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THE AURORED

Aurora's Community Newspaper
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VOL 27 | NO. 36 | 905-727-3300 **FREE** WEEK OF JUNE 11, 2026



FESTIVAL FUN – Tens of thousands descended on Yonge Street for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's annual Aurora Street Festival. More than 500 vendors, businesses and other participants lined the route, but food trucks, buskers, and more feeding body, mind and soul along the way. For more on this year's extravaganza, see Page 21. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2026 celebrated at Town Hall ceremony

Joe Bentolila, George Biondic, Paul Rosen, Shayne Stevenson, and Aurora Church Dodgers Hockey Club to be enshrined on November 5

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2026 was revealed at a public ceremony at Town Hall on Tuesday night.

ASHoF Nomination Committee Chair Rocco Morsillo presented the inductees, local lawmakers and members of the public alike at last Tuesday's Council meeting. Morsillo introduced to the assembly long-time AMHA President and Coach Joe Bentolila; long distance runner George Biondic; Team Canada Paralympic Gold Medalist goaltender Paul Rosen; former

Tampa Bay Lightning and Boston Bruin centre Shayne Stevenson; and the first team to be enshrined in the ASHoF—The Aurora Church Dodgers Hockey Club. Due to illness, Rosen was absent from the proceedings. After the formalities in the Chamber, a procession of red-jacketed Hall of Famers and blue-jacketed administrators

Continued on page 17

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Representatives of the Aurora Church Dodgers, along with Joe Bentolila, George Biondic, and Shayne Stevenson were recognized as the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2026 at Council last week. Also joining the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame this year is Paul Rosen. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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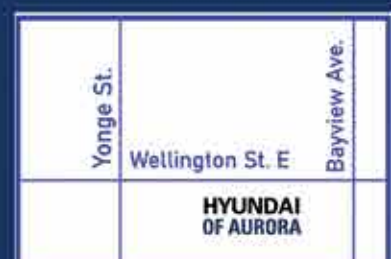
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Catch the excitement of World Cup at local viewing parties

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The world is set to descend on the Greater Toronto Area this week for the FIFA World Cup, and while tickets to Canadian games are the hottest tickets in Ontario, there's excitement to be had locally as well.

Starting this Friday, June 12, the Town of Aurora, in partnership with the Aurora Soccer Club and the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, will host a series of World Cup viewing parties at Aurora Town Square and the Aurora

Family Leisure Complex.

"The Town of Aurora is bringing the community together with Team Canada Watch Parties – creating a vibrant, inclusive space for residents to enjoy and celebrate the World Cup," said the Town of Aurora in a statement. "These events offer a fantastic opportunity for fans of all ages and backgrounds to connect, share in the excitement, and experience the energy of international soccer right here in Aurora. Watch parties will feature all Team Canada games, plus the Gold Medal match, making them a must-

attend for supporters.

"Join us as we...bring residents together in a fun, inclusive setting to celebrate soccer. Enjoy free popcorn during pool play games and enter for a chance to win raffle prizes at every game. Boost your chances to win! Earn extra raffle tickets by wearing red, Team Canada apparel, or soccer gear."

The first Watch Party will take place this Friday, June 12, at 3 p.m. at Brevik Hall, within Aurora Town Square. The fun shifts to the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Thursday, June 18, at 6 p.m. This viewing party will take place

on the floor of the Judy Sherin Arena, so bring your lawn chairs!

It's back to Aurora Town Square on Wednesday, June 24, for a further viewing party, this time in the David De Simone Performance Hall, at 3 p.m.

Additional viewing parties could be in the offing as Canada advances through the tournament.

For additional information about the World Cup Viewing Parties, including an up-to-date list of viewings as Canada's success allows, visit www.aurora.ca/SportWorkshops.



A PROUD COMMUNITY – Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councillor Wendy Gaertner, and Councillor Ron Weese joined municipal staff outside Town Hall last week to formally raise the Pride flag. A month-long celebration, the York Region Pride Parade will take place this Saturday, June 14, along Main Street, Newmarket, beginning at 4 p.m. The York Pride Festival will take place at nearby Riverwalk Commons throughout the day and into the evening. For a full roster of events, visit yorkpride.ca. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

WORLD CUP VIEWING PARTY

WITH

MP COBENA, NEWMARKET SOCCER CLUB & TOWN OF NEWMARKET

CANADA VS. BOSNIA

DETAILS

FRIDAY JUNE 12TH

RAY TWINNEY COMPLEX

3PM (FESTIVITIES LIKELY BEGINNING AT 2PM)

SANDRA COBENA
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
NEWMARKET-AURORA

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Yellow Brick House responds to legislation

Yellow Brick House acknowledges the recent discussions at Queen's Park calling for expanded access to restorative justice as an option for survivors of sexual violence within Ontario's justice system.

For many survivors, the traditional criminal court process can be lengthy, adversarial, and retraumatizing. They may be required to recount deeply painful experiences in public, over extended periods of time, within a system that does not meet the needs of survivors.

Restorative justice approaches, when appropriately designed, trauma-informed, and survivor-led, can offer an alternative pathway to provide opportunities for acknowledgment of harm, accountability from those who have caused harm, and meaningful steps toward repair. Importantly, restorative justice is not about minimizing or excusing sexual violence, nor is it about forgiveness or reconciliation. It is about creating space for survivors to define what justice and healing may look like for them, on their own terms.

A one-size-fits-all approach to justice does not reflect the complexity of sexual violence, nor does it reflect the diverse needs of those impacted. Expanding access to carefully regulated restorative justice options, alongside the criminal legal system, can strengthen survivor-centred responses and support more pathways to accountability.

As an organization supporting survivors of gender-based violence, Yellow Brick House continues to highlight the urgent need for systems that are responsive, flexible, and centred on survivor autonomy. Survivors deserve access to options that prioritize their safety and dignity whether within the criminal justice system or through alternative community-based processes.

We commend the ongoing advocacy of survivors and community organizations who continue to push for meaningful reform and expanded pathways to justice. Their voices remain central to shaping systems that are more humane, responsive, and effective.

Yellow Brick House remains committed to advocating for survivor-centred justice responses, strengthening supports for those impacted by sexual violence, and advancing systemic change that ensures survivors are heard, believed, and supported in whichever path they choose.

Yellow Brick House
Aurora, Richmond Hill

THE AURORAN

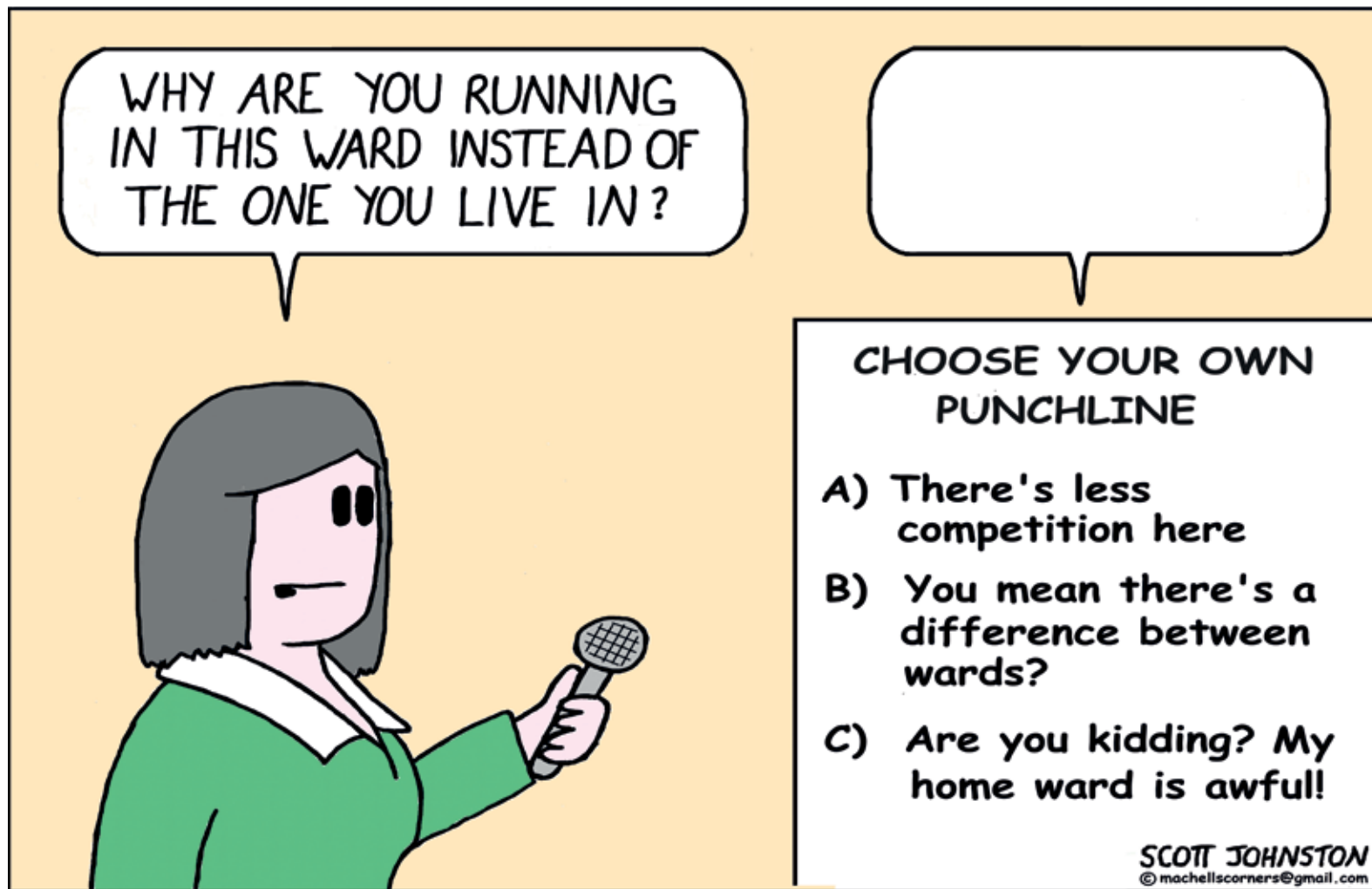
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Machell's Corners



Christmas in July came even earlier

Well, I guess it's that time of year again – I've got my first invitation to a so-called "Christmas in July" event.

While I'm certainly not one to frown on fun – and, speaking as a holiday enthusiast, these events almost always are – it's always a bit jarring when event invitations and advertisements for Christmas in July sales roll in at this time of year when summer is still a couple of weeks away.

I know it's not the intent of these occasions, but it sometimes feels like we're almost wishing away the summer. It's not dissimilar to how so many of us wish away the winter to feel the warmth of a good, sunny July day, but these yuletide yearnings make for something of a speedbump along the way to remind us that the cold and dark of the winter is not too far away.

This year, I'm just going to roll with the punches because, truth be told, I had something of a Christmas in July experience last week – a whole month early – when two items that have been on my own "grown-up Christmas list" moved that much closer to becoming reality.

In previous columns, I've often drafted up such a list as the holiday season approached – not in hopes of what I might find under the tree or in my stocking on the morning of December 25, but rather what I would like to see unfold in the year ahead.

Between the start of this month and the end of last week, two perennial entries on my list came tantalizingly closer to coming true.

The first bolt of good news came from the Ministry of Education on June 2 when Paul Calandra, Minister of Education, announced a \$4 million investment to "support new opportunities for high school students to build confidence, develop leadership skills, and gain meaningful real-world experience."

So far so good – and so far so needed and overdue in the public education sector – but what particularly caught my attention was that this program was being delivered in partnership with two venerable organizations that are experts in this field: The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award and The King's Trust Canada.

Both of these well-regarded initiatives have been embraced by our local independent schools and one of my favorite types of human interest stories to tackle in this job is speaking to students who have completed various levels in their quest for Duke of Edinburgh gold. No single experience is similar to another and there's a lot to learn when they share what they've done.

Being a monarchist from a relatively early age, it was often frustrating to go through the public school system aware that these opportunities were available and embraced elsewhere, but were virtually unheard of in our hallowed halls.



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

I did my best to change that through our student newspaper, such as it was at the time, but my prose didn't exactly set the school community on fire.

Now that the programs are set to get more exposure in Ontario than ever before, it's exciting to look ahead to all students will be learning and experiencing – and we will be a stronger Ontario for it.

"Education must prepare students not just for graduation, but for life beyond school," said Calandra in a statement. "When students have the opportunities to apply their learning in meaningful ways, they leave school better prepared for whatever path they choose. This investment will help more students access those experiences and build a strong foundation for the future."

The Ministry notes that through the partnerships, students will be able to, "enhance their adaptability and readiness for success in a rapidly changing economy; participate in skills development activities that reflect their interests and passions, helping to build self-confidence and transferable skills they can apply in life after high school; engage in voluntary service to give back to their communities by supporting people, the environment, or charitable organizations; participate in fun, skills-building, and outdoor education programs that are designed to teach young people about critical thinking, communication, networking, problem-solving, time management, and adaptability; [and] access real-world learning to support success in an evolving labour market."

"The King's Trust was founded by HM King Charles III in 1976 and was launched in Canada in 2011," the Ministry notes. "The Trust is part of an international network of charities celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and has supported 1.5 million young people in 25 countries. Its Skills Academy program is designed to help young people to build the foundational skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving and adaptability.

"Celebrating its 70th anniversary

this year, the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a globally-recognized youth development framework that supports young people to build confidence, life-skills, and purpose through real-world experiential learning both inside and outside the classroom. This program operates in more than 130 countries worldwide with over 500,000 Canadians participating since 1963."

The other instance of good news in my book came with Prime Minister Mark Carney's announcement of a national A.I. Strategy. Much-needed all around, I was particularly heartened by the fact that this strategy includes A.I. and social media literacy components for students – an element that has always been on my wish list and is much-needed in and of itself.

While one can only hope such programs will be made available to students in elementary and secondary schools as well, should the Provinces get on board, the Strategy includes a literacy component they argue will foster future opportunities.

The National AI Literacy Initiative will offer "entry-level AI training for all Canadians. As part of this effort AI literacy will reach 1 million entry-level post-secondary students and train more than 3,000 educators with AI learning kits in their classrooms. Free, accessible AI learning will include practical courses and sector-relevant modules."

"AI is here. The question is whether it will improve the lives of all Canadians or benefit only a few," said Carney in a statement. "AI can shorten our emergency room wait times and make a small business more competitive, if it is governed by Canadian values with a clear goal of improving the lives of all Canadians. That's why we need an ambitious new strategy: AI for All. We will build trust so that all Canadians are empowered to use this technology safely and with confidence. AI that builds Canada strong for all – that's our mission."

It's a good step forward, but let's keep our fingers crossed that these modules will help students also identify what's AI and what's not with ease, something that is sorely lacking in this day and age.

Perhaps this is just a pipe dream, but perhaps it is something that will work in concert with a potential social media ban for those 16-years-of-age or older. That's a column for a different week, but I remain hopeful.

While I might be able to strike more students being able to benefit from the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the King's Trust programs from my grown-up Christmas list, with that hope in mind, I have my eraser poised over AI and social media literacy as well.

Let's see where things stand in December!

THE AURORAN

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BY DAVID SUZUKI

Protected area targets face potential pitfalls

Alberta's government recently claimed almost all Crown land in the province should be considered protected, even though caribou herds there are edging closer to local extinction as logging and oil and gas development continue to degrade and fragment their habitat.

Alberta's claim comes in light of the federal commitment to meet an international target of 30 per cent land protection by 2030. As a *Globe and Mail* article reported, only 14 per cent of Canada's land base is protected, so an additional 1.6 million square kilometres must be added over the next four years to meet the objective.

Alberta could be trying to take advantage of what some interpret as a grey area under the federal government's vision: the category of "other effective conservation measures." In March, Prime Minister Mark Carney recommitted to achieve Canada's protected areas goal with a new nature strategy that identifies at least eight per cent of the target as OECMs.

"Nearly 60 per cent of the province's land base is publicly managed Crown land," Grant Hunter, Alberta's environment and protected areas minister, said. "This represents about 40 million hectares that have been responsibly managed, stewarded and conserved for decades. Land use is regulated to protect watersheds, conserve wildlife habitat, support forestry and agriculture, enable outdoor recreation and allow for responsible, carefully managed resource development."

OECM areas are managed for long-term conservation outside of traditionally regulated parks. Canada has clear criteria for them, including, "Conservation is year-round and will be maintained in the long term," and "conservation objectives are not threatened by other site objectives."

They make sense in some places. Indigenous protected and conserved areas (many governed by Indigenous law) can be good examples. The muddying of OECMs comes in part from industry, which also proclaims "conservation" despite caribou declines and argues land under its purview should be designated as OECMs.

A 2019 article by Wilfrid Laurier University associate professor Christopher Lemieux and colleagues in *Marine Policy* outlined potential risks: "Ambiguous language used to define and prescribe application of OECMs is being used as the basis for a revisionist paradigm that promises to undermine national and international conservation standards, fracture partnerships, and jeopardize the integrity of Canada's PA network."

Other potential pitfalls hamper the path to securing Canada's conservation objectives.

Numbers-based targets contain inherent risks. An article by European scientist Piero Visconti and colleagues in *Science* notes, "percentage area targets disregard the quality of what is being represented, with degraded ecosystems given the same value as those that are still functionally intact."

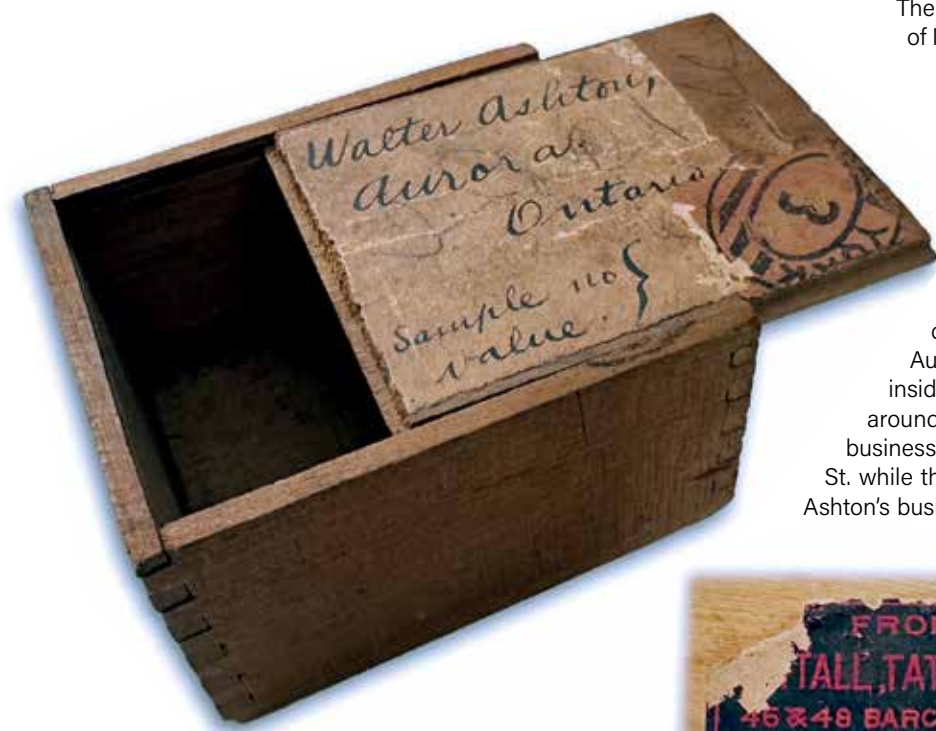
Protected areas are often too small to capture ecological processes. They can be islands of green in seas of development and extraction, lacking connectivity, often surrounded by deteriorated areas where wildlife that moves beyond the boundaries becomes threatened. Nature is dynamic, constantly shifting and evolving over long periods that allow for adaptation. Climate change alters landscapes at a faster pace. As the international Wildlife Society points out, "Protected areas are havens of biodiversity across the globe, but under a warming climate, species using them may shift their niches to areas that are no longer protected."

So too might tree and plant species move outside of protected areas in

Continued on page 23

The Whithall, Tatum & Co. of New York was one of the most prolific and significant glassmakers of the 19th century. They are best known for

the ubiquitous glass insulators used on power lines throughout the world, but their business before the advent of power distribution was supplying pharmacies and perfumeries with bottles and stoppers. This small wooden box (76.12.27) was sent through the good old postal service, for just three cents, by Whithall, Tatum & Co. to one Walter Ashton of Aurora, with some kind of pharmaceutical glass sample inside. Walter Ashton was born in 1864 in Aurora but moved around considerably during his life. In 1894, he swapped businesses with one Dr. Gould, taking over a pharmacy on Yonge St. while the Doctor took Ashton's shop in Oakville. Unfortunately, Ashton's business was short-lived, with the newspaper reporting the sale of his entire stock at 15 ½ cents on the dollar in January of 1896, and W.J. Bassett's Butcher shop moving into the space in early 1898 (21 years before he would be elected mayor). This little box, firm and solid but still a piece of ephemera, has revealed an entirely new angle to Aurora's pharmaceutical history.



Glass from the Past



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

 By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

Alas, the warmer weather has arrived and Newmarket—Aurora is once again coming alive with events, festivals, and opportunities to connect with one another. This past weekend was a perfect example of what makes our communities so special, with residents coming together to celebrate, learn, and enjoy everything our region has to offer.

One of the highlights of the weekend was my Third Annual Seniors Expo, which welcomed nearly 400 seniors from across Newmarket—Aurora and beyond. It was wonderful to see so many older adults come together to learn about the programs, services, and supports available right here in our community.

More than 30 exhibitors participated in this year's expo, sharing information on services that help seniors stay active, connected, healthy, and independent. Throughout the day, attendees also enjoyed a series of informative presentations, including a presentation from Dr. Makary of Southlake Academic Health Network on the importance of primary care.

Participants were also treated to an engaging skit performed by The Very Useful Theatre Company, and a timely cybersecurity session from Protexxa, which provided practical advice on protecting personal information and staying safe online.

Events like the Seniors Expo are especially meaningful during Seniors Month. I am proud that my Private Member's Bill received Royal Assent in December 2024, officially proclaiming June as Seniors Month in Ontario.

This designation recognizes the invaluable contributions seniors make to our families, communities, and province every day.

Our government continues to support seniors through initiatives that help them remain active and engaged. Programs such as the Seniors Active Living Centres Program provide opportunities for older adults to participate in recreational, educational, and social activities, while the Seniors Community Grant Program supports local projects that reduce isolation and encourage community participation. These investments help ensure that seniors can continue to thrive and remain connected to the people and places they love.

The celebrations continued Sunday at the Aurora Street Festival, one of the community's most anticipated annual events. It was wonderful to walk through the festival, visit local vendors and organizations, and meet with residents enjoying the beautiful weather. With

hundreds of booths lining Yonge Street, the event showcased the incredible talent, creativity, and community spirit that make Aurora such a vibrant place to live.

I would also like to thank Team DGM, who spent the day volunteering at our booth, greeting visitors, handing out wildflower seeds, and connecting with residents. Events like the Aurora Street Festival remind us of the importance of supporting local businesses, artisans, and community organizations that contribute so much to our quality of life.

As we look ahead, I hope to see many of you at the York Pride Parade taking place in Newmarket on Saturday, June 13. York Pride is an opportunity to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and the many contributions of 2SLGBTQ+ community members across York Region. It promises to be another wonderful community event as we continue a season filled with connection, celebration, and community pride.

Back by popular demand, my office is stocked with Canada Day signs in preparation for our upcoming Canada Day celebrations. Show your Canadian pride by having a sign placed on your front lawn. You are welcome to pick up your sign at my office, 16635 Yonge St., Unit 22, Newmarket, or call my office at 905-853-9889 and one of my team members will be happy to pop by your home with the sign, all free of charge.

I look forward to seeing you throughout the summer at the many events taking place across Newmarket—Aurora. Enjoy!

Growing herbs can be traced back nearly six thousand years before the Christian era began.

Herb gardening is a rewarding, low-maintenance hobby for seniors, and with a caregiver, both can enjoy active living and creative ways to use their harvest. Not all seniors have space for a garden or the mobility to take care of one, which is where herb gardening comes in. This easy kind of gardening doesn't require a lot of space or movement, but the results will make anyone proud of.

Herb gardening, even on a small scale, offers significant health benefits for seniors.

The gentle movements involved in planting, watering and pruning herbs provide light exercise that can improve fine motor skills. How many of you recall your early grades when your teacher or your parents helped you with a lima bean? Remember the excitement of seeing that little bean sprouts a green stem? As a retired elementary teacher, it was much more fun to observe the adorable reactions of young children watching something grow because of their care.

If you can, check out the dollar store for small little pots and seeds which are not costly at all.

Find a nice window in your home for sunshine and water them just a little when you see the soil getting dry. The best and easiest herbs to grow are basil, which is quick-growing and versatile in cooking, and mint which is hardy and thrives.

Here are some suggestions! Great for keeping squirrels away as well:

- Basil: Quick-growing and versatile in cooking
- Mint: Hardy and thrives in various conditions
- Chives: Requires minimal maintenance
- Rosemary: Fragrant and drought-resistant



Senior Scape

By Christina Doyle

"My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece"
- Claude Monet

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."
- Audrey Hepburn

"To see things in the seed, that is genius."
- Lao Tzu

"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves."
- Mahatma Gandhi

- Parsley: Nutritious and adds flavor to many dishes
- See you all next month!

**Roof and Parking Lot Projects
Reminder: Roof and
Parking Lot Projects
(May 2026 – September 2026)**

Beginning in May, full roof replacement work will take place at the Seniors' Centre and Town Hall.

This work is expected to have minimal impact on daily activities, and all programs will continue as scheduled.

Temporary accessible parking spaces will be placed as our permanent spaces will be impacted.

Some outdoor space around the Centre

will be fenced off to ensure safety. Following the roof work, the South parking lot shared by the Seniors' Centre and Town Hall, along with the walkway from John West Way, will undergo a full redesign to improve safety, accessibility, and overall usability. Construction is expected to begin the end of June, with the parking lot reopening in September.

Once complete, the redesigned lot will include:

- 13 additional parking spaces
- Improved lighting
- Safer traffic flow
- Better accessibility for all users

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South Parking Lot Closure: The main South parking lot will be fully closed starting the end of June and will remain closed until the project is complete (anticipated reopening in September). Centre Access: The Seniors' Centre will remain open throughout the construction period.

Evergreen Choir 2026 Spring Concert

On Saturday, June 13, at 2 p.m. Doors open at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are only \$5 and are available at ASC Reception. Don't miss this event!

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. The monthly Seniors Association bulletin is posted on our web site so for all the details on Association activities, clubs, events, bistro lunches, sports, and movies to mention a few, and town programs, trips and other valuable information concerning the Aurora Seniors Association, take a look at www.auroraseniors.ca



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Old Yonge Street proposal still misses mark, residents say

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A plan to transform the southeast corner of Yonge Street and St. John's Sideroad into a five-storey condo development, has come a long way in addressing residents' concerns, but is still too big for the surrounding community, according to neighbours.

Residents of the Old Yonge Street community continued their opposition to the proposed condo development at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting.

Since the last Public Planning meeting held to discuss the plan this past November, the proposal has been reduced from 152 to 148 residential units, on-site residential parking had been increased, and additional work on setbacks and buffers from the surrounding neighbourhood.

Neighbours, however, remain concerned about the size of the proposed building and the impact it will have on traffic on Yonge Street, Old Yonge Street, and St. John's.

"The subject properties are located within the Regional Corridor," said staff in the Committee report. "The Regional Corridor permits a maximum building height of five storeys."

"The proposed applications facilitate the intensification of underutilized lands within the Regional Corridor," the report continues. "The proposed density supports a 'complete community' and optimizes land use that is near a planned transit route. The development prioritizes sustainability and heritage preservation by incorporating measures to conserving the 'Red House' heritage asset.... The proposed amendments are directly supported by the Regional Corridor Policies, which identify Yonge Street as a primary intensification area

intended to accommodate building heights of up to five storeys. By introducing a five-storey mid-rise form, the development provides an appropriate 'missing middle' housing scale between Yonge Street and Old Yonge Street."

Some residents, however, offered a different viewpoint, stating that the property does not fit in with the Regional Corridor definitions.

Leta Dayfoot was one such neighbour who said the corridor is defined by an "arbitrary line" of 100 metres from Yonge Street and 80 per cent of the proposed building is outside the boundary. Also making it an outlier from the corridor definition, she said, was a lack of pedestrian connectivity where buildings within it must have an "uninterrupted walkway from the main entrance of the building to the sidewalks on Yonge Street."

"How can the Town justify a five-storey building solely on the premise it is on the Yonge Street corridor while ignoring fundamental principles in the Town's Official Plan, key fundamental principles properly adhered to, which would have resolved the valid concerns of surrounding residents and community?" Dayfoot asked.

Also opposing the idea of the Regional Corridor's application to this project, was resident Conan Lear who said walkability was important. To that end, he also highlighted concerns over the increased traffic the proposal might bring to the community.

"I live on [Old Yonge Street] and I can tell you it is not a safe street to cross. The Town can hide behind the fact that two corners of that property is York Region and not our responsibility. Those residents are," he said, advocating for a further sidewalk study.

Resident Anna Strunger was another delegate, and while she said the work to modify the proposal since it was last before the public on increased setbacks, landscaping, and tree preservation were to be recognized, the plan is an "over-intensification" of the site within the existing community.

"In my opinion, a lower rise development would be more appropriate and more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character," she said. "I'm also concerned about the adequacy of the proposed setbacks. While the applicant has increased setbacks since the original submission, the separation distances still appear limited considering the scale of a five-story building directly beside existing homes. The proposal requests numerous site-specific reductions and exceptions including reduced setbacks, reduced landscaping widths, reduced parking standards, reduced driveway dimensions and permissions for encroachments near environmental protection lands. Individually, these reductions may appear minor. Collectively, they represent a significant relaxation of established planning standards in order to maximize density on a constrained site.

"This raises an important question. If this level of intensification and exception is approved beside an established low-rise neighborhood, what precedent does that create for other stable residential areas in Aurora? I respectfully ask the Council to carefully reconsider whether this proposal truly achieves appropriate compatibility, transition and balance between intensification objectives and neighborhood protection."

Following the delegations, Council members said while they

This raises an important question. If this level of intensification and exception is approved beside an established low-rise neighborhood, what precedent does that create for other stable residential areas in Aurora

were pleased with the efforts taken to preserve the heritage on site, including the relocation of the historic home, one of Aurora's oldest surviving residences, to a new location on the same property, they shared some of the concerns voiced by residents.

"The applicant, planners, have been very diligent in listening to people over the last two times we've met, and items listed in this report.... I like it when people want to work with us and with the residents in order to get something that is feasible and acceptable," said Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese. "The problem we have is if we're going to be walkable and we have no sidewalk and we have no crosswalk, then everybody in that location is going to be bound, and the only way they'll get out is by car or by going up to Yonge Street and trying to get on the bus. There's not even a sidewalk on that side, so I am really worried about the walkability and the safety in there."

Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, replied there are plans to accommodate a sidewalk in the area in question.

"If this gets approved, their next step is to come in with a former site plan application, and that's when we will accommodate for that sidewalk that's along the frontage on the west side of Old Yonge from their southern limit to St. John's."

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Back to the future at Aurora Community Centre as Town launches roller skating drop-ins

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It's shaping up to be a full circle summer for the Aurora Community Centre as the Town of Aurora launches a new series of roller skating drop-ins.

Beginning Tuesday, June 23 and running on every subsequent Tuesday from 7.30 – 9 p.m., one of the arenas at the Aurora Community Centre (ACC) will be transformed into a roller rink, harkening back to the Complex's earliest days as home to the Canadiana Roller Rink.

The June 23 date is a chance to enjoy the program for free with pre-registration and those looking to lace up are asked to bring their own roller skates or roller blades. For subsequent dates, registration is set at \$3.37.

"This summer, roll into retro fun at the Roller Skating Drop-In," said the Town in a statement. "Open to all ages, this feel-good weekly event runs every Tuesday from 7.30 – 9 p.m., bringing the community together for an evening of skating, music and movement."

"Participants can roller skate and enjoy vibrant summer vibes with tunes by David Heard of Dave's Vinyl Party."

The tunes spun by Dave and Dave's Vinyl Party will be another full-circle moment as Heard was actively involved with music programming at the roller rink when it was in its prime.

He says the upcoming drop-in and the summer season that follows is all about community.

"Everybody gets something different from an activity like roller skating," he says. "For some, it could be just great exercise. For others, it's a chance to vibe to the music. Some people just like to get out and, in the skate community, when it grows, it becomes a very strong

community. The big thing about roller skating is the music. Music brings people together and when you just add something great like roller skating, it's just an all-around win."

As he's pieced together his vinyl music program, Heard says it will be "as close as possible to the last time it was done in the 1970s in the same location at the ACC" – and some of the records he's set to spin actually originated at the Canadiana, artefacts Heard was able to re-acquire as he continues to build his vinyl archive on Vata Court.

"On opening night, I'm going totally old-school and putting together a new program of great funk and R&B, and maybe a couple of disco tracks that were really popular in the late 70s through to the 80s," says Heard. "Then, on June 30, and we love this because it's also [the same night as] Dance in the Park, people can come roller skating and then they can go over to Town Park for the dance, but that night I'm doing something special, too – an all-Canadian curated program highlighting the bands that truly played the Aurora Community Centre Back in the day, including some very iconic bands like Rush. It's going to be very historic, very authentic, very nostalgic."

Themes for later Tuesday evenings include a reggae playlist curated for International Peace & Love Day, an 80s night, and much more.

If skating isn't your thing and you're more of a music lover – that's fine, too, as spectators are welcome to be a part of the evenings, as well.

"They may not be able to put on a pair of roller skates, a pair of quads as we call them, but they can still come, sit down, watch the skaters, and enjoy that music history," says Heard. "About two years ago, I did a skate for



Vinyl historian David Heard will bring a touch of nostalgia to Aurora's new roller-skating drop-in programs.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

a roller-skating facility in Orillia. When the doors opened, I could have wept with joy because the first three people through the door was a gentleman on a walker and two people on scooters. They didn't come to skate, they came to be a part of the community, watch the skaters, and enjoy the music. It's inclusive.

"I think [this series] will lead to much bigger things to do with skating. If the citizens and those abroad help us build this, I'm sure the Town will do something bigger next. We just have to pray to those skate gods that it happens!"

To register, visit aurora.ca/skating



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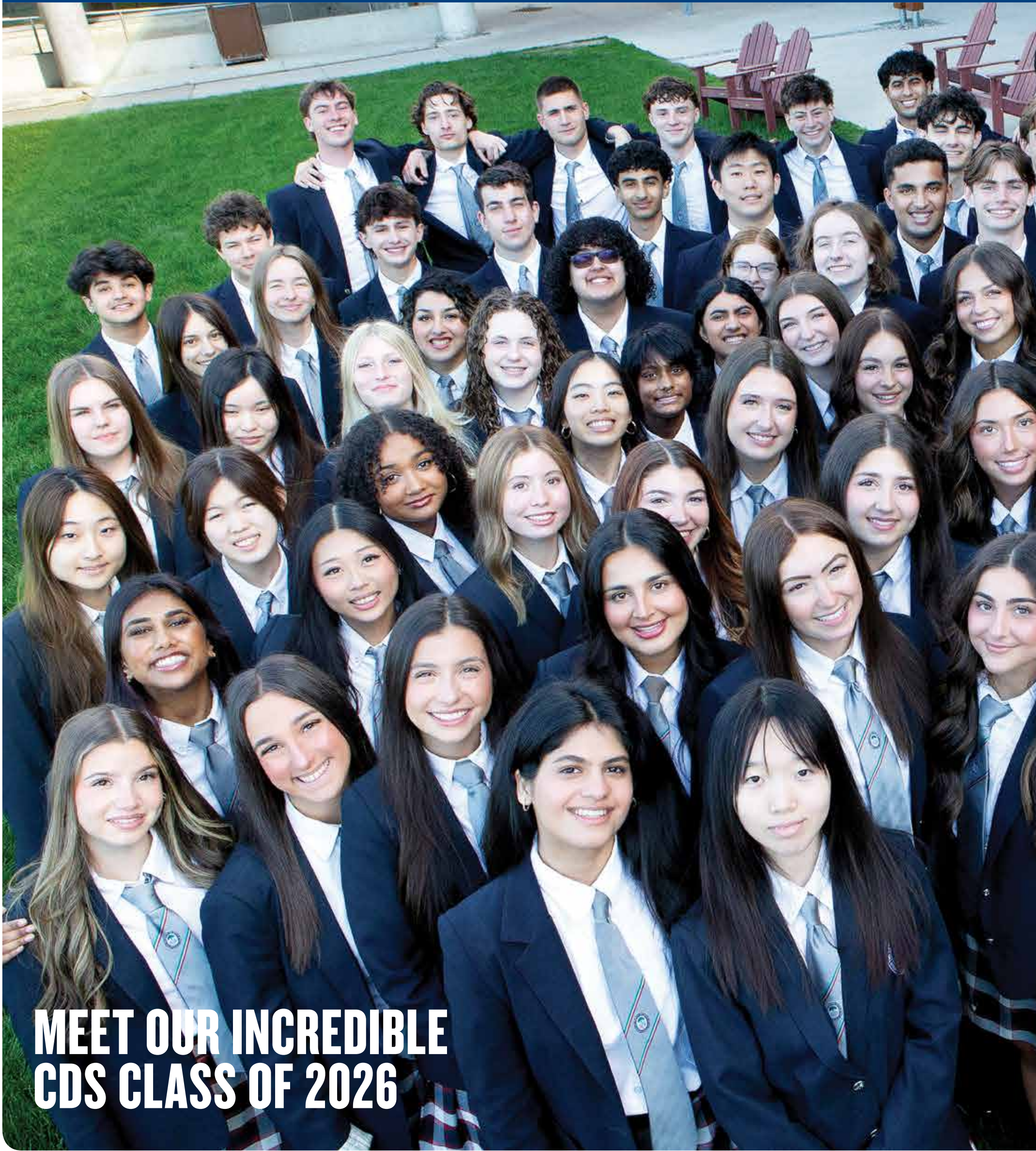
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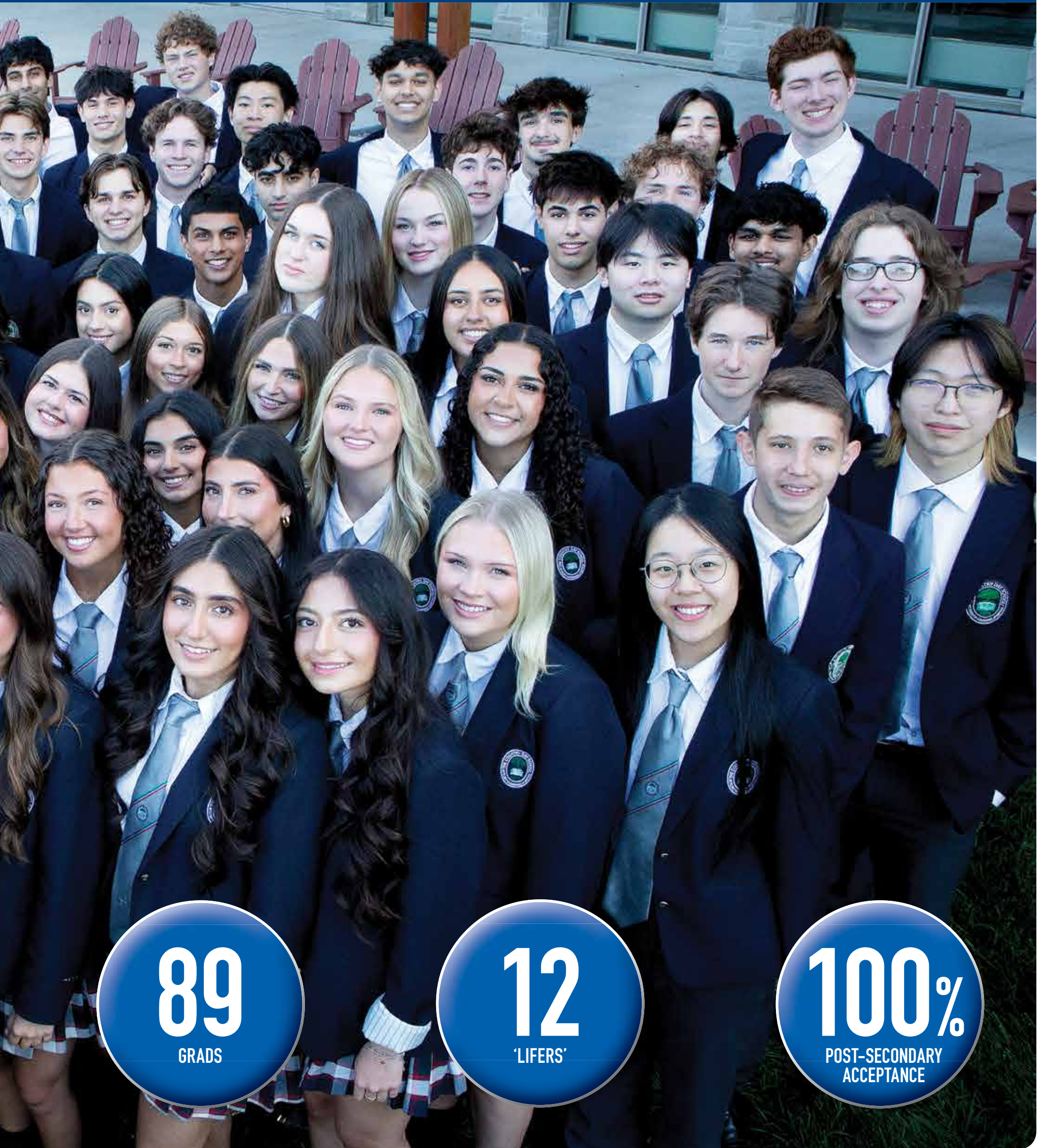
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Cultural Centre goes for the Gold with new concert series

Gold Circle brings prominent artists to Aurora Cultural Centre this fall

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Soccer stars have arrived in the GTA looking to capture the coveted gold World Cup, but world-class artists are set to descend on the Aurora Cultural Centre this fall as the organization launches a new concert series.

The Aurora Cultural Centre recently launched their Gold Circle concert series with the announcement of a performance by Matt Anderson, slated for February 25, 2027, a centrepiece of next year's Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

The second Gold Circle concert – Zombie Blizzard, featuring Aaron Davis and Measha Brueggergosman on October 3 – was announced last week and tickets for the third, a fall performance by acclaimed singer-songwriter Jane Siberry, will go on sale later this week.

A fourth concert in the series is still under wraps, but will be announced this fall.

Derek Andrews, Performing Arts Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre, says the new Gold Circle series was brainstormed as a way to elevate the local concert experience.

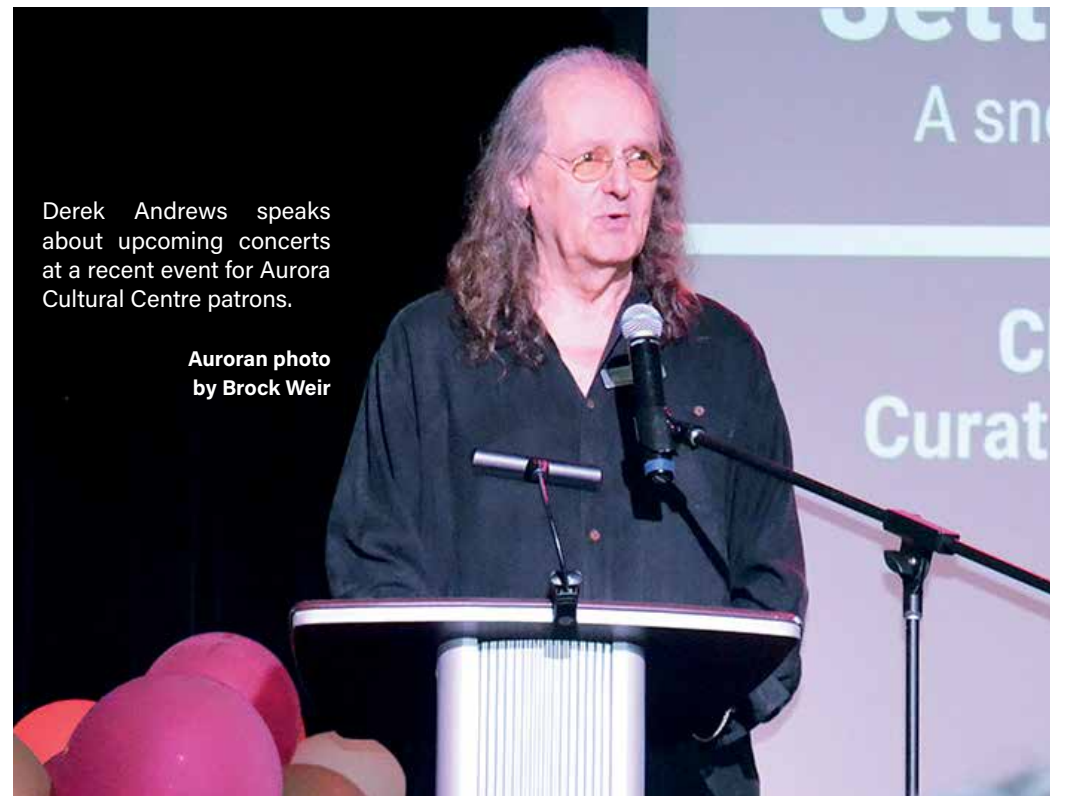
“Executive Director Suzanne Haines and I felt that we could take the level of talent up to match the quality of the building,” says Andrews. “We really feel we can do some special things on stage and to do that means developing a strategy called Gold Circle. It’s always an interesting process and challenge to find artists that work for our mandate and are available and interested – and when I say ‘mandate,’ it fits the character of what we do with the Centre, and that’s to keep things fresh and original.”

The Centre describes Anderson as “a powerful giant in performance” who “leaves it all on the stage in an incredible display of energy, songcraft, and guitar prowess.”

“Audiences are left breathless from his full tilt blues roots renditions of original material,” they say. “A consummate performer, he will move your heart with his honest, no holds barred emotion, humour and charm. Supporting the night with an opening set are rising stars Campbell & Johnson, the guitar virtuoso couple hailing from New Brunswick and PEI.”

Booking Matt Anderson for the Aurora Winter Blues Festival – and announcing his participation in the Festival early – was a no-brainer for the Centre. Haines is a particular fan of Anderson’s, and Andrews came to the table with a key suggestion.

“We reached out to ask if he would consider playing a smaller room,



Derek Andrews speaks about upcoming concerts at a recent event for Aurora Cultural Centre patrons.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

because he plays Massey Hall when he’s in Toronto, and [his management] agreed,” he says. “His booking agent has put together a whole tour and we sort of became an early anchor with that; they’ve put about 10 dates together for him to tour in the area.”

With the Davis and Brueggergosman concert, perhaps it was a matter of sheer curiosity with bandleader Davis and acclaimed opera star Brueggergosman putting their considerable talents together for something altogether different.

“Witness a ground-breaking collision of literature and music in Zombie Blizzard. This new song cycle, composed by Aaron Davis, sets the hauntingly beautiful poetry of Margaret Atwood to music,” says the Centre “Featuring the world-renowned Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, the performance blends classical concert arias with jazz-influenced art songs. With a virtuoso brass section and Atwood’s own voice triggered throughout the cycle, the evening tackles deep themes of gender, grief, and humor. It’s a rare, multidisciplinary event that pushes the boundaries of the jazz-opera genre.”

“I’d known of Measha’s opera

stardom internationally, but to hear that she was playing around in another genre was fascinating,” says Andrews, picking up the thread, of the development of Zombie Blizzard. “Of course, his jazz chops will be in evidence on the piano, but she’s singing Margaret Atwood poems, so that’s also a fascinating aspect on that concert.”

The Siberry concert, sales for which will go live this week, is another showcase for a Canadian original.

“She’s a real maverick in doing things her own way, not dissimilar to Loreena McKennitt, who took command of her career; after having record companies do a certain amount, she just got fed up with the industry and developed her own way of doing things, performing in salons and taking command of everything in her career. I’ve seen Jane recently performing and she’s still got all the charm and insights and brilliant stuff that she had when she established her identity.”

To learn more about the artists taking part in the Aurora Cultural Centre’s Gold Circle concert series, including tickets, visit www.auroratorowensquare.ca/events-tickets/whats-on.

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ELTON SEAN - Aurora Town Square was recently filled with the music of Elton John as they hosted Elton Sean – An Early Elton Tribute.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Aurora High School celebrates success of 2026 Water Walk



Aurora High School student Aaron Khaykin stops at one of the information booths along the Water Walk route. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora High School students are looking back on a job well done following a wildly successful Water Walk in support of the Shining Water Paddle Initiative.

Last month, local students joined forces with representatives of Shining Water Paddle to raise awareness of water health within and beyond Indigenous communities.

The event began with a gathering led by the Initiative before students laced up and fanned out into the community, taking in educational stations along the way.

“I thought it went really, really well – we had a lot of student engagement and a lot of people showed up to the event. It’s usually a day where a lot of seniors tend to skip class and not participate, but we had a lot of senior engagement especially, which was really nice to see,” said Aaron Khaykin of Aurora High School’s Indigenous Allyship Club.

“We were really trying to show

the importance of water, Indigenous cultures, the health of water and how we can protect it. It was really great to learn about these traditions and I think it opened eyes for a lot of people who wouldn’t typically know something like this was happening. Our main goal was awareness and I think we really did a great job of that this year.”

The fact that Indigenous communities in Canada today can find themselves living under Boil Water advisories is a reality that continues to strike a chord with students and the event was an opportunity to support Shining Water Paddle in their own awareness and capacity-building efforts.

“The organizer of Shining Water Paddle said water makes up almost 70 per cent of your body and that water needs to be clean and pure. People don’t have access to that, which is an issue,” said Aaron.

For more on the Shining Water Paddle Initiative and the work they do, visit www.safewater.org/news/tag/Shining+Water+Paddle.

Case of missing Aurora man deemed murder as first charges are laid

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

STOLEN VEHICLE RECOVERED

The case of a missing man last seen in Aurora has now been determined as murder by York Regional Police after charges related to the case were laid.

Roman Perelstein was reported missing by his family on August 30, 2022. He was last seen “several weeks prior” in the area of Orchard Heights, according to Police.

“Before Perelstein had been reported missing, on August 21, 2022, human remains were located along a trail in the area of Sideline 20 and Concession Road 8 in the City of Pickering,” said York Regional Police Constable Kevin Nebrija. “No identification could be made at the time, due to the conditions of the remains. In March 2025, through dental records, the remains were positively identified as Roman Perelstein. His death has been deemed a homicide.

“Following a lengthy investigation Suren Khizguiaev, 49, of Harwich Township, was charged on May 21, 2026, with Accessory After the Fact to Murder and Indignity to a Dead Body.”

The charges have not been proven.

The investigation continues and anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police Cold Case section at 1-866-876-5423 x6000, or email the Cold Case Section at coldcase@yrp.ca.

Tips can also be sent in anonymously through Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS or via www.1800222tips.com.

A 23-year-old Barrie man is facing multiple charges following a stolen vehicle investigation in Aurora.

“York Regional Police have recovered a stolen vehicle and charged a suspect after an Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) alert in the Town of Aurora,” said Constable Nebrija. “This incident underscores the growing role of technology in helping police detect crime and protect the community.”

The vehicle in question, a Ford Edge, was reported stolen in Barrie on June 3, Police note.

“On Thursday, June 4, 2026, an officer on patrol in the area of Yonge Street and Elm Grove Avenue received an alert from the in-car ALPR system identifying a grey Ford Edge as being stolen. The officer continued to observe the vehicle while additional units and Air Support Unit moved in to assist. With the assistance of the YRP Air Support and Canine Units, the suspect was taken into custody at St. John’s Sideroad and Industrial Parkway South.”

23-year-old Kyvam Aghakhani Barfeh is charged with Theft of Motor Vehicle, Possession of Property Obtained by Crime over \$5,000, Dangerous Operation, two counts of Breach of Probation, and three counts of Operation of a Conveyance while Prohibited.

The accused was on probation and a prohibited driver at the time of the offence, say Police.

The charges have not been proven.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Renovictions could be tackled by Council this month

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora needs to step up and support its renters when it comes to renovictions, Council members agree, but just how to do so is the question now being considered.

Renovictions were the subject of discussion at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting where Council reviewed a report looking into the financial implications of formalizing Aurora's response to such cases through a bylaw.

Renovictions, when tenants are evicted from their rental units ostensibly to make way for renovations, has been the topic of significant Council discussion this year following a motion from Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese last fall tasking staff with looking into what the Town can do to support residents in this situation.

The report, which is set to be discussed further at the June 23 Council meeting, looked at a number of different models to address renovictions, along with the financial implications of each.

"Should Council wish to proceed with the implementation of a municipally-administered renovictions licensing and enforcement framework, additional staffing resources would be required to set up the program, and then support complaint intake, investigations,

inspections, licensing administration, and enforcement activities," said Alexander Wray of Aurora's Bylaw Services Department. "Experience from larger Ontario municipalities indicate that the implementation of a renovictions bylaw can result in significant increases in resident requests for inspections, investigation, and municipal involvement.

"Municipalities that have implemented these programs have attributed increased service demands to heighten public awareness, misunderstood expectations respecting municipal jurisdiction, and the escalation of landlord-tenant disputes requiring municipal review or response."

If Council decides to address renovictions through the development of an enforcement-based program, Wray said the Town would need to hire a full-time contract staff member and one part-time contractor to support the program within the Bylaw department.

"These additional staffing resources would assist in addressing [the] anticipated increase in complaint volumes, investigative and inspection requests, administrative coordination, and resident inquiries associated with the renovation program," said Wray.

"As an alternative to implementing a municipally-administered renovictions licensing and enforcement framework, staff reviewed the feasibility of a one-

year pilot program focused on resident support. The intent of the pilot program would be to better understand the frequency and nature of renovation-related concerns within Aurora, identify resident support needs, evaluate service demands, and collect operational data to assist in determining the long-term feasibility and effectiveness of this type of municipal support program."

"As an approach scaled to Aurora's operational environment and historical volume of N-13 Notices, staff recommend the recruitment of one part-time contract position within the Town's Bylaw Services Division for a one-year term at approximately 24-hours per week. The proposed position would primarily serve as a liaison between residents who have received N-13 Notices and existing provincial processes and community support resources."

Council left last week's Committee of the Whole meeting without coming to a consensus on the best option. While members agreed that it's an "urgent" situation that needs to be addressed, they hope for more information to come forward ahead of this month's Council meeting to address two key issues: how to move forward without having to bring on new staff people now, and how to lay the groundwork for the next Council ahead of any implementation.

Supporting a fulsome response, rather than just a pilot program, was Councillor Weese who said the proposed pilot, on paper, "may help the evicted tenants with their rights, but it does little else."

"I see value in that, but I don't think it goes far enough to protect the tenants by not creating increased scrutiny of renovation-based evictions, proof of vacancy, or enforcement provisions that would prevent rent evictions," he said. "When you look at the 19 per cent of our population, or somewhere close to 18,000 people who live in rental units, then there's a significant number... of our rental people that are under this veil, I suppose, of concern that a landlord could suddenly say, 'I want to increase the value of my property,' renovate, evict people, and those people are out of their homes, and I don't think that's fair."

"What I'm asking here is that we don't do the pilot, but we do hire a full-time contracted person – bylaw enforcement or licensing officer – and a part-time contract administrative support position to administer and support the pilot program, and that we bring back the bylaw in September, or whenever it can be done in the next term. I will tell you that I'm really concerned about the urgency of this, because we do have tenants in this community right now who are facing these kinds of evictions, and I want to protect them going forward in the future."

I will tell you that I'm really concerned about the urgency of this, because we do have tenants in this community right now who are facing these kinds of evictions

Council members didn't necessarily disagree with Councillor Weese's assessment, but concerns were raised when Town Solicitor Patricia De Sario pointed out that the required positions would need to be brought on before the end of this term of Council – should lawmakers go forward with a full program – as the staffer would be tasked with drafting the relevant bylaw.

"Our historical N-13 volume is low and that's actually good news, but it doesn't mean that we look the other way," said Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim. "The question isn't whether we act, it's whether we act in proportion to what's actually happening here versus what's happening in the large municipalities with very different rental market dynamics. In the end, I think... we all have the same objectives to help these residents."

He added he would ordinarily support moving ahead with a full program rather than a pilot, but pilots help them "gain information, and then we make a more targeted decision after the pilot project."

The only issue Councillor Weese said he had with going forward with just the pilot was that sense of urgency.

But whether Aurora will be able to forge ahead with an option without bringing on new staff is the question Council hopes to have answers to before the end of this month.

"I'm not in support of hiring anyone now," said Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. "We're at the end of our term and I can appreciate the urgency, but, to me, this is an issue that the next Council has to address."

Added Councillor Weese: "I agree with Councillor Gallo on this issue here. What I'd like to have some urgency on is the development of the bylaw so it can be brought back for Council's consideration and implementation. If what you're saying is the part-time person is sufficient to do that, then I'm agreeing with both Councillor Kim and Councillor Gallo that if this can be done in a relatively urgent fashion, be brought back to us in September so that we can take a look at the bylaw and anticipate what the costs are... I just want to see some urgency on this on behalf of our residents."

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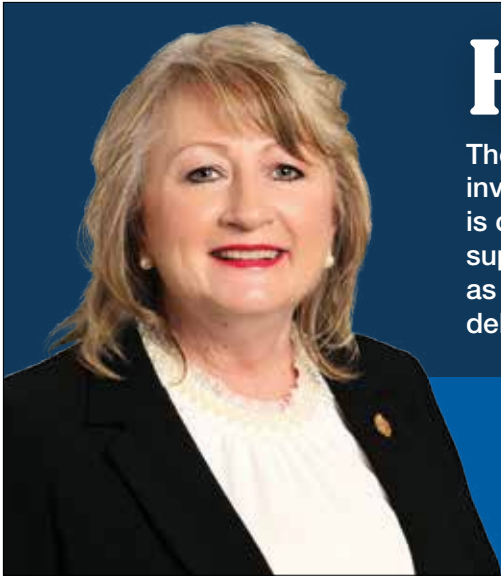
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Happy Seniors Month

The Government of Ontario is supporting active living for older adults with an annual investment of over \$150,000 through the Seniors Active Living Centres Program, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. The government is also providing additional support through the Seniors Community Grant, Investing over \$50,000 in local partners such as the Aurora Philosophy Institute and the Newmarket Public Library. These investments help deliver programs that keep older adults engaged, connected, and active in our community.



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Development charges, reserve accounts, could cause future budget concerns: staff

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Council's regular 1 per cent tax increase dedicated to maintaining reserves isn't cutting it, local lawmakers were warned last week, and shortfalls could result in budget impacts down the road.

According to a report before Council at last week's Committee of the Whole, Council's current financial strategy of a one per cent budget contribution to reserves is leading to a gap between funding and the costs of maintaining municipal assets.

"The Town's current Asset Management funding strategy of an annual one per cent for fiscal strategy has resulted in a reduced level of service for multiple asset categories," said staff in the report. "To ensure that the capital plan is affordable, the timing of capital projects is managed to ensure that the funds are available to fund the projects when planned. While the Town has strategically contributed to reserves for asset management for years, the timing of the projects may still be delayed until the Asset Management Plan becomes fully funded over time.

"In developing the 2026 10-Year Capital Budget, adjustments to the service levels of roads were made. The level of service for roads projects was reduced from 70 Pavement Quality Index (PQI) to 65 PQI. In addition, facilities, parks, and IT projects were deferred to ensure the affordability of the 10-Year Capital Plan. These deferrals have reduced the level of service for

each respective asset category in the short-term. The long-term strategy would be to continue to implement the annual increase to asset management based on the recommendations of the Asset Management Plan."

The report notes that the estimated replacement costs of all the Town's tax-funded assets was \$1.15 billion, but had since grown to an estimated \$1.35 billion by the end of 2025, including the SARC gymnasium, Aurora Town Square, new trails, a snow storage facility at Lambert Willson Park, and more.

"The current practice of increasing the capital reserve contribution by one per cent of the annual tax levy is not enough to fund the recommendations of the Asset Management Plan," the report states, recommending contributions increase to 2 per cent over a period of 15 years to catch up.

"To avoid year over year fiscal shocks as advised in the Town's fiscal strategy, staff recommends that the proposed 1 per cent increase to fiscal strategy funding be phased in over four-years in annual increments of 0.25 per cent. Therefore, a full fiscal strategy tax rate increase of 1.25, 1.50, 1.75, and 2.00 per cent for 2027 - 2030 should be considered as part of the next Council term's budget, respectively."

The report raised some alarm bells around the Council table last week, with some suggesting the numbers shouldn't come as too much of a surprise.

"I've been concerned about this since; I think it's the budget a couple of years ago, where it said that we were

short \$53.5 million in our repair and replacement fund, which is for Town infrastructure," said Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, suggesting budgets tabled in election years like this were not adequate. "I don't believe an alarm was raised in that report because I was very concerned about a reduced service level that would come about if we didn't have enough money in our reserve fund to ensure all of our Town infrastructure is kept in good repair or replaced.

"We have to pay for our services. We have to pay for the quality of life we want. We have to pay for climate change remediation and so many other things. So, when people talk about taxes, we've been charging 3%, except for those two election periods. It's not smart. We're not going to be happy with the increases that we'll have to have in the future if we don't do this now."

Concerns were also raised by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, who said, "Maybe some of our problems are overspending [on] capital projects that perhaps shouldn't have been moved forward or cost more than anticipated."

Financial concerns were also raised

on the amount of Development Charges (DCs) the Town has been able to collect from in-compliant developers over the last year.

A further report before Committee by the Town's Financial Services Department notes that under the new rules on DC collection put in place by the Provincial Government last year have resulted in Aurora collecting just \$3.5 million in 2025 compared to the average annual collection of \$16.9 million.

"Numerous legislative changes and present economic conditions have negatively impacted the Town's actual development charge collections," said staff in the report. "As a result of DC fund availability, some planned growth infrastructure work may need to be deferred or financed.

"In some instances, to maintain a consistent level of service to a growing community, the Town has proactively invested in growth infrastructure ahead of recovering DC revenues. To do this, it uses bridge financing that is repaid through the work's intended DC revenue funding source. Bridge financing may take the form of internal or external debt. Staff will assess the most advantageous form of debt to be used in each instance where bridge financing is required."

Heathwood Heights appeal to be fought at Ontario Land Tribunal

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A proposal to build five homes on a single lot at 161 Heathwood Heights will be fought by the Town of Aurora at the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Proponents of the development plan have appealed their application to build five homes on the lot to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and the Town confirmed its intentions to oppose the appeal following a special Closed Session Council meeting last week.

The motion, which was approved on a vote of 5 - 1 with Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland opposed and Ward 4 Michael Thompson absent, instructs the Town solicitor to "oppose the appeals relating to the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendment applications and [that] an external lawyer and any necessary experts be retained to appear before the OLT to support Council's position."

The Heathwood Heights proposal was recently the topic of an informal public meeting called by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo and held at the Aurora Public Library on May 28 to get residents' input.

Nearly 20 residents attended the session, along with Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese and Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Those who spoke up were unanimous in their view the Town should fight the appeal at OLT and

cautioned they believed it could set a precedent not only in the Heathwood Heights community, but across Aurora as a whole.

"We're looking for people to stand up for principle," said one resident. "It's carving up a lot and it's the impact on Aurora and the Aurora trails system, which is why we moved from Newmarket 20 years ago to Aurora.... It's just one lot, but the implications and the far-reaching implications of it."

It was a point of principle for another resident who said, the applicant is looking for "all or nothing."

"There's that concern on NIMBY-ism (Not In My Back Yard) and I'm sure that's got to be a part of it, but... it's the precedent that's going to be set," they said. "There's going to be creepage. It's not just that one property, and there's absolutely no gains to anybody except the developer. There's no low-cost housing. It's not solving any problems for anybody.

"If you're opening a can of worms, there's a number of homes in our neighbourhood that just sit empty, owned by whoever, we don't know. If they even got one to do that, they'd go, 'Why can't I do that? I'll make more money than someone else in this house. Let's put four on my property.' Then, down the street, somebody else puts four. What kind of neighbourhood are you going to have in 10 years?"

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Housing advocacy group hopes upcoming film screening will sow seeds of change

Aurora Cares – Housing For All continues push for affordable housing options



doing to advance housing possibilities? It's something that should be asked of every potential Council member, of every potential Mayor, not just in Aurora, but across the Region. If you haven't heard about any of these potential possibilities, you might not think of them. There are a number of projects going on across Canada and it's really uplifting to [learn more about them and say,] 'Hey, these are people with ideas.'

For more information about next week's screening, including ticket information, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

An upcoming film screening hosted by a local advocacy group pushing for affordable housing options is hoped to plant seeds that could lead to significant change.

On Tuesday, June 16, Aurora Cares – Housing for All, will present a screening of "Thinking Beyond the Market: Rethinking Canada's Housing Crisis" at Aurora Town Square. The screening, which will take place in Brevik Hall starting at 7 p.m., will feature a panel discussion with filmmaker Dr. Brian Doucet and other experts in the field.

The film follows Doucet as he travels across Canada to explore different policies, programs and projects that are helping to ease the housing crisis and "ensure housing is a human right."

Aurora Cares – Housing for All, a grassroots group initially formed to be a vocal support of the now-scuttled Men's Transitional Housing facility proposed by the Region of York in Aurora's south end, did not step back from

advocacy after the project was vetoed using Strong Mayor powers. In the intervening months, they have focused their energies on advocating for various housing forms in the community.

Members of the group first saw the documentary in Newmarket and felt it was important to bring it to Aurora to spark an equally important conversation.

"We wanted to switch our focus and not give up on getting housing for people, so we've moved into seeing what we can do to get affordable, attainable housing in Aurora. We're bringing in a lot of businesses to the community, which is excellent, but there's really nowhere for those employees to live, that they can afford to live in Aurora," says Kimberly McLean of Aurora Cares – Housing for All. "Some of us had gone to Newmarket to see this movie and came out very, very uplifted by the fact that there are some projects across Canada that are really making a difference. We thought, why don't we bring it here, offer it to the public and to business owners and to the Town, developers, whoever wants to come and see, and maybe it will plant


some ideas in their heads and see what could potentially be done.

"Right now, there are a lot of projects in Aurora that have planning authorization but are still just holes in the ground because they can't afford to build due to the market right now. There's a lot of holes with potential and there are developers sitting on these things, but they can't build because they can't make any money. They might be interested in seeing this and seeing where they could potentially work with other developers, other community groups, the municipality, to see if we can get some of these things build, where not only will they get some of their money back, but they'll provide housing

"We want people who work here to be able to live here."

The examples in the documentary are "good news" stories, she says, that might get local audiences looking at the issues differently.

"We consider this a small seed to be planted," says McLean. "There are elections coming up and it's a question that's being asked: 'What is our Town



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WEEK OF JUNE 11, 2026



STREET HOCKEY – Well, it wasn't exactly a street hockey game, but some of York Region's finest hockey players were well-represented at the Aurora Street Festival on Sunday with a big showing from the Central York Panthers. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2026 celebrated at Town Hall ceremony

From page 1

accompanied by families and friends reconvened outside Town Hall for a follow-up celebratory press conference.

Bentolila, Biondi, Stevenson, and Aurora Church Dodgers team reps were presented with their red ASHoF golf shirts—the “first stage of induction,” as described by President Javed Khan.

The long-time President addressed over fifty attendees and described the event as “literally showcasing the amazing members of this Class.”

“It’s all about celebrating each of the inductees over the next five months leading up to their Induction. Most importantly, it’s about the community coming together and celebrating.”

As the Emcee of the presentation to Town Council, Morsillo enjoyed the celebratory vibe in the Chamber.

“It was an overwhelming sensation—memories of all the nomination packages that our committee processed came rushing back to me. It reminded me of all the accomplishments that were presented by nominators. To hear the applause in the Chamber for each Inductee was incredible. It felt special. All the photos we presented—these builders and athletes realize how special they are after giving so much. They are a great group of people.”

Recently-retired AMHA President Joe Bentolila appreciated Morsillo’s description about the greatness of the inductees, but noted modestly: “This is so humbling.”

“It’s been all about working with so many dedicated people, but also being inducted with people who are filled with community spirit. It’ll be great to hear their stories on the Induction evening. It’s a fantastic feeling here tonight—it’s great to be recognized for my efforts, but I was surrounded by great people who have all bettered sport in Aurora. My goal was always to help the children of the community.”

Equally-connected to his community is long-distance runner George Biondi

who hopes his accomplishments inspire others.

“It’s an honor and I’m going to be an emotional guy at the Induction Ceremony. What I like most about this honor is how it could provide encouragement for the new generation of runners. They see us as pioneers. Beyond the younger generation, I hope we serve as inspiration to Seniors, too. People will read about our stories and I hope it inspires retirees. My message to them would be, ‘Whatever inspires you, do it!’ as a way of finding purpose in retirement.”

Finding common purpose was at the heart of the Aurora Church Dodgers hockey experience and club rep Tom McPherson described the team’s connectivity.

“This was all about being with people with common interests and virtues. That’s what we do as human beings. We share community. A complete cross-section of Aurora was in the Church Dodgers. On Sunday mornings, we’d have the visitors’ dressing room. We played til noon and we had the best storytellers who would tell stories til 2:00. We had so much fun.”

The 93-year-old raconteur was resplendent in this yellow and purple Church Dodgers jacket and the original club member bemoaned a golf game that started his day: “It’s been a busy day. Sadly, I didn’t shoot my age today on the golf course – had to settle for a 96.”

Shayne Stevenson, drafted 17th overall by the Boston Bruins in 1990, reflected fondly on both the call he received from the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame and chatting with his rep hockey coach outside the Town Hall on Tuesday.

“The call from Rocco was super special—he left a message on my phone to call him. Sure enough—when I called him back, he gave me the good news. Tonight brought back great memories for me— seeing Lowell McClenny and Colin Graham and taking photos with my two coaches. Lowell made me his team Captain when I was twelve years old. It was at that moment with my rep

coaches that I couldn’t believe forty years have passed. We were even on Sportsbeat TV together. Having my family with me today to share these memories makes me very happy, too. I’m very lucky.”

Features on each of the Inductees will appear in The Auroran beginning at the end of September and will run weekly

through October as lead-ups to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Induction Evening on Thursday, November 5.

(CORRECTION – In the caption of last week’s introductory story on the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s Class of 2026, Paul Rosen’s name contained a typo. We regret the error)

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Stories & Songs with Nonna brings generations together for Italian Heritage Month

Singer-Author Frank Moyo to visit APL on Sunday

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Children, parents, and grandparents are invited to come together at the Aurora Public Library this Sunday for a special Italian Heritage Month event featuring singer-songwriter and author Frank Moyo.

Moyo, a York Region-born and Toronto-based music educator, will bring his popular children's book "Nonna" to Aurora Public Library (APL) on June 14 for an afternoon of interactive storytelling, live music, Italian singalongs, and a fun immersion into the Italian language.

"I grew up with my grandparents, surrounded by them my whole life getting picked up from school, going to school with them, spending the summer with them. Especially in the last five or six years through social media we started to document a lot of what we do at home and what we do at our grandparents' house and through that we gained a presence," Moyo tells The Auroran.

"The main reasoning behind the Nonna book was the song 'Nonna' I wrote, which was basically an ode to grandmothers."

Originally inspired by the passing of his other grandmother, Moyo took the song to Canada's Got Talent and the book, illustrated by Kelsey Marshalsey, soon followed.

"People were really engaged with the book," says Moyo, noting that getting this first installment out to the public was a bit of a learning curve. "The stories in the book, the whole basis of it, a lot of people, not even just Italians, but in many cultures, could actually relate to

it because of their relationships with their grandmothers – little things like your grandmother telling you stories about where she grew up, holding hands walking to school in the morning, or when she would put you to sleep for a nap after lunch during the summer days, or asking 'Who's that?' in a picture she would have up in the living room, which would always bring up a story.

"That was the basics of the book and Kelsey really captured the essence of the story in illustrations. A lot of books on the market are these AI-generated things, but people want real stories. The fact the book was created from a song is something people also resonated with."

As he looks ahead to Sunday's event, Moyo, a vocal music teacher in the Toronto Catholic District School Board, says it will be an "engaging" afternoon where, in addition to taking part in the story, kids will also be able to perform with Moyo on various musical instruments.

"I'm a music teacher, but I [learned] could even incorporate other aspects into my lesson, which could be language, or math, or science, and I would make a song about it, and the kids would just grasp it so much more, because they were engaged musically, rhythmically, into what I was teaching. I started basically teaching them Italian, because it couldn't hurt anyone to learn a new language, and I started teaching them basic formal greetings in Italian, how to pronounce different words in Italian, different types of food, different types of pasta, cheeses, and so on. Now the reading-slash-show is a music lesson, where I teach verbs, I teach different types of food, it's engaging, and then I read the book, and we share thoughts on the book.

"It's a pretty all-encompassing, engaging 45 minutes that the kids are exposed to, then they come up and they perform with me, I give them rhythm instruments, and they're getting



Singer-songwriter-teacher-author Frank Moyo is bringing an afternoon of music, language, and storytelling to the Aurora Public Library this Sunday for Italian Heritage Month.

Contributed photos

incorporated into the set, and I think that's the aspect that they enjoy the most.

"It's obviously Italian Heritage Month, families want their children learning languages, they want their children having fun, they want them to be engaged, they want them to learn with other children as well, and I think that this show and this reading has all of

those components all intertwined into that. For a Sunday afternoon in June on a sunny day, I think you can't really beat that experience."

Moyo's follow-up book, Nonno, based on songs and experiences with his grandfather, is due out next month.

For more information, visit bit.ly/43snTXf.

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J.R. Newton's Artist Talk provides insights into his "Gilded Gold" exhibition at Micak Gallery



Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Surrounded by 12 of his latest Renaissance-Realist paintings, J.R. Newton engaged an enthusiastic gathering of more than 50 visual arts aficionados at the Micak Gallery on Thursday evening.

Newton's insights were offered in an Artist Talk—supporting his "Gilded Gold" exhibition that began on May 16 and concludes on June 13.

Gallery owner Katie Micak introduced the Orangeville-born artist and praised Newton's "lovely paintings that have such unexpected results."

One of the timely and controversial items discussed by Newton was the use of Artificial Intelligence in the artistic process "as an imaginative friend to bounce ideas off of. AI is a beast that's coming – and it's useful to make a proposal to a prospective client."

In addition to embracing AI as a small part of his process, Newton spoke about some of the recurring elements in his paintings and noted

that "many are based on moments with my wife Christina Ajdinovic who is my model and muse. She's appeared in almost 1,000 of my paintings."

Two paintings featuring the stirring likeness of Ajdinovic were presented prominently in the "Gilded Gold" exhibition.

"Study of Passing Time" and "Mourning Tide" reveal Newton's potent fusion of Renaissance and Realist styles – the grandeur of Italian Leonardo Da Vinci's female subjects meeting the photographically-detailed presentation methods championed by Canadian Alex Colville.

Another recurrent stylistic device that Newton discussed is his use of "throw away areas" similar to Caravaggio – reflecting the playfulness featured in his creative processes. He also acknowledged that his connection to Renaissance style, which is married to Realism in most of the paintings in the Gilded Gold exhibition, runs deeper than simply deploying the look of the sixteenth-century legendary artists.

"I'm a workhorse—I like the work

ethic of Renaissance painters."

However, Newton also admitted to feeling a connection to a famous twentieth century painter whose works are steeped in Americana: "I'm a huge Norman Rockwell fan—I love the way he composed pictures and I was moved by his narratives."

Newton described the challenges of being a painter—the toll it takes physically "peering through a series of magnifying glasses" and noted the restrictive quality of the medium in terms of how little time he has to make a first impression.

"As a painter, I have one second to catch your eye. Novelists have three hundred pages, singers have three minutes, directors have two hours."

Although the "Gilded Gold" exhibition featured many of Newton's traditional styles and subjects, the OCAD-trained painter spoke about "taking chances" at this point in his career. He directed our attention to "Soft Gravity" which is a fusion of "ballroom dancers, the 1970s paintings featured in the sitcom Good Times, and I asked myself 'How do I make this Space Age?' I was painting for a different feel. I wanted to play country music, but I'm not allowed, and the Classical side took over again."

Micak reinforced the discussion about Newton's bold new painting and observed that "Soft Gravity" asks the question, "What's it like to dance in space?"

"There's such a focus on female figures from the Renaissance, but John has also just come back from seeing Degas at The Louvre and 'Soft Gravity' presents an Impressionist's presentation of dance as well as a popular television show's art. There are so many connections to so many eras. Seeing the two converge—

his Realism and Renaissance and embracing new technologies – seems to activate his paintings in a new way."

It's evident that Newton is embarking on a new adventure as a painter based on the startling, engaging, and boldly-colored "Soft Gravity" and he acknowledged that there are periods in an artist's life that motivate creative changes and new approaches.

"Still life was my lifeline for years as an artist. As a result, I'll never eat apples and pears again."

The gallery erupted in laughter at Newton's self-deprecating and humorous insight—sealing the deal on an evening well-spent with art lovers ranging from tweens to retirees at the Micak Gallery in Aurora.

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

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Tens of thousands turn out for Street Festival



Campaigns hit the road



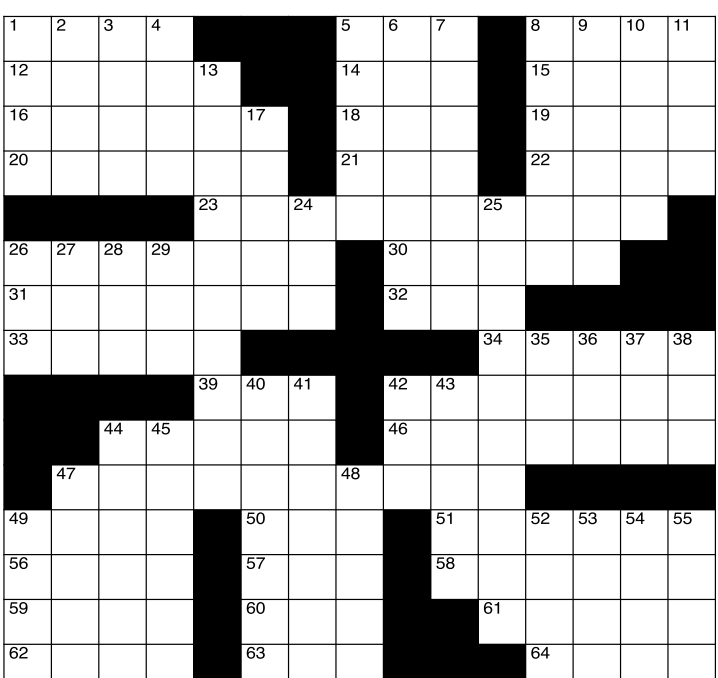
Yonge Street was a sea of people as tens of thousands came out for the annual Aurora Street Festival, hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. Bringing together more than 500 vendor booths and scores of entertainers and culinary options, the ever-popular event offered something for the whole family. Among the participants this year were the Alzheimer Society of York Region, the Fifth Aurora Scouts, New Roads Automotive, Country Day School, the Chamber, Royal LePage's Key Advantage Team, CHATS, the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, St. Andrew's College, the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Food Pantry, the Residences on Yonge, and Sport Aurora.

With a municipal election fast approaching in October, the annual Aurora Street Festival was an opportunity for municipal candidates to meet thousands of potential voters. (From TOP) Tom Mrakas, who is seeking re-election as Mayor, is pictured with his team. Mayoral candidate and incumbent Councillor John Gallo speaks with a resident. Mayoral candidate Shawn Deane also had a booth to engage residents. Ward 1 Council Candidates Lauren Hanna and Rocco Morsillo were also well-represented. Also participating in the event were Federal and Provincial representatives MPs Costas Menegakis and Sandra Cobena, and MPP Michael Parsa.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger and Lynette Lanning

CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. TAJUNE1126 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

- Sealed with a kiss
- Large sandwich
- Swiss city
- Japanese persimmons
- When you hope to get somewhere
- Wings
- A name of God
- Elected official (informal)
- Abnormal breathing
- "Seinfeld" character
- Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
- Something for sale
- Gets rid of
- One who touts
- Blemished
- Less than exciting
- Born of
- N. German town



CLUES DOWN

- Notes
- Move away from land
- Vulcanite
- More ignoble
- Child actor Kirk
- Written works
- Sea vessel
- Residue
- Engraved
- Having sufficient skill
- One and only
- Erase
- Broad inlets
- Nightmarish street
- Play again
- Formerly (archaic)
- Add a color to change the color
- Move swiftly and lightly
- Scottish island
- River in the Netherlands
- Asian people
- Fuzzy fruit
- Ninth month (abbr.)
- An idealistic social reformer
- What you owe
- Colorless mineral
- Shared one's soul
- Onion rolls
- Overjoyed
- Rattling breaths
- Tropical Old World tree
- A citizen of Senegal
- A Greek mythological beauty
- Wrath
- Instrument to measure wind speed
- Luxury carmaker
- Bitterly regret
- Not or
- Google certification
- Midway between northeast and east
- Space station
- Relating to the ears
- Congressman
- Yelled at
- Rudely assertive
- Defunct European money
- Onion rolls
- A way to state clearly
- Relating to a lobe
- Underlying message
- Hollywood pig
- Indicates pitch
- Filament of a feather
- Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles
- Diminish

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THINGS... you ought to know

OPINION

From page 5

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

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

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 16

Aurora Cares Housing For All presents Thinking Beyond the Market, a film screening, tonight at the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall. Showtime is 7 p.m. and tickets are \$8.42. Join Dr. Brian Doucet & guests in this full-length documentary film as he travels across Canada to learn about policies, programs and projects that are helping to ensure housing is a human right. Sponsored by Concierge Realty Group. Net proceeds for this event will be donated to the Aurora Food Pantry. For more, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

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

Caledon East United Church (6040 Old Church Road) will host a Yard, Craft & Vendor Sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Outdoors, rain or shine. Prices you can't resist - come early! Check out the Bake Sale and BBQ, too. Want to sell your items or be a vendor? Call Grace at 905-584-9974. Tables are \$25.

SATURDAY, JUNE 27

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 30

DANCE IN THE PARK - Town Park - 7 - 11 p.m. Bring out your dancing shoes and kick off the Canada Day festivities with the Dance in the Park! There will be fantastic live

bands, great food and the Rotary Beer Garden. Celebrate the start of Canada Day by dancing up a storm.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

Start your Canada Day off on Yonge Street with Aurora's Canada Day Parade starting at 10 a.m., with a route travelling north on Yonge Street from Murray Drive to Aurora Heights. The fun moves to Lambert Willson Park and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Festivities include live entertainment and children's activities. Be sure to participate in our Passport Activities which include interactive activities for each Province and Territory, reflective of their history and landscape. There will also be a variety of food vendors to enjoy. Evening fun continues beginning at 6.30 p.m., culminating with fireworks at 10 p.m. For a full roster of stage entertainment and other activities, visit aurora.ca/canaday.

SATURDAY, JULY 4

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series kicks off at Town Park this evening from 7 - 9 p.m. with Girls Gone Pop with The Beresfords. Local brother and sister duo, The Beresfords, deliver a highenergy tribute to today's most influential women in pop. Bringing fresh arrangements and vibrant harmonies to hits by artists such as Sabrina Carpenter, Chappell Roan, Taylor Swift and more. This show celebrates female artistry with a dynamic, feelgood set that turns every anthem into a moment. Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

SATURDAY, JULY 11

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 - 9 p.m. with Sheer Heart Attack -

Tribute to Queen. Celebrating the music of Britain's Royal Majesty, Sheer Heart Attack is dedicated to recreating the iconic sound and theatrical energy of Queen, that made them the unforgettable rock legends they are today. They will put on a show you're sure to remember, because they will rock you! Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

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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.

response to a changing climate.

Parks are not panaceas for addressing the ecological crises we face, but they are a primary tool.

The land outside of protected areas must also be managed for biodiversity outcomes. Landscape-level restoration is needed to repair damaged ecosystems. Buffer zones and connectivity corridors can create spaces for movement of wildlife and of ecosystems that migrate as the climate changes.

Ultimately, protected areas safeguard natural processes from deterioration as a result of development and industrial resource extraction, supporting resiliency. As a *Frontiers in Science* article recently underscored in response to the biodiversity crisis, "the top priority should be preventing the loss of intact biomes, ecosystems, natural processes, and species assemblages, as they are irreplaceable and cannot be quickly restored."

Alberta's grandstanding is just that; its announcement ignores its own protected areas legislation. The federal government must uphold OECM criteria and report on conservation outcomes, not just percentages. We must support Indigenous land governance and meet the land protection target by conserving healthy, resilient ecosystems — and pivot away from biodiversity loss and extinctions.

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

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