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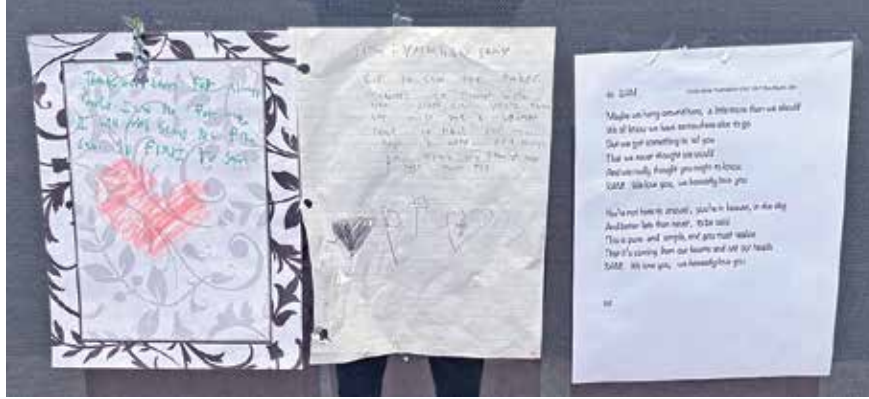
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AURORA MONTESSORI SCHOOL

WARM HEART SPARKS BIG OUTPOURING - (Clockwise from Top Left) Sam Saberi is seen accepting Aurora's Good Business Award on behalf of Tina's Grill in 2022. MPP Michael Parsa and Mayor Tom Mrakas joined Sam's family for a vigil in his memory on Friday evening, following his sudden passing on April 21. The afternoon following his passing, those impacted by Saberi's contributions began leaving tributes outside the restaurant.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger and Jan Parr

Saberi's legacy sparks wave of community giving, kindness

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The sudden passing last week of local restaurant owner Sam Saberi, a man known for his passion for supporting the community he called home, sparked waves of grief, gratitude, and a commitment to further his legacy of giving.

Saberi, owner of Tina's Grill, whose

commitment to Aurora was recognized in 2022 when he was named the Town's Citizen of the Year; died April 21 at the age of 41.

In the days following the announcement of his passing, community members recalled the many ways he supported his neighbours, whether through his restaurant or in his day-to-day life.

His kindness was remembered by

residents who pledged to perform random acts of kindness in his memory, and by fellow business owners who doubled down on their ways of giving in honour of his leadership, culminating in a vigil Friday night outside Tina's Grill which attracted hundreds.

Saberi will be honoured with a Celebration of Life this Saturday, May

Continued on page 8



Participants in Sunday's Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake had cheering sections lining Newmarket's Davis Drive.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Southlake Run crosses half-million mark as Hospital looks to future

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It was a milestone 48 hours for Southlake Health as the annual Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake achieved its long-held goal of raising \$500,000 for local health care, while plans for a new hospital campus in East Gwillimbury were formalized by the Province.

The Provincial Government

Continued on page 19

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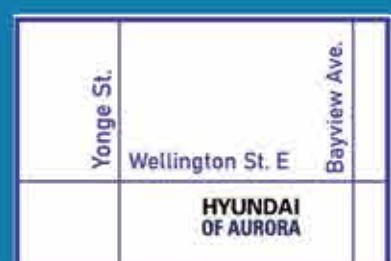
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PUBLIC NOTICE

ARE YOU CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR OFFICE?

This notice is for anyone who is considering running as a candidate in the municipal election on **Monday, October 26, 2026**.

Nomination may be filed with the Town Clerk at the Town of Aurora Administration Office located at 100 John West Way, Aurora between **May 1, 2026** and **August 20, 2026** by appointment during regular working hours, and on Nomination Day, **Friday, August 21, 2026** between the hours of **9 a.m. and 2 p.m.**

The required fee for a Member of Council or School Board Trustee is \$100 and the required fee for the Mayor is \$200. The required fee shall be in the form of cash, debit or credit card, a certified cheque or money order made payable to the Town of Aurora and must accompany the completed forms.

The Municipal Elections Act requires that each nomination (excluding School Board Trustee candidates) must be signed by 25 eligible Town of Aurora electors. The individuals providing signatures must be Canadian citizens, aged 18 or older, have a qualifying address in the municipality, and must not be prohibited from voting under any Act. The forms are available online or in person.

A nomination must be filed with the Returning Officer before an individual becomes a candidate for office and can accept campaign contributions or incur any election related expenses.

Offices for which a person may file a nomination paper for the 2026 Municipal Election:

Town of Aurora Council
 Mayor (1 to be elected at large)
 Ward 1 Councillor (1 to be elected)
 Ward 2 Councillor (1 to be elected)
 Ward 3 Councillor (1 to be elected)
 Ward 4 Councillor (1 to be elected)
 Ward 5 Councillor (1 to be elected)
 Ward 6 Councillor (1 to be elected)

Nomination Forms must be filed with the Municipal Clerk:

Returning Officer/Town Clerk
 Town of Aurora
 100 John West Way
 Aurora, L4G 6J1
elections@aurora.ca

School Board Trustees

York Catholic District School Board Trustee

Trustee Electoral Area; Aurora, King, Whitchurch- Stouffville (1 to be elected)
 Nomination Forms must be filed with the Clerk of the Town of Aurora

York Region District School Board Trustee

Trustee Electoral Area; Aurora and King
 Nomination Forms must be filed with the Clerk of the Town of Aurora

Conseil scolaire Viamonde Trustee

Nomination Forms must be filed with the City of Vaughan:
 City of Vaughan
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Nomination forms and other candidate information is available at the Clerk's office or by visiting the Town's website at aurora.ca/Vote2026.

Anne Kantharajah, Returning Officer/Town Clerk

Briefly

FIRE INVESTIGATION

Central York Fire Services continue to investigate the cause a fire on Aurora Heights Drive on Monday which damaged two neighbouring homes. CYFS responded to a report of a structure fire at 1.29 p.m. where a second alarm was raised when the fire extended to the neighbouring structure. "Command adopted an offensive strategy," said the CYFS. "Hose lines were deployed. Crews remained on scene for fire watch and assisted the CYFS investigation. Two firefighters were injured during firefighter operations with minor injuries. Crews found a cat non-responsive in one of the residences and worked collaboratively performing CPR and resuscitated the cat. The cat was transferred to an arriving vet." The response involved seven trucks, 28 firefighters, and one Chief Officer, along with support from the York Regional Police and York EMS.



The Aurora Farmers' Market team gave residents a sneak peek of the upcoming Market Season at this month's Aurora Chamber of Commerce Home & Active Living Show. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**



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MORE THAN A HOME *Celebrating 10 Years!*

Aurora Farmers' Market set to take flight at Saturday's opening day

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair will take flight with a dance of the butterflies on Saturday as they open their 2026 Market Season, coinciding with the start of Pollinator Month.

The Market, a perennially-popular destination for residents of and visitors to Aurora to shop, meet up for a bite, and simply enjoy the day, will open at Aurora Town Park on Saturday, May 2, welcoming visitors from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The season will continue each Saturday until the final Market Day on Hallowe'en.

Market Chair Cathy Williams says the 2026 is a new chapter for the Aurora Farmers Market (AFM) as they operate under a new deal with the Town of Aurora in which the municipality has taken on some of the administrative duties and hired a Market Coordinator, allowing Board members like themselves to redouble their efforts into the AFM itself.

"We're excited to start the new season with new staff and we're all ready to open," says Williams, owner of Catharina's Kitchen, which is now marking its 17th year at the AFM. "I've always loved the Market. I just love seeing all the people. I've lived in this Town 48 years and have been in this area most of my life, and it's just a really nice, mellow, feel-good kind of place. It's just happy."

Almost invariably on hand to add to the vibe is vinyl historian David Heard who spins music live from his turntables.

He will be there for Opening Day with a curated selection of music they're dubbing the Dance of the Butterflies, keeping with May's Pollinator Month theme.

He will spin another unique set on May 23 as part of the Market's Spring Festival.

Additional Special Event Days include the Strawberry Festival & Canada Day Celebrations on June 27, Customer Appreciation Day on July 25, the Community Corn Roast on August 15, the kick-off for the annual Stuff the Truck campaign on September 12; the Harvest Festival on October 12; and the annual series of Hallowe'en Parades on the final Saturday, October 31.

This year's Market will feature a bevy of favourite vendors and many new ones as well, including R&D Bees and Trees, featuring a number of honey-related products, NB Bakery, Sweet Tooth, Zest Up Your Life Catering, and Slabtown Cider Company.

This year's Market is sponsored by the Town of Aurora, Magna Syber, Psychability, Josef Gas, Munchies Kettlecorn, D'Amico Fine Homes, Amica Aurora Promenade, ft.custom. creations, Goodlife Fitness, Sasha's Sweets, Delmanor Aurora, Costco Wholesale, Catharina's Kitchen, Willowtree Farm, The residences on Yonge, and realtor Michelle Timoski-D'Amico.

And, Williams notes, there's always room for more sponsors to come on board.

"We had just under 40,000 people go through the Market last year, so it is just good visibility for sponsors," she says. "So many people come to the Market just to feel better and be a part of the community. Come out to the Market, enjoy yourself, and be a part of it!"

For more on this year's Aurora Farmers' Market season, visit theaurorafarmersmarket.com.

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Aurora's Youth Week offers basketball, baking, art party

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

National Youth Week takes place across Canada from May 1 to May 7, and the Town of Aurora is offering a number of ways for youth to get creative and stay active in the community.

The week will kick off with a flag raising ceremony at Town Hall and a live music night at The Loft – the drop-in space for youth at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

The fun will continue on Saturday, May 2, with a Mario Kart and Pizza Party at The Loft from 2.30 – 7 p.m., and a teen-led Art Party at the Aurora Public Library from 3.30 – 4.45 p.m.

Get crafty at Aurora Town Square on Sunday, May 3, as the Town partners with Lo & Co for a Key Chain Making Workshop and a Cake Decorating event, co-sponsored by My Indie Coffee, on Wednesday, May 6 – and registration is required for both events.

Looking to stay active during Youth Week? The Town has you covered with a Table Tennis Skills Workshop with world champion table tennis player Grace Wong, an honoured member of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, on Tuesday, May 5, from 4 – 6 p.m. at The Loft, and the ever-popular 3v3 Basketball Tournament at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex on Thursday, May 7, from 5 – 10 p.m.

“The first thing we always try to do is make events accessible,” says Miranda Link, Youth & Community Development Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. “We always do free drop-ins for the whole week, that’s always number one. We work with our Youth Engagement Committee, youth who go to school or live in Aurora, and they’re kind of like the boots on the ground that really help the Town

of Aurora connect with the youth community and work with them on programs youth would be really into. For example, the live music night, [committee members] said youth are always looking for a good space to come out and practice, or just come out and express themselves. We’re really trying to include them into the experience and have their buy-in and engagement with the activities.”

The marquee event for Youth Week, according to Link, is the 3v3 Basketball Tournament, along with the chance to try table tennis with a champ.

“Grace Wong is going to come out and run the skills workshop for youth and we’re really excited about that,” she says. “We’ve also partnered with two local businesses to run some workshops at My Indie Coffee at Aurora Town Square with the keychain making and the cake decorating, which is new this year. We’ve also partnered with the Aurora Public Library on a teen-led art party for people of all ages, or for families that come to visit the Library. This year, we’re trying to not only entertain the youth but engage them in the programs that we’re offering.”

Beyond the basketball tournament and the table tennis showcase, there will be drop-in sports programs throughout the week including youth basketball, rock climbing, youth shinny, and open gym opportunities throughout the week.

For a full schedule, of activities, visit aurora.ca/youthweek.

“If you’re looking for something new, or you have liked a tried-and-true thing that you love to do, come out for Youth Week because it’s an elevated experience for all seven days,” says Link. “We try our best to really celebrate youth and offer lots of cool, fun, interesting things – and even a few secret surprises we have peppered in throughout the week as well!”



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#AuroraArtsFestival

AURORA



SMILES ABOUND – Mayor Tom Mrakas joined members of the Aurora Public Library team – CEO Jodi Marr and Board Chair Lauren Hanna – and Tim Hortons' Drew Alford to mark the start of the spring Smile Cookie campaign. 100 per cent of proceeds raised from the sale of Smile Cookies this week will be donated back to the Aurora Public Library. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Region 2025 Health and Well-Being Review highlights community strengths, pressures

York Regional Council received an annual Health and Well-Being Review, an analysis of demographic, socio-economic and overall health and well-being trends and how York Region is responding to the evolving needs of residents.

The review identifies strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement, providing the Region, local governments, community partners and other levels of government with clear information to align support and policies. It is intended to inform community engagement, system planning and advocacy to help residents thrive.

“Ensuring residents have access to care and support continues to be a priority. While we are seeing continued growth and success, rising living costs, housing pressures and income insecurity are affecting residents in our communities,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Eric Jolliffe. “Understanding the health and well-being of residents allows us to address areas that need improvement and work with our partners to support everyone.”

York Region continues to experience population growth in 2025, increasing by 1.7%, adding approximately 21,300 residents, outpacing provincial and national growth. Despite Council investments advancing housing and human services, affordability challenges are making it harder for many residents to thrive. Trends from the review include:

- 20% increase in the subsidized housing wait list since 2024, reaching 22,074 households waiting for housing;
- 34% increase in people known to be experiencing homelessness since 2024, or 1,176 people, identified through the Point-in-Time Count;
- 27% increase in the monthly average number of people receiving Ontario Works since 2023.

York Region remains committed to supporting resident well-being through innovative programming, collaborative partnerships and effective service delivery. However, additional and sustainable investments from senior levels of government are needed for the Region to meet rising service demand and keep pace with population growth and changing needs.

“Growth and diversity enrich our communities and help make York Region strong,” said City of Vaughan Regional Councillor Gino Rosati, Chair of Community and Health Services. “The Health and Well-Being Review helps us understand where residents are facing barriers so we can better align services, work with community partners and advocate for the resources needed to support people at every stage of life.”

A Community Opinion Survey conducted by the Region in 2025 showed:

- 76% of residents reported a good or excellent quality of life;
- 83% said York Region is a safe place to live;
- 76% reported making financial sacrifices to sustain housing;
- 41% reduced spending on groceries due to financial strain;
- 24% reported a fair or poor quality of life.

While York Region continues to make positive impacts through investments in affordable housing, partnerships and strengthened advocacy, rising population, demand and costs are outpacing available funding for core services supporting health and well-being.

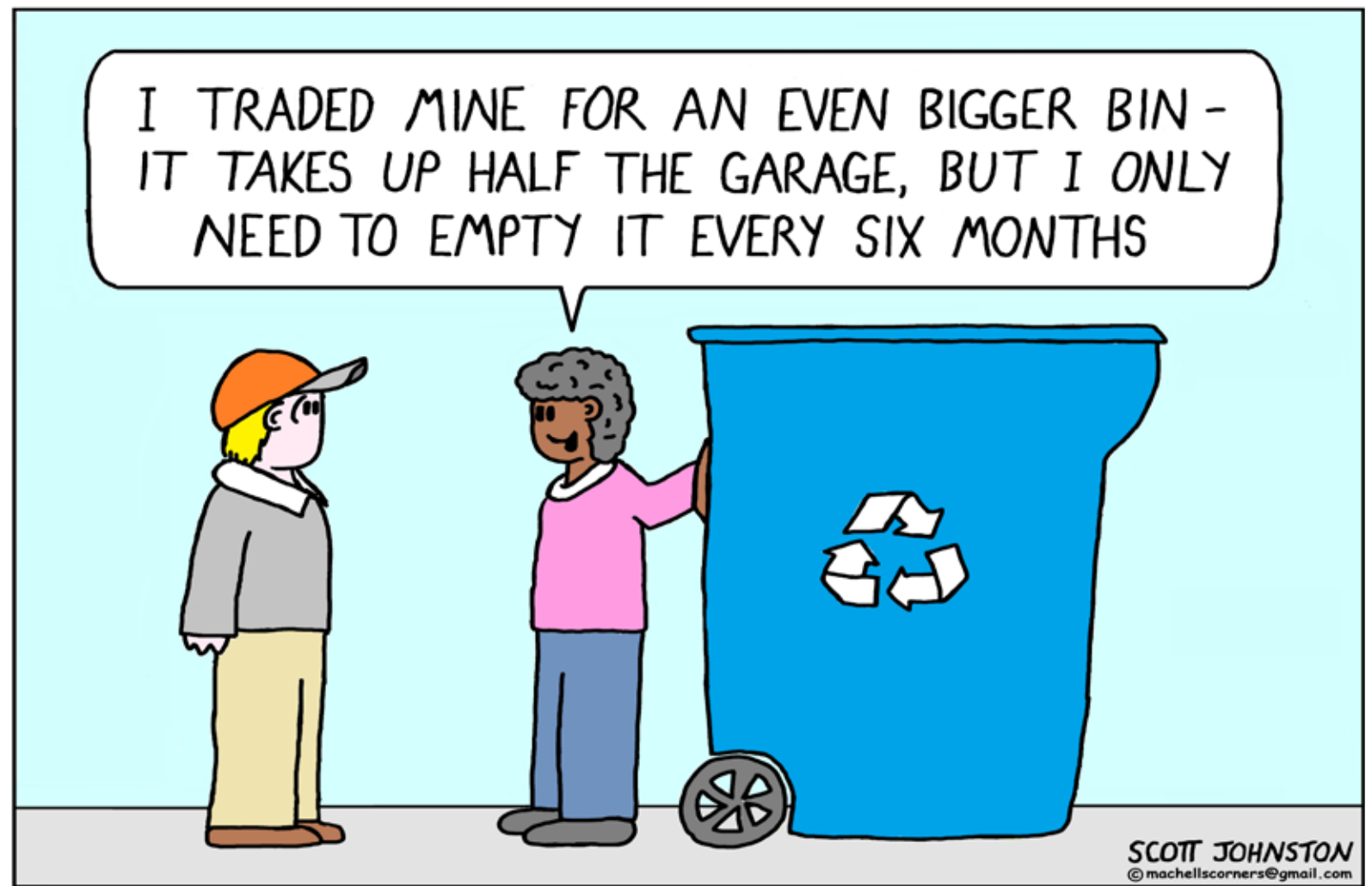
Based on the 2026 approved operating budget, a \$79.1 million provincial funding shortfall is projected for four provincially mandated services:

- Homelessness Community Programs - \$26.2 million;
- Long-Term Care Homes - \$30.8 million;
- Paramedic Emergency Services - \$3.7 million;
- Public Health mandatory programs - \$18.4 million.

The Regional Municipality of York consists of nine local cities and towns and provides a variety of programs and services to more than 1.3 million residents and over 58,000 businesses with 624,000 employees. More information about the Region's key service areas is available at york.ca/RegionalServices.

Regional Municipality of York

Machell's Corners

**Youth isn't wasted on the young**

It's often said that youth is wasted on the young.

Nobody knows for sure exactly who coined the phrase. Variations of it are attributed to such writers and wits as George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, but as far as my research – and that of others – can tell, there is no agreed upon first instance of it hitting our public consciousness.

“Youth is the most beautiful thing in this world – and what a pity that it has to be wasted on children!” is one oh-so-close comment attributed to Shaw.

If the adage can indeed be attributed to Shaw, evidently it took hold as it seems the quote was inextricably considered part of his long list of linguistic contributions while he was still active, writing, and coming up with more turns of phrase that continue to turn heads.

But, as far as phrases go, does it really hold water?

People of my own generation might have a unique perspective on the matter.

I was born in 1985, and there seems to be a disagreement on whether that puts me in the company of Generation X or the Millennials. Some sources define Gen X as pertaining to those born between 1965 and 1980, immediately following the Baby Boomer generation. Others define it as people born between 1976 and 1985, while Millennial area is variously plotted as 1981 – 1996, or more narrowly 1990 – 1998.

In hindsight, not only were us 1985 babies in-betweeners, perhaps being able to navigate our way around some of the more negative perceptions of each bookending generations of Gen Z and Millennial, but we were – and, one supposes, are – subject to constantly moving goal posts on just what constitutes “youth.”

Not too long ago, “youth” pertained to anyone 18-and-under, with some variations depending on your geographic location widening the window to 19-and-under and 21-and-under. Shortly thereafter after, “youth” was extended to those 25-and-under, with tributes to, for instance, Top 25 Under 25 lists in your field of choice coming into the fore.

I thought we'd topped out at 25 for a few years until I went on a mission to secure a ticket to a very important event in Ottawa about 15 years ago and was astonished that their cut-off for “youth” tickets reached all the way to the thirtysomethings. An apparently arbitrary thirty-one, to be exact. I thought that was kind of a stretch, personally, but being 26-ish at the time, I wasn't going to argue with

**BROCK'S BANTER**

Brock Weir

a \$40 discount. When a similar event took place last year, I was surprised the youth cut-off had been extended to a whopping 37.

Overshooting that goal post by a year-and-a-half may or may not have sparked a minor existential crisis in me, but I was buoyed a resurgence in Top 40 Under 40 events – not so much now in my forty-first year, but I'm sure the goal posts will be moved again, potentially by those who insist that fifty is the new forty – usually those who have crossed the half-century mark.

Regardless of how it's defined, National Youth Week starts on Friday and I'm glad to see that many of our communities have stepped up with programs designed to engage and inspire youth while keeping them active and creative at the same time.

In Aurora, for instance, which defines “youth” as far as programming is concerned as between the ages of 12 and 17, is hitting the ground running, opening the week with a flag raising ceremony and live music into the evening, followed by six days of events ranging from sports drop-ins and craft activities.

In fact, the celebration of youth is not limited to Youth Week itself.

The party will be extended through May 13 with the Town's annual Youth Innovation Fair, always a favourite event to attend, as students from across York Region converge on the community with ideas simple and elaborate to improve our future in some way.

In Caledon, regular youth programs will continue as usual during Youth Week with drop-in games, activities and more at both Southfields Community Centre and the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness.

There is certainly no shortage of things to do, but I can't help but think there is a missed opportunity in here somewhere.

The start of Youth Week 2026 coincides with the first day residents

looking for the chance to represent their communities at the municipal level, whether they're seeking the top job of Mayor, any number of Council positions, and even education trustee roles.

What a golden opportunity to encourage youth to get involved with their communities at the civic level, learn about what each position means and, if they meet the age requirements, consider putting themselves forward for contention.

As the Youth Innovation Fair reminds us each year, younger citizens have no shortage of ideas on how to improve the world in which we all live and, by the very existence of these ideas, they prove time and time again that they have their fingers on the pulse on the issues that matter to them and their peers – which are, more often than not, the same issues that matter to the community as a whole.

Yet, rare are the times when people who might fall under the myriad definitions of youth offered above feel encouraged to step forward and bring their ideas to a wider arena, and some might even be actively discouraged due to some vague idea that certain life experiences need to be had before they even consider trying to bring their voice to the proverbial table.

Councils should ideally reflect the community they serve and that includes all eligible voices 18 and above, and the voices of youth, middle-agers and seniors, are all relevant and due consideration.

It might be simply a matter of encouragement.

To all those considering putting their names forward for the first time this week through the close of municipal candidate registration in August, congratulations! You're making a bold step. You see a place where you can have impact, make a difference, and represent your neighbours. Politics is not for the faint-hearted, particularly in this extremely polarized and often (sadly) combative political environment we're unfortunately enduring at the moment.

To go the distance, you'll need the courage of your convictions and a certain thickness of skin, if you haven't developed that already – those factors will serve you well.

But, above all, it takes courage and compassion not only to identify where things can be improved or further, but put yourselves up front to help foster a better future.

Kudos to all of you, and make sure there's space at the table.

THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

The Auroran Newspaper Company Ltd.
15213 Yonge Street, Suite 8, Aurora, L4G 1L8

Main number 905-727-3300
Fax number 905-727-2620

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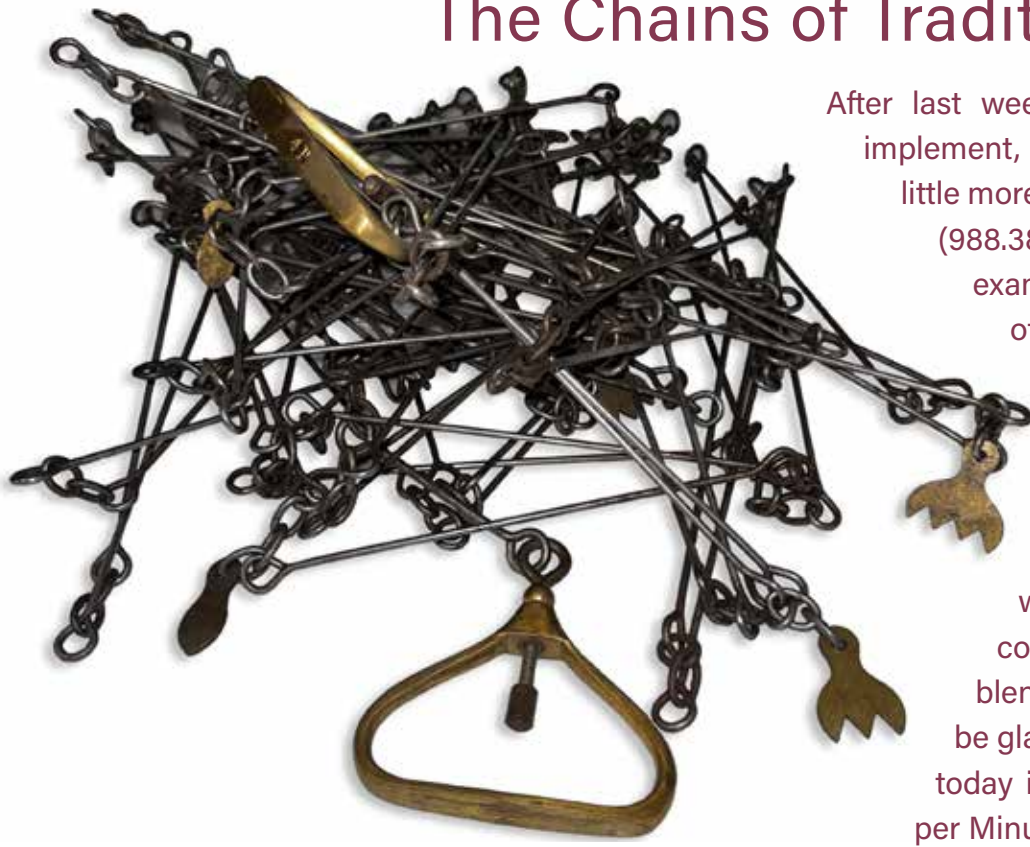


To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@jpcmedia.ca. Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

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The Chains of Tradition



After last week's rather familiar measuring implement, we kept the theme, but went a little more obscure. This surveyor's chain (988.38.17) is an early 20th century example of a tool used for hundreds of years to measure plots of land.

At exactly 66 feet in length (a little over 20m), it could be used to accurately measure out acres (10 square chains).

The fact that these chains were divided into 100 links of a confusing 7.92 inches seems to blend all our systems together, so be glad we aren't clocking our speed today in Links per Second or Chains per Minute!



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

This week was a truly defining moment for communities in northern York Region – the Ontario Government announced an initial \$10 million investment to support early planning for a new acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury and redevelop Southlake Health's existing hospital in Newmarket.

The reality is that our communities are rapidly growing and aging, and we've long needed access to more high-quality care. This new investment will help deliver increased inpatient capacity, a new emergency department, and expanded access to acute and post-

acute care, including medicine, surgery, orthopedics, rehabilitation, maternal and child health, and pediatric mental health.

This is exactly what we needed and what will be delivered.

What's most encouraging is that this announcement is part of an ongoing effort by the Ontario Government to connect people in Aurora and northern York Region with the health care they deserve. This includes recent funding

to create new primary health care teams, expand mental health care programming, and improve cancer care.

I want to thank the Government of Ontario for this transformative investment in our communities. I also want to thank the dedicated and compassionate team at Southlake Health, my fellow mayors for their staunch advocacy, and the generous community members who are helping make this possible.

Together, we're helping deliver the health care people need closer to where they are.



COSTAS' CORNER

MP Costas Menegakis
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

It has been a year defined by listening, learning, and working every day to represent the people of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. Over the past twelve months, I have had the privilege of connecting with our community by hearing your concerns, understanding your priorities, and carrying those perspectives with me to Ottawa.

In many ways, this past year has reaffirmed what makes our community so strong. It is found in the small business owner opening their doors each morning, in volunteers supporting neighbours in need, and in families working hard to build a better future. These are not abstract ideas; they are the everyday realities I encounter across our riding.

Through community events, cultural celebrations, and countless conversations, I have had the opportunity to listen closely to your experiences. Whether celebrating Canada Day, Lunar New Year, Nowruz, cultural events or supporting organizations that provide critical support to women, children, seniors, families and businesses, I am continually inspired by the generosity and resilience that define Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

At the same time, many of you have shared concerns about the rising cost of living, public safety, and ensuring that opportunity remains within reach for the next generation. Families are feeling financial pressure, seniors are

navigating fixed incomes, and young people are questioning what the future holds. These are real challenges, and they require practical, thoughtful solutions.

In Parliament, I have worked to ensure those voices are not only heard but acted upon. This has included actively participating in committee work to scrutinize government decisions, raising concerns around immigration backlogs and system integrity, and advocating for measures that strengthen public safety and support victims of crime. I have also focused on ensuring that federal decision-making reflects the realities faced by local families and small businesses in our community. I have stood up in Parliament on numerous occasions to speak up for our community by focusing on the issues that are important to our region.

Just as focused has been my constituent work at home, helping residents navigate federal programs, resolve casework issues, and access the support they need. These day-to-day responsibilities are often unseen in Ottawa, but they are at the heart of what it means to serve.

As an opposition Member of Parliament, I believe our role is not only

to challenge government decisions, but to improve them. It requires diligence, persistence, and a steady commitment to ensuring that policies are properly examined and that all voices are considered before decisions are made. Even when outcomes are difficult to change, the work of scrutiny and accountability remains essential to a healthy democracy.

Over the past year, I have also been reminded that meaningful progress takes persistence. It requires collaboration, thoughtful dialogue, and a willingness to engage with different points of view. While there will always be differences in public life, there should also be a shared commitment to improving outcomes for Canadians.

As I begin my sixth year as a Member of Parliament, I will continue to work tirelessly as I remain optimistic about what we can achieve together. Our community is strong, engaged, and forward-looking. With continued focus and practical leadership, I am confident that we can build on these strengths and address the challenges ahead.

It is a privilege to serve you. I remain committed to being accessible, responsive, and accountable, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the months ahead.

If you would like to connect or share your perspective, please do not hesitate to reach out at costas.menegakis@parl.gc.ca.

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

Conflict and crises floodlight fossil fuel folly

The sooner the world moves on from coal, oil and gas power, the better off we'll all be. Climate and pollution impacts will be reduced, as will energy price and supply volatility, the wealth gap and global conflict.

"But we can't get off fossil fuels overnight," people have been saying for at least the past 15,000 overnights! We have to start somewhere, sometime, though — and we have. Energy from wind, solar and geothermal, combined with ever-improving energy storage technologies and capacity, is expanding rapidly worldwide as prices continue to drop. People are starting to see through the politicians who act to benefit fossil fuel oligarchs rather than citizens.

Although the renewable energy revolution has been underway for many years, it's recently kicked into high gear in part because of wars and conflicts that to a large degree are fuelled by and affect global oil and gas supplies.

A report from global energy think tank Ember draws parallels between 1970s oil shocks and the current energy crisis caused by wars and blockades. The Strait of Hormuz shutdown alone represents "the largest oil supply disruption on record." But there's a difference: "For the first time, there are scalable, cost-competitive alternatives. Solar, wind, batteries, EVs and other electrotech offer a permanent route out of fossil dependence."

It's still a choice, though, one the fossil fuel companies and their supporters in politics and media are desperately trying to tilt to their favour, and we're far behind where we should or could be. That's especially critical at a time when a super El Niño — a weather trend caused by warm temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean — is expected to combine with already record planetary heating to create even more unstable and extreme weather conditions and impacts.

It doesn't look good.

There could be a small silver lining though. As author and environmentalist Bill McKibben optimistically predicts in one of his indispensable columns, "The havoc unleashed by a super El Niño will coincide with the havoc unleashed by Trump in the Gulf to produce a perfect storm of support for rapid action on getting off fossil fuels." He cautions, however, that, "My main fear is that this useful moment is coming very late in the game."

The Ember report notes it's easier than ever to disrupt oil and gas supplies. "A \$20,000 drone can stop a \$150 million tanker dead in the water," the report says, adding that the United States, now a net fossil fuel exporter, "has moved from guarantor to disruptor," creating a "glaring strategic vulnerability" for importers.

With power from solar plus storage costing a little over one-third the cost of power from liquefied natural gas (US\$60 per megawatt hour versus \$160), and electric vehicles becoming cost-competitive with gas cars on sticker price (with much lower operating costs), it doesn't make sense to keep burning fossil fuels.

Ember reports that LNG "faces the same fate as oil did in the 1970s: expensive, insecure and undercut by cheaper competition."

As McKibben points out, sunlight travels 93 million miles to reach Earth, none of them through the Strait of Hormuz. Because technologies including wind and solar power don't require diminishing, volatile fuel supplies, they have "near-zero running costs."

The Ember report also looks at time frames. Nuclear power plants and oil fields can take a decade to develop, at considerable cost in dollars and to the environment. "A solar farm takes 18 months. A rooftop system, a couple of weeks. An EV can be bought and



BUSINESS & FINANCE



Saberi's legacy sparks wave of community giving, kindness

From page 1

2, at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex from 3 – 6 p.m.

“Throughout his life, Sam was known for his kindness and generosity,” said his family. “He had an innate ability to make everyone feel welcome and valued, qualities that shone brightly in his role as the heart and soul of Tina’s Grill. Sam’s infectious smile made him not only the face of the restaurant but also a beloved figure in the community he served.

“A true sports enthusiast, Sam loved hockey, baseball, soccer, and football. His spirited enthusiasm for these games brought people together, fostering friendships, and creating memories that will last a lifetime.

“As we mourn his loss, we take comfort in the impact he had on so many lives. Sam touched the hearts of everyone he met. His legacy of kindness and community will continue to inspire all who knew him.”

Saberi is survived by his parents Hossein and Azar, his sister Tina, brother-in-law Branko, niece Maya, and nephew Mason.

When Saberi was named Citizen of the Year, he was hailed for his “unwavering” commitment to Aurora, both in serving up a delicious menu, but in turning his restaurant over as a drop-off location for toy donations during the holiday season, stepping up to raise funds for countless causes, and even fostering an initiative inviting patrons to pay it forward and pre-



Sam Saberi was one of many community leaders who have taken part in the annual Dancing with the Easter Seals Stars Aurora-Newmarket. He's pictured here on the dance floor with Anastasia Trutneva of Artistica Ballroom Dance Studio while the audience looks on. **Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger**

pay for meals which could then be claimed by community members in need.

“I am deeply saddened to hear about the sudden passing of Sam Saberi, an Aurora resident, business owner and community-builder who touched so many lives and made enormous contributions to our Town,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “To Sam’s family, friends and colleagues, I am so sorry for your loss. The truth is that this is a loss for our entire community – Sam was simply an incredible human being. Many know him as the co-owner of Tina’s Grill, where every meal included his ear-to-

ear smile and warm conversation. But he was so much more than a business-owner – his passion was to give back and help those around him. And did he ever, with contributions so big and so wide-ranging.

“On the last Wednesday of every month, he provided free meals to five families in need. He supported a local family after they lost their home to a fire, and used his business as a drop-off location for Christmas toy donations after toys were stolen from our local fire station. He collected donations for Ukraine, shared his personal journey of contracting COVID-19 to inspire others to get vaccinated, and selflessly helped a driver who suffered a medical condition and lost control of his vehicle. At Thanksgiving and Christmas, he donated dozens of turkeys to those who couldn’t afford them, and each year, he chose one struggling family and provided them with up to \$2,000 in groceries. This is just a snippet of how much he did.

“More than anything else, Sam’s generosity was contagious, inspiring other business owners and community members to follow his lead, making Aurora a more caring and compassionate place. One of the true honours I’ve had as Mayor was presenting Sam with the 2022 Citizen of the Year Award, a testament to the impact he made in our community. Aurora has lost someone incredibly special. And along with so many community members, I will be forever grateful for the lives he changed and how he simply made Aurora better. There is no doubt Sam’s legacy will be felt in our Town for so many years to come.”

On behalf of the local business community, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce also paid tribute to Saberi’s contributions to the Town and its residents, describing him as an “unwavering community champion.”

“As co-owner of Tina’s Grill, Sam built more than a successful local business; he created a welcoming space where community members felt at home,” said Alison Mumford, Executive Director of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. “Known for his kindness, generosity, and genuine care for others, Sam exemplified what it means to lead with heart and integrity.

“Sam’s dedication to both his business and the community was widely recognized. In 2021, he was honoured with a Business Excellence Award for Business Resilience during COVID, recognizing his perseverance and commitment during one of the most challenging periods for local businesses. In 2022, he was named Citizen of the Year by the Town of Aurora, a reflection of the profound impact he made through his generosity, leadership, and community spirit.

“Sam was always welcoming, kind, and demonstrated true passion and resilience as a business owner. His presence, support, and unwavering loyalty to the community will be deeply missed.”

In 2023, Saberi was one of the local leaders who laced up to help send children living with physical challenges to summer camp as part of Dancing with the Easter Seals Stars Aurora-Newmarket. That year, their combined efforts raised more than \$125,000 for the cause.

“From the moment I met you, I knew you were someone truly special,” said Anastasia Trutneva, co-owner of Aurora’s Artistica Dance Studios, his partner in the Dancing with the Stars Event. “You had no idea what you were stepping into when you signed up for Easter Seals Kids, and I feel so grateful to have had the privilege of being your partner. Even though you were completely outside your comfort zone, you never lost sight of why you were doing it – it was always for the kids. And when it came time to perform, you gave it everything. You danced so beautifully, and I remember feeling incredibly proud of you in that moment. It’s a memory I will always carry with me.

“From there, you became like family to us. The visits to Tina’s Grill, seeing your mom and dad, reminiscing about that night – it all meant so much. You were truly an angel on earth. The way you showed up for others, your constant support for your community, and your generosity were undeniable. You lived life with passion, always giving more, always doing more. You leave behind a powerful legacy – one of kindness, strength, and service.

“You will be deeply missed – and when we meet again, please save me a dance.”

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Hundreds turned out on Friday evening for a vigil honouring the life of 2022 Citizen of the Year Sam Saberi, outside his McClellan Way restaurant, Tina's Grill. Community leaders and members of the Saberi family joined mourners and brought tributes in his memory.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

Community vigil honours memory of Sam Saberi



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Classic comedy has been a journey for first-time director Cluff

Arsenic & Old Lace closes Theatre Aurora's 2025-2026 season starting May 1

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A black-and-white film from 1944 might not be the most obvious thing to capture the attention of a 16-year-old, but "Arsenic & Old Lace" is no ordinary movie.

Nor was Chris Cluff an ordinary 16-year-old.

Encouraged by his dad to sit down and watch the Jimmy Stewart classic, directed by Frank Capra and based on Joseph Kesselring's popular play of the same name, Cluff had his doubts, but ended up sticking around, taken with both its unconventional story of two elderly ladies poisoning lonely men who just happen to come through their garden gate and the broad physical comedy that goes with it.

Now a secondary school teacher in the York Region District School Board, Cluff is at the helm of Theatre Aurora's final production of its 2025-2026 season, bringing to life the classic play that started it all and revisiting what he describes as some "really cool memories" about his dad.

"Get ready for a wickedly funny romp in Joseph Kesselring's Arsenic & Old Lace," says Theatre Aurora. "Meet the delightfully eccentric Brewster sisters who believe their charitable calling involves adding a rather lethal ingredient to the elderberry wine they serve lonely gentlemen. When their



Arsenic and Old Lace opens at Theatre Aurora this Friday, May 2.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

unwitting nephew Mortimer stumbles upon his aunts' particular pastime, he scrambles to keep their secret under wraps – while dealing with a brother who thinks he's Teddy Roosevelt and another with a notorious past. Filled with rapid-fire wit and unexpected twists, this classic comedy proves that sometimes family ties can be downright deadly – and hilariously so!"

A veteran of previous Theatre Aurora productions, Cluff is making his directorial debut with Arsenic & Old Lace. Ironically enough, his last acting gig in the theatre

was as director Lloyd Dallas in the popular comedy Noises Off!

As the Board began piecing together the 2025-2026 season, Cluff wanted to use his skills in a new way and jumped at the chance to direct the show.

"Going through the text, what struck me right off the jump, is it is like a true crime story – this is like those voyeuristic, pulp Netflix streaming stories, but we get to kind of look in the fishbowl like we're watching a respectable story," said Cluff when asked why the basic story has endured for generations of theatre-goers.

He had the initial concept to add these contemporary true crime elements into the production, including nods to popular true crime podcasts, but came to realize the play didn't need these extra "adornments." He satisfied his podcast itch through promoting the show, but got back to basics in building up the production alongside his team of actors.

"I'm a high school teacher in the York Region District School Board and my style of teaching is highly collaborative and I don't really mirror a traditional director because I'm constantly taking feedback, constantly taking suggestions, constantly taking the actors' perspectives into view," he says. "It's a big, big beast of a play. One of my baselines is you want to do your best on the stage, but in order to do your best, you have to feel like you're a part of a whole, making time to listen to the actors and spend time trying out their suggestions and sometimes just saying, 'Show me.' The actors have been trusting, they allow me to do the story, I listened to them, we put it back together...and that's been pretty fantastic as a first-time directing

experience that everybody has a small piece of leadership of the group and the group listens well to each other as well."

Ahead of the show's opening night this Friday, May 1, the entire team is "firing on all cylinders" and director Cluff hopes the audience is prepared to come along on a fun ride.

"The great thing about farce is that it is designed to keep the energy up," he says. "The energy keeps building, the energy breaks, it constantly, intentionally by design, resets the audience's palate for another laugh. My hope is that the audience kind of leaves winded from the ride and I hope that the audience also comes in well-rested, fresh, ready to kind of un-notice stuff going on onstage because we've intentionally tried to layer in more of the story [so that it's] a full stage performance.

"I also hope they come wanting to like the play. I want them to be there because they appreciate the craft. I say that smiling because I do know that the community that comes out to Theatre Aurora are there for the show, they're there for the community, they're there for the actors. They're there for a lot of great reasons that are entirely supportive. I'm so grateful for the individuals that keep coming back to see new shows and without a doubt that are willing to come and see a show from a first-time director!"

For more information on Theatre Aurora's production of Arsenic & Old Lace, which runs on select dates and times May 1 – May 9, including tickets, visit theatreaurora.com, or call the box office at 905-727-3669.

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Hit the road with Optimists to support local kids in need

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

If you like to spend your weekends in the great outdoors, on the open road, and exploring the community around you, rev up your engines for the Optimist Club of Aurora's second-annual Road Rally Scavenger Hunt.

Set to take place throughout Aurora, and into Newmarket and Richmond Hill, on Saturday, May 23, it is billed as a "fun team scavenger hunt competition with proceeds supporting programs for Aurora youth."

The Optimists held their first Road Rally last year to mark their 40th anniversary in the Aurora community and the inaugural event was such a success they knew they needed to do it again.

"Everybody had fun and we really

enjoyed it," says Optimist Club member Carol Bartlett, noting the 25 registered vehicles brought 90 individuals into the Rally. "There were about 40 points of interest on the Scavenger Hunt, and we advised our participants that they didn't have to hit all 40, there were no points for speed, just points for whatever you could get done.

"The beauty of this was they could choose something that they were interested in. We had them look for a rotary phone, and they had to snap a photo with a teammate beside it. They had to find the current exhibition in the Great Hall Gallery at the Aurora Cultural Centre. We had them find Optimist Park and take a team photo. They had to go through a drive-thru and take a picture of the employee serving them. They had to find one of the five parks in Aurora that had pickleball courts..."

In short, there was a lot of Aurora

to see during the inaugural Rally and Bartlett and event co-chair Sandra Watson are hard at work to make sure this year's Scavenger Hunt list is fresh, fun, and could even take participants further into Newmarket and Richmond Hill.

Last year's event raised \$9,500 for the club, which went directly back into their youth programs, including initiatives focusing on improving food insecurity being experienced by kids, supporting local sports teams and arts programs, and individual children in ways as varied as a youth who needs new glasses, a snowsuit, or whatever the need might be.

"We'd like to improve that number, and we're all about it being a community event first and then a fundraiser second," says Bartlett. "We've done really well with sponsors this year and Highland GM is back on as our Premium Sponsor. Everything will take place at the Highland dealership."

Indeed, the fun gets underway at Highland GM with registration at 9 a.m., the Rally commencing at 9.30 a.m., and teams due back at Highland by 12.30 p.m. for lunch and prizes.

The cost per car is \$50 and this fee includes lunch.

"Come on out - it's a feel-good event, meet some Optimists, meet some people from the community," says Bartlett. "All the participants aren't necessarily Optimists, it's your community. It's a great way to come out and see what the

Optimist Club is all about."

For more information on the 2026 Road Rally, including registration, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/2026-optimist-club-of-aurora-road-rallyscavenger-hunt-tickets-1985319151024. For more on the work the Optimist Club of Aurora carries out throughout the year, visit www.auroraoptimist.com.



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Country Day School Public Speakers mark 19-year streak at World Championships



Photo courtesy of CDS

BY KIM SILLCOX

The Country Day School's top two speech and debate students competed at the World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships at Clifton College in Bristol, UK, from April 11-18. This was the 19th consecutive year that Kerstin Wyndham-West has qualified her students for this competition. She was accompanied by fellow coaches John Robinson and Andrea Davidson.

This year marked the 38th WIDPSC, bringing together 147 students from 17 countries—including Singapore, Australia, Morocco, Bermuda, South Africa, Vietnam, Canada, and the United States. Each participant competed in four events: Debate, Impromptu Speaking, Persuasive Speaking, and Interpretive Reading. Ahead of the tournament, the CDS team spent time in London, balancing sightseeing with dedicated practice sessions.

Congratulations to Adhya Chandradat, who qualified for three of four finals and placed an impressive 15th overall (tied) - an incredible accomplishment for a Grade 11 student - and to Aneesa Khan, who was just one spot away from making impromptu and persuasive finals. We are incredibly proud of both CDS students and all of Team Canada.

WIDPSC was the largest tournament either girl has ever attended and allowed them to meet people from all over the world. According to Adhya, "It was such a privilege to be in an environment where I could talk to anyone from the opposite end of the world just by taking a couple steps. It was definitely life changing and one of the best experiences I've ever had."

In addition to doing her interpretive reading of an excerpt from William

Shakespeare's Hamlet, Adhya was able to debate private ownership of culturally significant art and easing labour regulations during times of economic crises. Her impromptu speeches were on the following topics:

"Everything you want is on the other side of fear", "Glass half full", and "Everything will be okay in the end, and if it's not okay, it's not the end."

Adhya's persuasive speech was about scented products and fragrance labels that fail to list all of the dangerous chemicals, including hormone disruptors, that we don't realize we are inhaling. Aneesa's speech was about the unseen struggles of girls with ADHD.

Both girls were grateful for the opportunity to share their voice about topics that truly matter, and to engage in healthy competition with people whom they've looked up to for a while. They are already looking forward to reconnecting with these friends at the International Independent Schools' Public Speaking Competition next fall in Oakville.

"One of the best things witnessed was other people's viewpoints and stories, and regardless of outcomes, the love was always strong and consistent among everyone," said Adhya. "We're so fortunate to have incredible coaches to guide and help us become the best version of ourselves."

Coach Davidson added, "The greatest highlight for me was watching the girls grow and evolve over time through their speeches and readings. Despite the stiff competition for students (these are the best in the world!), the WIDPSC community is so warm, and deep friendships are forged. Watching the students and coaches cheer for one another during Grand Finals and say their teary goodbyes at the end proves just what an incredible experience it is."



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Region receives nearly \$18 million in Gas Tax funding for transit improvements



Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Thornhill MPP Laura Smith, and York Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe were joined by Regional Staff on Monday to celebrate \$17.8 million in Gas Tax funding coming to support York Region Transit.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Region of York is set to receive \$17.7 million in Gas Tax revenue from the Province of Ontario to improve and enhance transit services.

The funding was announced Monday afternoon by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy at Regional Headquarters in Newmarket.

“Our government understands that municipal transit systems are essential to the success of our growing communities,” said MPP Gallagher Murphy. “Transit connects people to jobs, to education, health care, and the everyday services that they rely on.”

The investment, she said, will enhance York Region Transit (YRT) routes, improve accessibility, and support the addition of new vehicles to the fleet, “making it easier for residents to get where they need to go closer to home.”

“Reliable transit is not just about getting from Point A to Point B. It’s also about affordability and it’s also about quality of life,” she continued. “It helps students get to school, it helps seniors attend appointments, and workers commute efficiently. It also supports local businesses, it reduces congestion on our roads, and this funding is part of a broader Provincial government commitment.”

“Through the Gas Tax Program, our government is investing nearly \$380 million in 107 municipalities across this great province of ours, ensuring that transit systems remain strong and responsive to the needs of our growing communities. Municipalities like York Region have the flexibility to use this funding where it matters most, whether that’s maintaining current service levels or planning for future growth. By continuing to invest in transit, we are helping build a stronger, more connected York Region, one that supports economic growth, improves mobility, and enhances quality of life for all residents.”

Underscoring the point was York Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe who noted the uptick in demand for YRT services.

“Today’s announcement, \$17.7 million through the gas tax program, is critical to keeping York Region moving. This fund plays a vital role in our day-to-day operations, keeping our buses on the road, maintaining our fleet, and ensuring residents can rely on safe and accessible transit services for all,” said Jolliffe. “In 2025 York Region Transit ridership reached nearly 24 million trips, a strong growth across our on-request services. Our

system continues to perform at a high level, with 94% on-time performance, reflecting the dedication of our teams and the importance of a sustainable investment. Through these initiatives, like the One Fare program, we’re also making transit more affordable and more seamless to riders traveling across multiple boundaries.... Thank you for recognizing the importance of municipal transit and for continuing to invest in communities in York Region. Together, we are building a transit system that is reliable, accessible, and ready for the future.”

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Developers pledge to work towards solution for Ridge Road proposal

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Developers behind a proposal to demolish a home on Ridge Road and build five new homes in its place pledge to work with the Town to address community concerns following a Public Planning meeting last week.

At issue is an application to rezone 107 Ridge Road, in the northwest quadrant of Yonge Street and Bloomington Road, for five residential lots and establish an Environmental Protection Area in its place.

The lot in question is 0.39 hectares at the southwest corner of Ridge Road and Glensteple Trail and is currently designated as Estate Residential and Environmental Protection Plans under the Town's existing Official Plan and the Town's Yonge Street Secondary Plan, known as OPA #34.

Nearby residents who delegated to Aurora's April 21 Public Planning meeting were unanimously opposed to the plan, citing incompatibility with the surrounding low-density neighbourhood and the impact of the proposal on environmentally-sensitive

Oak Ridges Moraine lands.

These views were largely shared by Council members who said more work needed to be done on the file.

They rejected staff recommendations to advance the file to a future Committee of the Whole meeting for further consideration and possible enactment in favour of a future Public Planning meeting to address the cited concerns.

"It's really about the Moraine," said Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, stating it would be precedent-setting for the Town of Aurora had the application moved forward as-is. "If we approve this, we will be guilty of slicing the Moraine, and it's so important that the Provincial Government passed the Oak Ridges Moraine Act and we have it as a special section in our OP. Please, please respect what the Moraine and what Provincial Planning is and did try to do."

These were views shared by Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson who said he met with concerned residents the weekend prior to the Public Planning meeting, and their worries included conformity, density, and OPA #34.

"Councillor Gaertner and the

residents are right that this sets a dangerous precedent," said Councillor Thompson. "Enabling people to change that zoning from Estate Residential to Suburban is a significant change and it opens the door to further higher-density development that is not contemplated within OPA #34. We created that vision, we just upheld that vision when we approved the Official Plan, and its incumbent upon us to stick to it."

Councillor Thompson said his preference was to bring the issue back to a future Public Planning meeting to let staff and the applicant to work together "to find something that may be suitable."

"Ridge Road was meant to stay as Estate Residential within our vision. If we're going to contemplate making any changes whatsoever, then look at it in its totality. Don't look at it lot by lot and have a haphazard approach to the planning of this area. Let's do a study, let's figure it out, engage the residents, and be able to chart what the future of Ridge Road should look like."

While Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland said higher density proposals in Aurora's south end are "encroaching far more into the Oak Ridges Moraine," she said encroachment onto Ridge Road would be "opening a whole can of worms that was not intended for this community at all."

Following questions from Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, the applicant said their "preference" is to work with Municipal staff to find address the identified issues, "that I can guarantee you," rather than taking the matter to the Ontario Land Tribunal for a decision.

"We are well aware of what our options are and, you're absolutely right,

Let's do a study, let's figure it out, engage the residents, and be able to chart what the future of Ridge Road should look like

we could do that tomorrow, but...we would like to see that fulsome set of review comments back to us, and then we will take a look at what we heard tonight, what we're hearing from our neighbours, and then we will continue to work with staff on a very collaborative basis," they said. "Obviously we're hoping to have a Committee of the Whole meeting before Council recesses, but, again, we'll play that as the issues come by and the comments are received."

The "willingness" of the applicant to work with staff and residents was cited by Mayor Tom Mrakas as a reason to go back to a Public Planning meeting.

"If we intended on making any changes to OPA #34, we just updated our OP and we would have made changes," he said. "We made changes to heights in certain areas, we made changes to density in certain areas, we didn't change OPA #34 and there's a specific reason to that: because we expect to see that area maintained within that character and within those policies that have been put forward since 2001."

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Residents sound environmental alarm bells over Ridge Road proposal

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Long-time residents were feeling a sense of déjà-vu last week as they came together at a Public Planning meeting to oppose a development project on Ridge Road.

At issue was an application to rezone 107 Ridge Road, in the northwest quadrant of Yonge Street and Bloomington Road, for five residential lots and establish an Environmental Protection Area in its place.

The lot in question is 0.39 hectares at the southwest corner of Ridge Road and Glensteep Trail and is currently designated as Estate Residential and Environmental Protection Plans under the Town's existing Official Plan and the Town's Yonge Street Secondary Plan, known as OPA #34.

For long-time residents of Ridge Road, planning rules coming out of OPA #34 to address density in an environmentally-sensitive area were hard-fought and the proposal before Council echoed earlier battles.

"Saying this is compatible with the neighbourhood, I don't believe to be true," said resident Richard Berman. "There's a few of us here – somebody that's been here for 40 years, somebody like myself that's been here for 15 years, and somebody that's been here for about six months, but all the people share the same thing: we moved into that neighbourhood appreciating the character that neighbourhood has with a reasonable assurance. It's labelled Estate Residential (zoning) that you're buying into a community that's going to remain. Homes will change, things will happen, but we expect it to retain some character of that. We believe that this change does not conform to that."

That resident 42 years is Jennifer Day, who said she was "shocked" by the

proposal on the table.

Ridge Road, while connecting to busy Yonge Street, is simply not a suburban street, she contended, noting many residents are still on wells and all homes remain on septic systems.

"This is being addressed as a subdivision that's going in here, not just a development... and quite frankly I'm shocked that this much change is going on a corner lot facing onto a little road that's a dead end at one end and Yonge Street at the other," said Day. "When I moved onto Ridge Road, it was [zoned] Rural Residential. It was changed to Estate Residential and now you're talking about changing it to a subdivision. I don't know how far this is going to go. Is every lot from here on in that somebody can do this now? This is not appropriate and I don't feel that it's fair."

Day took exception to the applicant's statement that the proposed development would bring further housing into the area, noting that while Aurora is indeed in need of additional housing units, existing residents need to be respected as well.

"We also need to have respect for the people that live within the area and appreciate that they've maintained their lands, they've been stewards of their lands, they've met all these rules and regulations for years, and all of a sudden the changes... I'm really disappointed this has come to pass, to be honest with you.

"Everybody goes through changes; this is radical change and that has to be addressed."

These were views shared by Tom McGinnis, a resident of Ridge Road for more than 30 years.

"I'm very familiar with the area, very familiar with the zoning, spent a fair bit of time over the last 25 years in the whole OPA 34 process with a number of other

people and groups, including an OMB application that established the density in this area at two units an acre back in 2001.

"The conformance to Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, unless the plan has changed, I'm very familiar with the plan," he said, noting the application

calls for two-and-a-half times more density than what is allowed on a small lot. "I don't see how this could possibly conform in terms of lot coverage, lot disturbance, hydrogeology, natural heritage, and other factors that are in the plan.... Conformance of the plan doesn't seem realistic."



OPEN FOR BUSINESS - Emerald Optometry, located at 16025 Bayview Avenue, formally opened its doors on Saturday, April 25, and Mayor Tom Mrakas joined owners Kevin and Michelle to mark the occasion. "We believe great eye care goes beyond prescriptions. Our approach is guided by clinical excellence, transparency, and comfort, so every visit feels thorough, unrushed and supportive. By combining advanced diagnostics with genuine patient relationships, we help you feel confident in both your vision and your care."

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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WEEK OF APRIL 30, 2026

U22 Panthers close “gritty” season with “heartbreaking” fourth-place finish at Provincials



Jamie Sanford's play between the pipes at the Provincials was praised by U22 Panthers Head Coach Steve Dempsey.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

The U22 Central York Panthers closed their 2025-26 season with six inspirational efforts at the Provincial AA playoffs last weekend in Mississauga.

All six of the Junior Panthers' games were decided by one goal and a constant in all three cliffhanger wins and all three heart-wrenching losses was the stellar goaltending provided by Jamie Sanford and Claire Hicks.

Head Coach Steve Dempsey applauded the play of his two netminders in Mississauga and throughout the Panthers' playoff run.

“Claire played well in all our OWHL playoff games. We went with the hot hand especially against Kingston and she helped us win the series. Claire was given the first game against Mississauga. We switched to Jamie in our next two games at the OWHL and started her at the Provincials. She was outstanding in our 3-2 win over Barrie and the 1-0 loss to Stoney Creek. She's been on a national stage at the 18U finals prior to joining our team so we stayed with her for the opening games. Claire beat London and Jamie beat Stoney Creek the second time around in overtime to get us to the quarters.

“There was so much skill on the ice during the overtime games and both Claire and Jamie made saves when the teams had Grade A scoring chances. With both goalies putting their excellent games on display, it was always a 1 or 1A scenario and it got down to a gut feeling as a coach as to who started.”

In addition to highlighting the skill of his goalies, Coach Dempsey summarized the valiant efforts of his young hockey team over a grueling 70-game campaign: “It was a gritty season. It was a journey—the players learned about themselves. There was so much growth and they'll be better for it. We were fitter this year and peaked at the right time. Our veterans were ready for heavy playoff games and over the thirteen-game stretch in our League playoffs and the Provincials, there were only three or four periods in which we weren't as competitive as I would have liked.”

Coach Dempsey liked what he saw in Mississauga last weekend as the Panthers

toughed out an arduous schedule. The injury-depleted squad played six games in less than three days.

“In 64 hours, we played the equivalent of seven full games including a 3-2 double-overtime win over Stoney Creek on Saturday afternoon followed less than two hours later by a heartbreaking 3-2 loss to Durham West in quadruple OT that ended around midnight. We played the bronze medal game against Mississauga on their big sheet of ice at 9 AM on Sunday and lost 3-2.”

To open Pool Play on Thursday night, the Panthers defeated the Barrie Sharks 3-2.

Coach Dempsey described Central York's victory over the 9th-ranked team in Canada.

“Beating Barrie in Game 1 was huge. A big rivalry has developed between the two regional teams—we have some of their players and they have some of ours.”

In a Game 2 of Pool Play on Friday afternoon, Coach Dempsey described the miniscule difference between Stoney Creek and Central York in the Panthers' narrow 1-0 loss to the #5-ranked team in Canada: “We were on the big Olympic ice at Iceland. They ran a set play with three minutes left, won the faceoff, and scored.”

Coach Dempsey's determined charges bounced back from the tough loss with a stunning come-from-behind 2-1 victory on Friday night over the London Devilettes.

“We were down 1-0 early, fought back, and got the game winner with less than one minute remaining in regulation. It was a storybook ending to advance to the quarterfinals.”

In the quarters, the Panthers were gifted with an opportunity to avenge a Pool Play loss to Stoney Creek. Coach Dempsey described the showdown.

“It was a tall order to beat Stoney. It was our fourth game in less than 54 hours, but we played well during the 3-on-3 double overtime. It was crazy to think that we were able to keep the players hydrated with the intensity of the games, but we came to play in those overtime periods.”

In the semifinal versus Durham West, the fatigued Panthers skated into the biggest game of the season at a considerable disadvantage, according to

Coach Dempsey.

“Durham was rested with a bye while we played five periods against Stoney Creek. It turned out to be a heartbreaker. We were up 2-1, but they scored to send it into overtime. There were lots of posts and crossbars in the four overtime periods—we were that close to advancing to the gold medal game. Playing a rested team for seven periods after playing five earlier in the day showed our mental fortitude. We walked out of the arena after midnight—having to be back at 9 a.m. to play Mississauga on their own rink.”

Coach Dempsey described his team's steely determination as they worked through a wall of exhaustion against the Hurricanes.

“We were down 2-0, but they answered the bell to tie the game. Given the

circumstances, it was an unbelievable experience—an absolute thriller where we showed so much grit and heart in the Bronze medal game.”

The importance of in-game motivation versus the home side was explained by Coach Dempsey.

“After we got down 2-0, we challenged the players to keep building the legacy—to create results that would leave the program better for the next group. For us to come back and tie that game on the big ice was incredible. We were fighting through injuries—we were down to nine forwards after moving one so we could have six on D. Mississauga scored the winning goal with six seconds left. It would have been the first time that the Central York Panthers 22U would have medaled at the Provincials. We were that close.”

FREEDOM OF THE TOWN



St. Andrew's College exercised its Freedom of the Town with a colourful cavalcade beginning at Town Park on Monday afternoon. There, musicians at the school – including the St. Andrew's Pipes & Drums – entertained the community as cadets assembled for the day's procession, a parade which ended at Trinity Anglican Church, where a service was held and Mayor Mrakas affirmed the Freedom honour.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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Run for Southlake crosses half-million fundraising mark



Hundreds flooded Newmarket's Davis Drive on Sunday morning to take part in the annual Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake. The top annual fundraiser for the local hospital was a tremendous success this year, with fundraising easily topping \$500,000 for local health care – \$507,000 at press time – as contributions keep rolling in. Joining participants – and participating themselves – on Sunday morning were Mayor Tom Mrakas, who stopped to take a photo with the Optimist Club of Aurora, Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena, and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, among many others.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Southlake Run crosses half-million mark as Hospital looks to future

From page 1

announced a \$10 million investment to advance plans for Southlake's new acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury, located near Queensville.

Services at the new campus are projected to include expanded acute and post-acute care, including medicine, surgery, orthopedics, rehabilitation, maternal and child health, paediatric mental health, increased inpatient capacity, and a new emergency department.

The current Southlake campus in Newmarket, which provided a backdrop to Sunday's exceptional fundraising run, which had raised \$507,229.78 and counting at press time this week, will be renovated and modernized, according to the Province, with a plan that includes more inpatient and emergency capacity.

"Today marks a defining moment for Southlake Health as we take a major step forward in transforming care across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County," said Paul Woods, President & CEO of Southlake Health in a statement. "The Government of Ontario's investment and endorsement of our vision to build a Distributed Health Network will create a more integrated, sustainable local healthcare system for generations to come. We are grateful to Premier Ford, Minister Jones, and all our Provincial and municipal partners for their leadership. Together, we will continue to deliver leading-edge care close to home."

In turn, Premier Doug Ford said the investment in Southlake's future is part of a \$64 billion plan to build and upgrade more than 50 hospitals

Ontario-wide.

"With today's announcement of a new, state-of-the-art hospital in East Gwillimbury and the redevelopment of Southlake Health in Newmarket, we're ensuring that people in York Region and Simcoe County have reliable access to world-class care for generations to come."

Added Minister of Health Sylvia Jones: "Our government is making historic investments to protect Ontario's health care system, ensuring people of all ages can connect to the care they need, no matter where they live. This investment for a new hospital and redeveloped facilities at Southlake Health is another important step in building a stronger health care system in York Region and Simcoe County that will connect more people and families to the care they need."

The Ministry of Health will continue to work with Southlake to complete early planning for the new hospital campus, including determining bed numbers and square footage.

The latest chapter in Southlake's story, which is more than a century-long, was received enthusiastically by local leaders at all levels of government.

"Southlake Health has long been a pillar of our community – providing compassionate, high-quality care to families across Newmarket, Aurora, and the broader York Region and South Simcoe area," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy. "Today's announcement is the result of years of strong local advocacy and I am proud to see that work translate into real progress for our residents. With this new hospital in East Gwillimbury

and the redevelopment of Southlake Health, we are ensuring that patients across the Region will have better access to modern, state-of-the-art [facilities] to provide that care closer to home. This investment will allow Southlake to continue growing and delivering for our community and its entire catchment area – now and for generations to come."

Added King-Vaughan MPP Stephen Lecce: "After opening the state-of-the-art Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital, our government is investing in another net-new hospital for families in King and Vaughan. This new hospital, along with redevelopment of existing Southlake infrastructure, will deliver better health care closer to home."

The history of care Southlake has provided to the community over nearly 104 years was recognized by York Region Chair Eric Jolliffe, who said he was "pleased to see the longstanding commitment to health and wellbeing continue and now expand into the Town of East Gwillimbury, reflecting our shared dedication to ensuring families and patients – today and for generations to come – have access to the care they need, close to home."

The future will reflect the rapid growth that continues to be seen in York Region and South Simcoe. Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas said more access to high-quality care was "long needed" and Monday's announcement was a "huge step forward" for healthcare.

"I want to thank the Government of Ontario, the dedicated and compassionate team at Southlake Health, and the generous community members who have been critical in this process," he said. "You're helping

This investment for a new hospital and redeveloped facilities at Southlake Health is another important step in building a stronger health care system in York Region and Simcoe County that will connect more people and families to the care they need

deliver the healthcare people need closer to where they are."

Added King Township Mayor Steve Pellegrini: "Access to health care touches every family, and growing pressure on our health system means we must plan regionally and proactively. King Township is appreciative that the nearby Town of East Gwillimbury has been selected as the second hospital site for Southlake Health, and we thank the Provincial government for investing in solutions that address capacity and overflow across northern York Region. Southlake is internationally-recognized and a leader in cardiac and cancer care, providing advanced, life-saving treatments close to home. This expansion will ease pressure on emergency departments, improve access to care and deliver real healthcare benefits for King Township residents and neighbouring communities."

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Ben Reeves (b. 1969), *Foragers* (detail), 2022, Purchased through the generous support of Karen and Christopher McCleave, McMichael Canadian Art Collection

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Heritage trees to get branch of support following Council approval

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Heritage trees in Aurora will now enjoy an extra degree of protection following Council's approval of a new tree management guide.

Council formally gave the green light to the new green measure at the March 31 meeting of Council.

The Heritage Tree Management Guide outlines a complete process of identifying, documenting, preserving and commemorating significant trees.

The guide will manage heritage trees on public property, but although Council approved the new measures, they questioned what could be done to protect similarly significant trees on private property as well.

"The Guide was developed in response to a Council motion from September 23, 2025 calling for stronger protection of Aurora's oldest trees," said the Town in a statement following the meeting. "With Council's endorsement, staff will now finalize the criteria for listing Town-owned heritage trees and begin creating an initial registry that includes each tree's location, historical significance, specimen details, scientific data, and photographic documentation. This multi-year effort will continue through 2027 and will include individualized planning for each tree based on its condition and future risk. Once assessments are complete, appropriate preservation measures will be implemented."

Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, however, said it's "really important" to consider similar measures for eligible trees on private property, particularly properties that are slated for development.

"Currently, it's just dealing with public property, but there was an interest through [Aurora's Parks and Recreation Advisory] Committee and also through staff to recognize potentially some private trees that we know exist that have some heritage value, both in species and age," said Sara Tienkamp, Aurora's Director of Operations. "At this time, we're just dealing with the public ones, and then

we'll do some research about how to tackle the private ones.

"Some residents may be interested in participating, some may not be interested in having trees recognized on their property, so that's something we'll work through in the coming year or so."

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 in January.

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 stated. "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.

THINGS... you ought to know

MAY 1 - 9

Theatre Aurora closes out its 2025-2026 season with *Arsenic & Old Lace*. Get ready for a wickedly funny romp in Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Meet the delightfully eccentric Brewster sisters, who believe their charitable calling involves adding a rather lethal ingredient to the elderberry wine they serve lonely gentlemen. When their unwitting nephew Mortimer stumbles upon his aunts' peculiar pastime, he scrambles to keep their secret under wraps—while dealing with a brother who thinks he's Teddy Roosevelt and another with a notorious past. Filled with rapid-fire wit and unexpected twists, this classic comedy proves that sometimes family ties can be downright deadly—and hilariously so! For tickets and showtimes, visit theatreaurora.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 2

The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair celebrates the opening day of its 2026 season today at Town Park. The Market runs each Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. As May is Pollinator Month, expect some themed music, crafts, and more!

MAY 2 & 3

The 62nd Annual Aurora Art Show and Sale, a collaboration between the Town of Aurora and the Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA) will take place at Town Hall. Colour isn't just an adjective...it can be an experience. For all art enthusiasts, this is a must-see event featuring over 300 pieces of artwork. Artists will be displaying their original two and three-dimensional artwork created in any medium. For more, visit aurora.ca/artshow.

MAY 9 & 10

The Aurora Historical Society will host its Mother's Day Afternoon Teas on Saturday, May 9, and Saturday, May 10, with two seatings each day at 12 noon and 2.30 p.m. Enjoy assorted teas, tea sandwiches, freshly-baked scones with jam and whipped cream, and a variety of desserts in the Hillary House Ballroom. Tickets are \$37.50 per person and must be purchased in advance. For more, call 905-727-8991, or visit aurorahs.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 9

The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

Aurora's Youth Innovation Fair will take place tonight from 6 - 8.30 p.m. at Aurora Town Square. The Town of Aurora is proud

to support youth innovation and community engagement through Aurora's Youth Innovation Fair. Open to students in Grades 4 to 12 and features a wide variety of innovative ideas and inventions created by youth. It is an exciting opportunity for youth to engage in innovation and share their ideas to tackle real-world issues.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

The Aurora Performing Arts Festival will take place at Aurora Town Square today from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Come out and see who gets crowned Aurora's 2026 Teen Idol! For more information, visit www.aurora.ca/recreation-arts-and-culture/specialevents/aurora-performing-arts-festival.

ONGOING

Partagez le Français: 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.



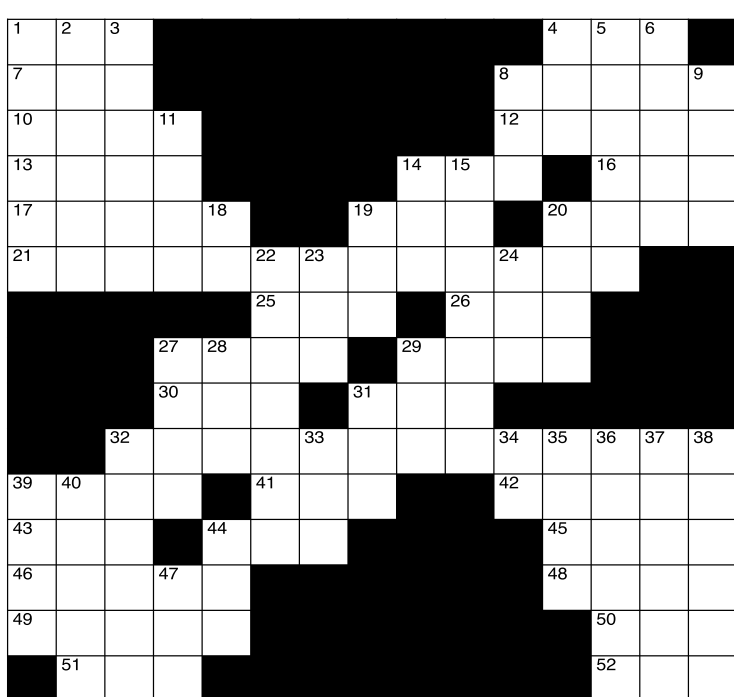
RAISING VOICES IN SONG - The "achingly beautiful" songs of Wales filled the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall on April 12 when the Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir took the stage.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Puzzle No. TAAPR3026 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

- Purchase
- British news organization
- Midway between northeast and east
- Language specialist group
- Fancy automobile
- Small loop or series of loops
- Exploiter
- Don't know when yet
- Group of languages
- One who's finished
- After B
- Angled
- A place to adopt pets
- Swiss river
- Young boy
- Unexciting



CLUES DOWN

- Type of whale
- In tune
- A citizen of Yemen
- Actress Ling
- One who supports
- Circus performer
- Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
- Quantitative fact
- Utah city
- Where a golfer begins
- Attendant
- The ancient Egyptian sun god
- Book of Chronicles (abbr.)
- Benedictine monk
- Not turbulent
- Car mechanics group
- American comedian Vidale
- Peyton's little brother
- Corporate higher-up
- "All in the Family" star
- Strike something forcefully
- Up in the air (abbr.)
- Clay earth pigments
- Means to record brain activity
- Small constellation
- Embraces
- Brief description
- Exclude
- White (French)
- Insect
- A major division of geological time
- Soviet Socialist Republic
- Buffer used in chemistry
- Fall heavily
- Pic ___ mode
- The Brits love it
- Children's TV channel (abbr.)
- Jacksonville footballer
- Helps little firms
- ___ and behold
- A way to resemble
- Fingers
- Excessive indulgences
- You might be an "empty" one
- "How the West Was Won" writ
- European river
- They begin the alphabet
- The body's messenger

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A Stronger Future for Health Care in Newmarket–Aurora



This week marks a historic milestone for families across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County. The provincial government has advanced the plan to **redevelop Southlake Health’s Davis Drive campus** and build a **brand-new state-of-the-art acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury**.

Our government is making historic investments in Healthcare. This transformational two-site hospital network will strengthen access to modern, connected, high-quality care — **closer to home** for more than 250,000 residents.

As your MPP, one of my commitments to our community has been to ensure the expansion of Southlake Health to accommodate our growing population. This commitment has come to fruition as we are delivering real progress: expanding capacity, reducing wait times, and continuing to develop world class care for generations to come.

Southlake Health is a critical pillar of Newmarket-Aurora — and our government is ensuring it remains strong, innovative, and ready to meet the healthcare needs of our community members.

Recent Provincial Investments Supporting Southlake Health

Over **\$58 million** invested in just the past year, including:

Expanding Emergency & Diagnostic Services

- **\$3,609,600** – Emergency Department Pay-for-Results program
- **\$1,144,500** – CT operating hours expansion

Supporting Mental Health & Specialized Care

- **\$128,568** – Psychiatric Stipend Funding Program
- **\$127,096** – Local Priorities Fund for complex needs
- **\$5,390,000** – Surgical recovery funding
- **\$46,000** – Physician Assistant Career Start Program

Hospital Operations & Modernization

- **\$22,706,300** – Hospital Operations funding (2024–25)
- **\$7,955,100** – Health Sector Stabilization Target Funding
- **\$2,952,685** – Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund (HIRF)
- **\$4,766,138** - Priority programs reducing wait times



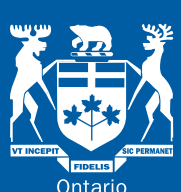
Capital Planning for the New Hospital

- **\$10,000,000** – Capital planning allocation for new East Gwillimbury hospital site and Redevelopment of the current Southlake site

Building a Healthier, More Connected Region

With these investments and the commitment to a **new two-site Southlake Health**, we are building the infrastructure needed to ensure every family — from Newmarket and Aurora to East Gwillimbury, Georgina, Bradford, and beyond — can access the care they need, when they need it.

A stronger Southlake means a stronger, healthier future for us all.



DAWN GALLAGHER MURPHY

MPP for Newmarket–Aurora

Building Our Community Together

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✉ Dawn.GallagherMurphy@pc.ola.org

📷 dawngallaghermurphy ✂ MurphyGallagher

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