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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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FREE

WEEK OF MAY 14, 2026

Mrakas will seek third term as Mayor of Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Incumbent Tom Mrakas will seek a third term as Aurora's Mayor.

Mrakas formalized his decision to seek re-election on Friday.

In a video posted to Facebook, Mrakas said he wanted to keep the "momentum" of the last two terms going.

"Serving this community as your Mayor has been the privilege of a lifetime, and over the last eight years as your Mayor, I have delivered on my commitment to Aurora: keeping taxes low, investing in our community, and making sure growth happens on our terms – proven leadership that delivers real results," said Mrakas in his campaign launch video, which was recorded on Church Street adjacent to Aurora Town Square.

"But there is more to be done and that's why today I am proud to announce I'm running for re-election as your Mayor. Let's keep the momentum going, and let's keep working together to get things done."

Mrakas was first elected to Council in 2014.

He successfully ran for Mayor in 2018, defeating incumbent mayor Geoffrey Dawe, former MPP and

Continued on page 19



Incumbent Tom Mrakas filed his papers to seek re-election as Mayor on Friday.

Contributed photo



Mayor Mrakas, left, and Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley, third from right, welcome Sharon, Tessa, Cleopatra, and Carole to Aurora Town Square at the start of last week's Walking Vigil.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls remembered in Red Dress Day vigil

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls were remembered in Aurora on May 5 as the community took part in its inaugural Red Dress Day Walking Vigil.

Organized by the Aurora Museum and Archives and the Town of Aurora, and led by Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley, the Walking Vigil attracted dozens of residents, and the participation of Mayor Tom Mrakas, former Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill Member of Parliament Leah Taylor Roy, and more.

Participants set out from Aurora Town Square in pairs and, led by Wheatley, stopped at points of interest along the way for songs and reflection, heading north on Yonge Street to Wellington, heading eastward toward Town Park where participants were welcomed by Fire Keeper Raiden Levesque who had

stoked a sacred blaze in front of the band shell.

When she was first approached by the Town to take part in this first Walking Vigil, Wheatley said she was not sure what to expect, but, at the conclusion of the event where participants were invited to leave an offering of tobacco in the sacred fire, she said she wouldn't change a thing.

"I was thinking about what I should say tonight, mindful of my own personal feelings and my connection to this – and all of our communities are connected in some ways," Wheatley reflected. "I feel like this country has failed us and continues to fail us, so when the Town of Aurora stepped forward of their own initiative [and] they approached us and asked if we could do this with you, I was unsure. I was unsure if community would come out – not because I don't think you care, but just that there's such a huge lack of awareness of the ongoing struggle that

Continued on page 5

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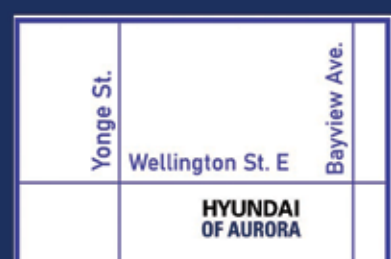
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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

May 14, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

| Date | Time | Location | Meeting |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|---|
| Thursday, May 14 | 7 p.m. | Video Conference | Committee of Adjustment |
| Wednesday, May 20 | 7 p.m. | School House Mtg Room | Aurora Cultural Centre Board |
| Wednesday, May 20 | 7 p.m. | Aurora Public Library | Aurora Public Library Board |
| Thursday, May 21 | 7 p.m. | Holland Room | Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee |
| Tuesday, May 26 | 5:45 p.m. | Holland Room | Council Closed Session (if required) |
| Tuesday, May 26 | 7 p.m. | Council Chambers | Council |
| Wednesday, May 27 | 7 p.m. | Holland Room | Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee |
| Thursday, May 28 | 10 a.m. | Video Conference | Aurora Appeal Tribunal/Property Standards Committee (if required) |
| Tuesday, June 2 | 9:30 a.m. | Newmarket CC | Joint Council Committee (CYFS) |
| Tuesday, June 2 | 5:45 p.m. | Holland Room | Council Closed Session (if required) |
| Tuesday, June 2 | 7 p.m. | Council Chambers | Committee of the Whole |
| Wednesday, June 3 | 10 a.m. | Video Conference | Mayor's Golf Classic Funds Committee |

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

What's Happening

Interested in running in Aurora's 2026 Municipal Election?



Make a difference in your community and help shape the future of Aurora. If you're passionate about local issues and want to serve your community, consider becoming a candidate in the 2026 Municipal Election.



Learn more about running for Mayor, Councillor, or School Board Trustee.

aurora.ca/Candidates



Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: Kate Greenway - A Sense of Place

This exhibition brings together watercolours inspired by landscapes, gardens, animals, birds, and quiet built spaces encountered both close to home and while travelling. Through careful observation and the luminous transparency of watercolour, each painting reflects the character of a particular moment – light on a field, a resting animal, a familiar street, or a distant view. Together the works explore how places shape our experiences and memories, revealing the quiet connections between environment, presence and time. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.

Get on the voters list for the municipal election on October 26!

RegisterToVoteON.ca
1.866.242.3025

Register to Vote



Open House: Help shape aurora's future stormwater master plan Wednesday, May 27 • 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Aurora Public Library

Discover how the Town is planning to reduce flooding, protect streams, and improve stormwater management. Learn about the Master Plan and share where you've seen stormwater challenges. Town staff and consultants will be on site to answer questions and gather your input.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN

Open House

engageaurora.ca/SWMmasterplanUpdate

Tell us how YOU would slice it!

2027 BUDGET SURVEY

Complete the online survey at: engageaurora.ca/Budget2027



Victoria Day Weekend Holiday Schedule Programs & Activities

Have fun over the holidays! We have programs and activities for everyone to enjoy. Visit our Holiday Schedules webpage for full details at aurora.ca/HolidaySchedules.

Join Us

AURORA RECREATION FAIR

Thursday, June 11, 2026
5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex
Desjardins Gym

aurora.ca/RecFair

Discover everything Aurora's recreation department has to offer, including a diverse range of recreation programs, services, camps, courses and volunteer opportunities. Find out more about sport development, youth drop-in activities, summer camps, accessible sport options, swimming lessons, registered programs and more! Details at aurora.ca/RecFair.

Aurora PRIDE FESTIVAL

May 31
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aurora.ca/NAAW

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Aurora.ca/WhatsOn

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Walking Vigil spreads message throughout community on Red Dress Day



(Top Row) Leaders of the Walking Vigil stopped along the route for songs and reflection – as seen on the north side of Wellington Street between Yonge and Victoria Streets. (Middle Row) Some of those who took part in Red Dress Day, describing themselves as survivors, symbolically painted their faces with a red hand print. Participants, such as Catherine, also left tokens of remembrance on a symbolic empty dress form at Aurora Town Square. (Third Row) The Zonta Club was well-represented. **Aurora photos by Glenn Rodger**

Interested in running in Aurora's 2026 Municipal Election?



Make a difference in your community and help shape the future of Aurora. If you're passionate about local issues and want to serve your community, consider becoming a candidate in the 2026 Municipal Election.

Your nomination can be filed with the Town Clerk 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.**



Learn more about running for Mayor, Councillor, or School Board Trustee.

aurora.ca/Candidates



Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls remembered in Red Dress Day vigil

From page 1

we are experiencing.

“This day is being recognized across the country for a reason: our reality is we are Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Two-Spirited-Plus, and I really look forward to the day when we don’t have to have these vigil walks anymore because justice is being served equally and fairly for all.”

Red Dress Day is a nation-wide observance to bring awareness to Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited People (MMIWG2S+).

The empty red dress is its evocative symbol, representing those who should still be with us today, was introduced by Metis artist Jaime Black.

Participants were encouraged to wear red in honour of MMIWG2S+ and they more than answered the call, their red hues illuminated by hand-held candles and other votives along the way.

“I know that there was a lot of silence, but that was to give space and time for the women’s voices we no longer hear, whose names we can no longer speak, for the communities that are suffering and struggling, for the families who are experiencing the tremendous loss we’ve been generating,” said Wheatley at the event drew to a close. “Every life lost matters. Indigenous women across this country are extremely vulnerable, and our strength and resilience allows us to step forward on a day like this collectively and individually to speak our truth, to connect our hearts, to remind you all that we will never forget the ones that we love, the ones that are part of our family...”

“This can bring a great deal of happiness and sadness. And we should have that. We should feel those things. We should feel sad. We should miss them. We should learn their names. We should reach out to the communities, both on and off reserve, that are struggling with this ongoing injustice – and that’s what

it is. It’s an injustice. The people who cause these harms when caught are often not punished. It’s not punishment we’re looking for. It’s justice.”

As participants prepared to depart, Wheatley asked them to think about the “resiliency of our people, our communities, and our families who have experienced cultural genocide” in the country, a country where “there’s no policies or laws that really protect us.”

“Canadians at large are kind of afraid [of] talking about it. They’re afraid of us, and they say this is wrong, and if anybody should be afraid in this country it should be us, but we’ve come,” she said. “We come anyways, we speak up, and we speak out and we continue to stand in truth. I thank you for standing in truth with us. It is so encouraging, it is



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so healing and it’s also so beautiful to see you come out.”

Added Levesque: “Us men need to do better – all of us – to take better care of the women and honour and really understand that call, for that understanding, for the matriarchs who lead us in that beautiful way, all the way into the future and for times to come. For us men, the violence needs to stop, especially against women and children,

and anyone for that matter. We’re a proud warrior nation... but we have to be humble and gentle warriors. There’s many ways of being a warrior and being kind is a very important teaching, I do my best – I’m far from perfect, but I try my best to reflect as a man how to do better [and] how to be just a kinder, gentler man. I invite those indigenous men for us to gather around those fires more.”



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A Message to the Community

FROM A FORMER MAYORAL CANDIDATE

Aurora is a place I have built my life in for over 19 years. I raised my family here, bought homes, rented homes, built businesses here, and became deeply connected to the rhythm of everyday life in this town.

My understanding of Aurora has never come only from council chambers or policy discussions, but from people... from the quiet, human moments that define what community really is.

I have seen that in the simple things: a stranger at the grocery store waving you ahead in line, a cashier trusting you to come back and pay when you’ve forgotten your wallet, neighbours checking in on one another without being asked.

I have also experienced the other side – moments of disrespect meant to diminish. But those moments did not define me, and they did not change how I choose to show up. Because at the end of the day, we all have a choice: to lead with division or to lead with intention.

More recently, I witnessed this town come together in a moment of loss. People stood side by side, offering comfort and choosing compassion over disagreement. It was a reminder that Aurora already knows how to be unified. The question is whether we choose to sustain that, especially when it is not easy.

This is also why I made the intentional decision not to run in this election cycle, even at a time when the opportunity



to step into a council seat felt both real and within reach.

I believe deeply that voices like mine matter, and that leadership grounded in accountability, compassion, and genuine community connection deserves a place at the table.

But leadership is not only about stepping forward. Sometimes it is about discernment, timing, and understanding where your contribution can create the greatest impact. At this moment, I believe my role is to help strengthen the broader conversation within our community through engagement, advocacy, and meaningful dialogue.

Choosing not to run is not stepping away from leadership. It is stepping into a different form of it – one focused

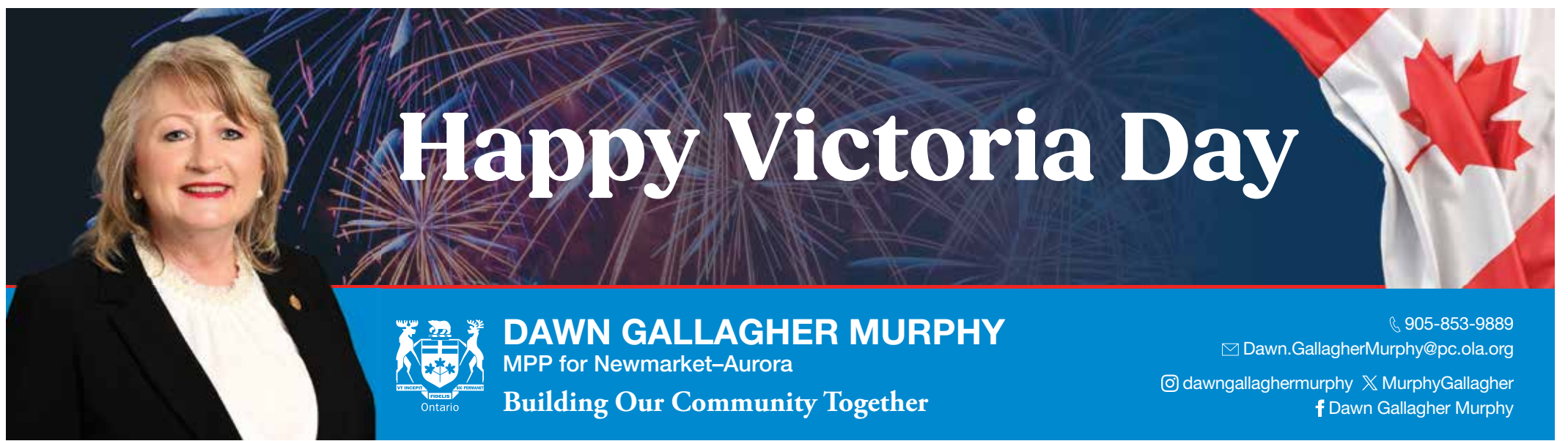
on strengthening the collective, encouraging thoughtful civic participation, and helping elevate the kind of conversations that move communities forward.


That is why I care deeply about what comes next for Aurora.

As someone who ran in the 2022 municipal election, including against the current mayor, I have seen firsthand how perspectives can evolve. Running for office is not rooted in dislike; it is about offering a different vision at a moment in time. And just as leadership should be evaluated, it should also be allowed to grow.

Supporting someone today does not erase where I once stood. It reflects a willingness to recognize growth, change, and the importance of unity when it serves the community well.

**A unified Aurora is possible.
Phiona Durrant
Nuff respect.**





Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP for Newmarket–Aurora
Building Our Community Together

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f Dawn Gallagher Murphy

Residents rally for “justice” after dog’s death during animal control call

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Dozens descended on Aurora Town Hall on Saturday rallying for “justice” following the death of a dog during an animal control call in East Gwillimbury.

Last week, photos and video of a rottweiler called Heiniu lying on the pavement with blood appearing to have come out of its mouth, sparked a wave of anger, calls to action, and questions many say remain unanswered.

“The Town can confirm that Animal Services responded to a call involving two dogs at large on May 4 in East Gwillimbury,” said the Town of Aurora in a statement. “During efforts to safely secure one of the dogs, an officer sustained a bite injury requiring medical attention. Due to escalating safety concerns and the presence of bystanders, Animal Service Officers contacted York Regional police for assistance.

“Throughout the incident, staff attempted to safely call, care for, and secure the dog while protecting public safety. The dog later became medically unresponsive and transported to a veterinary clinic. This was a difficult and upsetting incident for everyone involved, including staff, witnesses, and the owners. The Town is reviewing the incident and a full investigation is underway.”

Among those calling for both answers and justice is Holland Landing resident Michelle Sanders, who attended the rally with Heiniu’s family.

Sanders says she and her daughter corralled the two dogs running at large outside their home and ultimately called Animal Control.

It’s a call she says she’s come to regret.



Wendy and Stacy were among those who demonstrated at Town Hall and along Wellington Street East on Saturday.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

She says that, in her observation, Heiniu was not aggressive, but became distressed as Animal Control officers struggled to get him in the vehicle with catch poles.

It was in her driveway that Heiniu passed and each day since the May 4 incident she has been “praying for rain” to help wash the remaining blood from her driveway.

“It’s been beyond overwhelming,” says Sanders of both the incident and the mounting calls for answers since details were first shared through the Humane Initiative. “We are the absolute biggest animal-loving family you’ll ever meet [and] this is the worst possible thing that could happen to my family – in my driveway.

“I still have blood on my driveway. I have to relive this every single day of my life – every moment, every time I walk my dogs past that spot, it’s been so overwhelmingly painful that there’s days I don’t know what to do with myself. I have to bend over and literally try to breathe properly because I don’t know what to do. I work from home and I pray for days that it’s raining just so I don’t have to walk my dogs and I don’t have to walk outside. I’m praying for rain to help clean some of this blood off the driveway because there was so much and the smell was so strong. I was just trying to help them and do the right thing.”

Sanders stresses the movement that has resulted from the incident

is not about her, but the quest for truth and justice for Heiniu and his humans, and to ensure similar cases don’t happen in the future.

“At the end of the day, that beautiful dog died on my driveway and I have to live with that. Some days I don’t know how to get past this, but I do know I will fight and continue to fight to spread awareness,” she says. “I don’t want the negativity. I don’t want their lives threatened. That does not bring enjoyment to me. I want [those responsible] to be held accountable for their actions.”

For more on animal control in East Gwillimbury, visit www.eastgwillimbury.ca/en/government/animal-control.aspx.



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



McHAPPY DAY – Mayor Tom Mrakas joined the team at the McDonald's location at Yonge Street and Allaura Boulevard on Wednesday to celebrate McHappy Day. During the annual McHappy Day initiative, a portion of every menu sale supports sick children and their families across Canada, benefiting Ronald McDonald House. Ronald McDonald House helps families with critically sick and injured children stay close to their child's hospital care. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

Outgoing Council to consider compensation for incoming lawmakers

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The thorny issue of Council compensation is set to come back into the spotlight this week as members of the outgoing Council

consider potential pay increases for members of the 2026-2030 Council.

Sitting at the Committee level this week, Council is set to look at the current pay received by Mayor and Council in Aurora and how it compares to salaries received by

lawmakers in similar municipalities across the Greater Toronto Area.

The staff report was “intended to support fair and equitable compensation while maintaining fiscal responsibility and accountability to Aurora taxpayers.”

“The analysis considered principles of fiscal prudence, the need to attract a diverse and qualified pool of candidates, and the recognition of the demanding nature, complexity, and public accountability associated with the role of Mayor and Councillors,” say staff. “Factors of time commitment, decision-making responsibilities, and the breadth of issues addressed by elected officials were also considered.”

The comparison report, which looked at salaries in King, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Bradford West Gwillimbury, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, Caledon, Halton, and Uxbridge, found that the current mayoral salary in Aurora is 3.34 per cent below the 60th percentile, while compensation for Aurora Councillors falls to 31.96 per cent below that same percentile.

“As part of the market review, staff assessed potential market positioning options to guide the Town’s approach to Council compensation,” say staff. “A position at the 50th percentile is market. Anything above the 50th percentile is competitive. Based on the data reviewed, consideration may be given to a market position at approximately the 60th percentile, which balances fiscal responsibility with the objective of providing competitive and equitable compensation relative to comparable municipalities.

“Based on the findings of the review, direction from Council is required with respect to the desired market positioning (percentile) within the identified comparator group, as well as the continuation or modification of car allowance entitlements for the Mayor and Members of Council. Reviews of benefits and severance entitlements for Members of Council confirm that no changes are required at this time. Council’s direction on the identified matters will enable staff to proceed accordingly and ensure that compensation practices remain fair, competitive, and aligned with Council’s objectives.”

When it comes to vehicle allowances, the report found within the comparator group, transportation allowances for mayors range from \$3,000 to \$16,000, while the same allowances for Councillors range from \$1,500 to \$12,000.

“Based on the average results of the comparator analysis, adjusting the Mayor’s transportation allowance to \$12,000 to align with the market would represent a 17.14 per cent increase, while adjusting the Councillor’s transportation allowance to \$3,250 would represent a 32 per cent increase,” say staff. “Adjustments should recognize increased vehicle operating costs, and the travel demands associated with the role and, while remaining below most comparator municipalities, demonstrate a fiscally responsible approach to market alignment.”

Any increase to Council and Mayoral compensation would result in an increase to the Town’s Operating Budget for the year it becomes active, note staff.

BUSINESS EXCELLENCE CELEBRATION
An Evening of Distinction

2026 Award Categories:

- Non-Profit
- Community Participation
- Retail
- New Business
- Top Employer (10+ Employees)
- Women-Led Business
- People’s Choice

Nominations Close: May 31, 2026 at 11:59pm
Business Excellence Celebration: October 22, 2026

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Sam Saberi's love for the Philadelphia Flyers was clear at a Celebration of Life held in his honour at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex on May 2 - with, left, his parents and sister, posing with one of the many tributes left around the packed arena. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

Hundreds pay tribute to Saberi at Celebration of Life

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Hundreds gathered at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex on Saturday, May 2, to celebrate the life of Sam Saberi, owner of the popular Tina's Grill, and Aurora's 2022 Citizen of the Year.

Saberi, who left behind a legacy of community building and giving, died suddenly on April 21, aged just 41.

Community leaders joined the Saberi family at the SARC where the floor of the arena quickly filled with residents from Aurora and beyond who had been touched by Sam's legacy of giving.

"Sam was a respected member of the community, a wonderful friend, a trusted neighbour, and someone who genuinely cared about the people around him," said Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, who was one of several speakers paying tribute to Saberi at the podium. "Whether it was through his kindness, his support, or simply a presence, Sam made people feel seen. He made them feel valued and simply supported."

He was, Parsa said, a person people could always depend on, and someone who "gave selflessly and genuinely."

"He really cared about the people in the community," he continued. "His dedication to serving the community wasn't just something he did, it is who Sam was and the values he lived by every single day. His impact is reflected in the love, respect,

and gratitude so many people in the community feel today."

Parsa said he first met Saberi when he went to Tina's Grill and "knew right away he was a special guy." Noting his love for the Philadelphia Flyers, he noted that, in this community, only Sam could "put up a whole bunch of posters and signs of another NHL team, get away with it, and be loved by everybody."

"To the entire Saberi family, thank you so much for sharing Sam with all of us," he concluded. "Sam will be deeply missed, but he'll never be forgotten, and his memory will continue to inspire all of us. I learned a lot from Sam and I'm sure others will tell you the same, and I know you're very proud of him because we all are. As a life-long Leafs fan, I've never been known to cheer for any other team, but I've publicly posted for the remainder of the NHL playoffs I'll be rooting for the Philadelphia Flyers, who have a special guest waiting for them."

Saberi's love for the Flyers was also noted in a moving eulogy offered by his niece, Maya Hamer, who was accompanied at the podium by her brother, Mason.

Maya recalled joining her uncle at a Leafs-Flyers game and the fun they had making special signs for the game. Hers said, "Go Leafs Go," while Sam's simply said, "I failed as an uncle!"

"Looking back on that day, he never failed me as an uncle; he was

Continued on page 21

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Artists of all ages show their Pride through art ahead of Festival

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local artists of all ages have pooled their time and talents to showcase community inclusivity and individual identity ahead of the second annual Aurora Pride Festival.

On Thursday, the Aurora Cultural Centre celebrated the launch of a new exhibit, *Within & Between: An Exhibition for Pride*. Running through August 2, the show features work from local queer artists Serena Chagas, Jo Gomes, Rory Hope Gouthro, Kevin McBean, Parker McIntyre, Molly Steels, Rohjin Taebi, Natalie Rhys Turpin, as well as Ashlyn Gregory, the Aurora Cultural Centre's interim Gallery Manager.

Conceived to coincide with the second-annual Aurora Pride Festival, a collaboration between the Aurora Community Band, Borealis Big Band, and the Town of Aurora, it invited artists to showcase work that underscored their varied interpretations of Pride – and the result is a diverse celebration of inclusivity and acceptance, but also serious meditations on identity.

"I'm so honoured to be a part of this exhibit," says Gomes. "My photography submission reflects my basic understanding of what Pride means to me. It's around visibility, quiet courage to exist authentically. The themes I have are pieces of belonging, being seen, and living pride with every step forward. My Pride is both a personal journey and a



Pictured at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Thursday at the opening of *Within & Between: An Exhibition for Pride*, were Adora Lau of the Aurora Cultural Centre, artists Rohjin Taebi, Kevin McBean, Parker McIntyre, Natalie Rhys Turpin, Rory Hope Gouthro, Aurora Cultural Centre Interim Gallery Manager Ashlyn Gregory, Jo Gomes, and Serena Chagas.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

collective experience for me. It's not just a celebration, but also the courage to live authentically. I've been out for 40 years, so visibility has been a journey for me, and one of my photos is called *Stepping Into Pride*, which is basically talking about continuous journey, not a

single moment. It's more about an act of stepping forward and, again, moving into your authentic self, and that's fluid and changes over time."

McBean, who jokes that he just might be the eldest of the participating artists, looked at Pride through a historic lens, depicting the history of Stonewall, often cited as the first protest that led to the Pride movement, as well as more contemporary movements, including Drag Queen Story Hours.

Among the younger artists is 13-year-old Gouthro who said many facets of being queer can be hard to express – but art makes expression that much easier.

"The piece I created represents dysphoria transgender people feel around their body... which is something I think a lot of younger queer people experience," said Gouthro. "I wanted to get that out to show that even though it's really hard and it's really not a fun experience to go through, there's definitely a great way to find a safe space in a community. I have gone from dysphoria every day constantly to being very proud of my identify and who I am, and that meant a lot to me."

Also looking at this facet of the queer experience is McIntyre.

Gender dysphoria often features in McIntyre's work, but the wall-dominating piece they submitted illustrates "the feeling of how fulfilling being trans can actually be and how unique of an experience it is."

Fulfilment is also a theme for Taebi who says the theme of love is explored through acrylics and oils.

"This exhibition was conceived by Samantha Jones, our previous curator who is now on maternity leave, and it perfectly aligns with the upcoming Aurora Pride Festival at the end of the month, but it is also an opportunity for queer artists in York Region to get to show their work and celebrate the amazing arts community we have," says Gregory. "This has been a really fun exhibition to curate and, as a queer curator, it was sort of a dream come true to be able to work with all these artists and I think the show is fantastic."

"I wanted this exhibition to show just the breadth and depth of the queer experience, how different it is for everybody, and I think we have a really great cross-section of the community here. So often you see narratives about how difficult it can be and that's very true, but there's also so much joy and

happiness to be found within the queer community and within queer relationships and just being a queer person in general.

"I want people to walk away from this exhibition and think, 'Wow, being queer is a joyous thing, it's a complex thing, and it's difficult for everybody. We have some that are very happy narratives, some a little more sombre, a little more introspective.'"

These are sentiments shared by many of the participating artists.

"I just hope people think, 'Wow, I'm surrounded by so much creativity,'" says Taebi. "I hope they become more curious. I hope they look around York Region and a bit more and be like, 'Wow, there's so much more diversity than I was expecting.'"

Adds McIntyre: "I just hope people see there is so much joy within the community. It's not just the really dark stuff that gets covered because that's easy to talk about. I hope that younger queer people see that the community is a lot more visible in their immediate area."

This visibility is an essential component, noted Gomes, a college educator, agreeing with McIntyre.

"It helps educate, connect, and empower others," says Gomes. "I do hope this exhibition does that for others who may feel scared to come out because there's a lot of scary parts to that, right?"

Adds Gouthro: "The main thing I really want people to step away from, not just with my art, but the entire gallery is that it's a very complex identity, but it's also such a happy thing. I wanted to really emphasize the point that even in hard times, there's definitely light in this community and there is light at the end of that tunnel."

Within & Between: An Exhibition for Pride is on at the Aurora Cultural Centre's Great Hall Gallery through August 2. The Aurora Pride Festival will take place in the adjoining Aurora Town Square on Sunday, May 31, from 1 – 5 p.m. The celebration begins with an opening ceremony at 1.15 p.m., followed at 2 p.m. by a performance from the Borealis Big Band, from 3 – 4 p.m. with Pride-themed games and activities, before concluding with a performance from the Aurora Community Band.

For more information, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

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Winter Artist-in-Residence shines light on Jamaican roots through *In a Friendly Sky*



Brandon Baghaee speaks at the opening of his new exhibit, *In a Friendly Sky*, at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Thursday night. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Brandon Baghaee spent the last few months behind the yellow-brick walls of the Aurora Cultural Centre exploring his Jamaican roots as the Centre's Winter Artist-in-Residence.

Now that the paint is dry, his artistic vision is bringing new life to the Centre's lower hall gallery through his new exhibition, *In a Friendly Sky*.

On now through August 2, *In a Friendly Sky* takes Baghaee's signature surreal, and hyper-realistic self-portraits and interprets them through a new lens as he explores his "diasporic identity, culture, and genealogy."

"In this series, the artist explores his relationship to his Jamaican grandparents through self-portraiture, seamlessly weaving family history with broader cultural and historical

references," says the Centre. "Tapping into bell hooks' writings on building Black community through liberatory habits of being, Brandon connects to his grandparents by recreating their daily practices within his paintings."

"Although the artist appears alone in his compositions, he invokes his grandparents' presence through the everyday artifacts that signify their lives and habits. In *'Daphne'*, Brandon transforms his grandmother's hand-sewn wedding dress into a protective suit of armour, representing sewing as a form of resistance for Jamaican women. Similarly, *'Osmond's Sounds'* evokes his music-loving grandfather through the sound system, paying homage to ground-breaking Jamaican audio engineer King Tubby. By tracing the material ties of kinship and culture, Brandon simultaneously visualizes his connection to his grandparents while

situating himself within an imagined past.

"Rendered with smooth, meticulous brushwork, Brandon's paintings evoke a soft, dreamlike intimacy that is nonetheless bold and declarative. By collapsing the distinctions between individual and family identity, Brandon articulates a profound identification with his lineage and culture, and a continuity between generations."

Members of the public were invited to get their first glimpse of the new exhibition on Thursday, May 7, as the Centre hosted its annual Spring Soiree.

There, Interim Gallery Manager Ashlyn Gregory, welcomed guests and gave a special nod to Samantha Jones, the Cultural Centre's Gallery Manager. Now on maternity leave, Jones was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the artistic showcase.

"It has been my pleasure to finish the work that Sam started on these exhibitions and to bring them into their final form," said Gregory. "Brandon's exhibition, *In a Friendly Sky*, presents a new body of work that explores his relationship to his Jamaican grandparents by weaving family history with broader cultural and historical references. Four of the

paintings on display were created during his three-month residency, including the two large 48 by 60 canvases, which pay homage to his grandmother and his grandfather, who's here tonight.

"Though I've only known him a short time, I've been continually impressed by Brandon's intentionality, as well as his technical proficiency. His work is incredibly thoughtful and grounded, and he demonstrates a level of clarity in his artistic voice that's typically honed over years of practice. I know that he's going to continue to grow in his artistry and do amazing things."

Replied Baghaee: "First things first, I want to thank everyone for coming out and supporting. It means a lot, and it's very important to support the arts and have community, and that's what's here. This is very beautiful to see. I also want to thank Aurora Cultural Centre, everyone on the Board, and the whole team. Specifically, I want to thank Sam, Adora [Lau] and Ashlyn for all of their support throughout the whole process, and really being there for me and being flexible and dealing with my tight timelines and working very close to this exhibition. I really appreciate it, and I'm super grateful."

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Region recognizes National Nursing Week

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I am proud to recognize May 11 to 17, 2026, as National Nursing Week.

This year's theme, The Power of Nurses to Transform Health, continues to highlight the extraordinary role nurses play in shaping a strong, more responsive health care system. Through their expertise, compassion and leadership, nurses are driving meaningful change and advancing patient-centred care across York Region communities.

In York Region, our public health and long-term care nurses demonstrate this impact every day. Public Health nurses are at the forefront of prevention and health promotion, delivering essential programs that support healthier communities. In our long-term care homes, nurses provide skilled, compassionate care that ensures residents live with dignity, comfort and respect.

Their dedication, professionalism and commitment, especially in times of increasing complexity and demand, continue to strengthen our health system and improve the lives of those they serve.

During National Nursing Week, we extend our sincere thanks to all nurses across York Region. Your contributions are invaluable and your care makes a lasting difference.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO

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

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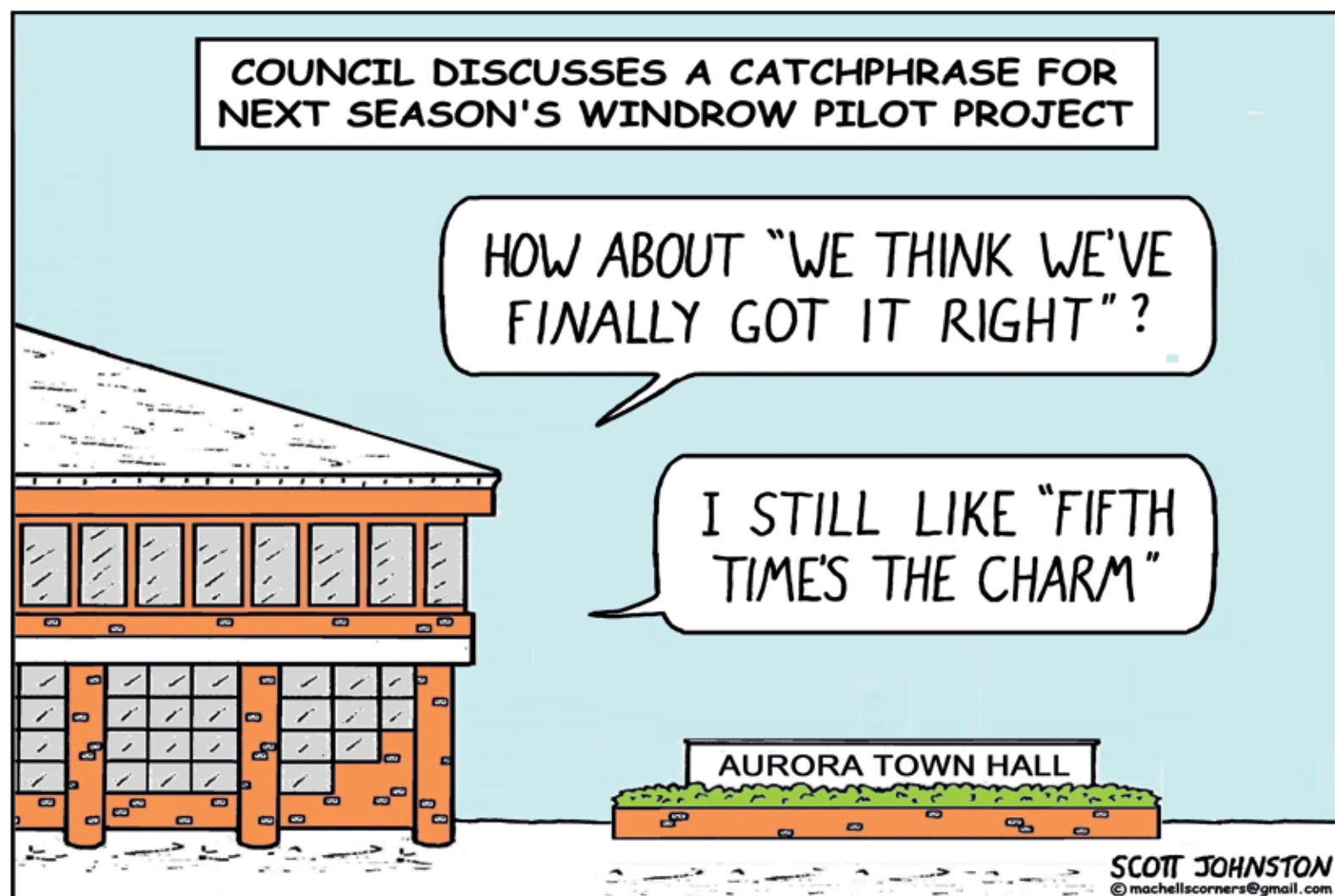
CORRECTION

Last week's article, "Councillors approve building framework to publicly report on expenses related to conferences, events," misattributed comments made on the matter by delegates to the April 28 Council meeting. Comments made by resident John Hartman were erroneously attributed to Shawn Deane. We regret the error.

The correct version of the story appeared online at:

newspapers-online.com/auroran/councillors-approve-building-framework-to-publicly-report-on-expenses-related-to-conferences-related-to-events.

Machell's Corners



Cell Phone Couples Counselling

I didn't see the point of it at first, but, for reasons I couldn't quite rationalize, I certainly wanted to be a part of it. Maybe it was the exclusivity of it all.

There are few things more intriguing than what's behind a closed door when you can see shadows behind it milling about through some frosted glass.

When that door opens, you're inevitably going to have that rush of "FINALLY!" or that gut-sinking feeling of, "That's it? That's what all the fuss was about?"

It seems like a distant memory now, but, once upon a time, such was the level of intrigue over the new online platform known as Facebook.

When the platform itself first hit my radar as a university student, it was almost exclusively for that particular demographic. But it wasn't open to just any university student – much like the early days of the also-now-ubiquitous Gmail, one had to be invited to join by an existing user before you could see what was going on behind the proverbial curtain.

It took a while to get that highly-anticipated invitation to see what all the fuss was about, and I'm afraid I was in the "That's it?" crowd.

As it was a mostly student-driven platform at the time, most of the people I'd even consider connecting with were those I invariably saw in person at some point every week. The impact of almost pre-historic status updates like "Joe Q. Public is..." and picking something like "hungry" as the blank-filler from a drop-down menu was minimal at best when you were sitting across the cafeteria table from Joe himself.

My interest waned pretty quickly.

It took a couple of years for my interest to become piqued again when the platform was opened up wider and one could then stay in much closer touch with further-flung friends and family, find others with shared interest, and see communities of these interests spring up – and many of these communities gradually became what their name suggests.

But, for every positive, there has been a negative, and this has proven true not just with Facebook, but in just about every platform that was emerged in the last couple of decades.

As connected as we have become virtually, it seems some are becoming more and more disconnected from our common reality.

In recent months, I have watched with no small degree of alarm as an acquaintance borne out of those online communities introduced their significant other to the group – only for it to become clearer and clearer in time that this "significant other" was the other side of their preferred AI chatbot.

While I'm happy that this person has



BROCK'S BANter

Brock Weir

found a way to stave off loneliness, if that is what they were indeed feeling, it has become concerning that the clear line between reality, fantasy, and wherever something like this falls, has become ever more blurred.

Maybe I was right in my first instinct to become a committed social media luddite, but I don't discount the value these tools and platforms bring to our society if they are used right and with full knowledge of how they can impact our lives.

I'm sure teachers, administrators and others in our education system might be nostalgic for the days when such platforms and outlets were invite-only and their impact could be rather contained – particularly when jurisdictions here at home and abroad consider wider-ranging social media and AI bans in the classroom.

Late last month, the Province of Manitoba announced it would take their cell phone ban in classrooms, first put in place in 2024, to the next level in banning youth from using social media and AI chatbots, citing the "harmful" effects these platforms and programs have on those who use them.

In a CBC report on Manitoba's progression on the file, they cite Premier Wab Kinew's concern with the "addiction to the infinite scroll" and its impact on anxiety, depression, and other mental health indicators, as a reason to move forward.

Manitoba's move comes as the Federal Government considers following Australia's lead in a country-wide ban on the same for users aged 16 and under. This development follows two non-binding motions passed at the Liberal Party of Canada's convention this past spring, which has caught the attention of party members in power – and amongst the opposition.

While some important questions have been raised over enforcement of keeping youth from finding ways around a ban, they have stressed the importance of making sure legislation is comprehensive and done right.

"The government's response to companies behind AI chatbots – tools that simulate human conversation – is

being closely monitored in the wake of the Tumbler Ridge, B.C. mass shooting," the CBC reported last month. "Open AI decided against flagging concerning messages the shooter had exchanged with ChatGBT months earlier.

"[Minister of Canadian Culture and Identity Marc] Miller says a moratorium on social media and AI chatbots 'could be an important layer' as government looks to resurrect part of its online harms legislation, 'but has to be seen as that and not as an answer to everything.'

"The politics...of it are convenient, but the policy has to be right," said Miller. "But is an outright ban the right policy?"

The devil will be in the details. Early results from Australia seem promising, and Ontario Education Minister Paul Calandra said such measures are being explored in this Province as well – building upon their ban on cell phones in the classrooms issued in 2024.

"I think the evidence is becoming more and more clear that cellphone use in our schools – elementary and secondary schools – anywhere on site has become a problem," said Calandra via the CBC.

It certainly has become a problem, there's no arguing that. And, in the case of these AI chatbots, it's become far more than just a "problem," but is a ban really the next logical step?

To my mind, a blanket ban represents an opportunity that is in danger of being missed.

Is cellphone use in schools, in and of itself, the problem? Or, is the problem cellphone use that is unfettered and unguided?

While I am not an educator myself, it appears to me that a major issue at the heart of it all is lack of instruction and education on how to use these ubiquitous devices, and all the bells and whistles they and app-makers offer, to their best and safest advantage.

If used correctly, these devices have tremendous power to enhance the learning experience, point users in – and I can't stress this enough – the right direction to learn more and enhance their lessons, and explore new horizons.

But it takes a collective effort – of teachers, parents, caregivers, and guardians alike – to equip youth with all-important critical thinking skills to suss out good resources from bad, and be able to separate the wheat from the chaff – or, in the parlance of Artificial Intelligence, the real from the "slop."

A ban would certainly have its benefits, but, before it's put into place, all the good must be weighed with the bad – and an outright ban, to my mind, seems like a reactionary step that avoids the heavy lifting that could reap benefits.

THE AURORAN

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A Link to the Past



While cufflinks have been a sartorial accessory for several hundred years, their practicality has faded and they remain in use almost exclusively in formal settings. The popularity of cufflinks increased dramatically in the wake of The Prince of Wales (who visited Aurora in 1860 and later became King Edward VII) having worn a jeweled pair made by Fabergé. Our cufflinks here (79.1.17 and 18) are the “double panel” style which would show a decorative element on both sides of the cuff. The left pair are made of a colour-mixed synthetic such as cellulose, backed by a shiny foil. The right pair are polished agate, the delicate banding a natural byproduct of sedimentation over thousands of years. Wearing these, we *won't* be rolling up our sleeves to get the dirty work done.

I hope you and your loved ones had a wonderful Mother's Day celebration. Whether you spent the day gathered with family, connecting with friends, or honouring the important women in your life, I hope it was filled with joy, appreciation, and special moments.

As we move further into spring, I am pleased to share several key updates shaping our community's future.

This past month, we reached a historic milestone in health care for Newmarket—Aurora and the surrounding region. Southlake Health has always been a pillar of our community—an institution that families rely on for exceptional emergency care, complex surgery, cancer treatment, mental health services, and so much more. For years, our rapidly growing population has placed increasing pressure on the hospital, making the need for expansion more urgent than ever. I have long committed to ensuring that Southlake has the support it needs to grow with our community, and I am proud to say that this commitment is becoming a reality.

Our government has officially advanced the redevelopment of Southlake's Davis Drive site and the construction of a brand-new acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury. This two-site network will significantly expand capacity and ensure that more than 250,000 residents across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County continue to receive high-quality care close to home. In just the past year, the province has invested more than \$58 million in support of Southlake's operations, services, and planning work. This includes \$10 million dedicated specifically to advancing the capital planning required for both the redevelopment of the existing site and the development of the



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

new hospital. These investments reaffirm our government's commitment to strengthening health care in our region and supporting the outstanding team at Southlake who care for our community every single day.

Big news for transit riders, it was a pleasure to meet with the Municipality of York Region to announce our government's investment of more than \$17.7 million through the Gas Tax program. This support will help expand service hours, enhance routes, improve accessibility, and maintain reliable transit options for residents across the region. Public transit plays a vital role in connecting people to work, school, medical appointments, and the daily services they rely on. Strengthening local transit means strengthening the quality of life and economic vitality of Newmarket—Aurora.

Another step was realized last week as we unveiled the sign at Gladman and Yonge St in Newmarket for the building the first of its kind

in Ontario, the York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre. On July 2, 2024, the Minister of Health came to Newmarket to announce that our government was committing to build this centre. Last year, we announced \$1.1 million for the initial phase of planning for the operations. The unveiling of this sign makes the statement of ‘progress’. This centre will be open 24/7. The goal of this centre is to ensure that a person's first mental health crisis is their last. The grand opening is scheduled for late spring 2027. Stay tuned for further updates over the next 12 months.

As we look ahead to June, which is officially Seniors Month in the province of Ontario thanks to my Private Members Bill, I am delighted to invite all seniors in our community to my Third Annual Seniors' Expo. After two highly successful editions over the past two years, I am proud to continue offering this event to support, celebrate, and connect our seniors with valuable local services and resources. This year's expo will take place on Friday, June 5th, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Newmarket Community Centre and Lions Hall. The event will feature local exhibitors, informative presentations, and a complimentary tearoom, creating an engaging and welcoming environment for seniors to gather and learn.

I look forward to seeing many of you there as we continue building a stronger, healthier, and more connected Newmarket—Aurora together. I also want to wish everyone a restful and enjoyable Victoria Day long weekend. Whether you spend it outdoors, taking in the warmer weather, or gathering with family and friends for a BBQ, I hope it brings you time to relax and recharge.

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

The world must move away from coal, gas and oil — quickly. Fossil fuels pollute land, water and air, create global instability and energy price volatility, increase the gap between rich and poor and alter the climate in ways that threaten health and survival.

But it's difficult to accomplish this when the global economic system prevents governments from protecting public health and the environment.

The First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels — held in Santa Marta, Colombia, from April 24 to 29 — shone a spotlight on this contradiction. Hosted by Colombia and the Netherlands, it brought government representatives from 57 nations together with Indigenous Peoples, scientists, academics, non-governmental organizations, farmers, youth, women and labour, health and social movements.

Participants underscored that the climate crisis is far beyond an environmental emergency; it's the ultimate test of whether international cooperation, strained under current economic and legal systems, can serve communities and people rather than protecting concentrated private power.

The international trade and investment treaties that underpin the global economy allow corporate interests to override peoples' rights to a healthy environment, life, water, food and democratic decision-making.

The Santa Marta conference made clear that the global struggle against fossil fuel dependence must be understood as part of a much longer movement for global economic justice. Formal colonial rule may have receded but many of its economic structures have endured through trade, finance and law.

Assisted by investment treaties and investor-

Colombia conference carves better climate and trade path

state dispute settlements, foreign corporations have been granted powerful rights to challenge public interest measures when they feel their profits — or even speculative profits — are affected. Communities facing environmental harm, displacement or threats to health from extractive industries enabled through foreign investments have no equivalent standing.

More than 2,500 international investment treaties, including several Canada has signed, allow corporations to bypass domestic courts and bring claims before private tribunals that operate with limited transparency and outside ordinary judicial safeguards, escaping virtually all public scrutiny.

This means foreign corporations can contest climate measures, environmental protections, Indigenous rights and public health decisions that might hinder their profits in a parallel, opaque legal system designed to buttress investor privilege. Even when governments' duties to regulate in the public interest ultimately prevail, the risk of costly claims can create a regulatory chill and discourage ambitious action before policies are enacted.

The fossil fuel sector has been a principal benefactor. Worldwide, companies have challenged coal phase-outs and cancelled infrastructure projects, drilling restrictions and other efforts necessary to accelerate the energy transition, uphold human and environmental rights and protect climate and biodiversity. Although states have committed to transition away from fossil fuels (as evidenced by the decision at the 2023 COP28 climate summit to “accelerate action across all areas by 2030”), they remain constrained by legal arrangements that can penalize them for doing so.

Canada has been an active participant, promoting investment protections through trade and bilateral investment agreements that have benefited many Canadian extractive

interests abroad.

Canada has also been a target. When democratic institutions in Quebec rejected the development of a new liquefied natural gas pipeline and export terminal, and subsequently adopted measures to restrict fossil fuel development, American corporations (Lone Pine Resources and Ruby River Capital) reframed those decisions as investor losses requiring compensation and sued the Quebec and federal governments for billions.

New legal developments such as the Building Canada Act and the sovereign wealth fund could help build a more resilient and forward-looking economy, but only if they contribute to ending Canada's lethal fossil fuel dependence. Public investment can and should play a central role in financing renewable energy, public infrastructure and a just transition. But these tools must be governed by clear public interest objectives. If deregulation weakens safeguards, or public funds are used to prolong fossil fuel dependence, we're not transforming the system but extending it.

If Canada wants credibility on climate leadership, it must end support for investor-state dispute settlements, reform trade and investment rules, respect Indigenous rights and ensure new public institutions and initiatives such as a sovereign wealth fund serve the transition rather than the status quo.

The Santa Marta conference leaves no doubt: climate action requires unhinging power from foreign corporate privilege and putting it toward justice, democracy and the communities most affected.

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with David Suzuki Foundation Director-General for Quebec and Atlantic Canada Sabaa Khan. Learn more at david Suzukisuzuki.org

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A “once-in-a-life-time GTA National Park opportunity”

On the northeast edge of the Greater Toronto Area is something truly extraordinary: Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP).

Accessible by public transit, it's one of the most biodiverse places in Canada—home to 1,700 species of plants and animals, including 42 species at risk. And next to it, in North Pickering, lies 37 square kilometres of federal lands that could improve the ecological integrity and sustainability of this national treasure.

Why these lands matter

Southern Ontario is the most developed and ecologically damaged area of Canada.

It was dominated by forests and wetlands when it was taken from First Nations and given to settlers by the British Crown. Since 1800, 94% of its forests have been cleared and 70% of its wetlands drained.

The remaining habitat is fragmented and under constant pressure from urban development, industrial-farming, pollution, invasive species, and climate change.

That's why the federal lands in RNUP and North Pickering are so important. They are the largest remaining public land assembly in Canada's endangered Carolinian and Mixed Woodland ecozones which are home to 20% of Canada's species at risk.

They are part of Rouge River and Duffins Creek watersheds which are home to species at risk like red-side dace and Atlantic salmon. When these species disappear, it's a warning sign that our health is also at risk.

Protecting these lands isn't just about wildlife—it's about clean water, mitigation of flooding and climate change, opportunities for permaculture, and healthy communities.

A rare opportunity

For five decades, these lands were set aside for a proposed Pickering Airport that was never built because there was effective public opposition, and No Airport business case.

In January 2025, the federal government finally cancelled the airport plan and committed to adding the “vast majority” of the federal lands in North Pickering to RNUP.

That decision was widely celebrated—but it has not been implemented yet.

Adding all 37 square kilometres to Rouge National Urban Park could create and restore a larger, better connected natural area where endangered wildlife can thrive, ecosystems and watersheds can recover, and local food can be grown without pesticides.

Canada made a promise

In 2022, Canada signed the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, promising to protect 30% of its lands and waters by 2030.

But in Southern Ontario's most endangered ecosystems, our Carolinian and Mixed Forests, less than 1% of the land is currently protected in national and provincial parks.

That's a huge gap—and a federal responsibility to do better.

The path forward is clear. The federal government should honour its commitment and permanently protect all 37 square kilometres of the federal lands in North Pickering by adding them to Rouge National Urban Park.

This is a rare opportunity to:

- Protect species at risk by restoring forests and wetlands;
- Reduce climate change, flooding and pollution by restoring forests and wetlands;
- Support pesticide-free local food production; and
- Improve public access to nature in a region with few national parks.

If the federal government gets this right, future generations will inherit a greener, healthier, more resilient GTA — with a green door to mother nature's beauty and diversity.

Jim Robb
Friends of the Rouge Watershed

AccessAbility week will “ramp up” awareness in Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

National AccessAbility Week will begin May 24 and the Town of Aurora is inviting the entire community to take part and “ramp up” their efforts to build a more inclusive community.

The theme for National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) is “Ramp up to AccessAbility Week” and the Town has put together a full program of initiatives that highlight the importance of having a barrier-free community.

“This special week allows us to continue shaping an inclusive Aurora – one that removes barriers

and ensures that everyone has a chance to participate in activities with equal opportunity,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “We are dedicated to ensuring accessibility for all residents and visitors, by continuously improving facilities and services to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.”

Several activities and workshops are planned to mark NAAW.

Programming begins Wednesday, May 27, with a Behavioural Management System Training workshop set for the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex from 4 – 9 p.m.

“The Behaviour Management System (BMS) Practitioner Training

is a comprehensive, evidence-informed program designed to equip professionals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support individuals who display challenging behaviours,” say organizers. “Grounded in trauma-aware, person-centred, and strengths-based principles, this training prepares practitioners to create safe, respectful, and effective environments across educational, clinical, community and residential settings.”

Registration for the workshop is \$25 per person.

Programs continue at Aurora Town Square on Thursday, May 28, with a seminar on Brain Health hosted by the Alzheimer Society of York Region.

This free session, which runs from 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m., is open to the entire community and anyone “interested in learning more about maintaining brain health for themselves, their families, or those they support.”

The week culminates in a full community celebration at the Stronach Aurora Recreation complex on Saturday, May 30, from 12 noon to 4 p.m.

The party includes adaptive sport try-it sessions ranging from Rhythmic Gymnastics and Bocce Ball with Special Olympics, Wheelchair Basketball and Sledge Floor Hockey with Para Sport Ontario, a Seated Fitness Class, open gym and public swim opportunities, arts and crafts, and much more.

For a full schedule of events, visit aurora.ca/NNAW.

“Aurora continues to take active steps towards becoming a more accessible and inclusive Town,” says

Accessibility is more than infrastructure – it’s about creating environments, services, and opportunities that work for people of all abilities

the Town of Aurora. “We are proud of the partnerships, programs, and initiatives that promote meaningful participation and representation for all residents – including those with visible and invisible disabilities.... We invite community members, organizations, and businesses to join us in this important recognition and to explore how we can continue to make Aurora a place where everyone belongs.

“Accessibility is more than infrastructure – it’s about creating environments, services, and opportunities that work for people of all abilities. The Town of Aurora is dedicated to advancing accessibility through thoughtful policy, inclusive programming, and strong partnerships with local organizations and community leaders.”

This dedication is underscored in the official proclamation for NAAW in Aurora issued by the Mayor’s Office which notes Aurora is committed to “fostering a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community where all residents – regardless of ability – can fully participate and thrive.”

“Accessibility is a shared responsibility that requires ongoing collaboration, education, and action to eliminate barriers and ensure equity of opportunity and experience for all,” reads the proclamation. “The Town of Aurora recognizes the importance of meaningful inclusion and the role of persons with disabilities in enriching the social, cultural, and economic fabric of our community. NAAW encourages reflection, dialogue, and action to create environments that are not only accessible, but inclusive by design and built in partnership with those with lived experiences.”



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Cenotaph Centennial secures gold for Aurora, King, Stouffville



Pictured here, celebrating the tri-municipality win are: Meghan Houston (King), Liza Mallyon (King), Michelle Johnson (Aurora), Ally Falzone (Aurora), Jeremy Hood (Aurora), Krista Rauchenstein (Stouffville), Melissa Vella Singh (Stouffville). **Contributed photo**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The tri-municipality collaboration celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Cenotaph brought home the gold for Aurora, King, and Whitchurch-Stouffville at the Hermes Creative Awards.

The Hermes Creative Awards, a program of the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals, honours excellence in traditional and emerging media.

The Gold Award for the three municipalities, which came together to mark the 100th anniversary of the Aurora-based monument memorializing those from each community who made the ultimate sacrifice for King & Country during the First World War, was a testament to the “depth, quality, and impact” of the initiative.

“The Aurora-Whitchurch-King War Memorial (AWM) stands as a powerful symbol of remembrance and joint collaboration,” said Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas. “This recognition is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. I am incredibly proud of the thoughtful, creative and respectful way this memorial was commemorated, and grateful to our municipal partners, the Legions and community members who helped bring this important historical story to life.”

Added King Township Mayor Steve Pellegrini: “Receiving this international recognition affirms what our communities can achieve when working together. The AWM monument first erected in 1925 was the result of collective dedication, as residents came together to honour those who lost their lives from King, Aurora and Whitchurch. 100 years later, that same collaborative spirit lives on in the 2025 exhibition, created through partnerships across our community to preserve, interpret, and share this history anew.”

Kudos were also offered by Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt who said, “this

initiative reflects what is possible when communities come together with a shared purpose. It honours not only those commemorated on the memorial, but also the collective effort to keep their legacy visible and meaningful in our communities today.”

The Cenotaph’s centennial celebration kicked off last fall with a mobile exhibition erected outside the monument, located on Yonge Street, just south of Edward Street, along with street banners in each community paying tribute to individuals immortalized on the monument.

A special service and rededication ceremony was held before the monument in October, followed by a reception at the Aurora Legion.

Since then, the mobile exhibition has taken the show on the road and is due to land at the King Heritage and Cultural Centre later this year.

“For us, this project was very deeply meaningful given the topic and what it was that we were commemorating the anniversary of. Everybody that approached this project did so in such a reverential and respectful way, right down to the third-party companies that were producing the signage for the outdoor exhibit,” says Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum & Archives. “Everybody had such a reverence and respect for the topic, for the work, and I think the awards underscore that – how much passion everybody brought for it and how important it was to everybody involved to see that these men and their memory were honored, as well as the people of these three communities who came together.”

This passion was also underscored by Meghan Houston of the King Heritage & Cultural Centre, who said it was also a chance to renew the ties between the three municipalities and underscore to the residents of King that this is their monument as well.

“King is very much a community of communities and being able to bring together the stories of the boys from Nobleton, the boys from Schomberg,

Continued on page 23

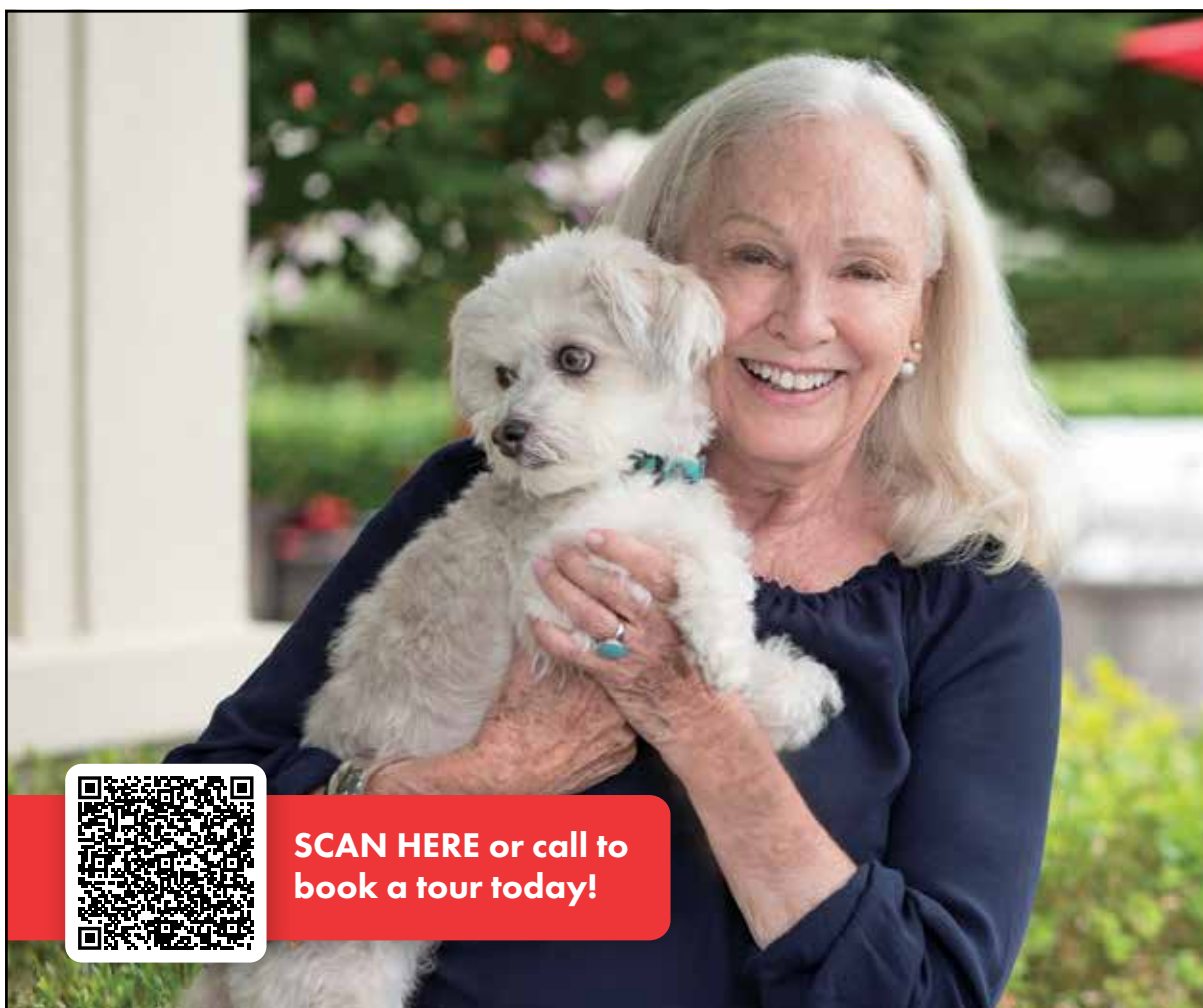


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WEEK OF MAY 14, 2026



Champion table tennis player Grace Wong, fourth from right, is flanked by Kristin Fawcett Daja and Karen Merk, and participants at a skills-building Table Tennis Workshop hosted at The Loft in conjunction with Youth Week – and the 100th anniversary of the sport itself. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

World Champion Grace Wong inspires teens and tweens at Aurora Youth Week Table Tennis workshop

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora Sports Hall of Famer and World Champion Grace Wong led a group of aspiring table tennis players through skills-building activities at The Loft in the Aurora Family Leisure Complex last Tuesday afternoon.

The Aurora Youth Week Table Tennis Workshop also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the sport.

ASHoF volunteers Kristin Fawcett Daja and Karen Merk engaged the teens and tweens through a series of trivia questions about table tennis and led the attendees in a sports-specific dynamic warmup to get them primed for dribbling, serving, volleying, and smashing.

After serving and volleying techniques were taught by Wong, the competitive juices were stoked, teams were selected, and games were played up to 11.

Resplendent in her red ASHoF golf shirt and clearly in tip-top shape for the upcoming Masters World Championships in South Korea, Wong's presence as a global champion was evident in her spontaneous coaching moments and demonstrations of skill during the workshop.

She positively reinforced the youthful players' forehand motions and paddle strokes—making them

comfortable in a supportive yet competitive setting.

In the hotly-contested matches that ensued, the youngsters demonstrated their quick learning and athleticism in spirited rallies and quick twitch returns.

Wong said she was impressed with the entry level players' improvement over the course of the session.

"The best part of the workshop was to see them go from not knowing how to play to enjoying the games as well as going from being scared-looking to smiling. I felt happy for them. It was great to see how quickly they learned and how interested they were to learn. At the end, they wanted to beat their opponent—their determination was very encouraging."

The 2024 Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Inductee also took time during a workshop water break to delineate her plans to compete in an upcoming global championship tournament.

"I'll be travelling to the 2026 World Masters Table Tennis Championships in Seoul, South Korea in June and competing in three divisions: Women's Singles, Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles. I went to Montreal last month to play for the first time with my new left-handed Mixed Doubles partner. We were able to get some court time together and work out how we fit together on the court. He's an Iranian-Canadian and we're looking forward to competing

together in South Korea."

Wong added that "my new Women's Doubles partner is 35-years-old" and the soon-to-be 60-year-old declared herself "ready" to take on the world from June 7-12.

"I'm leaving on June 4 for Seoul to get myself prepared for Singles. It was fun that we wrapped up today's workshop with the kids challenging

me. They were filled with curiosity and enthusiasm for the sport and fueled my desire to compete next month."

As noted in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Facebook post about the Wong's Table Tennis workshop, "Moments like these help inspire the next generation of athletes and leaders in our community."

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ASC wins Canada Soccer’s prestigious “Canada Soccer Organisation of Distinction Award”

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Ontario Soccer Regional Director and Canada Soccer representative Jacques Konig presented the Canada Soccer Organisation of Distinction Award to President Martin Ambrose on Thursday night at the Aurora Soccer Club.

President Ambrose was taken by the honor bestowed upon the 72-year-old sports organization and provided historical context for more than 35 attendees.

“We are truly humbled to say the least. This sort of recognition always gives pause to be thankful to those who came before us and laid the

pathway that we all enjoy today. It’s no exaggeration that the founders could have barely imagined that the Aurora Soccer Club would be recognized as a Canadian Soccer Organisation of Distinction. Only 33 organizations have received this award across Canada and it belongs to the club’s players, coaches, parents, and volunteers. It’s fantastic to be part of the thirty-three clubs that have been recognized.”

Ambrose thanked Konig for his kind words about the Club as well as Tony Barbieri of the York Region Soccer Association for attending the presentation.

The affable ASC President also expressed his gratitude towards “the

lifers and club reps in attendance including Benny and Trudy Steenhorst, Alan Dean, Dave Geering, John Pickering, Eddy Boyle, Ove Bakman, Malcolm Cocking, John Aird, Ovi Mucuceanu, Paul Eccleston, Natalie Veneziale, and Brian Casey.”

Special recognition was made of Ed McNally’s attendance.

Ambrose singled out the Aurora Sports Hall of Famer’s “37 caps for Canada” and thanked “Hearts Captain Malcolm, Dave, Alistair, and Benny for bringing the Hearts and United together in the early 80s—cementing the foundation we know today.”

“The most satisfying part of tonight’s presentation is to see all these gentlemen—who are life members—get recognition after they put in years building the Club. They’re all volunteers. The relationship makes you proud and passionate about what we do here—especially growing the Club from 160 to 850 playing members and it’s all been built within a 100% volunteer organization.”

Thursday night’s presentation was the first stage of celebrating the Club’s award.

Ambrose explained the Spring and Summer sequence of events: “As a club and community, we intend to celebrate this recognition during the World Cup and our Club’s charitable events throughout the Summer months. This will provide an opportunity for our members, supporters, and the broader community to join in the celebration. This is a great accolade when you look at the success of soccer in Canada, especially in a year when we are co-hosting the World Cup. During World Cup matches being played



Ontario Soccer Regional Director and Canada Soccer rep Jacques Konig presents the Canada Soccer Organisation of Distinction Award to Aurora Soccer Club President Martin Ambrose on Thursday night at the ASC.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

by Canada, England, Scotland, and other countries represented by our Club’s membership, we’ll be celebrating this milestone and all the key moments in the soccer club’s journey. It’s going to be an exciting year for the Aurora Soccer Club.”

“The Canada Soccer Organisation of Distinction Award” recognizes Canadian soccer clubs and organizations that have made a positive impact on the game at the national, provincial, and community level. The award—which is part of the Canada Soccer Hall of Fame Induction ceremonies in 2026 – recognizes clubs, academies, leagues, and organizations that were established more than 50 years ago.

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Celebrating Mom at Hillary House



Mother's Day was "steeped" in history over the weekend as the Aurora Historical Society hosted a series of Mother's Day teas throughout Hillary House National Historic Site. Among the families celebrating their matriarchs were (top) Sasha, Atoossa, Heather, Andrew and James; and (above) Elaine, Eve, Candace, Sandy, and Rose. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

Mrakas will seek a third term as Aurora's Mayor

From page 1

Ontario Environment Minister Chris Ballard, and long-time deputy mayor John Abel for the Town's top job.

He secured a second term in the 2022 Municipal Election against challengers Phiona Durrant and Anna Lozyk Romeo.

His registration on Friday makes the Mayoral campaign a three-way race so far, with challengers John Gallo, currently Aurora's Ward 5 Councillor; and resident Shawn Deane confirming their intentions on May 1, the first day candidate registration opened.

The first day of nominations also saw the first candidates step forward for Ward Councillor positions, with another entrant at the start of the week.

It is currently a two-person race in Ward 1 with Lauren Hanna and Rocco Morsillo vying to represent Aurora's historic central core at the Council table. Incumbent Ron Weese had not formalized his intentions by press time.

Nikki Alber will also be on the ballot, seeking election in Ward 3.

Ward 3 is currently represented by long-time councillor Wendy Gaertner. Gaertner, who has served as Councillor

since 2003, has stated she will not be seeking re-election and has formally endorsed Alber for the position.

Michael Thompson, incumbent Councillor for Ward 4, has confirmed his intention to seek re-election, but is yet to formally register for the race.

"Having a vision is wonderful, but it doesn't mean anything if you don't get it done," said Mrakas in a campaign note shared through his website. "Residents deserve better than the status quo — leadership that promises a lot and delivers nothing. Over the course of two terms on Council, I have brought forward 76 motions, 70 of which had the majority support of my colleagues. That's 70 innovative possibilities, 70 solutions to issues that matter most to residents. I have demonstrated that I have the critical leadership capability that residents expect.

"From protecting our environment to preserving Aurora's heritage properties, from getting the most out of your tax dollars, to protecting our right to decide how, when, or if our community grows, I have a proven track record of getting things done for Aurora."

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Sun shines down on Aurora Farmers' Market



The Aurora Farmers' Market's opening day on May 2, may have been cold, snowy and wet, but Mother Nature shined upon its second Saturday on May 9 as shoppers descended on Town Park for the event. Among the weekend patrons were (TOP ROW) Savannah, Nolan, Grayson, Mea, and Sandra; and Lynne, who picked up some produce from Daniel. (SECOND ROW) May is Pollinator Month and Garden Aurora and the Aurora Community Arboretum were out in force. (THIRD ROW) Volunteers Melody and Sid kept things moving, while musician Jordan kept customers grooving. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**



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CMHA celebrates new signage “Leading the Way” to future Mental Health Centre



Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Lead the Way Gala set for May 28

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Supporters of the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe are set to descend on Aurora on May 28 as the organization hosts its Lead the Way gala, supporting the future York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre.

Billed as a first-of-its-kind 24/7 hub for mental health and addictions care in the communities of York Region and south Simcoe County, The Centre marked a milestone on its anticipated road to welcoming its first clients in 2027 with the dedication of new signage on Friday.

Located on Yonge Street in

Newmarket, directly opposite the headquarters of the Regional Municipality of York, the future site of the Centre welcomed Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor and members of the CMHA-YRSS team for the occasion.

“Just putting the sign up doesn’t really change anything, we’re already doing this work, we already know the direction, but it is a milestone – [it shows] that it’s there and it demonstrates the commitment of our funders – the Ministry of Health and York Region – to build The Centre,” says Frances Reinholdt, Interim CEO of the CMHA-YRSS. “We’re on target for moving through the next steps for approval, moving to the RFP... and getting shovels in the ground so that we can have clients through the door in 2027. There’s a little bit of fluidity in terms of what the timelines will look

like because these are complicated steps, they’re sequential – we’ll get them done, but they are complicated.”

Community consultation on how The Centre will ultimately serve the communities in its catchment area continue, and these conversations extend to all the partners that have come together to make the facility a reality.

“The work that we’re doing is really bringing people in house to walk through and get their advice and get them to guide and help us develop that,” says Reinholdt. “I think when you’re doing anything innovative, it’s incumbent upon you to reach out and understand what people are hearing and thinking about, and then really trying to work with that both in terms of how you message and help people understand what is the value for the community? What’s the value for this Centre, and what will it provide for people here and their families?”

“I’m a neighbour of the Centre, so it’s personal for me that we get this right.”

The Centre has taken on extra resonance for Reinholdt as she steps up

to temporarily fill the leadership role left by former CEO Rebecca Shields, who departed the organization earlier this spring to head up Kids Help Phone. Reinholdt has been with the CMHA-YRSS for more than five years, most recently serving as Vice President of Clinical Operations.

“The draw for me to come to CMHA in the first place back in 2021 was, one, it’s an organization that does incredible work in the community and, two, the vision to open a community-based 24-7 mental health centre,” she says. “My background is in hospitals – I’m a nurse, I’m a hospital person – and I have been in ‘community’ before, but just this opportunity to develop a community-based centre of access for people with mental health and addictions was such an incredible opportunity. I appreciate the vision of the CMHA, our funders, and all of the partners in the system that said, ‘This is what we want to try.’”

“For me, it’s continuing to build on the work already done. Moving into the CEO role right now is an exciting time. We get to celebrate next steps and anticipate getting closer to being able to build in the near future.”

The next celebration will take place at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Industrial Parkway South when it provides the backdrop for the May 28 gala.

Organizers say the gala “offers a memorable experience with something for everyone.”

“Every ticket, sponsorship, and donation moves us closer to opening a warm, welcoming, and dignified space where people can access the right supports, at the right time, in one central location.”

For more information on how you can support the Gala and the efforts to make The Centre a reality, visit: cmha-yr.on.ca/cmha-signature-events/lead-the-way-gala.

Hundreds pay tribute to Saberi at Celebration of Life

From page 9

the best uncle I could ever ask for,” she said, adding he was her number-one supporter. “Although he never gave me a cousin, he did have a child of his own, which was Tina’s Grill. He loved that restaurant, and loved everyone who supported it, especially at times like COVID. Everyone’s support just pushed them through, and I know he appreciated every single one of you guys so much.

“I know Sam would really appreciate every single one of you for coming today, so every time you see the colours of orange or black together, every time the Flyers win, or the Eagles, or the Blue Jays, or the Raptors, still think of him. Every time Morgan Wallen comes on the radio or country music, think of him. Every time you witness silly pranks... think of him. Most importantly, every time you see someone that has a smile that fills the entire room, always puts others before themselves, and always shares kindness with everyone, think of him. That’s the legacy he left

behind, and we must continue it.

“I encourage you to reach out and give back to the community. Commit acts of kindness and treat others with love, as that is what Sam would do. His name was big in Aurora, but his heart was even bigger.”

Tina’s Grill, located on McClellan Way, just east of Bathurst Street, re-opened for business, for the first time since Saberi’s passing, on May 5.

Sharing a message from her grandparents, Hossein and Azar, Maya noted it was their way of keeping Sam’s legacy alive in the community.

“When Sam went to heaven on April 21, we thought our lives were over too and there was no future for us,” said Azar and Hossein in the message delivered by their granddaughter. “But after all of your support and the unbelievable comments, it gave us enough strength to follow his heart and legacy he had left behind. We go back to work to keep his name and legacy alive forever. We promise this from the bottom of our hearts.”

OBITUARIES - FOREVER IN OUR Hearts

Eli Melrose Smith

Eli Smith passed away on May 3, 2026, leaving behind a legacy of love, family, and cherished memories.

Born on April 21, 1946, in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Eli lived a life defined by his devotion to those closest to him and by his legendary sense of humour. He was known for being a truly kind and patient husband, father, uncle, and friend.

He was the beloved husband of Carmelita Smith, with whom he shared many years of partnership and affection. Eli was a proud and guiding father to his three children: Melanie (Raul), Jason (Melissa), and Andrew (Nellma). His role as a grandfather brought him immense joy, and he will be deeply missed by Aidan, Ethan, Nathaniel, and Connor.

He is survived by his sisters and their families: Linda Critch, wife of the late Austin, and their daughter, Michele; and Trudy McEvoy (PJ), and their children, Brian and Stephen. Eli now joins his brothers, Allen, father of Sara and Derek, and Percy, father of Adam, Andy, and Lisa, in eternal rest.

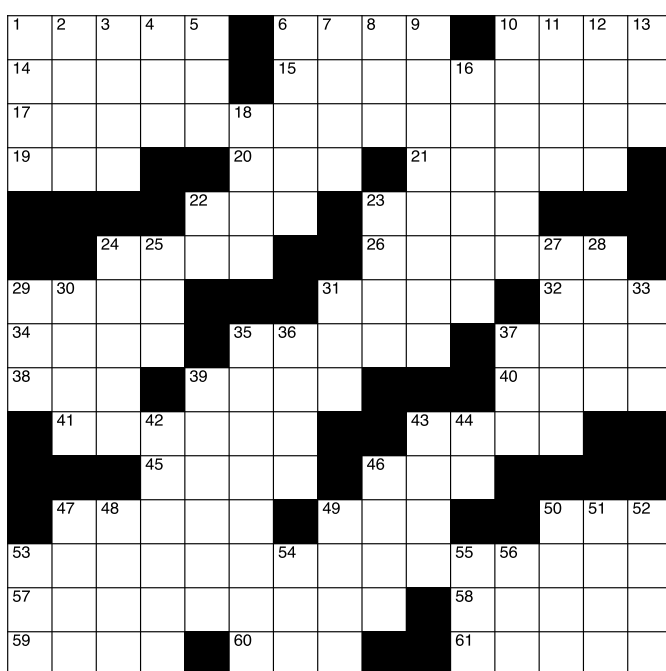
Eli was known for being a truly kind and patient soul. He had a quick wit and was famously known for his one-liners and the best “dad jokes,” always ready to bring a smile or a laugh to those around him.

He will be remembered as a man of character and a steady presence in the lives of his family and friends. His warmth, kindness, and humor will live on in the stories and jokes shared by those who knew him best. He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered forever.

A funeral service was held on May 13, 2026, at Thompson Funeral Home in Aurora, followed by interment at Westminster Cemetery in Toronto.



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CLUES ACROSS

- Notable casino destination
- Current units
- Roman military unit
- American lizard
- Fates
- The Yankees have lots of these
- Unhappy
- Mimic
- Remove from the record
- Where cargo ships dock (abbr.)
- A way to fight
- Turfs
- Contract
- Country along the Arabian peninsula
- Tree species
- Pituitary gland secretion (abbr.)
- Perfect

- “Partner” to groans
- Jewish calendar month
- Where wrestlers work
- Egotistical
- Potted plants
- Containers
- Large, flightless birds
- Part of a book
- American spies
- Pancakes made of buckwheat flour
- Swiss river
- Disfigure
- Have surgery
- Formal withdrawal
- Early English council
- Area units
- 2,000 lbs.
- Siskel and ___

CLUES DOWN

- Animal jaws
- Small water buffalo
- An appliance has one
- Every
- Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
- Very skilled
- No more than what is specified
- Tire measurement
- Towers
- Forward
- Jacob ___, American journalist
- Vale
- Former CIA
- Middle Eastern nation
- Exhausts
- South Dakota
- The complete duration of something
- Kids love him
- Singular
- Cod genus
- Mild yellow Dutch cheese
- Resistance unit
- Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- Cast out
- 60-minute periods
- Most worn
- European river
- Atomic mass unit
- Items of food
- Body parts
- Ireland
- Partner to Pa
- Sammy ___, songwriter
- Dutch settler
- Full-grown pike fish
- Sun or solar disk
- Minute arachnid
- From a distance
- A monthly expense
- Young women’s association
- Brazilian state
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- Pointed end of a pen



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THINGS... you ought to know

Cenotaph Centennial secures gold for Aurora, King, Stouffville

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.

THURSDAY, MAY 14
All are welcome to attend the Aurora Cultural Centre tonight for the opening night of Jing Fu: Unearthed – My Equilibrium from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided with remarks at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 16
The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Happiness Mafia and Town of Aurora present Jeremie Albino tonight at Aurora Town Square. Jeremie Albino is a Canadian roots rock singer-songwriter whose songs are grounded in the gritty storytelling of classic country music, propelled by the rhythms of old-school R&B, played with the wild abandon of early rock 'n' roll, and sung with the deep feeling of southern soul. For more information, including tickets, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

SATURDAY, MAY 23
The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 24
Garden Aurora will host its annual Plant Sale today from 11.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. at Aurora Home Hardware, Rain or Shine. This is a cash-only event. All are welcome to attend our community sale which is an annual fundraiser. Our generous members are sharing their beloved plants with the community at extremely reasonable prices. There will be knowledgeable gardeners on hand to help answer questions. Plan to come early as most years we have a line-up of people waiting before we start. Any questions? Please reach out to us through our website www.gardenaurora.ca.

SUNDAY, MAY 31
AURORA PRIDE FESTIVAL
Join the Aurora Community Band and Borealis Big Band, in partnership with the Town of Aurora and York Pride, as we celebrate the 2nd Annual Aurora Pride Festival on Sunday, May 31, 2026, from 1 to 5 p.m. at Aurora Town Square. Enjoy an uplifting afternoon of music, connection, and celebration as we come together to honour diversity, inclusion, and community in the heart of Aurora. For more, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

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/special-events/aurora-performing-arts-festival.

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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.

From page 15
and the boys from King City, not just under the story of a shared experience of people in King, but it's also a shared experience of people from York Region," she said. "This project, I think, opened a lot of people's eyes to how closely connected King and Aurora were.

"We got the chance to delve back into old newspapers and old letters to really hear about what the experiences of the everyday person was like in the aftermath of that. It wasn't just families dealing with loss; it was farms that lost farmhands who had been parts of the family for the last few years, it was neighbours and teachers, and everybody was affected by it. I think a project like this definitely shows how interconnected not just our communities are, but the families that live in those communities."

From Johnson's perspective, the commemoration of the Cenotaph's centennial and it's readdiction was also a "recommitment" to fostering the Peace Park in which it stands as a "shared place" for all three communities.

"I think we tend to think of our

boundaries, especially in the municipal museum world where myself, Meghan, and our colleagues in Stouffville come from, they're pretty defined but the reality is people continue to engage with people all across the different communities and traverse the different spaces for different things," she says. "It's always been like that. It was certainly like that around the time that the memorial was constructed in the early 1900s. I think it's important to remember that because there's strength in coming together like that.

"Having something like this memorial constructed and the park dedicated for this purpose of coming together, whether we can speak about it comfortably or not, it still serves that role. People still attend the park and they have for over 100 years for the purpose of remembering, reflecting, and paying respects. I think if we have more people from the three different communities coming on a regular basis, I think it's a very powerful and important thing because people across the communities are connected, whether it's through school, home, work, shopping, and they have been for quite a long time."

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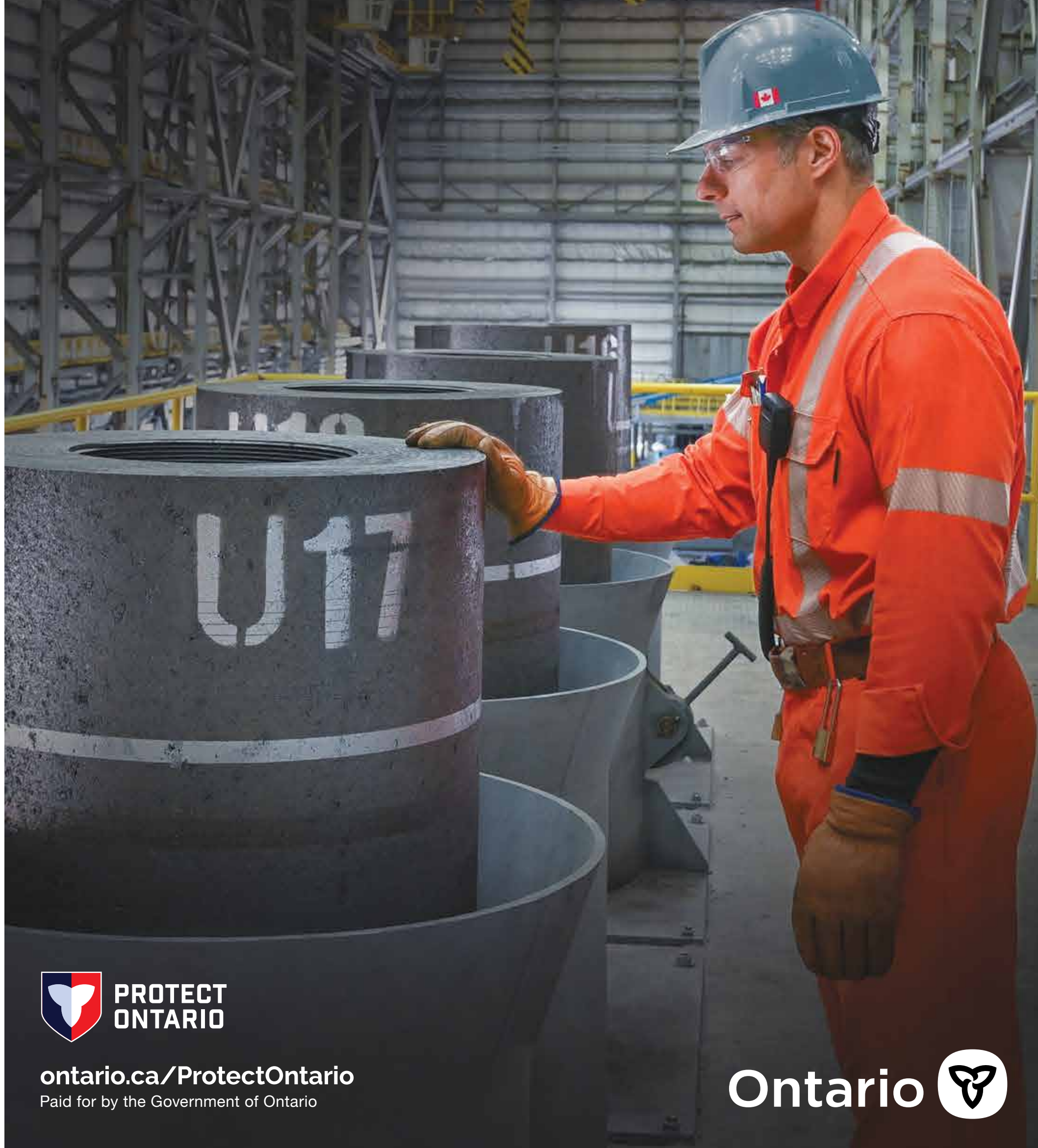
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