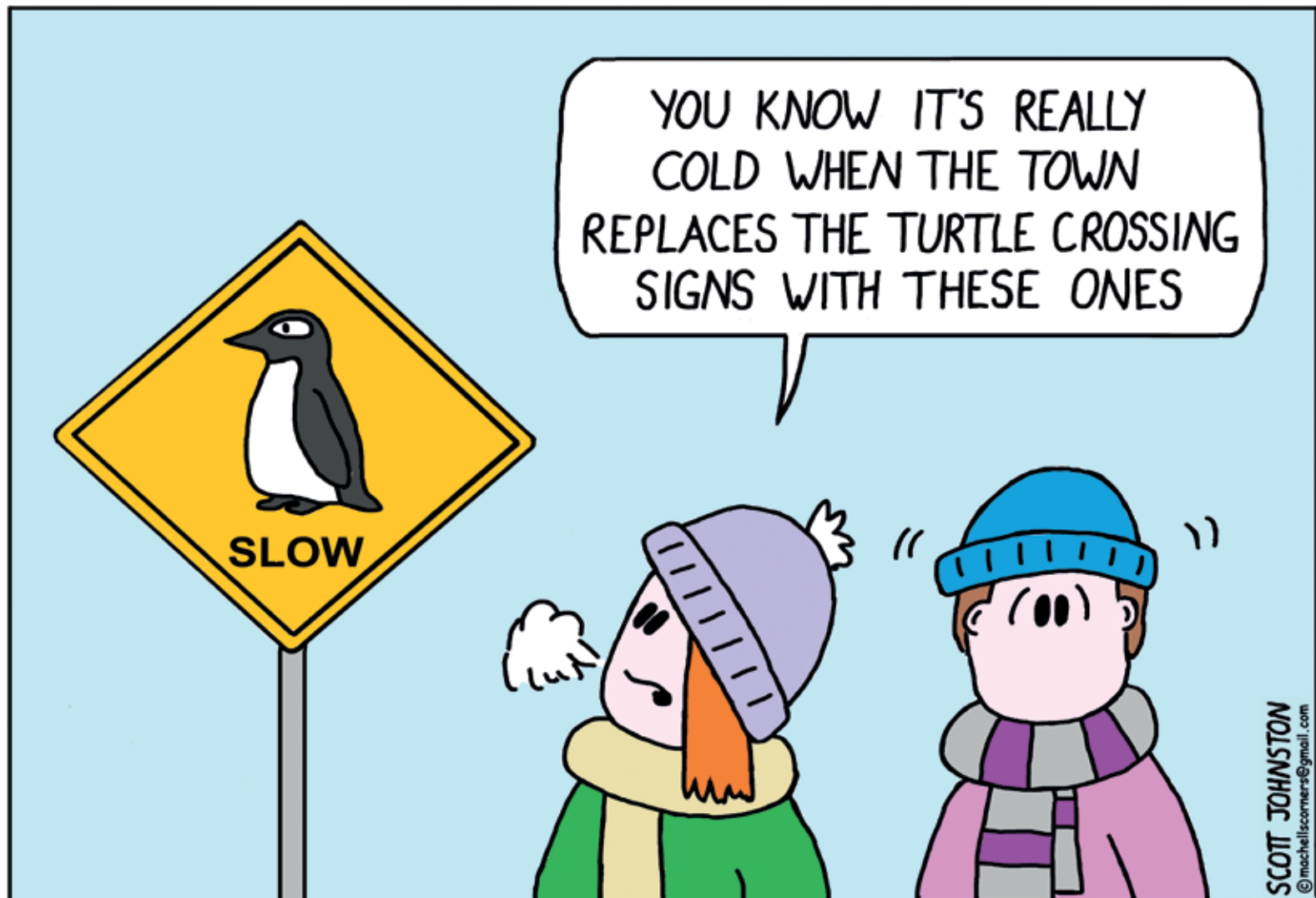
Just because it belongs in the bin DOES NOT mean all this packaging will now magically get recycled. In fact, many soft plastics are highly unlikely to ever be recyclable and could make the rest more difficult to sort. That’s why we recommend you put your plastic film, bags, and pouches together in one bundle that can be separated easily from the more valuable paper and metals. We want companies to take responsibility for their growing plastic packaging mess, but we can save them from themselves a little bit by helping prevent this garbage from contaminating the truly recyclable materials in the bin. Continue to keep food and hazardous waste like paint and batteries out of your recycling bin, as always!

And now some bad news: This new blue box program will not deliver for the environment.

Unfortunately, this new program is very unlikely to incentivize changes in how companies package their products. We have long advocated for true producer responsibility where companies take on the full cost of their wasteful packaging and feel the urge to fix it. This would require them to meet high collection and reuse, refill or recycling targets that are enforced by the government. But the provincial government has weakened the rules so much that companies won’t be driven to reduce waste and increase recycling. Instead, garbage is simply becoming a higher cost of doing business and companies will continue to try to offload their responsibilities onto others. They have already successfully gotten rid of obligations to collect packaging waste

Continued on page 5

Machell’s Corners



Shifting Resiliency



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

generally kept the shifts that made sense and improved the situation in question, and mercifully went back to time-tested practices in other areas.

Importantly, we were able to exercise critical thought in what made sense, what should stick around, what should be consigned to the history bins, and what rules were worth re-learning.

And the rules are being rewritten every day.

Last week, Prime Minister Mark Carney made a landmark speech at the World Economic Forum which was held by many around the world as a watershed moment in how countries like Canada are working to redefine their respective relationships around the world.

While views on the speech here at home were positive-to-mixed, generally speaking, it was fascinating to see the international reaction to the Prime Minister’s words, with so many citing it as a valuable example of international leadership in what is perceived to be a recent leadership vacuum.

“Today, I’ll talk about the rupture in the world order, the end of a nice story and the beginning of a brutal reality where geopolitics among the great powers is not subject to any constraints,” he began. “But I also submit to you that other countries, particularly middle powers like Canada, are not powerless. They have the capacity to build a new order that embodies our values, like respect for human rights, sustainable development, solidarity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of states.

“The power of the less powerful begins with honesty. It seems that every day we’re reminded that we live in an era of great power rivalry. That the rules-based order is fading. That the strong can do what they can, and the weak must suffer what they must. . . . There is a strong tendency for countries to go along to get along. To accommodate. To avoid trouble. To hope that compliance will buy safety. It won’t. So, what are the options?

“We knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false. That the strongest would exempt themselves

when convenient. That trade rules were enforced asymmetrically. And we knew that the international law applied with varying rigour depending on the identity of the accused or the victim. This fiction was useful. And American hegemony, in particular, helped provide public goods: open sea lanes, a stable financial system, collective security, and support for frameworks for resolving disputes. So, we placed the sign in the window. We participated in the rituals. And we largely avoided calling out the gaps between rhetoric and reality. This bargain no longer works.”

Carney made a comprehensive case in his speech on why the bargain no longer works, and the importance of protecting yourself when the rules no longer protect you.

The reaction was as swift as it was predictable – Canada being disinclined from participation in the fledgling and questionably-structured Board of Peace and living under threats of 100 per cent tariffs.

It’s almost as if certain parties went out of their way to underscore and bolster the point that Carney was making – but it also drove home there’s no way to line up a goal if the opposing team keeps moving said goalposts.

While Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre praised Carney’s “eloquence” before going point by point through the speech through the partisan lens, which is his job as Leader of the Opposition, there was some common ground to be found in his response.

“So far, Mr. Carney has been lucky that he’s been judged by his rhetoric and his stated intentions, by the number of his trips and meetings overseas,” he said. “Because, nearly a year into his term, the rhetoric has changed, but reality has not. There is an illusion of purpose, but no results to back it up.

“We need to do things, not just say them. ‘Canada Strong’ can no longer be a slogan, nor ‘True North Strong and Free’ just a motto. We must put our people and country first in all that we do. Then, and only then, we will be autonomous and affordable, secure, and self-reliant.

“.... We are the masters of our fate. We are the captains of our souls. It’s time we finally take the wheel – and steer Canada forward with purpose and resolve.”

Now that Parliament is back this week, it’s time to do just that.

While the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have found general agreement in what the reality is, a surprisingly tall order today, now is a time to for all to come together with purpose and resolve for our collective strength, freedom and, to utter that dreaded word again, resilience.

THE AURORAN

Aurora’s Community Newspaper

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THE AURORA MUSEUM & ARCHIVES is...

Trying to Cash In!



While Canada's shiny and semi-transparent polymer banknotes will have been with us 15 years in 2026, paper notes were a feature of Canadian banking for nearly 200 years. The banknotes presented here were issued and hand-signed in 1835 for the short-lived Agricultural Bank of Upper Canada. There were some benefits to putting one's money into the Agricultural Bank, one of which was its convenience as a third-party lender between farmers and merchants. At this time, banknotes were properly meant to be exchanged for real silver money, but when the Agricultural Bank was failing in 1837, people realized their Toronto-issued notes could only be exchanged in Montreal. A long haul for a few shillings!



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor Tom Mrakas

As we move into 2026, I believe it's more important than ever to keep residents informed, engaged, and part of the conversation about where our Town is headed. That's why I'm looking forward to sharing our progress — and what's next — at the Mayor's State of the Town Address and Luncheon, presented by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

This year's State of the Town will take place on Tuesday, February 18, 2026, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Royal Venetian Mansion.

The event is an opportunity for residents to hear directly from me about the work being done at Town Hall, the decisions guiding our community, and the priorities shaping Aurora's future.

Over the past several years, we have been focused on turning plans into action — strengthening local services, investing in recreation facilities and infrastructure, supporting a strong local economy, and ensuring our neighbourhoods remain vibrant and welcoming. These are the things that matter to residents in their day-to-day lives, and they remain at the centre of our work.

The State of the Town is also about transparency and accountability. It's a chance to reflect on what we've accomplished together, acknowledge the challenges we face, and share how we are planning responsibly for the years ahead. Aurora continues to grow and evolve, and it's critical that we do so in a way that protects what makes our Town special while preparing for the future.

I hope to see many residents and businesses there and continuing the conversation about building a strong, active, and inclusive Aurora.

For full details and registration, please visit: www.aurorachamber.on.ca/mayors-luncheon/

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

from public spaces, including parks, and from many apartment buildings. Stunningly, they are also now allowed to burn some of the materials and call it recycling. These are all backward steps that will need to be reversed by a future government that cares about the environment and our health.

But all is not lost! Deposit return for the win.

The best way to ensure packaging is reused or recycled is deposit return. That's where you pay a small deposit on the container when you buy a drink and get your deposit back when you return the empty. Beer brewers have operated this kind of system in Ontario for more than 100 years. Ontario's Beer Stores have enjoyed very high return and recycling and refill rates—more than 80 per cent! But non-alcoholic beverages, stuck in the Blue Box, fare much worse, with less than half being collected and recycled. That's why we're calling for an expansion of the deposit-return program to all beverages — including pop, water and juice — with increased locations to return your empties. That would be a more economical way to get more containers back for recycling, and prevent the waste of billions of containers in the province's landfills, incinerators, roadsides, parks, rivers and lakes.

Karen Wirsig
Plastics Program Manager
Environmental Defence



PARSA'S PERSPECTIVE

Michael Parsa, MPP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

I want to connect with you as we head into February, a time of year that often feels like a chance to catch our breath and reset after a busy start to the year.

Winter can be a demanding season, and February invites us to slow the pace to check in with ourselves and with one another. It's a month that encourages reflection, conversation, and connection as a community.

That sense of reflection is especially meaningful as we recognize Black History Month. This is a time to acknowledge the Black Canadians

whose stories, leadership, and resilience have helped shape our communities and our country. It's also a chance to listen, learn, and think more deeply about how the past continues to influence the present. These conversations don't end with February, but this month gives us a moment to be more intentional about having them.

February also offers a welcome reminder of the importance of time

with loved ones.

Family Day is an opportunity to appreciate the people who support and ground us. Whether it's spending time at home, reaching out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while, or simply being present, those moments matter. Family comes in many forms, and it's the care, support, and connection behind it that truly matter.

I hope this February gives you the chance to reflect, to engage in meaningful conversations, and to spend quality time with the people that matter most.



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

So, are you getting used to your giant new blue bin?

It's been a few weeks now, and I must admit the new wheeled carts are handier to move around than I expected, but as for storage, I still feel they take up way more space than is necessary.

I'm obviously not alone as by mid-December, thousands of Aurora households had signed up to receive smaller bins when they become available. And yes, those should have been an option before they were even delivered, but that's all water under the bridge now.

After all the hype and pushback on these bins, I was curious to see how the disposal process actually worked. Fortunately, I happened to be looking out at the street when our first pickup occurred.

The truck stopped in front of each house, aligning its collecting arm with the blue bin. The arm was extended to the container and a claw mechanism gripped and lifted the bin. The arm then retracted and the contents of the bin were upended into the truck. Then the arm returned the bin to its position on the driveway, and the claw let it go.

This explained why everything had to be in the bin, and not tied up beside it, like we often did in the past with oversized things that wouldn't fit in the

blue boxes, like excess cardboard.

It all seemed very efficient. At least, until they arrived at the house next door.

When the claw clamped shut on the blue bin, it also captured, and completely destroyed, the green bin that was sitting next to it. The clamp was released and the green bin shoved aside, then the blue bin was re-clamped and lifted up. But instead of the arm retracting, the bin was just upended and emptied there on the street and all over the arm mechanism.

To his credit, the lone contractor quickly got out of the cab and proceeded to pick up all of the scattered recycling, which took a few minutes, as some of it ended up on and under the truck, and it was a windy day.

Fortunately, this gave me time to hastily don my boots and move our green bin a healthy distance from our blue bin.

Cleanup complete, the disposal process was carried out successfully, both next door and at our house, and the truck drove off to continue its rounds.

As with all new processes, I guess there is a bit of a learning curve on both

sides.

This did get me thinking, though.

In the past with the old bins, when the recycling crews came by they could see what was in the bins. Occasionally, due to residents not being aware of what could be disposed of, or knowing full well and trying to sneak things by, something non-recyclable would be put in the bins... electronics, fluorescent lightbulbs, construction debris... I've seen all sorts of odd items in them in our neighbourhood.

In that case, the bins would not be emptied, and the crew would slap on a sticker informing the residents that something non-recyclable was in there.

Now the new bins have lids, and with the driver remaining in the vehicle, at no point in the process do they see what it's inside the bins, so the potential for contamination of materials, intentional or otherwise, is much higher.

Unless, of course, the dumping of the bin on our street was a random quality control test to ensure that people were disposing of things properly. But that's unlikely.

At least, I think it is. There's a lot I'm still discovering about this new program.

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



(LEFT) Among those celebrating the launch of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival last week at Slabtown Armoury were Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis, Aurora Cultural Centre Performing Arts Manager Derek Andrews, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Cultural Centre Executive Director Suzanne Haines, and Music Aurora’s Stewart McLaren. (RIGHT) Jay Blues performed live at the launch.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



Cultural Centre, Music Aurora launch countdown to Aurora Winter Blues Fest

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Music was in the air at Slabtown Armoury on Wednesday night as the Aurora Cultural Centre kick-started the countdown to the 2026 Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

The first Aurora Winter Blues Festival since before the Global Pandemic, previous festival organizers Music Aurora have formally passed the baton to the Aurora Cultural Centre, which has developed an expansive lineup of live performances and educational workshops running February 26 – March 1.

Among the artists set to appear at the 2026 Aurora Winter Blues Festival (AWBF) include Jack De Keyzer, Suzie Vinnick, Glenn Marais’ Jook, Dominique Fils-Aimé, Harrison Kennedy with Dave Mowat, and Little Magic Sam Band.

Those who braved the snow to take part in the January 21 launch event were treated to a number of musical sneak-peeks, including by Jay Blues, who will be appearing as a special guest during Vinnick’s February 27 performance.

Welcoming attendees, Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, said when the Cultural Centre first opened its doors in 2010 it made a conscious decision not to compete with the work of Music Aurora and steered away from programming Blues. However, they saw a gap when the AWBF was not among the events resurrected in the post-pandemic world.

“We hired [Programming Manager] Derek Andrews over the pandemic and at that point we were just looking for a general programmer,” said Haines. “I said to him, not knowing his full history with the Blues, ‘The only thing you can’t program is Blues in Aurora.’ Without a beat, he just kind of continued to have the conversation, didn’t even push back or anything, took the job, and it was later I found out his real history with the Blues. I felt, ‘Wow, that’s amazing that you would come into this community, to program for this community, knowing you couldn’t do the one thing that you love to do.’”

“After the pandemic, we noticed the Blues Festival didn’t emerge immediately and we had a great opportunity to sit down with [Music

Aurora’s] Greg Smith and Stuart McLaren in a local pub... and just talk to them about the possibilities of doing some Blues programming.... We continued the conversation about how Music Aurora could really breathe back into life and, really, the intention was to steward it forward. Here we are now in this really solid, incredible partnership with Music Aurora standing side-by-side and reviving this festival.”

This partnership, Haines concluded, has been “foundational” in giving the Centre the “confidence to really pull this together and bring this back to the community.”

This sentiment was returned by McLaren who shared the Festival’s roots from a house party first started by Jamie Macdonald and Helen Gushue in their basement to an event that regularly sold out such venues as Theatre Aurora and St. Andrew’s College.

“The foundation of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival was in the community. Jamie was adamant that live music needed to be supported, and he had a special appreciation for the Blues,” said McLaren. “The foundation was live music that was going to be performed, promoted and put on by people around Town. We’d use local venues...we used local caterers, we used local breweries, which was very important to lubricate the social fabric... we had local businesses involved, restaurants would give discounts to people if they came to the show before or after, and bands would show up at their place in between sets. All in all, we were very local.

“Because of that success, and because of the good works of Suzanne and Derek... I’d like to say thank you to everyone at the Aurora Cultural Centre for helping us bridge the gap from

COVID to today. I think it’s going to be very successful with a great lineup.”

Despite his “biting my tongue” on the Blues when he first met with Haines, Andrews says when the green light was given to proceed with reviving the AWBF, he “unleashed” his genre knowledge to develop the program – which, he said, is grounded by the “strong heart” of Jack DeKeyser on opening night.

“I’ve asked Suzie Vinnick to do something special by bringing in a couple of guitar-slingers and Kevin Bright and Tony D are a couple of the best,” said Andrews. “As we carry on, I went local with Glenn Marais doing his ‘Jook’ show. On Saturday night, we got our hands on Dominique Fils-Aimé because she is touring in the area. Dominique did a show for us and sold out St. Andrew’s College. She’s won the Jazz Vocal Juno twice, so she is a bit to the left side of Blues, so to speak. She’s a very soulful Haitian heritage Montrealer, and that show will be really, really stellar. She’s next in sales behind Jack, so that one’s going to do very well as well.

“Then we kind of go traditional on Sunday afternoon with Harrison Kennedy, the 82-year-old Hamilton-based soul-singing Blues man who’s won Junos and all kinds of awards in the States and Canada. Harrison is the real deal. Underground Railroad family, he was on Motown, the guys had a real life, and he’s going to tell those stories when he comes and plays. The winners of the Blues Award for New Artist, Little Magic Sam, are closing out the Sunday night program.”

For more on the 2026 Aurora Winter Blues Festival, including the full lineup and ticket information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/awbf2026.



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Shoppers Foundation raises nearly \$100,000 for Yellow Brick House

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Vital services supporting women and children fleeing domestic violence got a significant boost in support this month as the Shoppers Foundation for Women’s Health presented a donation of \$96,300 to Yellow Brick House.

The money, which was raised across 50 local Shoppers Drug Mart locations through its annual Giving Shelter Campaign, was a chance for customers to support women and children seeking safety from domestic violence and abuse by funding emergency shelter beds, counselling, and other essential programs that support survivors.

“We’re very excited with this partnership opportunity because it really focuses on women’s health and the health of their children, which is something that we are definitely supporting through our services, through our emergency shelters for abused women and children,” says Lorris Herenda, Executive Director of Yellow Brick House.

“Yellow Brick House provides a whole array of services for women and children who experience domestic violence and our first services are two emergency shelters

that offer shelter beds to women and children who are escaping violent homes. While they’re in the shelters, they receive trauma counselling, crisis intervention, help with searching for housing, legal support, immigration coordination, employment supports, anything that the family needs to leave the shelter and start leading a life free of violence. All the same services that are offered to women and children in the shelters are also offered to families that are in the community that are not in our shelter system.

“What the support from the Shopper’s Foundation for Women’s Health enables us to do is to support that wide range of services for women and children. The shelter beds, the cost per night is \$300 per woman or child, which is the shelter bed, it’s all the supporting pieces around staying in a shelter such as food and clothing and also all the support services. That’s the cost. This generous support from Shoppers Foundation for Women’s Health enables us to reach more women and children, enables us to keep our shelter beds open, to keep them really available for families who are desperate to escape a violent situation.”

With such a wide-ranging customer base, Herenda says she appreciates that a company like Shoppers Drug Mart has put

such a “prominent focus on maintaining the health of women and their children.”

“Being safe is one of the major, major conditions to ensure your health, and if you’re not safe and your children are not safe, your health is compromised,” she says. “I do believe that customers who go to Shoppers Drug Mart and purchase their health needs and supplements are really relating closely with families who don’t have access to safety and really want to share their concerns for the health of women and children in the community as a whole.

“It’s so crucial for businesses to partner with local organizations, social service organizations that support vulnerable populations – in our case, abused women and children, because it really demonstrates the organizations, the corporate or the retail business’ commitment to ensuring

that the communities are strong, and the only way you get a strong community is when you support individuals who are vulnerable.

“And in this case, Shoppers Drug Mart and Shoppers Foundation for Women’s Health definitely demonstrate their commitment to not only supporting the community members through purchasing of items and through retail shopping, but really investing in the well-being of the community as a whole. And other organizations and corporations can certainly do the same thing and align themselves with other social services to strengthen their community and also to strengthen and support their customers, because these women and children are potentially also their customers. They’re investing in the well-being of their buying power.”

Legacy, end-of-life care for Aurora’s heritage trees considered

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Efforts to recognize Aurora’s oldest trees gained momentum this month as the Town’s Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee considered not only what makes a tree “heritage” but how their legacy should be celebrated if they can’t be preserved.

Aurora began taking a look at “heritage” trees in September of last year following Council’s adoption of a motion put forward by Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland. It tasked staff with returning a report on recommendations to ensure the long-term protection of designated trees, including long-term health plans, as well as appropriate ways to commemorate the trees in question.

“Aurora is home to a handful of trees believed to be senescent or centenarian in nature, are presenting important natural, cultural and historical significance, and these trees serve as living testament and hold future cultivar legacies to Aurora’s ecological heritage,” said Councillor Gilliland in her motion.

The resulting report, penned by Manager of Parks and Fleet Matthew Volpintesta, was presented to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee last week.

The committee focused on the end-of-life tree management guide within the report, which notes the first step in the process will be firming up the criteria of “what characterizes a tree as having cultural or natural heritage significance.”

Once the trees are selected, they should then be thoroughly documented for the historical archives.

“Risk assessment should confirm structural decline and assess health under existing tree categorization,” the report states. “There is also a public engagement component which would seek input, including notifying public, community and stakeholders, [and] consider commemorative options.”

If the tree fails, the report notes their lumber could be transformed into park furniture, such as picnic tables, public art installations, and more. Seeds and cuttings could also ensure their legacy continues.

“Ultimately, this is going to be a policy that allows us to put a framework around how to [commemorate the oldest trees in Aurora] and support that – and not just protect them in the short term, but have an end-of-life, because a lot of them have cultural significance within the Town,

whether it is sentimental, or whether it is due to its age, or its species, or events around it,” said Sara Tienkamp, Aurora’s Director of Operations, at last week’s Committee meeting. “This way, if we have an end-of-life, we can collect seeds, we can grow some of these strains, and put them back into our naturalized areas and have longevity of certain trees of significance for years and years to come.”

At this point, the program is only going to consider trees on municipal property, Tienkamp noted. Some of the eligible trees being considered under this criterion include several centuries-old Burr oaks in the Aurora Community Arboretum and elms on Henderson Drive that have stood for more than 100 years, withstanding the scourge of Dutch Elm Disease.

“We’ve identified only about 15 trees that we would start with,” she said, adding some of the Arboretum’s burr oaks have already been recognized through a plaquing program. “There’s some large elm trees down Henderson Drive...that are quite rare.... Those specific ones [we] have actually worked with the University of Guelph and they’ve taken tissue samples from those because they’re actually genetically resistant to Dutch elm disease. There are a few other heritage trees within the old part of Town, certainly around Catherine Street [and] Town Park that we have on our radar, but we’re going to start with those ones... and then expand it.”

The program, of course, will come at a cost, and funding opportunities are being explored, she noted, but, “It’s all part of our ultimate strategy to expand our urban forest.”

“Urban forest is certainly important from a CO2 reduction [standpoint]. Also, we have very explicit targets that we’ve set with Council’s endorsement for a 40 per cent canopy target, so keeping these trees healthy and as long as we can keep them within the urban forest is important, but we need to bring along with it maintenance and funding associated so we can maintain these trees.

“Baby steps to start, but I can see it expanding over the years and that’s part of this – that we can create a framework that we can project out which ones we will dedicate next and whether we’ll expand the program into private trees at some point, and maybe even into our woodlots. Our woodlots are fairly well-protected right now, but bringing them into identifying some of them that are significant trail systems will be the second and third phase of it.”

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Cultural Centre brings on Director of Development as it charts five-year plan

From page 1

Debra Wilson, who recently served as Interim President of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, was recently brought onto the team in what they describe as a “pivotal moment” for the Centre as it rolls out its new Strategic Plan.

“The Plan sets out a bold vision for growth during the next five years, with a focus on strengthening the Centre’s role as a Cultural Leader and Artistic Hub in Aurora, expanding on its reach across York Region and deepening engagement with donors, partners, sponsors, visitors, artists, and audiences.”

The Plan sets forth what Cultural Centre Executive Director Suzanne Haines says are “some new pieces to the puzzle that are really substantial for the organization.”

“The next plan really levels up the organization in a really significant way,” says Haines. “I was looking for someone who could help us do that through community partnerships and relationships in the community, and who knew the community really well.”

“The next five years are really about the organization creating strong ties in the community, showing leadership and building programming that helps bring the community together,” Haines continues. “Our residency at Aurora Town Square is a huge part of that opportunity, of course, and the right people in the organization. Our programming is in really great shape in terms of the performing arts, the gallery, and the arts education programs, really finding a seat at Aurora Town Square and being able to fill that space in a really meaningful way for the community. Now, what does the organization do next?”

“It’s around two key phrases that are ‘Cultural Leadership’ and an

‘Artistic Hub.’ It’s a key component to get very excited about over the next five years. The building of that requires a lot of community partnerships and that’s one of the reasons to look for someone who has that strength for the organization.”

Wilson says she was first interested in joining the Aurora Cultural Centre team for the chance to work with Haines, with whom she says she has a “great synergy.”

“Being able to enjoy who you’re working with is really important, especially in this environment when you’re doing outreach into the community,” says Wilson. “The other thing that excited me was to continue with a lot of the work that I was already doing, which was talking to local businesses, local influencers, and sharing what’s happening here.”

“If there’s a love language for what I do, it’s connections. It’s bringing together and connecting people, whether it’s programs or performing arts, or just connecting people; even when it doesn’t impact me directly, I love being part of the solution for people and making sure that when the tide rises all boats float so it is helping everyone.”

On a road posted with landmarks reading “Cultural Leadership” and “Artistic Hub,” Haines says building connections is key in developing these areas.

“That kind of partnership and community involvement is going to help us build the kinds of programs that the community has been asking us for,” says Haines. “We got to a certain point and we know that we want to continue to do that work with the community, so it requires those partners to make it possible. That’s year one; year five, what those long-term goals are really about growing our capacity and resilience in arts and culture. In not-for-profit worlds, that’s a super important part of it and thinking about what kinds

of mechanisms we can use to help build sustainability.”

Adds Wilson: “We’re looking at expanding some of the programs that don’t currently exist here yet. That’s going to be very exciting when we’re able to announce that there’s going to be something new happening here.”


The Strategic Plan, which was due to be formally presented to Council this week, states that establishing the Centre as that “cultural leader and artistic hub” is a top priority that will be defined around “research, benchmarking, and professional development” to learn from other examples how to build upon the Town’s Economic and Tourism Strategies, establishing the Cultural Centre “as a destination that must be experienced.”

This will work hand in hand with plans to enhance the Centre’s “mission to deliver accessible live performances, education programs, and gallery exhibits that build new and recurring audience participation.”

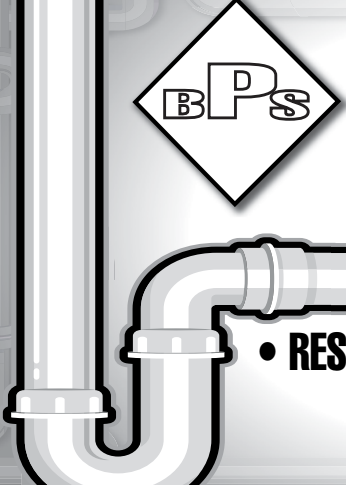
“This Strategic Plan is a living document that will guide our evolution while remaining responsive to community needs,” the Plan notes. “Through careful implementation of these goals, we will strengthen our role as a cultural and artistic hub that enriches lives, supports artists, stimulates

economic activity, and builds a more connected, culturally engaged Aurora and region.

“Success will be measured through audience growth and diversity, financial sustainability, community partnerships, artistic excellence, and tangible impact on quality of life in our community.”



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The Importance of Being Earnest warms up Theatre Aurora stage this week

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Bright lights are set to warm up the Theatre Aurora stage this week as they raise the curtain on their first production of 2026 – the perennially popular The Importance of Being Earnest.

Penning by Oscar Wilde in 1895, the comedy of manners focuses on two Victorian men who have adopted the same pseudonym, Earnest, to land the ladies. You had to have been there.

“Confusion and hilarity ensue, says Theatre Aurora. “With dazzling wordplay, clever social satire, and absurd twists, The Importance of Being Earnest remains a timeless romp through mistaken identities and the extremes we’ll go to for love (and a little mischief). Join us for an evening of laughter as Wilde’s signature wit skewers society’s pretenses and reminds us all of the true value of being earnest.”

Running on select dates and times through Saturday, February 7, the show is being directed by Theatre Aurora veteran Barb Jones. A producer on the show since it was first conceived as part of Theatre Aurora’s 2025-2026 season, Jones stepped into the director’s chair at the eleventh hour over Christmastime to steer the play through to opening night.

“It’s been an awesome experience with this cast,” says Jones. “I’ve been with Theatre Aurora for a while, so I do know a number of the cast that are there now, but some of these people are new

to us, so it’s been a lot of fun getting to know them. The cast has worked their hearts out getting this show up and on the boards, and I’m really excited about seeing it all come together.

“This cast has worked so hard. They are so ready to get this show on the road. Our set is phenomenal, and our set designer and set dresser are working so hard putting things together with such great ideas.”

Jones says Wilde’s work endures simply because it’s “classic comedy” and while it “pokes fun at the societal norms of the time, it also translates to now.”

“I think it’s just one of those shows that’s timeless,” she says. “It becomes something that people can relate to of all ages, all walks of life. Oscar Wilde was a bit of a trailblazer in a number of ways; he wrote so many different things. He wrote plays, poems, novels, the whole bit, but he was part of, shall we say, the original gay community. He was imprisoned for it because, at the time, that was not done.”

As she looks forward to opening night, Jones says she believes there’s something for everyone in this time-tested comedy.

“I hope audiences will understand that this is all a bit of a gentle poke at some of our own views of family and family life, that, in the end, family is a really big part of everything we do,” says Jones. “The search for Earnest’s family and where it ends up is something important, and I think it’s important



The Importance of Being Earnest opens Friday at Theatre Aurora. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

for everybody to take that away – that we’re all looking for family, whether it’s blood relations, or whether we have families of friends, but we do all need that family get-together.

“Coming in as a director, I did have a little bit of the essence of the show, but being with [the cast and crew] and working with them on a regular basis has been just such a heartwarming experience. They all seem to be

enjoying themselves and they’re such a tight-knit group, just phenomenal in how they treat each other and how they’re working together. That’s going to be coming across to the audience and I hope that people will take away the fact that theatre is fun!”

For more on Theatre Aurora’s production of The Importance of Being Earnest, including dates, times, and tickets, visit theatreaurora.com or call the box office at 905-727-3669.

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COMMUNITY PRODUCT INITIATIVE



Vince's Market last week presented the Aurora-based Alzheimer Societies of York Region, Simcoe County, and Durham Region with a cheque of \$34,835, the results of their 2025 Community Product Initiative. Through the Community Product Initiative each year, a portion of the proceeds from the sales of selected products go directly to the year's selected charities. The 2026 beneficiary has been announced as Easter Seals Ontario. “Our year-long partnership with Vince's Market has been truly transformative for the Alzheimer Societies of Durham Region, Simcoe County, and York Region,” said a spokesperson on behalf of the Societies. “Either through numerous events or through the generous Community Product Initiative, Vince's has not only raised significant funds to help provide caregivers with critical supports and services, but also have helped raise awareness of the need to support families impacted by dementia in our regions.” Pictured here accepting the cheque are Kari Quinn Humphrey (Alzheimer Society York Region), Kendel Ferrara (Alzheimer Society Durham Region), Jaime Grant (Alzheimer Society Simcoe County), and Maria Ciarlandini and Giancarlo Trimarchi of Vince's. Joining Giancarlo and Maria to celebrate the selection of Easter Seals as the 2026 partner was Easter Seals' Andrea Peterson.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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WEEK OF JANUARY 29, 2026

Tigers’ three-goal rally versus Lindsay creates weekend split after narrow 4-2 loss to Haliburton



Aurora’s Javian Nei (39) and Haliburton’s Brody Coe (19) battle in the faceoff circle in front of Tigers defender Sebastian Catalano (39) and goalie Noah Kraus (32). Kraus made 34 saves in a narrow 4 – 2 loss to the Huskies.

Aurora photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

Cole Crawford, Charles Hotles, and Marcus Carter scored one goal each to spearhead a three-goal rally as the Aurora Junior Tigers defeated the Lindsay Muskies 3-1 on Saturday night at the ACC.

After surrendering a shorthanded goal to Ajay Raj at 12:27 of the first period, Tigers’ goaltender Kian Hodgins held the Muskies scoreless for the remaining 48 minutes of play to earn the much-needed W.

Hodgins was selected Second Star of the Game by OJHL Staff for his 30-save performance.

The timely victory by the ninth-place Tigers pulled the club to within seven points of the eighth-place Muskies for the final playoff spot in the OJHL East. Aurora has a game in hand on Lindsay.

Cole Crawford catalyzed Aurora’s comeback when he beat Muskies netminder George Cote for his 11th of the season at 13:08 of the second period.

Three minutes after Crawford tied the game, Aurora Assistant Captain Cayden Smith earned his 25th assist of the season when he fed Charlie Hotles. The big winger slipped the puck past Cote for the game-winning goal. Hotles’s heroics earned him First Star of the Game honors.

Smith had noted the keys to beating Lindsay after the Tigers’ narrow 4-2 loss to the Haliburton County Huskies on Friday night.

“They’re an aggressive team. We need to get under their skin and finish our checks. We need to play our best game to get two points tomorrow night.”

Smith’s assessment turned out to be prophetic, indeed, as the Tigers turned in one their best games of the season on Saturday. The home side induced the aggressive Muskies to take five penalties compared to only two trips to the sin bin by the disciplined Tigers.

An empty net goal by Marcus Carter with one second remaining on the clock provided his club with its margin of victory. It was Carter’s seventh of the season and sealed a big win for the home side.

Despite the disappointing final 4-2 score on Friday night which included an empty netter by the visitors with 0.7 seconds on the clock, Aurora put up an urgent effort against Haliburton from the opening puck drop.

Due to their early forechecking, the Tigers took an early 1-0 lead when Smith—set up by Hotles’s pass-- beat Huskies’ netminder Carter Wadon at 6:08. The Tigers’ leading scorer described his 18th of the season.

“We had a good forecheck. We got a break on a bouncing puck. I was able to tip the puck from my skate to my stick. I was in the right place at the right time.”

The gritty and tireless centre, whose regular shifts were augmented by plenty of penalty killing and power play ice time, was disappointed by the final result versus the Huskies.

“We played a solid 200-foot game tonight. We needed to block a few more shots from the point to help [Tigers goaltender] Noah [Kraus]. I know he didn’t see two of the three goals that got by him.”

The former Lindsay Muskies’ netminder was particularly spectacular

in the second period.

Kraus’s athleticism compensated for a number of his defenders’ giveaways and helped protect Aurora’s slim 1-0 lead for twenty-eight minutes. Smith complimented Kraus’s 34-save effort between the pipes.

“He’s come in from Lindsay and he’s done such a good job for us. His hard work in practice is starting to show up in our games. We needed to give him more support tonight.”

After a penalty-free first period, tempers boiled over early in the middle frame when Tigers’ defender Martin Maryanovsky and Huskies’ forward Ryan Gosse dropped the flippers, peeled off their helmets at centre ice, and revved up those assembled at the ACC.

Maryanovsky and Gosse earned their game misconducts. Numerous haymakers were landed in the spirited tilt that ended with Maryanovsky taking Gosse down to the ice. After the ice chips cleared, the exhausted combatants got a warm ovation on a frigid night in Aurora.

The dustup at center ice at 1:26, won by Maryanovsky in a split decision according to our panel of judges, woke up the docile dogs from Haliburton. The re-energized visitors carried the play for the rest of the period. Undaunted by the charge of the Huskies, Kraus flashed the leather at 16:37 and 14:57 then delivered a spectacular three-save sequence moments later as his high-quality goaltending bailed out the leaky Tigers defensive corps.

Kraus kept the Huskies off the scoreboard until 14:39 of the second period when Luis Sturgeon’s wrist shot from the right point flew through a

group of players and beat the screened Kraus high glove side.

Four minutes later, Chase Del Columbo banged in a rebound past Kraus from the right doorstep to give Haliburton County its first lead of the game which they took into second intermission.

Del Columbo scored his second of the game at 7:48 of the third period when his quick shot from the top of the left faceoff circle fluttered through a maze of players past a trebly-screened Kraus and into the back of the Aurora cage.

Haliburton held its 3-1 lead until 16:16 when Aurora forward Anris Bundzenieks swept off the left wing and rifled the puck short side from the faceoff circle—beating Nadon cleanly for his 14th of the season.

The Tigers pressed valiantly through the waning minutes of the period, especially when Kraus was pulled with 1:04 on the clock and his teammates on the attack. With 44.6 seconds left, Aurora Head Coach Darcy Roy called a timeout and the home side executed their bench boss’s offensive zone strategy. However, a moment of bad luck in the Huskies zone created a footrace for a neutral zone puck won by Haliburton forward Isaac Larmand who shoveled the puck into Aurora’s empty cage with 0.7 seconds left in the entertaining contest.

After a pair of strong weekend performances, the Tigers continue their quest for the playoffs when they host the Pickering Panthers on Friday, January 30 and the Trenton Golden Hawks on Saturday, January 31. Puck drop for both games at the ACC is 7 p.m.



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Barbs star Chloe Daniels signs first pro rugby contract

BY JIM STEWART

Aurora Barbarians star and Olympic silver medalist Chloe Daniels signed her first professional rugby contract on January 20 with the Bristol Bears of the Professional Women's Rugby league in England. Her professional signing capped off a significant twelve-month period for Daniels. The Sutton resident was awarded the 2024-25 Queen's Outstanding Performance of the Year as "the student-athlete who has brought the most honor and recognition to Queen's University resulting from success in provincial, national, and international competition." Daniels helped lead the Golden Gaels to a national championship and an OUA championship in 2025. Daniels scored the match-winning try in Canada's historic 19-14 quarterfinal victory over France at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

Aurora's Andrew Nembhard's 27-point performance sinks reigning NBA champs

Pacers' point guard Andrew Nembhard scored 27 points, dished out 11 rebounds, and pulled down seven rebounds as Indiana defeated Oklahoma City 117-114 in a rematch of last year's NBA Finals on Friday night. The Aurora native scored 16 points in the first half, including a 3-ball that gave the Pacers a 47-30 lead. Another Canadian NBAer starred in the contest at the Paycom Centre in Oklahoma City. Hamilton's Shea Gilgeous-Alexander, the reigning MVP, scored 47 points. He made 17 of this 28 field goal attempts and went 12 for 12 at the charity stripe in a rare defeat for the Thunder on home court. It is, indeed, the Golden Age of Canadian basketball with 25 Canucks currently on NBA rosters.

ParaSport "Try-It Session" at SARC cancelled due to inclement weather

Sport Aurora, Community Living Central York, ParaSport Ontario, and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association announced the cancellation of the ParaSport "Try-It Session" – scheduled for January 26 at SARC. According to Sport Aurora's Executive Director Laurie Mueller, "This decision was made due to inclement weather conditions that present a safety risk to participants, volunteers, staff, and attendees. The safety and well-being of all involved remain the highest priority for all partner organizations." The event—which would have provided participants with the opportunity to play sledge hockey, seated volleyball, wheelchair basketball, and bocce—also featured the presence of Paralympian champion Paul Rosen as an ambassador for ParaSport participation. The event will be rescheduled.

Shaolin kickboxer Ron Piklas preparing for World Junior Wushu Sanda Championships in Tianjin, China

BY JIM STEWART

Ron Piklas had many reasons to celebrate on Saturday afternoon when we met at Shaolin Martial Arts with his coaching staff. The Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School pre-IB student was not only celebrating his 16th trip around the sun, but he was looking forward to representing Canada and competing in Wushu Sanda at the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships in March in Tianjin, China. Piklas's instructor, Sport Aurora's 2025 Coach of the Year Rocco Colarossi, believes that Shaolin's most decorated student-athlete has the right stuff to succeed on the big stage in Tianjin. "He's got a good head on his shoulders. Ron thinks under pressure really well. His ability to pivot under pressure is his best attribute as an athlete." Coach Colarossi also noted that Piklas will have ample opportunities to compete in this hemisphere as well in 2026 after he returns to Canada after the World Championships in March. "We're looking at the Pan-Am Games in Argentina in October and the Bermuda Open in November." When asked about his goals at the World Championships and all competitions this year, Piklas was succinct and confident in his response: "Win." It's evident that Piklas has made it his habit to win, based on his considerable accomplishments over the last three years. At the 2025 Ontario Championships held in Aurora at SARC's Desjardins Gym, Piklas captured the Gold Medal in Sanda—a fusion of Kung Fu from China and North American kickboxing. Prior to his triumph on home turf, Piklas had become a multi-time Canadian Champion and Pan-Am Gold Medalist. Shaolin's Grand Master and 9th degree Black Belt Tim Wakefield reflected on Piklas's modest beginnings at the Martial Arts Centre on Mary Street: "He started as an eight-year-old in the after-school

program and this is what has happened." Shifu Tim emphasized that Piklas's impressive development as a kickboxer has coincided with the student-athlete's connection to the three pillars of Shaolin. "It's about the unity of Zen Philosophy and the Martial Arts—the alignment of mind and body. It's also about Martial Virtue of Wude where martial skills must be used for protection, not aggression; compassion and non-violence are emphasized. Lastly, it's about self-perfection through rigorous practice. Continuous, hard training leads to perseverance." Piklas's perseverance and kickboxing talents emerged as the most decorated Shaolin athlete at the 2023 Ontario Winter Games in Renfrew when he won two U12 gold medals in Sanda. In the same year, Piklas also won the Gold Medal in Traditional Form—Hand and Weapon at the Pan-Am Centre in Markham. In Tiajin, which is located in the southwest corner of Beijing, Wakefield explained that Piklas will be competing in the "15-17 Age Group in the 60 KG-and-under category. He'll be at the top of the category in weight. We try to keep him at the top of the weight class. The event is regulated by the IWF which is recognized by the IOC." In light of this string of successes and his upcoming date with destiny in China, the articulate kickboxer noted that, "The training's getting real. We're training every day and it's more of a tailored program. While everybody in our class is doing their activities, I'm doing my own thing including three rounds of five-minute skipping, three rounds of weighted shadow boxing with 2-3 pound weights, and I get a one-minute break between rounds. Then I join the rest of the class to do pad work." Coach Colarossi added, "We do some extra skills work. We make sure he's good and sweaty at the end of the workout." It's evident that perspiration and inspiration are in a fine balance for Piklas, and his dedication to the workout of body and mind has led him to the pinnacle of international competition.



Shaolin Martial Arts Coach and 2025 Sport Aurora Coach of the Year Rocco Colarossi (left) and 2025 Ontario Champion and Pan-Am Games U14 Chinese Kickboxing Gold Medalist Ron Piklas (right) are off to the World Championships in China.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"This will be my first out-of-country competition. For it to be an international championship is amazing. It feels unreal. It's been great to see the progress I've made. Looking back, many don't stay in. Now that I'm preparing for international competition, it's been satisfying to make the jumps in levels every year." Piklas credited his jumps in levels to the coaching he has received from Wakefield and Colarossi. "It's top tier. They get into depth in everything. They provide examples and, during our drills on the bag, we go over the possibilities during competition. They ask me 'What if he does this?' and they show me how to avoid being trapped. We go over the pros and cons of techniques and mitigate the risks of getting into the pocket—they teach me about staying out of the Danger Zone." Piklas and Colarossi have GoFundMe pages to help defray the considerable costs of competing in the World Junior Wushu Championships in China. The top international event takes place over nine days. If you'd like to help this dynamic local student-athlete and his award-winning coach with their substantial international travel expenses, go to these links:

Ron Piklas: gofund.me/e808fc6c9
Coach Rocco Colarossi: gofund.me/bdaca04d5

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CMHA issues 2,000 push-up challenge to support local mental health care

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Staying active during the winter season is crucial for mind, body, and soul – but if you’re looking for a good excuse to keep moving, consider the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Push-Up Challenge.

Now in its third year, the Push-Up Challenge is a way to “have fun and push for better mental health.” Participants are invited to take on 2,000 push-ups between February 5 and February 27, a number chosen in memory of the estimated 2,000 lives lost to suicide each day around the world.

“The Push-Up Challenge is a powerful reminder that small daily actions can create meaningful change,” said Catherine Matzig, Senior Director of Philanthropy for the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS), in a statement. “When our community shows up for this Challenge, they’re not only honouring lives lost – they’re helping ensure that people in York Region and South Simcoe can access mental health supports when they need them most, especially during those isolating winter months.”

Matzig tells The Auroran they think

of the Push-Up Challenge as a “cross-country movement with a local heart,” and money raised locally will benefit all of the CMHA-YRSS’ programs, including programs supporting those experiencing depression and anxiety.

“People understand the importance of recognizing mental health and mental illness, talking about it, and this gives people a really easy way to introduce that conversation and to keep coming back to support mental health,” she says. “I think we all know somebody close to us who in some way has been impacted by mental health, mental illness, and it’s a great way to support programs and services that support those who are struggling with their mental health and to really raise the level of conversation locally, but absolutely across the country to destigmatize, demystify it, and give us an opportunity to learn more and to come together as a community of people who really care about the mental wellness of those who are close to them.”

Holding the Push-Up Challenge during the winter months is a conscious decision of the CMHA because it’s a time when people are “struggling with the effects of low light, with the cold, the dark, and the temperatures, and staying active while all this is happening is key

for mental health,” says Ansara Ali, Peer Support Worker with the CMHA-YRSS’ Community Connections team.

“This encourages the social piece since that is something we definitely struggle with during this time of year,” says Ali. “We tend to be a bit more secluded naturally for that reason,” she adds, noting that “any form of movement” can help make a difference.

“You can be very flexible with that in terms of whether it’s a walk in the community or, if you’re at home, you can just designate five to 10 minutes to do a mindful meditation, or just dancing to your favourite song,” she says. “Any form of movement is very important in terms of just maintaining where we are during this time.”

And if push-ups aren’t your thing, other activities can help you stay active while supporting the cause.

“Anybody can join the Push-Up Challenge and you can join solo, but you can also join as a team,” says Matzig. “You can rally your workplace or your gym. The structure of the event is really built for communities and companies to step in, start a friendly competition, and keep each other accountable.

I think keeping friends and neighbors accountable throughout this winter

season is really important to keep our mental health high.

“Accessibility really matters to us for this push up challenge. So, you don’t have to just do push-ups. It’s not everybody’s cup of tea. So, you can squat, do sit-ups, bench presses, resistance band moves, jumping jacks, lunges, anything that just gets you moving and gets you motivated, and alternatives to push ups, wall push ups, chair push ups, that sort of thing, so that everybody can participate safely and to the best of their ability. Also, please keep it local. When you are choosing your recipient CMHA, please choose York and South Simcoe during your registration. Your efforts really do help support and expand mental health programs and services right here in our Region.”

For more information on the 2026 Push-Up Challenge, including how to register or support a participant, visit thepushupchallenge.ca.

Seniors’ Centre celebrates milestone 20 years in John West Way home

From page 1

to thrive [and] evolve to meet the needs of our seniors.”

Mayor Mrakas underscored this point by highlighting the contributions of countless volunteers and mentioning several members of municipal staff who have also contributed to the Centre’s success, with special mention to the Town’s long-time Adult Program Coordinator, Karie Papillion, who now holds another position within the municipality, for “helping build the strong foundation that we continue to benefit from today.”

“The Centre has always been more than just a building—it’s a place where friendships are formed, where people stay active and curious, where laughter is shared, and where no one has to feel alone. That sense of community and connection is invaluable and it matters just as much today as it did 20 years ago,” he continued. “As Mayor, I can’t say how proud I am of the role that this Centre plays in making Aurora such a caring, inclusive, and welcoming place to live at every stage of life.

“Congratulations to everyone who has been a part of this incredible journey, past and present, and to many more years of connection, activity, and community ahead.”

One person who was there at the start of that “incredible journey” was former mayor Tim Jones, who took time out of his own birthday to celebrate the Centre’s.

Jones said the creation of the Aurora Seniors Centre is one of “the biggest feathers in my cap” as Mayor.

“I am so proud,” said Jones, noting he worked hand-in-hand with former Aurora Seniors’ Association president Charles Sequeira and his board to make the vision a reality. “I can’t be more proud of the way it’s developed, it’s grown, and it’s enhanced.”

The history of the Aurora Seniors’ Centre dates back to the 1960s when sorority sisters formed what was then called The Friendship Circle, identifying a community need and coming together to fill the gap.

By the time the idea for today’s Aurora Seniors’ Centre was conceived, they had a membership that was approximately 400 members, and a further 200 had joined up by the time the present building opened just across the parking lot from Town Hall in 2006.

In his remarks, Sharp paid tribute to the contributions of his predecessors at the helm.

“Without [Charles Sequeira] this place might not be here,” said Sharp. “Not only was he involved in pushing Council and pushing Mayor Jones to get this building built, I understand he was actually involved in the design, so Charles worked tirelessly to make this place happen. Charles, from everybody here, thank you for making this place possible.

“Jim Abram...is a strong advocate for older adults and works with politicians looking for opportunities for us, looking for grants, looking for ways that we can improve the Centre. Jim, again, thank you on behalf of the membership. If you haven’t seen Carol Hedenberg around the Centre, you’re just not coming to the Centre. Carol was a Board member, a President, and she’s involved in so many things around the Centre and does it kind of anonymously most of the time. She was behind most of what’s happened today, so thank you, Carol, for everything you continue to do.”

Past president Dave Legallais was also mentioned for his very important work in steering the Centre through all the challenges of the Global Pandemic.

“It’s a centre, it’s our community, and when you come in you feel warm, you feel safe, and you feel welcome,” said Sharp. “I’ve been to a couple of other centres, and I’m not going to name names, but it doesn’t have the same feel. We’ve got a different feel here partly because there are so many volunteers who all want to be here.

“This is a special place, and obviously you all agree with that or you wouldn’t be here today. Once again, from the Board, from the Staff, from the Mayor, from former mayor Jones, and from the bottom of my heart, thank you all for coming out today.”

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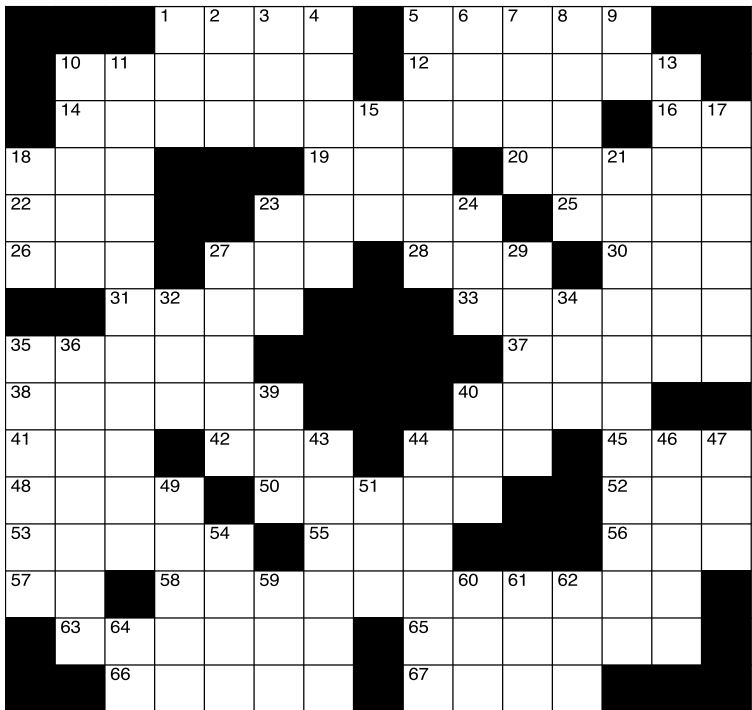
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Puzzle No.TAJAN2926 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Native American group of N. California
- 5. Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- 10. Tool to remove
- 12. Rods
- 14. One who renews
- 16. They precede C
- 18. Chatter incessantly
- 19. ___ King Cole, musician
- 20. Insect parts
- 22. One from Utah
- 23. The world of the dead
- 25. Singer Redding
- 26. NBA legend Nelson
- 27. Indicates wrongly
- 28. Unhappy
- 30. Anger
- 31. Dark brown
- 33. Some are in kitchens
- 35. Made a mistake
- 37. Damp

- 38. Type of fuel
- 40. Actor Damon
- 41. What thespians do
- 42. One’s mother
- 44. Disallow
- 45. Swiss river
- 48. A banana has one
- 50. Philippines lake and volcano are two
- 52. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 53. Agave
- 55. Journalist Tarbell
- 56. One-time tech giant
- 57. Indicates upon
- 58. Intestinal bacteria
- 63. Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- 65. It goes with nook
- 66. A fashion
- 67. Very eager to hear or see

CLUES DOWN

- 1. With
- 2. Utilize
- 3. Writing utensil
- 4. Where rockers go to work
- 5. Subsidies
- 6. Consume
- 7. Greek mythological figures
- 8. California mountain town
- 9. Tin
- 10. Muse of lyric and love poetry
- 11. Animates anew
- 13. Humorous criticisms
- 15. Cool!
- 17. Worst
- 18. Wet dirt
- 21. Designed to be useful
- 23. Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- 24. High schoolers’ test
- 27. Computer device
- 29. Indian territory ___ and Diu
- 32. A place to sleep
- 34. AI tool
- 35. Pass or go by
- 36. Indicates a purchase
- 39. A digital tape recording of sound
- 40. More (Spanish)
- 43. Disfigured
- 44. White (Spanish)
- 46. Church building
- 47. Georgia rockers
- 49. Type of surgery
- 51. Much ___ about nothing
- 54. Make by braiding
- 59. Local area network
- 60. Unit of work or energy
- 61. Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- 62. Liquefied natural gas
- 64. Distance to top



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Celebrating SENIORS

6 tips for winter walking safety

(NC) Enjoying a walk outdoors is one of the best ways to stay active and incorporate daily movement, especially when managing arthritis. But colder months can bring slippery sidewalks and freezing temperatures, making gentle walks a risky adventure. With a few simple precautions, you can stay safe and enjoy the outdoors all season long.

Here are six tips from Arthritis Society Canada to make walking in a winter wonderland as safe as possible:

1. BE WEATHER WARY.

Prepare for snow and ice by keeping a shovel, sand or de-icing salt handy at home to clear your path and avoid slipping on your way out. Pick a well-maintained and frequently travelled route and choose the warmest time of day to go on your walk, to give ice a chance to melt.

2. GEAR UP FOR COMFORT AND SAFETY.

Stay warm and cozy with insulated layers, socks, gloves and a hat. For footwear, invest in supportive, warm

boots with good traction and a low, wide heel for better balance. On icy or snowy days, consider ice cleats or ice grippers on your shoes.

3. WARM UP, THEN WALK.

Before you head out, do a quick warm-up to get your blood flowing. March in place and swing your arms or move your foot and ankle in circular motions to get your muscles ready for the cold.

4. WALK LIKE A PENGUIN.

When navigating a slippery surface, channel your inner penguin and move slowly with small baby steps, like a shuffle. Bend your knees slightly to lower your centre

of gravity, keep your feet flat on the ground with toes pointed outward for better support and keep your arms out for stability—like penguin wings!

5. USE CAUTION WHEN EXITING VEHICLES.

Getting out of your car can be tricky on icy surfaces. Remember to move slowly, swing both feet out and plant them on the ground first and hold onto the doorframe as you carefully stand up.

6. CONSIDER WALKING AIDS.

Handrails on stairs and ramps are your friends and can help reduce the risk of a fall. If you use a cane, consider attaching an ice tip to the bottom for better grip.

You could also try walking sticks, including hiking poles, for added stability and balance.

Find more arthritis-friendly tips at arthritis.ca.



www.newscanada.com



Caring for Aurora's Seniors — Expertise, When It Matters Most

As Aurora celebrates its seniors, many families are quietly navigating change — supporting aging parents, adapting to new health needs, or coping with loss while trying to keep loved ones safe and independent at home. Concerns don't always arise during scheduled care hours. Questions often surface late in the day, overnight, or during unexpected situations — especially in winter.

At Hospall Homecare, families have 24/7 access to a dedicated Nurse Manager. Whether it's guidance after a fall, questions about changes in health or behaviour, or reassurance during an uncertain moment, families can speak directly with a nurse who knows their situation and can offer practical advice, tips, and next steps — even when care isn't onsite. Visit www.hospall.com to read nurse-led articles

on keeping seniors safe this winter, advanced preparation at home, navigating grief, and aging at home, or to learn how to connect with a Nurse Manager.

KEEPING SENIORS SAFE THROUGH THE WINTER — PLANNING AHEAD MATTERS

Winter brings heightened risks for older adults — many of which families don't recognize until something goes wrong. Slippery walkways, power outages, reduced mobility, and isolation can quickly turn manageable situations into emergencies.

Preparation plays a critical role. Having essential supplies on hand, ensuring access to food and medications, planning for heat and power interruptions, and knowing who to call when concerns arise can significantly reduce risk. Hospall supports seniors and families with daily routines while encouraging early planning and

informed decision-making — helping families feel more confident before winter challenges occur.

THOUGHTFUL DEMENTIA CARE — SUPPORTING THE WHOLE FAMILY

January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month, a reminder of how essential understanding and empathy are for those living with dementia. Hospall caregivers are trained in the Gentle Persuasive Approach (GPA) — an evidence-based method focused on respectful communication, relationship-based care, and reducing distress. Our Nurse Managers share GPA insights and strategies with families, helping them better understand behaviours and respond with greater confidence at home — particularly in moments when a caregiver is not present.

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NEW FRIENDS, NEW BEGINNINGS, NEW JOYS

Thriving Together at The Meadows of Aurora

When my parents moved to The Meadows it felt like they were turning a page in their lives. They were ready for something new, and a lifestyle with none of the typical burdens of home ownership. Though the decision to downsize wasn't easy, it's clear now that this was the perfect place for them to start an exciting new part of their lives.

Two main things have struck me since my parents made this decision. First, I was both thankful and pleasantly surprised that THEY were the ones to decide on this; neither me or my brother would have to ask about next steps as my parents age.

Secondly, I'm now living in southern Vancouver Island and my brother lives in Florida. Because life has taken us elsewhere with our own families and we can't be a regular in-person part of our parent's daily lives, it was exciting to see how my folks have been able to reconnect with old friends through the process of the move. Also they've made new friends, who share a like-minded approach to enjoying this stage of life.

The thoughtful design work also plays a big part in their happiness since the move, and their unit is suited to their needs. Lounges in the shared spaces are well designed. They are warm and inviting, with cozy seating that encourages conversations over coffee with friends. My parents love spending time there, connecting with neighbors and enjoying the relaxed, friendly atmosphere around the property and buildings.

Perhaps the best part of this transition has been the balance it offers. My parents still have their independence, but they're surrounded by a supportive and vibrant community. Seeing them thrive at The Meadows has been such an answer to prayer, it's the gift of vitality and peace of mind. Watching them the past eight months, even from far away, has been inspiring, and I'm so grateful they've found a place where they truly feel at home for their next chapter.

*A Son's Perspective on a New Chapter
– Mike Ford, "Son of a Owner"*



We've seen far too many seniors struggling—whether to make ends meet or to simply enjoy the retirement they dreamed of. Too often, financial strain dims the golden years. One of our missions is to shed light on the real benefits of Reverse Mortgages and help dispel the misconceptions that surround them.

WE ARE CAROL AND GORD COLOGNA, AND YES—WE'RE SENIORS OURSELVES.

Carol brings over 20 years of experience in Corporate Banking and more than two decades as a dedicated Mortgage Broker. Her passion lies in empowering individuals through knowledge, with a particular focus on Equity Release Mortgages.

Gord, a senior before Carol, spent over 20 years as a successful entrepreneur and business owner in York Region. After selling his business three years ago, he joined Carol in mortgage brokering, driven by the same heart for service that guided his previous work. Gord has a deep commitment to mentoring, and has helped many at-risk youth find direction and opportunity through meaningful employment and support.

FOUR TYPES OF CLIENT NEEDS: A DEEPER LOOK AT WHY CANADIANS 55+ TURN TO AN EQUITY RELEASE MORTGAGE

You may know that the Equity Release Mortgage (aka Reverse Mortgage) is available to Canadians aged 55+ who own their home—but behind that simple fact lies a much deeper and more human story.

Across Canada, 1.4 million seniors—21% of those 55 and older—are facing financial need. Nearly half of homeowners aged 55–64 still carry a mortgage, and even after 65, 1 in 10 continue making mortgage payments.¹ The

reasons behind these numbers are as varied and personal as the people themselves.

Here are four stories we see every day—four common reasons why Canadians turn to the Equity Release Mortgages.

1. CARRYING THE WEIGHT OF DEBT

This client lies awake at night, worried about how to make the next payment—on their mortgage, credit card, or car loan. Maybe they've dipped into their retirement savings to help a child with university tuition or a down payment. Maybe they've been quietly carrying more than they can handle, hoping things will get better. They're not looking for extravagance—they just want relief.

2. LIFE THREW A CURVEBALL

This client never expected to be here. A sudden roof leak. A medical issue that made their home harder to live in. The need to bring in help to care for a spouse. These aren't luxuries—they're urgent needs. And they're not in a position to pull out tens of thousands of dollars at once.

3. READY TO FINALLY LIVE

After decades of hard work, this client thought retirement would be their time. Time to travel, enjoy hobbies, visit family—or finally buy that little lakeside cottage they've dreamed about. But when the math doesn't add up, the dream feels out of reach. They don't want to just get by—they want to truly live.

4. STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP

This client isn't in crisis—but something's changed. The weekly dinner out. A ticket to the theatre. A small trip to visit the grandkids. All the little joys that made life rich are suddenly harder to afford. Retirement isn't what they pictured—not because of lack of time, but lack of freedom.

For each of these clients, the home isn't just an asset—it's a lifeline, a foundation, a source of pride. The Reverse Mortgage allows them to access that value without selling or taking on new monthly payments—offering comfort, possibility, and peace of mind.

¹ Statistics Canada, 2023.

Contact:

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Fitness classes

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Exercise is a pillar of a healthy lifestyle. When individuals exercise regularly and pair physical activity with a healthy diet and smart lifestyle choices, they can extend their life expectancies and sleep well knowing they're doing everything they can to increase their chances of enjoying a limitless retirement.

Adults over 50 know it's not always so easy to exercise. Hectic schedules can make it seem like there's little time for exercise. And even when adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts combining strength training with cardiovascular exercise are too time-consuming and possibly even a little dull. In such instances, fitness classes can take the place of more traditional exercise regimens. Various classes provide a challenging workout, and many can do so in an hour or less.

PILATES: Improving balance, core strength and flexibility are three goals of Pilates. Pilates has an interesting history, as it was created by Joseph Pilates, a German prisoner of war who was imprisoned off the coast of England during World War I. Pilates and the exercising phenomenon he created ultimately made

their way to the United States, where the routine was embraced by dancers looking for a way to aid their injury recovery. Pilates is now part of millions of individuals' exercise regimens. This low-impact exercise is designed to strengthen muscles and improve alignment and flexibility. Achieving greater balance after 50 pays untold dividends for older adults, who can decrease their risk for falls and fall-related injuries by increasing their steadiness.

SPIN: Spin classes are a wildly popular exercise program that utilizes cycling to help people break a sweat. Cardiovascular exercise is beneficial for a number of reasons, including its connection to heart health and even cognitive health. But many people lament daily sessions on a treadmill or elliptical that they find boring. Spin classes involve the use of stationary bikes, but instructors typically guide class members through conditions that mimic outdoor cycling sessions. Resistance and pedaling speed changes throughout a spin class, which serves to keep individuals engaged and burn lots of calories.

KICKBOXING: Sometimes referred to as Krav Maga, kickboxing is another unique and challenging class



offered at many fitness facilities. Martial arts like kickboxing assist with weight loss and can help people improve their muscle tone, flexibility and stamina. Adults over 50 who are not accustomed to physical activity may find their energy levels are low, but a few kickboxing sessions may produce noticeable differences in stamina. The balance benefits of kickboxing are similar to those provided by Pilates, so this activity may be particularly beneficial for adults over 50 looking to reduce their vulnerability to falls as they grow older.

DANCE: Dancing is widely seen as a fun activity, and rightfully so, as few things can be as enjoyable as cutting a rug. But dancing also provides a great cardiovascular workout. Local community centers and even some fitness facilities offer age-specific dancing classes, which are great for individuals who want to build core strength, improve bone health and protect their heart.

Adults over 50 who want to be more physically active can look to any number of fitness classes to break a sweat, build strength and have fun all at once.

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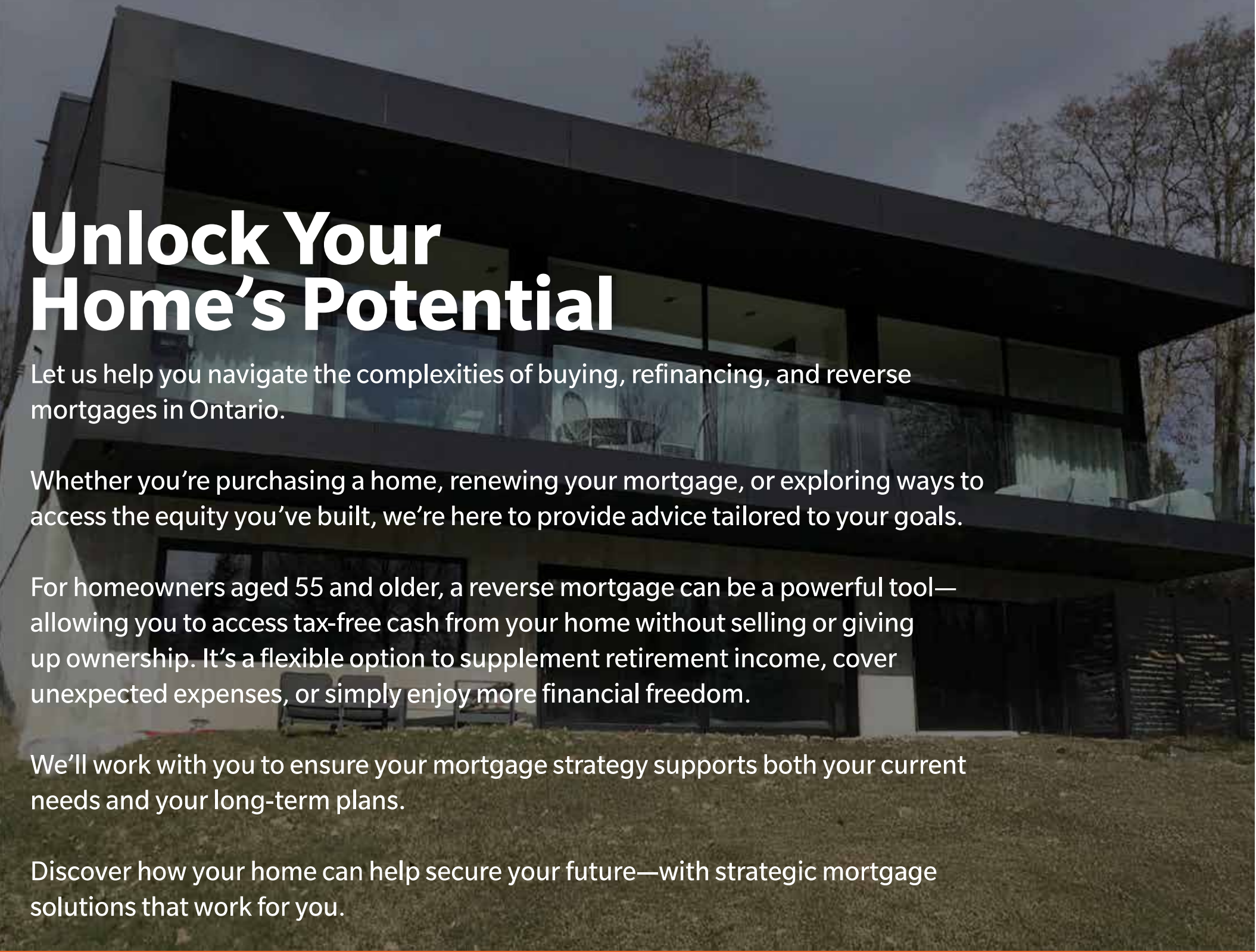
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Harvey Dix
Founder / Director,
Memories+
Home Healthcare

How **Memories+**
Home Healthcare
Supports All Ages
and Needs

When I first started Memories+ Home Healthcare, I thought our services would only serve seniors. While older adults are certainly a significant portion of who we serve, I quickly realized that there are many other situations where home care services can be helpful. Our services are flexible and personalized specifically to your needs.

Here are just a few examples of how our services help individuals in the community:

HOSPITAL DISCHARGE SUPPORT:

Coming home from a hospital stay can be a scary time. Having home care support ensures that care continues safely and without interruption.

ACCIDENT AND INJURY RECOVERY:

Whether you're recovering from a motor vehicle accident or a personal injury, having professional help at home can foster a smoother, more comfortable recovery.

SURGERY RECOVERY:

After hip, knee, or other surgeries, rehabilitation at home is critical. Having home care can support your rehabilitation needs and help you regain strength in the comfort of your own home.

COMPANION CARE:

Social engagement, meaningful conversations, and activity support reduce isolation and enhance overall wellbeing for those of all ages.

DISEASE AND ILLNESS SUPPORT:

Anyone can get sick. From Diabetes support to stroke recovery, Parkinsons' routines to Dementia support, person-centred compassionate care is there when you need it.

PALLIATIVE CARE:

There comes a time when each one of us must say goodbye. When that time comes, having the proper care in place can help everyone get through this challenging time in the comfort of one's own home.

HOME SUPPORT:

Sometimes you just need a little help around the house! Whether you need a little light housekeeping or assistance with nutritious meals, the Memories+ Home Healthcare team is here to help.

At Memories+ our goal is to provide compassionate, personalized support while respecting dignity, promoting independence and improving the quality of life of our clients and their families. Call us today at 1-855-558-4798, and Let's start Making Great Memories together!

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7 BENEFITS OF SOCIALIZATION FOR SENIORS

Social isolation often goes overlooked, but it's a key contributor to poor mental health.

Experts state that it is increasingly important for adults to maintain an active social life as they age. There are many benefits that come from staying engaged and socializing with others. The following is a look at seven ways socialization benefits seniors.

1. Regular social interactions can help older adults avoid depression, anxiety and feelings of isolation, according to Integracare, a senior living company.
2. Social engagement can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia because socializing helps to keep the mind sharp through new experiences.
3. Socialization often revolves around an activity that gets seniors up and moving. While being sedentary is alright on occasion, consistently sitting or laying around can lead to high cholesterol, weight gain and high blood pressure. A 2019 study published in The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences determined that older

adults who interacted with people beyond their usual social circle of family and close friends were more likely to have higher levels of physical activity, greater positive moods and fewer negative feelings.

4. Regular social interaction may compel seniors to embrace healthier eating habits. Social events expose seniors to different types of food, which can help them get the nutrients they need to live healthy.
5. Regular socialization can help seniors feel they are needed and have a sense of purpose, which can boost self-esteem. Engaging with others often means contributing to a community, and that can be satisfying.
6. Getting out and interacting with others can serve as an informal wellness check, potentially alerting family and friends to issues that may need attention.
7. Getting outside and interacting with others can open seniors up to new hobbies. Whether that is participating in a new sport or joining a club, there are mental and physical advantages to engaging socially.

Socialization is an important factor in seniors' overall wellness, and one that should be discussed along with diet, exercise and illness management.



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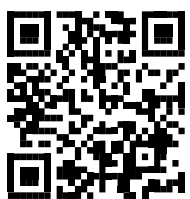
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When ...is the right time *for* retirement living?

Deciding when a loved one may benefit from retirement living is never easy. It's normal for families to feel uncertain, emotional, or even guilty when considering such a meaningful transition. At Delmanor, we understand these feelings—and we're here to help guide families with compassion, clarity, and confidence.

There are often a few clear signs that additional support can make life safer, richer, and more fulfilling. Safety is one of the most important. Changes in mobility, frequent falls, slower recovery from injuries, or missed medications can signal that living alone is becoming challenging. Small moments of forgetfulness—like leaving appliances on—can create real risks over time.

Social connection is another important consideration. If your parent is spending more time alone or no longer participating in the activities they once enjoyed, loneliness may be taking a toll. Everyday tasks can become exhausting, leaving little energy for socializing, hobbies, or time with friends.

Families also need support. Caring for a loved one while balancing careers, children, and daily responsibilities can lead to caregiver burnout. What begins as helping out occasionally can quickly become overwhelming, placing strain on both emotional well-being and family relationships.

Starting the conversation with empathy is key. Share your concerns thoughtfully, listen to what matters most to your loved one, and reassure them that their comfort, independence, and dignity remain the priority.

At Delmanor, retirement living is about more than care—it's about living well. With chef-prepared meals, enriching programs, welcoming communities, and professional support, residents gain the freedom to focus on what brings them joy. Families gain peace of mind, and time together becomes about connection, not caregiving.

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Staying Strong & Steady This Winter at Kingsway Place Retirement Living

Winter in our community brings beautiful snow-covered streets and unique challenges for older adults. Kingsway Place Retirement Living is committed to helping residents stay active, confident, and safe all year long through engaging exercise programs, thoughtful design, and personalized care.

Movement That Builds Strength and Confidence

Regular movement is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of falls. At Kingsway Place, exercise classes are designed specifically for older adults, with a focus on balance, strength, flexibility, and gentle cardiovascular activity. These classes help improve stability, support joints and muscles, and make everyday movements easier.

Classes are offered at a comfortable pace in a supportive group setting, encouraging both physical wellness and social connection, which is especially important during the winter months when isolation can increase.

When and Where Do Falls Most Often Happen?

Falls can happen at any time, but they are more common in winter due to icy sidewalks, snow-covered driveways, and reduced daylight. Many falls also occur indoors, particularly in bathrooms when stepping in and out of the shower, on stairs and entryways, or during everyday routines like getting out of bed or reaching for items.

Understanding where and when falls happen is an important first step toward prevention.

Winter Fall-Prevention Tips

There are several simple ways older adults can reduce fall risk during the colder months:

- Wear non-slip, supportive footwear indoors and outdoors
- Take extra time when walking on snow or ice and avoid rushing
- Keep pathways well-lit and clutter-free
- Use handrails and grab bars whenever available
- Stay active with regular exercise to maintain strength and balance
- Ask for help with tasks such as shoveling, errands, or winter driving

Prevention Comes First

When it comes to falls, prevention is always better than reacting after an injury occurs. A single fall can affect confidence, independence, and overall health. By focusing on strength, balance, safe environments, and proactive support, many

falls can be avoided altogether. "Planning ahead is far better than recovering from a preventable accident," says Kingsway Place recreation director, Andrea Lee Han.

How Kingsway Place Supports Fall Prevention

Safety is built into every detail of the Kingsway Place community, offering:

- Showers equipped with grab bars and benches for comfort and stability
- Thoughtfully designed suites and common areas to reduce tripping hazards
- 24/7 PSW and nursing support, providing peace of mind at all hours
- Emergency call button necklaces for all resident's, ensuring help is always close by
- On-site programs that encourage residents to stay active and engaged

Their team works closely with residents and families to ensure individual needs are met, especially during winter.

A Smart Winter Solution: Winter Stays at Kingsway Place

Winter stays are a popular option for families in Aurora who have parents living independently farther away. When winter driving becomes challenging and weather conditions are unpredictable, many families choose a short-term stay for added safety, comfort, and peace of mind.

Winter stays start at \$3,710 per month and include:

- Three nutritious meals per day
- Daily refreshments
- Weekly housekeeping and linen/towel service
- 24-hour nursing and PSW support
- In-house physician visits once per week
- Complimentary Wi-Fi in common areas
- Access to exercise classes, programs, and social activities

A winter stay offers relief from winter driving and icy conditions while providing professional care in a warm, welcoming environment.

Whether considering a short-term winter stay or long-term retirement living, Kingsway Place is here to help older adults enjoy winter with confidence. To learn more about Kingsway's fall prevention programs or winter stay options, please connect with their team at inquiries@kingswayaurora.com or 905-841-2777.

Live carefree with us this winter!

Join us for a season of warmth, friendship, and joy at Kingsway Place Retirement!

Our winter stay program offers personalized care plans, health and wellness programs, community events, and delicious meals—all designed to keep you cozy and cared for this season.



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For many, the sounds of life are deeply tied to cherished memories—the laughter of loved ones, the rhythm of a favorite song, or the gentle rustle of leaves on a crisp fall day. Amplifon, a global leader in hearing care, is on a heartfelt mission to help people rediscover these precious moments.

The heart of Amplifon’s mission lies in its dedication to restoring not just hearing, but the emotions and memories tied to sound. Whether it’s the sound of a grandchild’s laughter or the melodies of a favorite song, these moments matter. With services like free hearing tests, risk-free hearing aid trials, and flexible payment options, Amplifon ensures that no one is left behind on their journey to rediscover the joys of life.

“Our professionals understand that hearing is about so much more than sound,” shared Diego Alejandro, General Manager of Amplifon Canada. “It’s about reconnecting with life, rebuilding confidence, and creating new memories with loved ones. Every person who walks into one of our clinics has a story, and we’re here to help them write their next chapter. Our goal is to break down barriers for those who

have lived in silence for too long—helping them feel seen, heard, and understood. Historically, hearing loss has carried a stigma that has made many hesitant to seek help. But we believe that no one should feel ashamed of their challenges. Our goal is to replace that stigma with hope, empathy, and a renewed sense of connection.”

ABOUT AMPLIFON CANADA

Headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario, Amplifon Canada is a trusted provider of hearing care solutions, powered by more than 350 dedicated employees across its clinics. With a focus on improving lives and strengthening communities, Amplifon Canada combines advanced technology with compassionate, personalized care. From offering free hearing tests to ensuring access to state-of-the-art hearing aids, Amplifon strives to make hearing health accessible for all Canadians.

Start your journey to better hearing with Amplifon Hearing Care Experts.

To learn more about Amplifon Canada, and find a clinic near you, visit our website at www.amplifon.ca

Fruits and vegetables that can make for nutritious *snacks*

Snacking is a routine part of many people’s lives. In fact, a 2023 study published in the journal *Nutrients* estimated that adults consume one to three snacks each day, and that said consumption ultimately accounts for roughly 20 percent of their energy intake.

Such frequent and routine snacking could be detrimental if people aren’t opting for nutritious foods when eating between meals. With that in mind, the following are four fruits and vegetables that feature a low-calorie, nutritious profile, which makes them ideal foods to reach for the next time hunger pangs demand a between-meal bite.

APPLES: There might be something to the adage, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Apples are rich in antioxidants, which have been touted for their anti-inflammatory properties as well as their role in building a strong immune system. Chlorogenic acid is an antioxidant found in apples that researchers have found can help to lower a person’s risk for diabetes, while the catechins in apples have been linked to a reduced risk for heart disease and cancer. WebMD notes that the fiber in apples



helps people feel fuller after eating, a benefit most easily attained when eating apples with the skin on.

BANANAS: Bananas make a perfect snack because they’re easily portable and loaded with nutritional value. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health notes that a medium ripe banana contains just 110 calories and zero grams of fat. The potassium in bananas can promote heart health by enabling the heart to beat regularly, and this popular fruit also has been characterized as beneficial for digestive health.

BROCCOLI: Broccoli might not finish in the top 10 if people were asked to name the foods they’re most likely to eat as a snack, but this nutrient-rich vegetable makes for a healthy between-meal bite. Broccoli can be eaten raw or cooked, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture notes a single cup of cooked broccoli contains just 55 calories. Within that small serving snackers can get roughly 134 percent of their daily value of vitamin A, 112 percent of their daily value of vitamin C and 92 percent of their daily value of vitamin K.

CARROTS: Carrots are another accessible, nutritious vegetable to consider the next time hunger pangs hit between meals. WebMD notes a single serving of carrots contains just 25 calories but is loaded with vitamins and minerals, including vitamin A (73 percent of the recommended daily value), vitamin K (9 percent) and vitamin C (5 percent). The fiber in carrots can promote healthy digestion, and the wealth of antioxidants like carotenoids and anthocyanins found in carrots help to fight off free radicals that can increase a person’s risk for disease.

Snacks are a part of many people’s daily routines. Finding the right foods to snack on can make a world of difference for people aspiring to live healthier.

New Year, New Connections



It’s always a good time to focus on what truly matters — your health, your happiness, and the connections you cherish. From sharing moments with loved ones to enjoying quiet time for yourself, these are the experiences that make life meaningful.

As your trusted local partners in hearing health, we’re here to support you in the year ahead. Explore our products and services, and let’s make this year one of clearer communication and stronger connections.

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- We invite you to visit Margaret Bahen Hospice on your chosen day for a coffee, chat or quiet visit.



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THINGS... you ought to know

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30

The Pan African Flag will be raised at Town Hall tonight with a special Flag Raising Ceremony set for 6 – 7 p.m. If you missed it last year, you definitely don’t want to miss it this time. Come celebrate, dance, and raise the flag with us as we kick off Black History Month in pure vibes. For more information, visit aurorablackcommunity.com.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

The Aurora Black Community Association will host its annual Black History Month Gala this evening at the Royal Venetian Mansion. Come enjoy culture, community and celebration. For tickets, visit www.aurorablackcommunity.com/event-details/aurora-black-history-gala.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Kick off Family Day weekend at Aurora Town Square this morning as the Town of Aurora hosts the first of its two-part Arctic Adventure celebration. The fun runs today from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a variety of family-friendly activities. For more information, visit aurora.ca/arcticadventure.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Arctic Adventure returns to Aurora Town Park today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a whole

host of winter fun for Family Day. For more information, visit aurora.ca/arcticadventure.

HERITAGE WEEK IN AURORA – Celebrate Aurora’s rich cultural history during provincial Heritage Week (a nationwide observance in Canada, officially celebrated in Ontario during the third week of February). The Town of Aurora, together with the Heritage Advisory Committee, is proud to host a full day of free programming designed to highlight the stories, people, and places that have shaped our community, as well as other initiatives throughout the week. For a full roster of events and activities, visit aurora.ca/heritageweek.

ONGOING

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

Support AbuseHurts’ Delivering Hope Full

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

NOTICE OF PASSING

SHEPPEY, Eric Joseph



– At Moria Place Long Term Care – Tweed, on Saturday, January 24, 2026. Eric Sheppey, of Madoc, formerly of Gilmour, and Aurora, in his 92nd year.

Son of the late Jack and Margaret Sheppey (nee Dawson). Beloved husband of Irene Sheppey (nee Bone). Loving father of Brent Sheppey (Ginger), and the late Jeffrey Sheppey (surviving Suzanne). Loved by his grandchildren Alex, Melissa, Stephanie, Sarah, Jessica, and great-grandchildren Ryenne, Leo, Zachary, Iris, Archie, Josie, Jeffrey, and Joey. Predeceased by his brother, Charlie, and his sister, Janet. Cremation has taken place. If desired, donations may be made to the Heart of Hastings Hospice – Madoc. Online condolences at www.rushnellfuneralhomes.com/madoc. Rushnell Funeral Homes – Madoc, 112 Durham Street South, 613-473-2833.

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