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SOLIDARITY – Residents filled the forecourt of Town Hall on Wednesday, January 28, for a rally held in solidarity with the Iranian people. Hosted by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Mayor and Council, the event featured speeches from community leaders and the raising of what was described as the “true flag of Iran” outside the local seat of government. INSET: Amongst those joining MPP Parsa and Mayor Tom Mrakas for the event were Councillors Ron Weese, Rachel Gilliland, Michael Thompson, and John Gallo. For more, see Page 14.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora came together to mark the start of Black History Month with the raising of the Pan-African Flag at Town Hall on Friday evening.

The flag-raising ceremony, hosted by the Town of Aurora and the Aurora Black Community Association

(ABC), was an evening of celebration and reflection, with poignant words shared by community leaders in Council Chambers, and live music and celebratory treats feeding mind, body and soul.

The observance began outside for the flag-raising itself, where Mayor Tom Mrakas formally proclaimed February as Black History Month in Aurora.

“Black History Month continues to provide the Town of Aurora with the opportunity to celebrate the contributions and vital role Canadians of African descent have made to strengthen the social and cultural mosaic of our community, province and country,” said Mayor Mrakas issuing the proclamation.

Inside, where he was joined by Aurora-

Continued on page 7



The Pan-African Flag was raised at Town Hall on Friday night to signal the start of Black History Month. The ceremony was followed by a poignant community event in Council Chambers.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Monica Stohr

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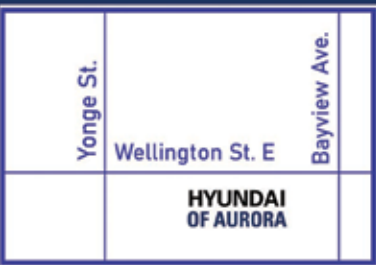
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York Catholic District School Board warned by Ministry of Education

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The York Catholic District School Board will be placed “under supervision” if it doesn’t appropriately respond to multiple issues, including governance and finance, Ontario’s Ministry of Education warned last week.

On January 28, Ontario Minister of Education Paul Calandra said the Ministry was putting the Peel District School Board under provincial supervision with immediate effect, while the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) would be subject to a similar move if it did not respond to long-standing Ministry concerns.

In his statement, the Minister cited “infighting, disruption and serious financial concerns” that have “undermined student success for years.” These, he said, “need to end immediately with every penny of public funding directed to support students in the classroom.”

“The Minister is immediately placing PDSB under provincial supervision and has halted the Board’s imminent layoff plan, which would have seen 60 classroom teachers lose their jobs and caused significant learning disruption for nearly 1,400 students in the middle of the school year,” said the Ministry. “The Board has also run a deficit for five consecutive years, affecting its long-term financial sustainability. The Board has been given 14 days to respond to the Minister’s concerns, after which the Minister will determine whether to continue with supervision.

“The YCDSB has also been informed that the Minister intends to take action to place the Board under supervision if it fails to appropriately respond to the pressing governance and financial concerns in the next 14 days. The Board’s years of inadequate financial management have depleted its reserves, putting its ability to serve students and the broader community at serious risk. High-risk financial

assumptions in the Board’s financial recovery plan, along with an alarming revolving door in leadership and ongoing governance issues, have raised doubts about the YCDSB’s ability to balance its budget and put students first.”

Following the Minister’s announcement, the YCDSB announced local trustees and the Board’s senior management were working to address the concerns.

“The Board of Trustees and the Senior Team are working together to create a plan that best serves our students, staff, and families,” said Maria Iafrate, Chair of the Board, and Jennifer Sarna, Interim Director of Education, in a letter addressed to the YCDSB community. “As part of the process, there will be Board Meetings in the coming weeks to discuss this plan.

“Please rest assured that the YCDSB’s day-to-day operations will continue as usual.”

The Minister’s ability to take on oversight of Ontario school boards came into law with the Supporting Children and Students Act 2025, which broadened Ministerial oversight, including Board finances, governance and performance.

“The Act gives the Minister of Education the authority to initiate an investigation, issue binding directions or issue an order to place a school board under supervision where there is a concern about a matter of public interest, whether on financial or non-financial grounds, to ensure accountability on behalf of parents and teachers,” says the Ministry.

“When a school board is placed under supervision, the Minister of Education may appoint an individual, commonly referred to as a supervisor, to exercise powers and duties of the board. Supervisors have leadership and expertise in governance, finance and/or public accountability matters. They report regularly to the ministry while working to improve stability and efficiency in school boards under supervision.”

Residents step forward to declare as first-time Council candidates

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The 2026 Ontario Municipal Election campaign isn’t set to formally begin until May, but two local residents put themselves forward as first-time municipal candidates this week.

Lauren Hanna, a long-time community builder and Chair of the Aurora Public Library Board, has declared her candidacy for Ward 1, while Optimist Club member and long-time political volunteer Connor Logan has done the same for Ward 2.

The Wards are currently held by Ron Weese and Rachel Gilliland respectively.

In her campaign launch video, Hanna, a mother of two, and member of the Town Park Community Association, said she wants residents to feel their municipal government is “accountable.”

“I have worked my full career in Ontario’s public service and I know how important local government is,” said Hanna. “I want all residents in Aurora to feel included and engaged in our community, and to be confident that our local government is accountable.”

Logan, a long-time Aurora resident and graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University, who ran for the Ontario Liberal Party as a candidate for the riding of Windsor-Tecumseth in last year’s Provincial election, kicked off his campaign with a focus on youth and housing.

“For a long time, we haven’t had youth representation on Council and I want to be the person to represent us. However, it is not just youth issues that matter; older generations are also being impacted by the issues of today,” he said. “Aurora could have received millions and millions of dollars from the Provincial and Federal governments. However, we didn’t diversify our housing and we didn’t build affordable housing. There’s many lots being put up on the Greenbelt and surrounding area that are going for a million dollars-plus, but the average person can’t afford that. If I were to make it on Council. I would make it my mission to diversify housing as anyone should be able to live in our Town and be a part of our community.

“Now, the campaign doesn’t start until May, however, I’ll be going around Town asking Aurorans how they feel about this current municipal government, what they would like to see change, and what they would like to see stay the same.”

The 2026 Ontario Municipal Elections are slated for October 26.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Region marks Black History Month

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I am pleased to recognize February 2026 as Black History Month. This month provides an opportunity to celebrate the achievements, contributions and resilience of Black residents in York Region and across Canada.

Black communities in Canada have diverse histories. Some families have lived here for generations while others have immigrated more recently. Together, they help shape a Canada that is culturally rich, compassionate and full of opportunity.

York Region is one of the most diverse communities in the country with a growing population of residents who identify as Black or of African heritage. This diversity is a source of strength, vitality and economic opportunity and helps create a Region where everyone can thrive.

Regional Council remains committed to fostering equity and inclusion. In 2018, we endorsed the Inclusion Charter for York Region, affirming our dedication to a welcoming community where all residents can participate fully, live with dignity and reach their potential. We continue to work with community partners and within our organization to challenge systemic anti-Black racism and ensure meaningful action toward equity.

During Black History Month, and all year long, we honour the contributions of Black Canadians and reaffirm our commitment to building a York Region where diversity is celebrated, equity is advanced and every resident feels valued and respected.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO

Open letter to YCDSB students, staff and families

We want you to be aware that yesterday, the Minister of Education requested that the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) submit a plan outlining how we will provide effective governance and financial management.

The Board of Trustees and the Senior Team are working together to create a plan that best serves our students, staff and families. As part of the process, there will be Board Meetings in the coming weeks to discuss this plan. We will let you know when these meetings are scheduled, and we encourage you to attend in person at 320 Bloomington Road West, Aurora, or watch it live on the YCDSB’s YouTube channel.

Please rest assured that the YCDSB’s day-to-day operations will continue as usual. We will provide you with more information as it becomes available.

Maria Iafrafe
Chair of the Board

Jennifer Sarna
Interim Director of Education

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

Machell’s Corners



School shakeups and trusty trustees



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

to the election of our school trustees and the arguably less-than-welcoming political area parents and other stakeholders might be considering jumping into.

Last week, the Peel District School Board and the York Catholic School Board found themselves once again in the crosshairs of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry made the decision to put the PDSB under Provincial Supervision, halting their plan to lay-off 60 classroom teachers, a move the Ministry says will “cause significant learning disruption for nearly 1,400 students” in the middle of the year.

The YCDSB, on the other hand, has been warned the Ministry will put them under Provincial Supervision as well if they don’t respond to “pressing governance and financial concerns” within 14 days of last Wednesday’s announcement.

“I’m taking immediate action to put an end to mismanagement and disruption at two school boards that are directly and negatively impacting both students and teachers,” said Education Minister Paul Calandra in a January 28 statement. “The action I am taking at the PDSB will put an immediate halt to a disruptive mid-year upheaval in staffing that would have created uncertainty for parents, students and teachers alike. I am also putting the YCDSB on notice that the infighting, disruption and serious financial concerns that have undermined student success for years need to end immediately, with every penny of public funding directed to support students in the classroom.”

The decision earned a quick and sharp rebuke from the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, with president David Mastin stating the Ministry’s “takeover” of the Boards undermines their democratically-elected membership.

“There is growing concern that these takeovers are part of a broader plan to seize control of school board finances and real estate across the Province,” said Mastin. “This treats public education as a profit-making enterprise rather than a vital public service meant to serve every child. Parents and communities must join us and act now

to prevent lasting damage to our high-quality public education system.

“Elected trustees are a critical link between communities and publicly-funded schools. They provide local accountability, represent and elevate diverse perspectives, and make decisions that reflect the needs of the students and families they serve. Replacing them with supervisors, government insiders with little to no education sector experience, strips communities of their democratic voice and hands control over to a government that has repeatedly shown disregard for public education. Government-appointed supervisors answer only to the Premier and the Education Minister, not to parents, not to students, not to communities.”

While I agree with EFTO that the above-mentioned scenario is troubling, it can’t be said there is no room for improvement when it comes to how boards like the YCDSB and PDSB operate.

In my more than 15 years covering school boards, I have to say one of the most disheartening experiences I’ve had in that context was the YCDSB’s debate over whether or not to fly the Progress Pride flag at Board facilities during Pride Month.

There were distinct splits in the discourse amongst both trustees and parents, with a far more unified voice in favour of flying the flag among the student body.

While parents and trustees argued amongst themselves, sometimes in language that would not have been accepted in the classroom, the students themselves passionately and articulately made the case, going high when an alarming number of those in the crowd opted to go low.

And this was not just delegates to the meeting; these were views expressed with equal passion and clarity by Student Trustees appointed to be, as their title suggests, the voice of students at the Board table.

Sadly, their efforts were nixed by Trustees, some of whom, by their own admission, leaned on their own personal views to justify their vote rather than on the voices of the parents and students they were elected to represent.

The Ministry of Education has mused on whether or not school boards are even necessary in today’s society. That is not a question I have – they are integral for parents and students to have a voice in their own education.

Whether or not that voice is being listened to is a question I believe should be equally integral in upcoming reviews, here in our communities or in any jurisdiction within Ontario.

You know what might not be a bad start? Giving weight – and maybe even a voting stake – to students who have been selected to be the voices of their peers.

They’re not window dressing; they’re there for a reason.

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THE AURORA MUSEUM
& ARCHIVES IS CELEBRATING...

The Winter Olympics



Read the full column to learn more and be sure to visit the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex to see the skates in person!

These skates were the final pair worn by Olympic figure skating coach and Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Honoured Member Sheldon Galbraith. This week’s Time Traveller’s Diary visits the 1948 Winter Olympics and explores how Galbraith drew on his wartime experience with flight simulation to shape his coaching style. That approach supported Barbara Ann Scott’s historic achievement as the first Canadian to win a Winter Olympic gold medal in a sport other than hockey.



Time Travellers
Diary

By Michelle Johnson
Collections & Exhibitions Coordinator
Aurora Museum & Archives

Talent Takes Flight
at the 1948 Winter
Olympics!

This year, the beginning of February also signals the beginning of the 2026 Olympic Winter Games taking place in Milano Cortina, Italy. To mark the occasion, I decided to venture back to the Winter Olympics of the past – specifically the 1948 Olympic Winter Games, held in St. Moritz, Switzerland. You might wonder, why 1948? Let me explain ...

During the Second World War the 1940 and 1944 Winter Olympic Games were cancelled, causing a 12-year hiatus. In 1948, the return to competition felt deliberate and focused, it featured smaller teams, simpler venues and a shared goal to restore international sport.

Front and center in today’s time-travelling tale is a young Sheldon Galbraith, an Honoured Member of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

Before the war, Sheldon competed with his brother in figure skating events and toured North America with the Ice Follies. After the United States entered the war, he served as a flight instructor with the U.S. Naval Air Force until 1945. When he returned to the rink, he carried one clear idea from aviation into figure skating coaching: flight simulation.

Applying the concept of flight simulation to his coaching techniques allowed skaters to get the feeling of jumps and spins before attempting them on ice. Sheldon used trampolines to build lift, understand air position, and practice safe landings. He also employed spinning devices to train for axis control, balance, and familiarity with rotation speed. The idea was simple, innovative, and effective.

In 1946, Galbraith began working with a rising Canadian star, Barbara Ann Scott and the success quickly followed with her winning the 1947 World Championship. Knowing that these two were on to something, I pushed the machine forward and returned to the 1948 Olympic Winter Games in St. Moritz to watch Barbara’s skate ...

The event began under bright winter light on the outdoor rink, which was perfectly framed by the Swiss Alps. Barbara skated with the steadiness and confidence of an athlete who knew every step, rotation, and landing. The same ice had endured heavy use from the men’s hockey tournament and was far from perfect, yet her composure and training held. Her performance received a standing ovation, and it went on to win Canada’s first Winter Olympic gold medal in a sport other than men’s hockey!

Galbraith served as Canadian Olympic figure skating coach in 1948, 1956, and 1960. His story is one that illuminates a unique connection between the war time Olympic hiatus and the incorporation of new techniques learned during the hiatus to achieve greatness.

Last week, Council considered a motion by a Councillor that proposed a fundamental change to how Development Charges (DCs) are collected in the Town of Aurora.

Council ultimately defeated it in a 5-2 vote — and I believe that decision was the right one for our community.

As I stated at the table, this proposed change to how development charges are collected does not improve affordability for homebuyers. In my view, it does the complete opposite. It amounts to nothing more than a shell game — and a very transparent one.

In effect, the proposal seeks to remove a major cost from developers and shift it onto homebuyers, saddling them with Development Charges disguised as a longterm municipal fee.

In other words, the developer does not pay.

- They do not carry the cost.
- They do not carry the risk.
- They collect their profit and walk away.

Meanwhile, the homeowner is left with a 25-year bill attached to their



GETTING
THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

property — payable whether they stay, or sell.

That is not improving affordability. It is offloading of corporate costs onto families.

And we should not pretend this approach would lower the price of housing. There is zero guarantee — none — that a developer would reduce the purchase price by even a single dollar. All this proposal

does is hide the cost, making it less visible at the point of sale while locking homeowners into decades of additional payments.

That is not responsible governance. That is not fair to homeowners.

Council, in the majority, voted against the motion, determining that further study was not necessary, noting that external experts had indicated the approach would deliver minimal—if any—advantages for homebuyers or the municipality.

I agree with my Council colleagues. As I stated during the meeting, as Mayor, I will not support shifting developer obligations onto residents nor will I waste taxpayer dollars asking staff to write a redundant report when their advice had already been sought and given.

Council’s 5-2 vote against the motion underscores Aurora’s ongoing commitment to responsible fiscal leadership and to safeguarding Aurora’s financial stability by prioritizing residents over measures that could undermine it.

Every time I walk up the steps to West Block and enter the House of Commons, I am struck by a profound sense of humility. I am reminded that the title “Member of Parliament” isn’t just a designation or a job—it is a sacred commitment to you.

Being your representative means carrying your stories, your concerns, and your hopes into the heart of our democracy. Over the last 10 months, I have had the opportunity to speak with many of you at community events, and thousands more have reached out via telephone, social media, mail, and email. The message I hear is consistent: you are deeply proud to be Canadian, but you are becoming increasingly worried. In an unstable world, it feels as if more and more hardworking people are being left behind and our values are being tested.

That sense of worry often starts at the kitchen table. One of the most pressing issues I hear about is the skyrocketing cost of living, especially at the grocery store. In December alone, we saw a staggering 6.2% increase in food inflation year-over-year. It is a sobering reality that Canada now grapples with the highest food inflation in the G7. This isn’t just a statistic; it’s a crisis for our seniors on fixed incomes, for young families trying to provide nutritious meals for their children, and for our youth who are looking at the future with growing uncertainty. Ensuring that food is affordable must be your government’s first priority, just as being able to afford food is yours.

But the anxieties of our community don’t end at grocery store checkouts. Public safety must be the bedrock



COSTAS’ CORNER

MP Costas Menegakis
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

of a free society, yet many feel that foundation is cracking. We have seen no strong action to repeal the current government’s “catch-and-release” bail policies, which have allowed repeat violent offenders to roam our streets rather than remain behind bars. Just a few months ago an innocent man was fatally accosted right here in our community. He lost his life in an unprovoked attack in front of his home. The murderer was a repeat violent offender who should have been incarcerated instead of being allowed to roam freely on our streets.

Part of being a Member of Parliament is also being a legislator. While Conservatives are always willing to work across the aisle to make progress, the bills put forward by Liberals go nowhere near far enough to protect our communities and are often extremely poorly written. We need laws that actually put the rights of victims and law-abiding citizens ahead of the interests of criminals.

Safety, however, isn’t just about physical security; it is about the protection of our fundamental values.

This is why many in our community are watching the progression of Bill C-9 with a very critical eye. There are deep-seated concerns that, as currently drafted, this legislation could be used to criminalize the sharing of passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and other sacred texts. Let me be clear: the state has absolutely no place in the religious texts or teachings of any faith community. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights enshrined in our Charter, and they must be preserved without compromise. We cannot allow government overreach to infringe upon the private sanctuary of faith.

Our commitment to these fundamental rights cannot stop at our borders. In the past two months, the world witnessed the heinous, violent repression and murder of tens of thousands of peaceful protesters who were simply asking for their basic human rights in Iran. I stand unequivocally with the courageous people of Iran in their fight for freedom. It was an honor to offer my support to the over 20,000 Iranian Canadians who gathered recently in Richmond Hill, and to stand in solemn solidarity with the grieving families during the anniversary of the downing of Flight PS752.

Serving as your Member of Parliament is a tremendous honor and your feedback is at the heart of everything I do. I will always fight for a Canada that is safe, affordable, and free. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to email my office at any time at menegakis@parl.gc.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.



Council approves transformative downtown plan with Community Planning Permit System

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora’s Community Planning Permit System, one which has the potential to transform Aurora’s downtown core while respecting its history, was approved by Council last week.

Council’s approval came despite a last-minute motion to delay approval by approximately a month to allow more time for residents more time to weigh in on the proposal.

“Aurora Town Council approved the Downtown Community Planning Permit (CPPS), a streamlined tool that combines zoning amendments, minor variances, and site plan applications into one process,” said the Town in a statement following last week’s Council meeting. “This tool improves efficiency in the application and approval process, supports a mix of housing options, and helps deliver community benefits such as parks, public facilities, and infrastructure upgrades. The CPPS sets clear, proactive criteria for downtown growth, guiding revitalization with design standards that build on the Downtown Urban Design Study.”

The plan also sets clear criteria on intensification in the area, allowing buildings of up to eight storeys to be built in the core, with step backs of more than 10 metres from existing designated buildings in order to preserve heritage façades and the local streetscape.

While some residents previously spoke out at Council regarding parking and traffic worries as a result of bringing more residential units into the downtown core, most feedback was positive, stating that intensification and bringing more people into the area, while respecting the heritage feel of the corridor, was the right way forward.

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, however, questioned whether there has been enough time for Aurora residents to weigh in on such a transformative system, particularly one that delegates some of the approval process to staff rather than Council, if the proposals in question meet the set-out criteria.

“The CPPS represents a significant departure from our normal planning process, and my primary concern is the loss of transparency and meaningful community involvement,” he said. “Under this system, developments that would traditionally come before Council through rezoning, site plan, or variance applications, could proceed without the same level of public notice and debate.

Residents and downtown stakeholders expect to be engaged when major changes are proposed in their neighbourhoods. This model reduces opportunities for residents to be heard and limits Council’s ability to weigh in on site-specific impacts. Decisions



An artist’s rendering of how the newly-approved CPPS could intensify the downtown core.

Image courtesy of the Town of Aurora

that shape the future of our downtown core could be made largely behind the scenes, even when they are technically compliant. Planning should not be efficient; it must be open, understandable and trusted. When people feel decisions are made without them, confidence in the system erodes regardless of the outcome. Downtown Aurora is too important to risk a process that prioritizes speed over transparency. Until there is clear community support, stronger safeguards, and a defined role for Council, I cannot support moving forward.”

Similar views were offered by Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner who said while she herself supported the CPPS, the public feedback wasn’t there yet.

“We’re dealing with a vision that is going to be an enormous change for the downtown,” she said. “Do I agree with it? I do. Do the residents agree with it? I have no idea. Nobody I have spoken to in the last week has any idea about this. I think this is perhaps the most monumental thing we’re going to do in Aurora, ever. I could say we need a referendum, but we know...they don’t work very well, but definitely what we need to do is more education, more engagement with the public.

“If we approve this tonight, it is set in stone. I’m not ready to do that yet. I believe we’re all here to represent the residents and, frankly, I think as many people don’t pay attention to politics, most people are unaware and, okay, it’s our responsibility to make them aware, and I think they’re going to agree with it because I think it’s very well done, but I want to know that. I want to have the feedback.”

Councillor Gaertner’s motion to delay approval by a month failed to gain traction around the Council table, with other members stating they were comfortable with the level of public engagement, and with the plan moving forward.

“We went through an extensive Public Planning process to get to this point,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas. “We’ve gone through that extensive process, we’ve dealt with the

public, we’ve had Open Houses, we’ve done everything transparently and open with the public. We’ve defined the parameters, similar to creating the Promenade Plan as a Secondary Plan, similar to creating the Official Plan. We’ve done all these things and we’ve done them properly. It’s the only way. If we approve this, if an applicant comes forward and wants to build what we’ve approved as a community, as residents of this community have decided we’re going to move forward with this, and Council has decided we’re going to move forward, then yes, they move forward.

“All this does is set the guidelines that we’ve gone and done an extensive public consultation and already gone through the Public Planning... If anything comes in above and beyond that, we would go through that process again and be transparent with the public. This is about creating a vision for our downtown which [is] what this has done, and this is through the engagement of residents and our community.”

While Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said he understood Councillor Gallo’s perspective about engagement, he said he appreciated the work that the Planning department had done to engage residents and said getting community input has often been a challenge.

“I don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater,” he said. “There is a tremendous amount of good work done here and I have a great feeling that this is the right direction to go, even though the fine points are not put on it. I just want to say that I’m a little disappointed that we don’t have more communication out and in, but I don’t think that’s reason enough for me to vote against this, just simply because of the enormous amount of work and effort and thought that’s gone in here and the professional consultation that has gone on.

“If someone would tell me that we could put this off for another month or two and we could gather surveys and all the rest of it, I would be happy to do that, but I don’t think that’s going to yield any more

information than we have right now.”

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland was also supportive, citing how long this plan has been in the works.

“We’ve been trying to regulate and plan for this downtown for at least 30 years, I know,” she said. “What I have learned is that the unclear rules don’t protect our downtown. What they create is a lot of uncertainty, appeals, and one-off decisions and benefits, whoever can push the hardest.

“I find this approach here is really different. It doesn’t just allow more height; what it does is it controls where and how height happens. Along Yonge Street, the historic scale is protected through the deep setbacks, keeping the street human-scaled [in] look and façade, the taller portions are pushed back in interior blocks... for that heritage façade.”

Similarly, Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson said a motion to push things to a later date “pushes it down the hill” without any new information, and Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim said while he too understood the concerns over having residents weigh in on future developments in the area, a delay would be a “huge setback.”

“It’s been talked about 30 years prior. We have this momentum going with Aurora Town Square, and I would like to keep that momentum going,” said Councillor Kim. “I think this is a huge step in the positive progress in the Yonge and Wellington corridor. I think that our business owners have said that this would be a very positive impact to that end, so I’d be in support of this. When you look at other communities like Brampton and Gananoque that implemented CPPS, Gananoque did it Town-wide, and Brampton was in their downtown core, and they were able to preserve historical and history of their architecture and the personality and the character of their downtown core. There are examples out there to believe that this is a step in the right direction.”



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CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



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Building Our Community Together

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Dawn Gallagher Murphy

Flag raising signals start of Black History Month in Aurora

From page 1

Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, former MP Leah Taylor Roy, members of Council, and leaders of Central York Fire Services, York Regional Police, and York Paramedic Services, the Mayor thanked members of the ABC for their “leadership, contributions and lived experiences” which “continue to shape our Town in meaningful and lasting ways.”

“Coming together to raise the Pan-African Flag and mark the beginning of Black History Month is a powerful and meaningful tradition here in the Town of Aurora,” he continued. “When we celebrate Black History, we are celebrating Canadian history and recognising the extraordinary achievements and contributions that Black Canadians have made and continue to make in communities across our country. Black History has always been driven by grassroots leadership, by community organizations, and advocates who ensure that these stories are told, shared and celebrated. Because of that work, communities like ours have the opportunity to learn, reflect, and come together....

“It’s also important to recognize that Black History Month is not only about celebration, it’s also about acknowledging Canada’s history of anti-Black racism and the impacts that are still felt today. It reminds us of the responsibility we all share as individuals and as a community to speak up, to listen, and to act against prejudice and discrimination in all its forms. At a time when division and intolerance can feel increasingly visible beyond our borders, gatherings like this remind us of who we are and the kind of community we are committed to building here in the Town of Aurora.”

The flag, he concluded, is a “powerful symbol of our shared commitment to equity, inclusion, dialogue and unity.”

These sentiments were shared by keynote speaker Unna Fletcher, Director of Operations at City College (Newmarket and Toronto).

Fletcher thanked the ABC for their “unwavering commitment and dedication” to the local community and said the moment of raising the flag is “one of recognition, reflection and pride.”

“Black history is part of our

shared story, one shaped by resilience, creativity, leadership, and our enduring commitment to community,” she said. “Today, we honour the generation who paved the way, the individuals who continue to make a difference – individuals like [ABC Founder and President] Phiona Durrant and the legacy that lives on through culture, service and progress. Please know that Black History is not a side chapter of history. It is not confined to a single month. It is the foundation of innovation, culture, resistance, and progress that has shaped this nation and the world. From the brilliance of inventors and artists, to the courage of activists and everyday people who demanded dignity in the face of injustice, Black history is human history.

“The flag rises in honor of those names we know. And those names history tried to forget. It honours the enslaved who endured, the leaders who dared to dream, the organizers who disrupt systems of inequality, and the generation who continue to push us closer to justice. But today, it’s not about the past. Black History Month calls on us to reflect on the present and to shape the future. It challenges us to ask difficult questions. Number one, are we creating spaces where equity is real, not symbolic? Are we listening to Black voices, not only when it’s comfortable, but when it’s necessary? Are we turning remembrance into action? Raising this flag today is a visible reminder that representation does matter, that acknowledgment matters, and that progress requires intention.

“Today, let this flag stand as a symbol of pride, resilience, and excellence. Let it remind us that honored Black history means committing ourselves every day to fairness, inclusion, and opportunity for all. As the flag rises, may it inspire us to educate, to advocate, and to lead with courage.”


Durrant led attendees in an exercise between speakers, inviting everyone to grasp hands and form a circle around Council chambers and attendance was such two concentric circles were required to accommodate everybody.


“There is no collective strength if we’re not holding onto each other,” said Durrant. “I see everyone today and the problem is we keep letting go and this [circle] is the protection we have.”



(Top) Singer Julia Rose sang “Stand Up” as part of the commemorations. (Middle) MPP Michael Parsa addresses the audience. (Above) Unna Fletcher, Director of Operations for City College, provided the keynote address. Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

BLACK HISTORY MONTH





MICHAEL PARSA, MPP
Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Aurora pumps brakes on developments in south end with new measures

Yonge Street South subject to new Interim Control Bylaw

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Any developments on Yonge Street south of the CN Rail bridge have been temporarily put on ice following Council’s approval last week of an Interim Control Bylaw for the area.

The Interim Control Bylaw (ICBL) was brought forward in a motion from Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson with the intent to “temporarily prohibit or restrict new development” while the Town undertakes a “focused planning study” of this segment of the Yonge corridor;

defining its boundaries, appropriate boundaries and built forms, and transitions between areas of differing densities.

Critics of the motion, however, argued that the area was already reviewed as part of Aurora’s latest Official Plan (OP) and putting an ICBL in place could undermine the principles of the OP.

“Our OP is one of the Town’s primary tools for shaping development and managing growth,” said Councillor Thompson at last week’s meeting. “It sets out our long-term vision, the principles behind the vision, and the policy Council relies on to evaluate whether change

is appropriate, compatible, and in the public’s best interest. Those aren’t my words, they are the words we, as Council approved and embedded in our OP.

“I brought forward this motion today because I do not believe we have that clarity when it comes to the development along the Regional corridor, particularly where it intersects with the intent and fundamental principles of the Yonge Street South Secondary Plan, commonly referred to as OPA 34.”

This piece of legislation, he said, is clear on Yonge Street’s function as a Regional corridor while minimizing the built form, maintaining setbacks, and limiting heights and massing. But while OPA 34 covers 37 pages of the OP, information about the area’s designation as a Regional Corridor is limited to a single paragraph.

“That imbalance is where the problem lies. We have detailed, carefully crafted policies in OPA 34. There is no ambiguity for estate residential, cluster residential, suburban residential lands. We need the same degree of clarity in the regional corridor,” he continued. “Our Official Plan explicitly allows Council to revisit policies when issues arise during implementation, especially when conflicts emerge that were not anticipated. This is exactly the situation we are facing today. This motion does not prejudice outcomes or undermine growth and development. It simply allows us to do what good planning requires: step back, work with the community and stakeholders, reconcile conflicting policies, and provide clear direction on what development along Yonge Street South should look like. That clarity is essential for residents, for applicants, for staff, and for this Council.”

While the motion was ultimately approved by Council, it was not unanimous.

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, for instance, described the ICBL as “one of the strongest and most disruptive tools” available to a municipality, which should give people “pause.” Moreover, he said an ICBL over land already covered under the recent OP “sends a troubling message that we lack confidence in the planning framework that we ourselves just approved.”

“Aurora, like every municipality in Ontario, is under increased pressure to deliver housing, not just in theory, but in practice,” said Councillor Gallo. “Strategic corridors like Yonge Street are specifically identified to accommodate growth in a way that is transit-supportive and responsible, rather than pushing development into stable neighborhoods or greenfield areas. Freezing development in a designated intensification corridor, even temporarily, works directly against our housing targets. It delays units that are already planned within an approved policy framework and introduces uncertainty at a time when predictability is essential to actually deliver housing.”

Similar opposition came from Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who said the Town spent “a lot of money” to develop the OP to “determine what our Yonge Street corridor is going to look like,” and was opposed to “halting development on one of the most major corridors in our Town.”

“We have tools like zoning, the holding provisions, the site plan control, the urban design guidelines – so for us to come in in such a short period of time and put an ICBL in place so soon after the Official Plan, it sends a message that we’re really unsure about our growth

framework that we just approved. To me, that has implications on our credibility, certainty and potential appeals. If the issue is clarity rather than direction, I think we have better tools, and that’s what I’m looking for.”

The majority of Council, however, disagreed, and Director of Development Marco Ramunno noted that there are just two active applications the ICBL would impact, which still had a way to go before being shovel-ready.

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said that he agreed the size and the depth of what’s defined as the Regional Corridor needs further definition.

“The Region approved these corridors along Regional roads to stimulate increased density for all the right reasons – to increase housing supply, of course, but the corridor needs to be better defined, in my opinion,” he said. “I believe the issues surrounding the Regional corridors have to be better interpreted. We’ve had issues where part of an application within a corridor and part of it is out, and it’s left to Council to make these judgements in the best interests of the residents in the area, as well as the community at large.”

With that said, he conceded ICBLs have been “criticized when they’ve been used to unduly restrict development, and it’s known to restrict housing supply and it freezes construction.”

“Certainly, I don’t take an ICBL lightly,” added Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim. “We don’t use it often, but we did use it in 2018 during our discussions on Stable Neighbourhoods. We also used it when we were having a discussion on 1289 Leslie and Wellington. I would submit that we used the Interim Control Bylaw for the benefit of the Town in those two situations and we had beneficial results.

“I do agree that it hasn’t been long since we confirmed the Official Plan, but just because we spent a lot of time and we confirmed a plan or a policy, it doesn’t mean that we can’t go back and review it because I consider all policies or plans a living document that we revise from time to time when it’s needed. For us to not review something when we have identified that it might need another look, I think it would be irresponsible to just not do anything just because we just confirmed it a year or two ago, or any policy for that matter.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas noted further examples of interim control bylaws in recent years.

“The study is frankly much needed as I think everyone agrees around this table, but to move forward and do a study without implementing an interim control bylaw, having that pause in place, what you do is you create an atmosphere where applicants are going to come rushing to the Town to put in applications before the study is completed so they can get in before the new parameters are set forth in the OP and updated,” said Mayor Mrakas.

“When we deal with these applications and we’re in the midst of making changes, we say that, ‘Well, we’re looking at this, we’re studying this area, we need some more time. So, we would like you to come back to another Public Planning [meeting] or we would like to take some more time while we finish this.’ What do they do? They go straight to the tribunal. You’re going to have more and more applications going straight to the tribunal without putting the pause in.”



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Bid to restructure how Development Charges are collected, paid, rejected by Council

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A move which could have seen a significant shift in how Development Charges (DCs) are paid and collected was rejected by Council last week.

At issue was a motion put forward by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo which would have tasked municipal staff with exploring a new structure of collecting DCs, which are fees paid by incoming developers to the municipality to improve infrastructure taking into account a larger population as a result of development.

The Councillor proposed exploring a new structure which would take the price of Development Charges out of the upfront price of a home and instead giving first-time home-buyers the option to amortize these fees over 25 years.

The new structure, said Councillor Gallo, would help reduce the upfront cost of purchasing the home while providing flexibility, but Council members against the motion said it would do nothing to ultimately reduce the price of a home while adding an extra layer of bureaucracy at Town Hall.

“This motion does not eliminate development charges, it does not reduce municipal revenue, and it does not commit this Council to implementing a new system. What it does is ask staff to study an alternative, one that improves affordability and transparency while fully protecting the Town’s financial position,” said Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo.

“Today in Aurora, development charges are collected at occupancy.

While developers technically pay them, everybody in this room understands the reality. Those costs are fully embedded into the purchase price of a new home. Buyers then finance those charges through their mortgage and pay interest on them for decades. To put it in real numbers, a single semi-detached home in Aurora today carries roughly \$142,000 in total development charges, once you combine the Town portion, the Region and Education portion.

“The townhouse carries approximately \$117,000, a large apartment unit, \$91,000, and even small apartments, over \$63,000. All of that is added directly to the purchase price before a buyer even steps into the home. Under the concept being studied, the amount would be removed from the upfront purchase price, itemized clearly and separated – not only the Town’s portion, but also York Region and Education portions, and buyers would be given a choice. They could pay those charges upfront, exactly as they do today, or they could opt to repay them over time as a clearly-disclosed, property-tied tax charge on their bill.”

But whether or not it ultimately reduced the final bill for the homeowners in question was the sticking point.

Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim, for instance, said while “the intention is great” there is “no guarantee that...savings would be passed onto the homebuyer.” Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland offered a similar perspective, stating “I just kind of feel like Peter is paying Paul to pay Peter in a different way.”

“I don’t see where the savings is,”

she said, adding the bureaucracy of maintaining any system resulting from the motion would cost further money. “I feel like what this is going to end up resulting is just more work for staff in Town and more risk and more delay and defer on DCs and our future potential growth, because at the end of the day, you need the Province, you need the Region, you need the fFderal government, you need all this collaboration. At the end of the day, this is just not a single tier, like a municipality solution. This is an entire big balloon of things.

“And if we really are serious, maybe what we should do is be delegating at AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) or FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) and doing a delegation in front of the Ministers and telling them what we want to do and getting them to put their act together and maybe putting together some sort of responsible plan.”

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson voiced a similar perspective, adding he “struggled” to see how a switch would improve affordability as the total bill will be the same in the end.

“I share those concerns that have been voiced around the table. I’m concerned that our Director of Finance is not necessarily supportive of this, given the administrative burden, so I’m not supportive of it,” he said.

Final word went to Mayor Tom Mrakas who described the proposed structure as “as a shell game” that would benefit developers over first-time homebuyers.

“[It] takes development charges off the developer entirely and

dumps them onto the home buyer as a long-term municipal tax,” he said. “Developer doesn’t pay. They don’t carry the cost. They don’t carry the risk, and they collect their profit and walk away. Meanwhile, the homeowners left with a 25-year bill attached to their property, payable whether they stay, sell, or struggle. That is not affordability. That’s not attainability. That is offloading costs onto families.

“Let’s not pretend that this lowers the price of housing. There is zero guarantee, zero, none, that a developer would reduce the purchase price by a single dollar. All this does is hide the cost and make it less visible at the point of sale.”



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Theatre Aurora’s The Importance of Being Earnest

A REVIEW BY SCOTT JOHNSTON

Bringing some 19th century wit and charm into the 21st century, Theatre Aurora kicks off 2026 with the delightful play “The Importance of Being Earnest.”

Written by the master of comic timing and wordplay, Oscar Wilde, the story follows two Victorian gentlemen, good friends Jack and Algernon.

The former has an estate in the country, at which he projects an air of serious dignity to the other members of the household. To let off a bit of steam he has invented a fictitious brother, Ernest, living in London. This gives him the excuse to go to the city often, where he adopts the persona of the outgoing Ernest.



The Importance of Being Earnest is on now through Saturday at Theatre Aurora.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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But when Algernon learns of his friend’s double life and makes a surprise visit to the estate pretending to be Ernest, chaos, confusion and comedy ensue.

Apart from the delightful script, full of one-liners and amusing observations, this is a superbly performed play. The Theatre Aurora cast is wonderful, delivering not only their lines with perfect timing, but showing great physical comedy skills, and reactions to the events on stage.

Christian Tribuzio as Jack and Kostyn Mitruk as Algernon are perfectly cast as both friends and foils, timing their lines and actions, and performing so well together.

Matching their acting chops are Grace Quinsey and Kendall Zurowski as the main characters’ love interests Gwendolen and Cecily. These ladies capture your attention in every scene they’re in, and give their characters multiple dimensions.

Rounding out the cast are Christopher Gale as long-suffering butlers Lane and Merriman (yes, both of them), Claire Katz as the formidable Lady Bracknell, David Haddad as Reverend Canon Chasuble and Kirsty Campbell as governess Miss Prism.

Additional elements on stage, such

as terrific period costumes, a well decorated set, and balanced lighting enhance the production with the perfect setting and ambience.

It’s easy to see why this is one of Wilde’s most popular plays, especially in the hands of a great director and cast at Theatre Aurora. It’s well worth venturing out into the cold to see.

Evening performances of “The Importance of Being Earnest” continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, February 5, 6 & 7, with a matinee on February 7. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.

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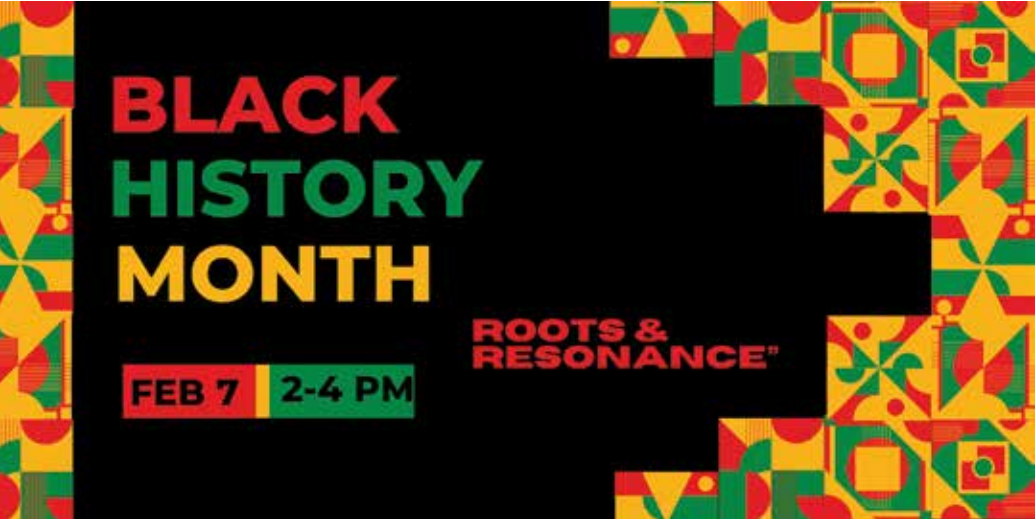
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APL marks Black History Month with series of events



BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

BlackHistoryMonthcommemorations will continue at the Aurora Public Library this month with opportunities to learn, reflect – and even sing!

Aurora Public Library’s (APL) Black History Month program will begin this Saturday, February 7, with an afternoon of learning entitled Roots & Resonance.

Suitable for people of all ages, the 2 – 4 p.m. panel discussion will feature Canadian visual and performing artist Dylan Smith, Aurora Black Community founder and president Phiona Durrant and, leading a workshop focused on voice, identity and leadership, facilitator Aisha Saintiche.

“The event is designed to inspire but also be reflective,” says APL CEO Jodi Marr. “It offers space for artistic expression, meaningful dialogue, and that community connection factor. We’re hoping it’s going to be a celebration of culture, storytelling and contemporary Black voices.

“It’s going to be a really great time and a full and busy day!”

The program continues on Monday, May 9, when the APL hosts a screening of the film Bob Marley – One Love, at 6 p.m., and virtually on Wednesday, February 18, through the York University Scholars’ Hub at APL.

This session of the Scholars’ Hub will feature Buried Histories: Racial Geographies of Memory from New York to Toronto, a lecture from Safiyah Rochelle, an Assistant Professor in York’s Department of Social Science.

The talk “explores how cities choose what and who to remember, using examples from the African Burial Ground in New York and Toronto’s lost Black neighbourhood, The Ward, and why reclaiming these histories matters today.”

“It’s nice that we can bring university-level learning into the public setting through our partnership with York University,” says Marr. “It makes this kind of scholarship really accessible to everyone, whether they are part of the Library or not. This [will be a talk] where there will be a lot of learning, and that’s one of the key things we need to do over the course of this month: we want to honour the stories, the achievements and contributions of Black Canadians, both past and present, and then recognize the deep roots that Black communities have in our country, from their early settlements to the diverse and growing Black populations that shape the communities we are in today.”

For more on these events, including how to register for the film screening and Scholars’ Hub, visit aurorapl.ca.

CELEBRATION *of* YOUTH ARTS

Mayor Tom Mrakas dropped by the Aurora Cultural Centre last week to meet Grade 12 students set to participate in the Mayor’s Celebration of Youth Arts 2026. Featuring the work of Grade 12 students from all of Aurora’s high schools – and beyond – this year’s showcase formally opens this Friday, February 6, with an opening gala from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m., where all are welcome. The show runs through April 19.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Wednesday's rally brought out dozens of community members in solidarity with the Iranian people. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Aurora raises “true flag of Iranian people” at Town Hall rally

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The “true flag of Iran, the flag of the Iranian people” was raised at Town Hall on Wednesday afternoon during a rally held in solidarity with the people of Iran.

The rally, which was hosted by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, and Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas, filled the forecourt of Town Hall where Parsa presented Mayor and Council with the flag in question.

“Friends, Iran is one of the world’s oldest civilizations, shaped and sustained for thousands of years by strength, resilience and perseverance of the Iranian people,” said MPP Parsa. “In recent weeks, the brave people of Iran have once again shown the world their determination, their resolve by raising the true flag of Iran, the flag of the Iranian people, in Iran as a powerful expression of identity, resistance, and hope – a flag that belongs to them, a flag that has endured alongside generations who refuse to lose their identity in the face of repression.

“It is a symbol of a people who will not be silenced and who will continue to stand up for freedom despite unimaginable costs.”

The lion and sun depicted on the flag, he said, “represent the Iranian people’s call for freedom and regime change; a call that in recent weeks has been met with brutal violence.”

“Over 37,500 innocent people, which we know is a lot more than that, have been murdered by this regime and more

than 330,000 people have been injured in the hands of this vile regime, simply for demanding their fundamental human rights,” Parsa continued. “The flag carries centuries of meaning. Its green, white and red reflect hope, peace and strength, and its centre, the lion and sun, stands as an enduring symbol of a proud civilization shaped by its history, by its culture and its remarkable resilience.

“Friends, neighbors, colleagues, let me be clear: The terrorist regime in Iran does not represent the people of Iran. And it must be held accountable for acts of genocide and crimes against humanity. The true representatives of Iran are its people, fearless, courageous in their pursuit of freedom.”

Amid the sea of residents waving the flag, holding signs of solidarity and more, support was shown by municipal representatives, including Mayor Mrakas, and Councillors Ron Weese, Rachel Gilliland, Michael Thompson, John Gallo, and Harold Kim.

Local leaders coming together to raise the flag, said Parsa, was a moment of “unity [and a] reminder that light will always prevail over darkness, no matter our background, our religion, creed, or beliefs, as we share the conviction that people deserve freedom, justice, and a future shaped by their own will.”

In turn, Mayor Mrakas praised Parsa as “being the voice that he is for the Iranian people here in Canada.”

“Today we stand unequivocally with the Iranian people. Aurora is a Town that believes in freedom, freedom of expression,

freedom of belief and freedom from fear and oppression,” said Mayor Mrakas. “These are not abstract ideals. They are fundamental human rights. For far too long, the Iranian people have lived under a terrorist regime that rules through violence, intimidation, censorship, imprisonment and fear. A regime that silences women, punishes dissent and brutally suppresses those who dare to stand up for their basic human rights. What the Iranian people are facing is not a difference of opinion. It is a systemic repression carried out by a regime that uses terror to maintain control.

“I want all of you to know that we see you, we hear you and in Aurora we stand

with you, the Iranian people. Today, we will raise the Lion and Sun flag here, the true flag of the Iranian people here at Aurora Town Hall. We raise it as a symbol of Iran’s true history, identity and pride. Separate from the regime that seeks to erase it, this flag will not fly as an act of politics, but as an act of solidarity. Not as a gesture, but as a statement of principle. Aurora will always be a place where people can gather peacefully, speak freely and stand up for the community without fear. As we raise the Lion and Sun flag here at Town Hall today, let us send a message that Aurora stands with the Iranian people today and always.”



UNSPOKEN WORDS – Words can tell a story, but artist Chika Oh is a firm believer that a picture can say 1,000 words. The Nigerian-born Toronto-based artist has always found it easier to express herself through a visual medium, and she’s letting her brush and canvas do the talking in “Unspoken Words”, a new solo exhibition that opens at Aurora’s Royal Rose Gallery this Thursday, February 5, featuring portraits of female Black entrepreneurs. The gallery will host an opening reception with Oh from 6 – 9 p.m., featuring spoken word artist Rita McCall, and all are welcome. The Royal Rose Gallery is located on the west side of Yonge Street, just south of Wellington Street. Image courtesy of Chika Oh

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WEEK OF FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Junior Tigers drop 7-2 decision to persistent Panthers



Tigers' sharpshooter Javian Nei (39) screens Panthers' goaltender Anthony Sciere (35) in OJHL action at the ACC. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

BY JIM STEWART

Thomas Leone and Gianfranco Rosella tallied a goal each for the Junior Tigers, but the Pickering Panthers used a pair of productive periods to defeat Aurora 7-2 on Friday night at the ACC.

The navy-clad, maroon-trimmed Panthers jumped out to a 3-0 first period lead when Landon Stevens, Matt Indovina, and Evan Elliott each lit the lamp over a twelve-minute stretch.

Rosella, who earned Third Star of the Game honors as selected by OJHL staff, explained his team's letdown in the first frame.

"We took some undisciplined penalties and they capitalized on the nice goals they set up. Even though we were down by three, we were still hungry to come back."

Indeed, the Tigers played a strong second period. The home side set the pace and dominated play in the opening nine minutes. Midway through the middle frame, Aurora's diligence was rewarded when Thomas Leone's tip of Martin Maryanovski's blue line blast flipped high over the shoulder of Panthers' goalie Anthony Sciere and into the netting to narrow the visitors' lead to 3-1.

Charlie Hotles earned his 17th assist of the season on Leone's deft deflection.

Rosella described the Tigers' resurgence in the second period and into the final frame: "Coming off the big win versus Lindsay and even though we got down by three, we just went to re-set. We have a lot of speed and talent on this team and we used it. We were the better team at the end of the first period and during the second

period."

The Tigers were also gifted a 4-on-3 power play when Pickering defender Marco Costante drew a hooking penalty at 10:12 after coincidental roughing minors were meted out to Elliott and Tigers' forward Cayden Smith at 9:50.

With the extra space, the Tigers prowled throughout the power play, creating high quality scoring chances, but Sciere served as Pickering's best penalty killer—especially when he snagged sharpshooter Javian Nei's one-timer.

It was a turning point in the game and Rosella rued his squad's inability to beat Sciere again during the second period.

"We created lots of scoring chances, but didn't capitalize, especially on the power plays."

Capitalizing on the power play became a recurrent theme in this OJHL contest.

One second before the Tigers killed off Avery Grant's four-minute minor for kneeling to start the third period, Costante's wrist shot from just inside the blue line was deflected by Jake Mallory in the slot and past Kraus to restore the Panthers' three-goal lead at 4:31.

Two minutes later, Costante earned his third assist of the game and secured First Star of the Game honors when he lased a pass from the point to Peter Smith who roofed his 15th of the season just under the bar and above Kraus's shoulder glove side to make it 5-1.

Despite the four-goal deficit, Aurora kept attacking and Cole Crawford rang one off the right post on a breakaway, eliciting groans from the Tigers' faithful over the team's lack of

puck luck. However, Aurora was gifted with another two-man advantage and this time the Tigers capitalized.

Less than 14 seconds into Pickering's second penalty to create a 5-on-3 advantage, Rosella banged in a rebound from the slot. The speedy centre's one-timer knuckled over a sprawled Sciere and into the back of the net.

Rosella described his sixth of the season: "To be honest, I didn't see it go in. It was in a scramble in front of the net. It was a nice set up to control the play."

Rosella's marker narrowed the Panthers' lead to 5-2 and earned assists for Johnathan Cirone and Paul Mazanik.

However, playoff-bound Pickering closed out the period effectively when Ty Robar sniped one off the left wing to make it 6-2 for the visitors and Alex Colangelo chipped one over Kraus with 3:16 remaining to provide the margin of victory for the third-place Panthers (28-12-2-2).

With 12 games remaining in the regular season, the Tigers' playoff hopes dimmed a bit when the eighth-place Lindsay Muskies (16-21-5-2) defeated the Caledon Admirals 4-3 on Friday night to move nine points ahead of tenth-place Aurora (14-28-0-2) in the OJHL East standings.

The Tigers travel to Lindsay to take on the Muskies on Friday, February 6 in a must-win game for Aurora.



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Saints get silver in 42nd Annual MacPherson Hockey Tournament

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The SAC Saints’ drive for a three-peat stalled on Sunday afternoon at the 42nd Annual MacPherson Tournament.

The Saints, who finished first in the Hamilton Division after winning two of their three opening round games, were edged 3-2 by their Prep Hockey Conference rival Northwood at the La Brier Family Arena.

The Saints captured gold at the prestigious eight-team tournament in 2024 and 2025 and were seeking a third consecutive title after knocking off the GOHL U18 All-Stars 4-1 in Saturday night’s semifinal.

The path to this year’s final was an arduous one for the talented Saints.

Saints split opening round games on Friday

SAC’s Varsity hockey team opened the MacPherson with a tidy 3-0 win over Victory Honda, an 18U AAA team from Ann Arbor, Michigan. Andy Huang scored two goals and James Roy added one to pace the Saints’ attack. SAC goaltender Noah La Gambina notched the shutout on Friday morning.

However, in Game 2 on Friday night, the Saints fell to Northwood 3-2 to put a damper on the pageantry associated with the MacPherson’s compelling Opening Ceremonies. Charlie Sullivan and Nolan Long tallied one goal each for the Saints in the narrow loss to their rivals from Lake Placid.

Four-goal third period explosion impels Saints to 5-3 comeback victory over Selects

Evan Pahanich and Alex Carscadden fired two goals each in the third period to catalyze SAC’s 5-3 comeback win over the Bishop Kearney Selects on Saturday morning.

Prior to the heroics of Pahanich and Carscadden, the Saints trailed 2-1 heading into the third period.

1:45 into the final frame, Pahanich notched his first goal of the season when his wrist shot, unleashed above the right faceoff circle, clanged inside the right post, past Selects’ goaltender Giovanni Scally, and into the net to tie the game 2-2.

Unfortunately, SAC forward Cooper Bordeaux bumped into

Scally two minutes later, drew a goalie interference penalty, and the Saints suffered the consequences. Seconds into the Selects’ power play, big left winger Rocco Afonso found open space between the circles and one-timed a perfect pass past Saints’ netminder La Gambina to restore the Rochester school’s lead.

The red-clad Saints, just 1-1 after their games on Friday, were on the verge of elimination from their own tournament when defender Luca DiPlacido’s neutral zone infraction nullified his team’s power play and put SAC shorthanded for four minutes.

However, the 4-on-4 hockey that resulted turned quickly in SAC’s favor when Pahanich fired his second goal of the game from the right point. The puck skittered through the slot and past Scally to tie the game 3-3.

On the ensuing rush, Carscadden—last year’s OT scoring hero in the MacPherson Final—jammed the puck thorough Scally’s wickets to give the Saints a 4-3 lead with 6:51 left on the clock. The 6’1”, 181-pound power forward described his game-winning-goal: “James Roy made a great pass and I brought it to my backhand. I didn’t see it go in, but the guys rushed me.”

With Scally out of the net with 1:08 remaining, the Saints withstood the Selects’ final push. Carscadden fired an empty netter from the slot to take the suspense out of the remaining 39.1 seconds.

The Princeton Tigers commit and Guelph Storm draft pick credited Pahanich for creating the turning point in the game: “When Evan scored his first goal of the year, it really picked the team up. It was huge for us. The whole team pushed after that because we knew we had to have a win in regulation to get to the semifinals. It was definitely one of our biggest wins of the season.”

With the regulation win, the Saints earned the top seed in the Hamilton Division on a tiebreaker with Northwood and Victory Honda who also accrued 2-1 records after the opening round of play.

Saints scuttle GOHL U18 4-1 in semifinal to advance to MacPherson championship

In the crossover semifinal, SAC took on the #2 team from the Meagher Division—the GOHL U18 All-Stars.



(LEFT) SAC Head of School Kevin McHenry, left, and Director of Athletics Joe Foote, right, present the MacPherson Tournament Championship Trophy to Northwood School Captain Spencer Thompson. (RIGHT) Chase Petrova (30) receives Player of the Game honours from Foote after backstopping SAC to a 4 – 1 semi-final win versus GOHL.

Auroran photos by Jim Stewart



Saints stymied in quest for three-peat in entertaining game with Northwood

SAC Captain Finn Kearns was gracious in defeat after Sunday afternoon’s tough 3-2 loss to Northwood. The articulate on-ice leader complimented the high quality play of the club from Lake Placid: “They played two flawless games and deserve to be champions. We knew going in that Northwood had an amazing hockey team.”

Kearns also praised the efforts of his teammates throughout the championship final: “We were a younger team and we played them hard. Even when we were down by two late in the third period, no one stopped. Despite all our best efforts at the end, we came up a little short. Most importantly, I thought we played with a lot of pride.”

Trailing 3-1, Kearns showed the way for the Saints. His low laser slapshot from just inside the blue line above the right faceoff circle beat Northwood goaltender Owen McLean between the pads to draw SAC to within one with 12:13 left on the clock. The smooth-skating defender described his big goal: “I got it through with urgency. It was an old school goal. One of my upsides is getting pucks to the net.”

Kearns’s timely marker elicited a furious effort by the Saints to get the equalizer, but the team came up just short due to McLean’s heroics and an incredible lack of puck luck in the waning seconds. The SAC Captain’s gritty efforts in the championship earned him Player of the Game honors.

The Saints opened the scoring with the prettiest power play goal of the afternoon. A brilliant tic-tac-toe passing play featuring Jacob Bultje and Nolan Long culminated in red-hot Carscadden unleashing a wicked wrist shot that beat McLean for the go-ahead goal with 1:53 left in the first period. Carscadden’s goal-scoring heroics earned him a spot on the tournament All-Star team.

The Saints held their precarious 1-0 lead until there were exactly three minutes remaining in the middle frame. SAC goalie Noah LaGambina made a series of spectacular saves to repel high quality scoring chances by Northwood during the second period. However, Max Stracar roofed a rebound past a sprawled LaGambina to even the score.

SAC opened the third period on the PK. The Saints killed off most of the infraction, but Stracar struck again with one second left in the Northwood power play when he sniped a wrist shot from the left faceoff circle. Stracar’s shot beat LaGambina high blocker side to give the navy blue clad squad its first lead of the game at 2-1.

Less than two minutes later, Parker Thompson rifled a snap shot off the right post and past LaGambina to give Northwood a 3-1 lead. It was the game-winning goal that ended the Saints’ dream of a three-peat.



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OPINION

Wiindigo Winds

In this newest month of 2026, we as individuals and a nation are looking forward to the New Year’s events, gatherings and celebrations.

With good cheer and optimism it is always inspiring to have this renewal time where we examine our plans, dreams, and responsibilities for the upcoming year. The good cheer seems to fade, though, as we weather month after month where the daily grind redirects some of those early year hopes and dreams, until we are left looking at the good cheer restart again for the following year with the expectation that some traction will be the outcome. The hope is always that we individually and collectively will do better.

Over the past year, across this great country of ours, we have seen much transpire. As an Indigenous person observing the activities, priorities, commitments and just general overall interactions between the Sovereign Nations of Indigenous People and Canadians there is an observable pattern emerging that is causing concern.

What I have noticed is a growing lethargy regarding reconciliation, as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Report released in 2015, and this may be connected to the drying up of available funds from government sources that publicly committed to long term funding ensuring meaningful reparations could happen when it was convenient. A way to leverage hope was manipulated in view.

I wonder why the funds are dissipating when the 94 Calls to Action have not been fully addressed. Clearly there is a lot of work ahead when you take into account that only 8-11 (dependant upon which source you read) of the Calls have even been addressed by the government. Of those Calls many were easy low hanging fruit not requiring much funds or long-term commitments. This means the government gets a failing grade for once again taking the easy route out of true responsibility. In the words Justice Murray Sinclair, “We have led you to the mountain and now its your time to climb”.

This TRC report is a guide map to restore right relations with First Nations, Metis and Inuit Sovereign nations who are still reeling from the intergenerational effects of cultural genocide committed through residential schools over a 150-year timeframe. These schools were government funded and religious run institutions committed to “killing the Indian in the child”. The intergenerational

harms are ongoing both on and off reserve where statistics continue to reinforce dire statistics. These statistics include highest suicide rate per capita in Canada, highest incarceration rate per capita in Canada and highest population in Child Care Services across the country. Appalling statistics that don’t even address basic human rights – ongoing issues like access to clean water, appropriate infrastructure funding & food sovereignty.

The ongoing need for healing is encapsulated with a play on the word reconciliation which has been morphed into “reconcile-action” in some circles. This reworking of the word is a strong reminder of the ongoing need for the work itself, which needs to be action oriented and not just talk.

While the statistics for Indigenous People across this country continue to be dire, the efforts by diverse Nations across the county continues in big and small ways. The idea that we are sitting waiting for some kind of handout to assist our own healing needs is ludicrous to say the least. There are so many efforts to support and assist with a cultural grounding of wisdom that it can make your head swim while trying to navigate the self generated efforts for healing. To be noted, many of these are funded by Indigenous organizations, communities, special interest groups and collaborations regardless of blank or absent budget lines.

This brings me to the examination of leadership in this country who consistently find ways to dangle funding “carrots” when in a run for leadership positions. It appears that once the position has been secured the words “reworking budget lines,” etc., start to pop up. This means priorities changing regarding where funding may be focused. Indigenous People often are not considered priorities and budget focus lines commonly disappear when the “rework” is released. This is astonishing when you consider the very public commitments uttered by so many in local, regional, provincial and country wide leadership spaces to honour reconciliation. While these funds are critical to the survival of many programs it also speaks to the lack of honour in leadership when they slack off of the commitment to support, heal and integrate acts of reconciliation that are meaningful while keeping healthy budget line and promises intact.

We have witnessed the growing suppression of consultation that is beyond a box check. We have witnessed premiers who claim they want to separate from Canada itself without taking into consideration whole land they are referencing. This Country will always be Indigenous Land period. Our Ontario Premier has consistently disregarded our rights.

Businesses, corporations, institutions, educational facilities, religious organizations, environmental groups, scientific and political realms are all embracing the growing trend of placing Indigenous needs on the back burner again... such a sad observation in many ways.

We have witnessed the policing system exert extreme measures against Indigenous People seemingly oblivious to our statutory rights as Sovereign Citizens on these lands.

We have witnessed country wide apathy when we attempt to communicate

reminders of our individual and collective rights and needs.

It seems the greed for commodification of any or all of Canada’s perceived resources, to keep the economy thriving is consuming responsibility, commitment and ethical relations with all Indigenous relations. We have concept for greed that should be understood. Its akin to the behaviour and teachings of the Wiindigo spirit. The never ending need to consume indefinitely, regardless of outcome, will always lead to a massive

deficit of one’s own humanity and eventually resources.

Must we again remind each other that resource extraction dependency will lead to our own demise. The removal of trees, the abuse of water, urban sprawl that eliminates farms/farmers & destroys landscapes necessary for our non-human relatives... the list just goes on and on.

So much work, effort, hope and celebration was embraced in 2015. It’s 2026...how can we re-ignite that flame of hope?

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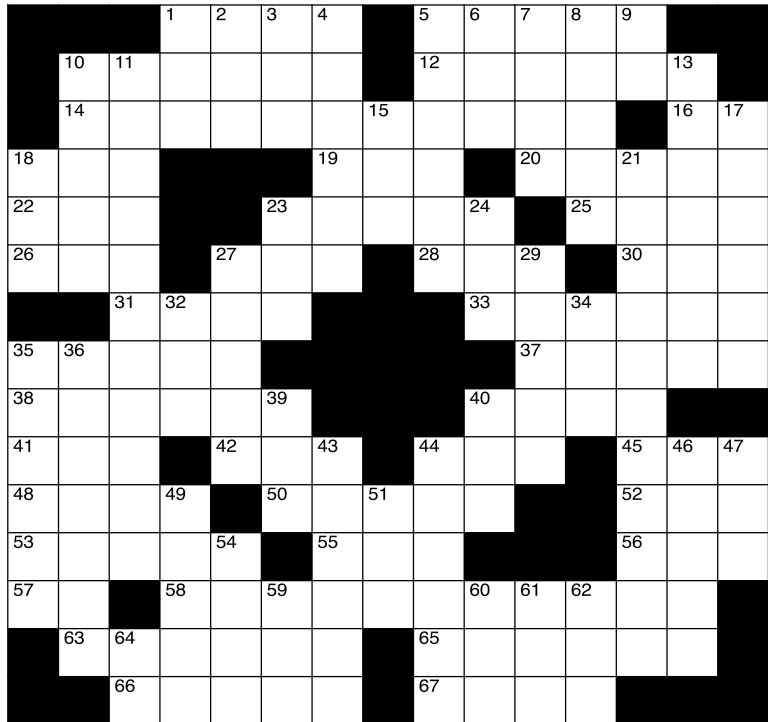
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- Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- Tool to remove
- Rods
- One who renews
- They precede C
- Chatter incessantly
- ___ King Cole, musician
- Insect parts
- One from Utah
- The world of the dead
- Singer Redding
- NBA legend Nelson
- Indicates wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown
- Some are in kitchens
- Made a mistake
- Damp

- Type of fuel
- Actor Damon
- What thespians do
- One’s mother
- Disallow
- Swiss river
- A banana has one
- Philippines lake and volcano are two
- Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- Agave
- Journalist Tarbell
- One-time tech giant
- Indicates upon
- Intestinal bacteria
- Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- It goes with nook
- A fashion
- Very eager to hear or see

CLUES DOWN

- Witch
- Utilize
- Writing utensil
- Where rockers go to work
- Subsides
- Consume
- Greek mythological figures
- California mountain town
- Tin
- Muse of lyric and love poetry
- Animates anew
- Humorous criticisms
- Cool!
- Worst
- Wet dirt
- Designed to be useful
- Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- High schoolers’ test
- Computer device
- Indian territory ___ and Dlu
- A place to sleep
- AI tool
- Pass or go by
- Indicates a purchase
- A digital tape recording of sound
- More (Spanish)
- Disfigured
- White (Spanish)
- Church building
- Georgia rockers
- Type of surgery
- Much ___ about nothing
- Make by braiding
- Local area network
- Unit of work or energy
- Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- Liquefied natural gas
- Distance to top

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THINGS... you ought to know

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.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Galantine's Day Wine and Paint Night – 7 p.m. at Hillary House National Historic Site. Grab your girlfriends and enjoy a fun-filled paint night at Hillary House. In partnership with Royal Rose Art Gallery, you'll be guided through painting on a beautiful bottle of rosé wine. All materials provided. You get to enjoy the bottle of wine afterwards and be left with a beautiful vase! Light refreshments available, including a glass of wine per participant. \$50/pp. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website (www.aurorahs.com) or by calling 905-727-8991.

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.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

AHS Speaker Series: Samantha George "Parkwood National Historic Site" – 7 p.m., virtual via Zoom. Join the Aurora Historical Society for the first Speaker Series event of 2026. Samantha George, Curator of Parkwood National Historic Site in Oshawa, will introduce audiences to the domestic stories of the McLaughlin Family, who called the large estate home. Members: \$10.50/\$12.50 non-members. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website (www.aurorahs.com) or by calling 905-727-8991.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

AHS Speaker Series: Heison Chak "Toronto's Lost Shipwreck" – 7 p.m., at Aurora Town Square or Virtual via Zoom. Hosted

by the AHS in partnership with the Aurora Museum & Archives. Join us for a presentation by Heison Chak as he explores the four pillars of exploration through the recent rediscovery of a 200-year-old schooner in Toronto. Discover how modern technology and local research brings maritime heritage to life - showing that world-class discovery can begin close to home. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website (www.aurorahs.com) or by calling 905-727-8991.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

Introduction to Paper Quilting. 1 p.m. Have you ever wanted to try paper quilting? In this introductory workshop, you will create a greeting card/piece of art using this easy to learn heritage craft. Workshop includes all materials. Taking place in the beautiful Hillary House National Historic Site Ballroom (2nd floor). Enjoy light refreshments, a short tour of Hillary House, and shop in the Gift Shop. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website (www.aurorahs.com) or by calling 905-727-8991.

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.

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