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# THE AUROREDAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

[TheAuroran.com](http://TheAuroran.com)

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FREE

WEEK OF JUNE 25 | 2026



**MUSIC & STORYTELLING**

National Indigenous History Month was marked at Town Park on Saturday morning with music and storytelling. The event, held in conjunction with the Aurora Farmers' Market, included a live concert from Dave Mowat & Trio, which blended various music traditions and expressions and (INSET) storytelling by Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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## Aurora to play a part in automotive, smart mobility development

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Garry Lee laughingly describes himself as a “geek” at heart. The owner of Aurora-based Megalab takes great pride that his company is able to help innovators take their ideas from concept to reality, particularly if they benefit society. He will have many more opportunities to do that in the future as Megalab has

been named one of the key local partners in York Region’s Regional Technology Development Site (RTDS). Dignitaries gathered at Megalab’s Addison Hall headquarters on Friday afternoon to celebrate funding from the Province of Ontario and private sector partners that will make the RTDS a reality. The mission of the York Region RTDS is to help entrepreneurs and businesses “bridge the gap between research and

development and commercialization, particularly in the sectors of automotive and smart mobility technologies. Supported by all nine York Region municipalities, the RTDS will be delivered in partnership with ventureLAB and York University, whose YSpace offers companies the chance to “access cutting-edge labs, research, and talent in areas like smart materials, electrification and system reliability.”

Continued on page 12

## Student robotics teams wows judges in Mexico

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Ayden Arabi, Allegra Buchanan, Amaya Gajadhar, Ethan Gajadhar, Patrick Northrup, Madeline Northrup, and Chase Sullivan are inspirational York Region tweens embracing a future that will feature much automation and many automatons deployed to assist humanity. Their connectivity to that ‘Brave New World’—expressed through their fine coding skills, engineering abilities, and

Continued on page 31



“FIRST” PLACE CHAMPS - Equipe Francobotique came together last week to celebrate a number of big wins at the International FIRST LEGO League Championships in Mexico earlier this spring. Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

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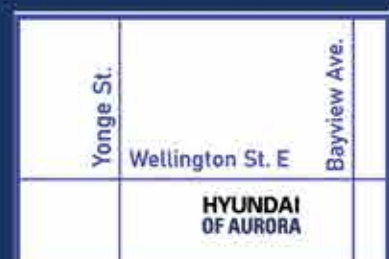
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# Havenwood Academy celebrates providing “paths for every learner”



Celebrating the completion of a successful school year at Aurora's Havenwood Academy on Saturday afternoon were Angela Caporiccio, Director of Education, Executive Director Eden Naylor, and Dianne Dalisay, Director of Therapy and Student Services. **Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan**

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A first word is always the cause for celebration, but when a non-verbal student makes an important breakthrough, it can mean so much more.

Such was the case for the teachers, instructors, and students who are part of the Havenwood Academy community, a new neurodiverse-affirming school on Edward Street dedicated to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment “where every student is known, valued, and empowered to thrive.”

Havenwood, which now occupies the former location of Lighthouse Learning Development Centre, has become a close-knit community since its inception just eight months ago.

It was an inception born out of necessity after Lighthouse moved to

York Region’s southern tier, leaving local families to look for more local learning opportunities for their children and young adults.

“We had a little parent gathering and asked if this was something you’d want to bring your kids to, about 10 parents said yes, so we opened our doors,” says Angela Caporiccio, Havenwood’s Co-Founder and Director of Education, of the Lighthouse families that came together to keep this kind of specialized education available locally. “It sort of happened out of necessity because, unfortunately, the school system in our Province has a hard time supporting these learners, so we thought, let’s create our own version.”

“I’ve been in York Region for many years in special education, teaching in the autism classes in the Public Board and I thought, okay,

Continued on page 28

# SARC name is coming down, Mayor confirms

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Aurora is taking down the name of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, Mayor Tom Mrakas confirms.

The move follows a court decision on Friday, June 12, which found Magna founder Frank Stronach, 93, guilty of one count of sexual assault and one count of indecent assault.

Stronach, who first faced a series of charges in 2024 related to incidents going back to the 1970s, pled not guilty to 12 charges relating to seven complainants who came forward.

Mayor Mrakas confirms to The Auroran that, in light of Friday’s conviction handed down by Superior Court Justice Anne Molloy, the Town will be “taken down” the “Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex” (SARC) name from the northeast Aurora recreation centre.

A formal statement will be coming this week, he says.

The SARC, located on Wellington Street East, just west of Leslie Street, is a stone’s throw away from Magna International’s Wellington Street campus, and Mrakas says the naming rights to the recreation centre belong to Magna rather than the Stronach family.

“When circumstances such as these arise, we have a responsibility to act in the best interests of our residents and the community as a whole,” he says. “Sexual assault, sexual violence, and violence of any kind have no place in our society, and the Town of Aurora will always stand on the side of respect, dignity, and safety for all.”

Stronach resigned as chair of Magna’s board in 2011 and plays no role in the company.

The Town’s move to address the name of the SARC follows a decision made by Newmarket Council on

Monday night to re-name Frank Stronach Park.

The park, located on Veterans Way, just off Leslie Street, will now be known as Veterans Park, Council decided.

Newmarket-based Southlake Health confirms they are also undergoing a similar process regarding the name of the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre.

“Sexual assault or violence of any kind has no place in society and will not be tolerated by Southlake,” said Southlake Health in a statement. “A review of the philanthropic naming recognition of our cancer centre is underway following a formal request from Magna.”

Requests for comment from Stronach’s team had not been received at press time.

Following Justice Molloy’s decision on Friday, Yellow Brick House, a women’s shelter based in Aurora and Richmond Hill, said the verdict “reinforces a critical truth: sexual violence is serious, and accountability remains essential, regardless of how much time has passed since the harm occurred.

“This moment is not only about one case. It’s about the many survivors who have lived for years, sometimes decades, with trauma, self-blame, and silence. It is about those who froze in fear, who calculated their safety in the moment, or who felt overpowered and unheard,” said the organization. “Today’s outcome may offer validation for some. For others, it may reopen wounds. What remains clear is this: survivors need safe, trauma-informed pathways to justice. They need systems that recognize how trauma affects memory, behaviour, and reporting timelines. They need communities that respond with belief, dignity and support.”

Sentencing for Stronach related to these two convictions is expected to begin this fall, while a further set of sexual-based criminal charges will be subject of a Newmarket trial in 2027. He vigorously denies the claims.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Pathways is BS – “bunk science” – says Environmental Defence**

The Pathways carbon capture project is being sold by the federal government as a climate solution. In reality, it is an expensive, risky and deeply flawed plan to keep the oil sands producing for decades to come while asking Canadians to foot the bill.

There are no two ways about it: Pathways CCS is BS (Bunk Science).

The Pathways project was already a bad deal when it was estimated to cost \$16.5 billion. The latest estimates now suggest that it will cost at least \$20 billion, without considering the day-to-day operating costs. At the same time, the promised emissions reductions from this project have been quietly shrinking – from an original target of 10-12 MT by 2030 to now a measly 6 MT by 2035. By contrast, emissions from the oil sands were 91 MT in 2024.

This is not a climate plan. This is yet another permission slip for the oil and gas industry to pollute, signed off by Prime Minister Carney. The Pathways CCS project is the Prime Minister’s thinly veiled attempt at greenwashing a new million barrel a day bitumen pipeline that is unequivocally a carbon bomb.

The oil sands remain one of Canada’s largest sources of carbon pollution. Instead of requiring these companies to clean up their mess, the federal government has recently gutted one of the last remaining climate policies – the industrial carbon price – and is now preparing to hand billions in public money for a project that won’t make any meaningful progress in reducing oil sands emissions. Certainly not when it is tied to a new bitumen pipeline to the west coast.

Even if – and that is a big IF since many carbon capture projects fail to achieve their targets – the Pathways CCS project works exactly as promised, it would only capture a small portion of emissions from the oil production process. It will do absolutely nothing for the vast majority of emissions that are released when the oil is exported and used.

This is the core purpose of carbon capture and storage for oil companies: it allows the industry to claim they are enacting climate action when in reality all they are doing is expanding production and driving the climate crisis.

Pathways CCS also presents very real risks for nearby communities. This project would require a massive CO2 pipeline and underground storage network through rural Alberta. Landowners, Indigenous communities and local residents have raised serious concerns about environmental safety, water and land rights.

Meanwhile, the companies behind this project, the Oil Sands Alliance, are some of the wealthiest companies in the country. They have made enormous profits while Canadians continue to struggle with rising costs associated

Continued on page 5

*To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to [brock@lpcmedia.ca](mailto:brock@lpcmedia.ca). Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.*

Machell's Corners



**Forward-thinking milestones**

Even though they weren’t playing in the Greater Toronto Area at the time, apparently it was a celebratory atmosphere in the GTA last week when Team Canada won its first-ever World Cup game.

The game may have been played in Vancouver, but it seems geography didn’t dampen anyone’s enthusiasm as I heard from no less than three people that at the precise moment the game was sealed in Canada’s favour, pockets of cheers could be heard all around – and even from a great distance. In fact, one highly informal correspondent of mine reported that they could hear the commotion from the FIFA Fan Zone at Fort York clearly on the far side of Toronto Island, almost as if the party was happening right next to them.

In the interests of full disclosure, I’ve never quite been bitten by the bug that’s resulted in the “Football Frenzy” so many people are experiencing right now (I’m saving my personal – and limited – sports-fan energy for Wimbledon over the next coming weeks) but I’m thrilled that so many people, some of whom would never have deigned to even consider watching a soccer match previously, are catching the fever and going all out in celebration.

Only time will tell whether the significant costs of bringing the World Cup to Toronto and Vancouver will have been worth it from an economic perspective, but if it’s engagement the powers-that-be are after, it seems the return on investment has been pretty swift.

Of particular interest to me has been reading accounts of individuals, families, and groups from so many parts of the world that have made the pilgrimage here to catch their home team on our soil. It has been not only a chance for them to enjoy the game and maybe even enjoy some extra cachet among their fellow sports fans, but, for many, to explore a new city, country, and region for the very first time.

For residents of this country who were born abroad, it’s also been a great opportunity to see those who now call this country home celebrate the successes of their homelands on these soils.

Overall, it’s been a great opportunity to see Canada through a fresh lens – even if briefly borrowed.

As I wrote in this space last week, it is an invaluable reminder of how people from the outside looking in view this country, and it’s provided some valuable food for thought on just what it means to be Canadian, how we go about celebrating it, and how we define ourselves moving into the future.

Those are often front-of-mind thoughts around this time of year with Canada Day just around the corner – and perhaps



**BROCK'S BANTER**

Brock Weir

even more so now as this Wednesday’s celebrations lay the groundwork for a milestone Canada Day next year, marking the 160th anniversary of Confederation.

Now, a 160th anniversary is not usually seen as a major milestone. Unlike a 150th anniversary, otherwise known as a Sesquicentennial, there isn’t an obvious tongue-twisting alternative name for a 160th, but it’s still a significant milestone – and opportunity – to take stock.

A May survey published by Strategy Online suggests Canadians are getting ready to celebrate the nation by getting out and exploring it, the pollster noting that Canada Day is “forecasted to be one of the least homebound major holidays this year.” But the same poll finds that the passionate “Elbows Up” mentality of supporting the country through our spending habits so ably demonstrated last year might be on the wane.

“The consumer insights and data company’s 2026 Annual Holiday Preview, fielded among more than 5,000 consumers, found that only 48 per cent of respondents plan to celebrate at home on July 1 – the lowest tally among major holidays tracked by the firm. By comparison, 73 per cent celebrate Halloween at home, while Christmas sits at 64 per cent. Overall, 61 per cent of Canadians surveyed said they intend to celebrate Canada Day in some form, trailing Christmas (86 per cent), New Year’s Eve (70 per cent), and Easter and Thanksgiving (67 per cent). The data suggests Canada Day celebrations remain centred around communal and outdoor activities. Nearly half of respondents (46 per cent) said grilling or barbecuing are part of their plans, while 42 per cent expect to spend time with partners or family and 31 per cent plan to celebrate with larger groups.

“A separate Numerator poll of roughly 1,800 people suggest consumer patriotism and its effect on purchasing seems to be cooling. May’s Tariff Statement Tracker includes a monthly survey of roughly

1,800 Canadian consumers. And the number of respondents who ‘strongly agree’ with the sentiment, ‘I intend to buy only products made in Canada’ has hit its lowest point since Donald Trump began imposing tariffs last winter at 17 per cent. That number was 26 per cent in February 2025 and 29 per cent the following month.”

While Canadians are spending next week’s holiday in the great outdoors, I hope some take the time for a bit of reflection on what it means to carry the badge of “Canadian.”

By this time next year it will have been 10 years since the Canada 150 celebration – and, so many years on, I still even hesitate to use the word “celebration” as it was a rather fraught occasion in this country and, at the time, there didn’t seem to be much to celebrate.

Politics were becoming ever-more polarized, the country was grappling with its complicated history of colonialism and the treatment experienced by First Nations people, and these two factors, coupled with myriad others, added layers of anger and frustration to what was, previously, a joyous celebration of red and white, of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

But a lot has happened in the ensuing decade.

The polarization of politics has continued apace, we’ve seen changes in leadership, we’ve seen a change in reign after 70 years, we’ve seen both action and inaction on the First Nations file, we’ve weathered a pandemic which exposed frays in our national fabric we had never seen before, (or, at least, were comfortable turning a blind eye to) which, in many cases, are still un-mended, we’ve seen Western separatism gather steam, threats to our national sovereignty, and we’ve become a reluctant player in a trade war in which there are no winners.

Maybe getting outdoors and experiencing the natural wonders of this country is one unifying factor on an ever-shortening list of things that seem to bring us together, along with hockey, more recently soccer, and even coming together to complain about everything we might feel is wrong with the country.

But, I hope many of you take next week’s holiday as a chance to get out, explore the celebrations and activities our communities have to offer, reacquaint yourselves with friends and neighbours, and realise our commonalities are still more numerous than our differences, that the benefits of being Canadian far outweigh the cons, and maybe even try to look at this country through the lens of those visiting right now for whom Canada remains a land of promise, acceptance, and forward-thinking.

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From page 4

with climate change, and more frequent and intense climate disasters. If the Oil Sands Alliance truly believed this in this project, why would they not pay for it themselves? They can definitely afford to.

Well, recent statements from oil companies and their allies seem to suggest that they themselves are souring on the idea behind the Pathways CCS project.

So, now Canadians find themselves in a situation where our limited public dollars will be used to finance a risky and ineffective project that is being opposed by rural Albertans, Indigenous Peoples and the oil sands industry. Why? Well, because Prime Minister Mark Carney believes it will help him greenwash his new pipeline and achieve the mythical “decarbonized oil.”

Let's be clear on a few things: Pathways CCS is not a nation-building project. There is no such thing as “decarbonized oil” – after all, you can't decarbonize hydrocarbons. The Oil Sands Alliance doesn't need public dollars as they are set to make nearly \$100 billion in profits this year. Prime Minister Mark Carney needs to stand up for Canadians rather than prioritizing the continued profits of the oil industry.

CCS is BS (Bunk Science) and Canadians should not have to pay for this risky and ineffective technology.

Environmental Defence

## Check before you splash, says Region

With summer upon us, York Region has kicked off our 2026 Beach Water Testing Program which runs until the end of August. During this time, York Region will monitor water quality at 13 public beaches in York Region to ensure the water is safe for swimming.

To monitor bacteria in the water, a minimum of five samples is collected, usually twice a week, from each beach and tested for E. coli levels. Beaches are also monitored for visible signs of algae blooms, and other physical hazards.

To avoid illness, residents are advised to avoid swimming in beach water when levels of E. coli bacteria could be high (such as after a heavy rainfall) or when there is evidence of an algal bloom.

Check Before you Splash!

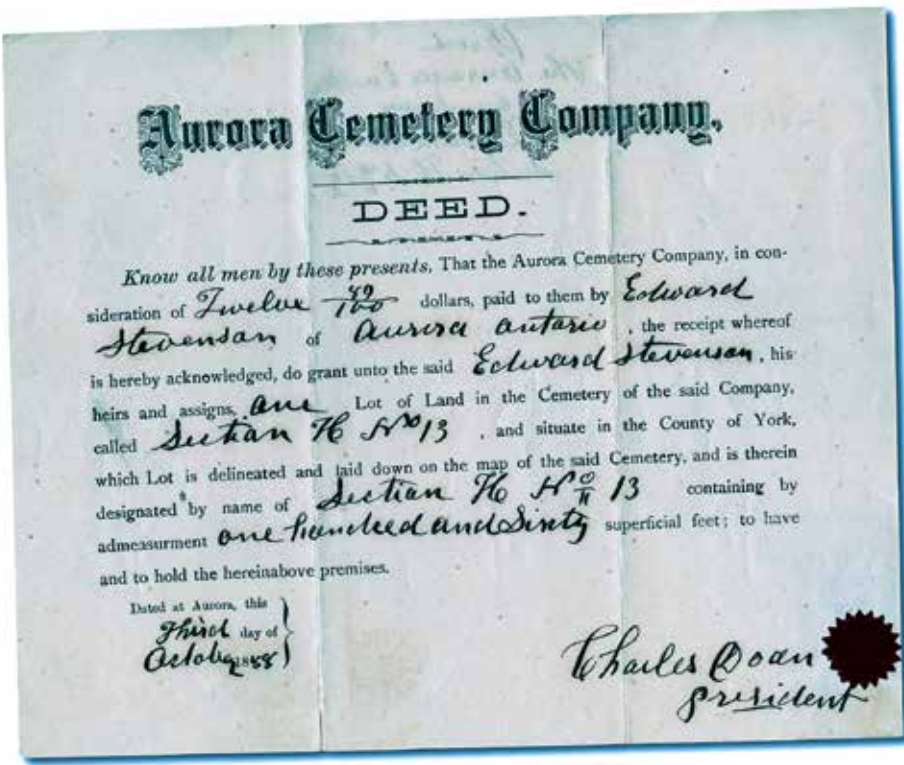
Residents are encouraged to check water quality results before entering the water to make an informed decision. There are two ways to do this: check the signs posted at the beach or check online before you go at [york.ca/Beaches](http://york.ca/Beaches).

Region of York



## Deed of the Dead

In the museum world, we often focus squarely on those who are no longer with us, so please excuse this macabre fugue. In keeping with our Time Traveler's experiences at Decoration Day in the cemetery last week, we're sharing with you a fascinating look into the business side of a graveyard. The Aurora Cemetery Company was founded in 1868, with Charles Doan as its president. Twenty years on, he was in the same position and signed this 1888 deed (999.29.6) to formalize the sale of a cemetery plot to one Edward Stevenson of Aurora. Edward was already 73 at this time and possibly thinking about his mortality; he had already lost his first wife Elizabeth in 1860 and had likely gone through the entire process before. The deed lists the size of the plot in “superficial feet”, an antiquated term for square feet – 160 of them, where most graves today are less than 30 in area. Today, Edward and his second wife Emma are buried at the plot he purchased; he made it to his 91st year before claiming his selected resting place.



This July 1st, our community will gather to celebrate Canada's 159th birthday. It is a day filled with immense national pride, gratitude, and optimism for our collective future. Across our community, we wave our Canada flags, watch the fireworks light up the night sky, attend parades, and enjoy backyard barbecues with our family, friends, and neighbours. When we look around at our incredible country today, we are reminded of just how truly fortunate we all are to call Canada home.

It is a beautiful, harmonious tapestry of people from all walks of life, cultures, and backgrounds. We are a country built as much by the descendants of those who have always called this land home as by newcomers who arrived seeking refuge, opportunity, or simply a fresh start. Indigenous peoples and waves of immigrants from every corner of the globe have each added their own thread to who we are today. Our rich diversity proves that different perspectives can unite under one flag to build a safer, more prosperous, and more welcoming society.

It shows up in the languages spoken on our streets, the food at our tables, the festivals that fill our calendars, and the quiet, everyday kindness of neighbours helping neighbours. That is not a happy accident, it is the result of a deliberate choice, made and remade by each generation, to see our differences as a source of strength rather than division.

Canada's journey began on July 1, 1867. The British North America Act officially united Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada. Built on negotiation, vision, and a desire for self-governance, this historic agreement laid the strong structural foundation for the peaceful, prosperous nation we love today. As Canada expanded over the decades to welcome new provinces, it grew to



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our country competes on the world stage. From historic hockey triumphs that bring our country to a standstill to legendary Olympic podium finishes, our athletes consistently punch above their weight, showcasing teamwork, resilience, and sportsmanship. That influence extends into the global cultural arena. The impact is undeniable. Canada's brilliant artists, authors, and performers who constantly capture the world's imagination tell powerful stories that were shaped from Canada's unique identity. Together, our athletes and artists inspire us, unite the entire nation in moments of pure pride, and forever elevate Canada's reputation on the international stage.

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So today, let's hear it for the best country in the entire world! Let's carry forward the same spirit that built this nation, the negotiation and compromise of our founders, the sacrifice of our veterans, the resilience of our athletes, the creativity of our artists, and the everyday generosity of ordinary Canadians, into everything we do next. Together, we will continue to build a brighter, stronger future for generations to come.

From my family to yours, I wish you a safe, happy, and wonderful Canada Day everyone!

## OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

Attacks on energy transition are attacks on worker jobs are disappearing in coal, oil and gas. It's not just because we have many more efficient, cost-effective and less polluting ways to power our societies — although that's a big part of it. Automation, artificial intelligence and industry consolidation are already reducing the fossil fuel workforce, and the trend is accelerating.

In Canada, despite a 35 per cent increase in oil production and 24 per cent in “natural” gas over the past five years, employment in the fossil fuel industry dropped by 38,000 jobs, down to less than one per cent of the workforce, the Centre for Future Work reports.

The industry and its political and media supporters care little about jobs or working people, as much as they might claim otherwise. Machines and computers don't require training, demand fair wages and benefits, take sick days or get injured on the job.

For evidence of how little regard many fossil fuel supporters, especially in politics, have for working people, one has only to look at their attempts to stall the necessary

## Attacks on energy transition are attacks on workers

transition to renewable energy — which is already generating far more employment.

The Trump administration in the United States is an obvious example, but we've also seen it with Alberta and Saskatchewan's governments, various Canadian provincial and federal political parties and politicians in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Barriers thrown in the way of renewable energy development while fossil fuels continue to receive support and subsidies don't just represent an attack on safer, less-polluting energy sources; they're also an attack on working people.

According to the Pembina Institute, the Alberta government's 2023 pause on renewable energy projects affected 118 projects worth at least \$33 billion of investment, which would have created enough jobs to keep 24,000 people working for a year. More recently, 79-year-old Calgary-based ATCO Ltd. has blamed Alberta government policies for a \$408 million devaluation of its wind and solar projects in the province.

Overseas, as Guardian writer George Monbiot explains, the conservative Confederation of British Industry found that “the net zero economy now directly

employs more than 300,000 full-time workers, while supporting the jobs of 1.1 million” and that the sector is worth £100 billion to the UK, growing steadily. “The rest of the green economy directly employs a further 600,000.”

He adds, “In October, the government announced plans to create another 400,000 jobs through its green energy plan, particularly for people leaving the fossil fuel industry, school leavers, ex-offenders, veterans and the unemployed.” In 2023, the country's oil and gas industry provided just 27,500 jobs and supported 205,000.

It's the same everywhere, especially as countries ramp up renewable energy development in attempts to extricate themselves from increasingly volatile fossil fuel markets, choked by conflicts in the Middle East and Russia-Ukraine and subject to shortages and monopoly control.

In the U.S., regardless of its president's attempts to shore up what he ludicrously calls “clean, beautiful coal,” solar generated more power in May than coal for the first time — supplying 12.8 per cent compared to 12.2 per cent for coal.

Despite a recent drop in renewable

energy investment in the U.S. because of the administration's policy reversals and support for fossil fuels, the sector is growing faster than any part of the economy. The World Resources Institute reports that “clean energy jobs grew by nearly 12%, going from 3.2 million workers in 2021 to 3.6 million by the end of 2024. Across the country, 22 out of every 1,000 workers were employed in clean energy-related positions in 2024. During the same period, the broader U.S. job market only grew by only 8%.”

It's clear that those advocating for the necessary “just transition” from fossil fuels to renewable energy care more about workers than fossil fuel supporters, who prioritize profits and political funding.

Along with a shift to better jobs in renewable energy, we also need to shift our thinking about employment. For starters, we must realize that the five-day, 40-hour workweek is as outdated as the energy sources that have fuelled it.

We must also ensure that those employed in the fossil fuel industry, along with many others, can be guaranteed adequate training, good wages and benefits and varied opportunities to be part of cleaner, healthier, more prosperous future.

# Thompson, Kim seek re-election in Wards 4 and 6

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Council of 2026-2030 is guaranteed to have several new faces around the table as Councillors Wendy Gaertner and Rachel Gilliland seek new opportunities, while Councillor John Gallo is challenging Mayor Tom Mrakas for Aurora's top job – but long-time Councillors Michael Thompson and Harold Kim are vying to represent their constituents for another four years.

Thompson, who was first elected in 2010, is seeking his fifth consecutive Council term, and his second as Ward 4 Councillor. As of press time this week, it's a two-person race in the Ward with candidate Shaheen Moledina also in the field.

Kim, first elected in 2014, is standing for a fourth term, the second representing Ward 6, and is currently being challenged by resident Jibraan Khan in what is Aurora's fastest-growing quadrant.

For the incumbents, it's a matter of continuing work that is already underway and steering Aurora into the future.

## MICHAEL THOMPSON Ward 4

Thompson was the first incumbent member of Aurora Council to confirm their intention to seek re-election this past winter, but formalized his candidacy on June 11.

Following his registration, he said he was proud of Council's past



Incumbent Council members Michael Thompson and Harold Kim are seeking re-election in Wards 4 and 6 respectively.

Photos courtesy of the Town of Aurora

accomplishments, but said "there's more work ahead."

"We need to continue investing in our infrastructure, protecting the quality of life that makes Aurora such a wonderful place to live, and ensuring residents receive value for their tax dollars going forward," he said, noting the number of Council members not seeking re-election was just one factor he considered in deciding to run again. "The next term will bring significant change around the Council table. While fresh perspectives are great and they're important, experience and continuity are equally valuable. The decisions Council makes over the next four years will have a lasting impact on our community, and I

believe Aurora will benefit from having an experienced Councillor who understands the issues, knows the history behind key decisions, and can help our Town through this period of transition, while continuing to be a strong advocate for the residents in Ward 4."

Among the many Council decisions over the past four years he says he's particularly proud of include the opening of Aurora Town Square and the new gymnasium at the SARC, work on the upcoming multi-use path on Yonge Street, the installation of traffic lights on Yonge Street near Delmanor, the opening of new artificial turf fields, and the acquisition of parkland.

"Those are all great things but, at the same time, while there's always large projects and long-term initiatives that attract attention... local government is ultimately about ensuring the day-to-day needs of our community are met: maintaining roads and infrastructure, delivering services, access to parks and facilities, and ensuring Aurora remains a great place to live, both today and for future generations. It's not always making headlines, it's not always grabbing attention, but just ensuring that the day-to-day fundamentals remain, first and foremost."

## HAROLD KIM Ward 6

When Harold Kim was first elected to Council in 2014, he says he didn't foresee such longevity in the role, but his three terms on Council so far, and its accomplishments, have been "very rewarding."

Among the most rewarding aspects of the position, he says, have been

those related to economic development within the Aurora community.

"I'm on the board of the Aurora Economic Development Corporation and we've made some real strides in establishing up-and-coming companies and, in particular, companies in the med-tech and biotech space," he says, noting a number of other engagement opportunities spearheaded by the Economic Development Corporation, including Aurora CNX, that have helped showcase the "phenomenal" work of local companies.

"I would like to continue to move forward with the economic development area in Aurora and that's what excites me," he says, adding that representing Ward 6 is key in that excitement.

"Ward 6 is predominantly new residents to Aurora," he continues. "I've used the last four years to really connect the old with the new. Aurora is such a vibrant, volunteer-based community, and I want to keep that volunteer spirit alive. When you have a lot of new residents coming from different parts of the GTA, Ontario, or Canada, for that matter, people have different values. One of the important things that I believe that I have done is to educate and send a message to those in Ward 6 that we are a volunteer-based community. It's great to be a part of a family where we can all get involved, participate, and contribute to a greater Aurora."

"Four years won't change human behaviour [or] people's mentality, but it takes time. I would love to continue to do that for another four years, connect with those residents who I haven't been able to connect with yet, and let them know that Aurora is a thriving volunteer-based and activities-based community where everyone is welcome."

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# Culture “thrives” at ACC as it launches 2026-2027 season

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora Cultural Centre this week as they launch an expansive season of performing arts, gallery shows, and more on Thursday, June 25.

The new season, which is expected to go live at 9 a.m., brings the best of the world to Aurora through a new concert series, returning favourites that have been at the heart of the organization for more than 15 years, and more opportunities than ever before for local artists.

“I’d like to start tonight by talking about this simple mindset that when culture thrives at the centre of civic life, people don’t just attend events, they know that they belong here,” said Morry Patoka, Vice President of the Aurora Cultural Centre, at a recent sneak peek of the upcoming season hosted for program and community supporters. “This is really the heart and soul of why we’re all here tonight.... We’re all part of the reason the Aurora Cultural Centre is becoming broadly recognized as a cultural leader and an artistic hub. It means real impact: a child’s enthusiastic return to art camp, an older adult rediscovering their love of painting, a newcomer’s concert in Canada, clapping along to songs that are popular and fun. It means community impact: all of our programming brings people from all over the place, but from all different places in the world, sharing experiences that build trust – and where trust grows, friendships grow, and civic pride grows.”



Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, speaks to Cultural Centre patrons and supporters at a recent sneak peek at their 2026-2027 season. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

Derek Andrews, Performing Arts Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre, reflected these themes in teasing out some of the artists who will be gracing the Aurora Town Square and Brevik Hall stages in the season

ahead.

“Innovation and escalation are trademarks of the crop of 30-something concerts,” he said, making particular note of the Centre’s recently-launched Gold Circle concert series, which offers an enhanced experience for ticket holders enjoying top-tier talent from at home and abroad. “The Gold Circle concerts will cost a little more, but they also deliver a lot more. Powerful jazz women will grace our stage right off the top, and also with a Christmas twist. We’ll offer a taste of opera twice, family programming, grassroots fiddling and African percussion.

“Indie pop songwriters, Celtic direct from Ireland, gospel, top ranking Indigenous performers – we raise the bar with another season of great music.”

Great music will also be found in, as the name suggests, the latest installment of the Great Artists Music Series.

The Great Artists Music Series is the brainchild of Grammy Award-winning classical musicians and producers – and Aurora residents – Bonnie and Norbert Kraft. Once again, they have assembled a four-concert series featuring acclaimed and emerging talent.

“We’re celebrating our seventeenth year of the Great Artists Music Series,”

said Bonnie Kraft. “Norbert and I have proudly supported the Aurora Cultural Centre since its beginnings in 2009 because we have seen firsthand how the arts can transform people’s lives. Live music has the power to bring us together at the very deepest level, and reminds us that we are all much more alike than we are different. We can connect emotionally with music that was written 500 years ago as well as music that was written yesterday or improvised today.

“Since our first concert in 2009, we have brought exceptional world-class musicians to share their music making with us. Many of them have played in the most prestigious concert halls, but they still always express how much they love playing for us. We have invited young, emerging artists at the beginning of their careers, as well as having the privilege of hosting international-renowned musicians from throughout the world.”

New this year will be two Sunday afternoon events in Brevik Hall offering a cabaret-style experience with intimate seating, pastries, and “gorgeous music” in this “Tea & Classics” program.

The Centre’s multiple galleries will be very active in the season ahead as well, with installations highlighting the impacts of the opioid epidemic; memory, identity, and intergenerational trauma; local natural wonders; textiles; works created by local artists in-house through their Artist-in-Residence program; and much more.

“As a free public gallery, we offer a rotating calendar of exhibitions and programs that expand access to contemporary art and provide vital opportunities for critical cultural dialogue and connection,” said Interim Gallery Manager Ashlyn Gregory. “It’s important to understand galleries not just as a space to look at art, but as a place for the community to gather and have shared experiences. In a time where people are feeling increasingly socially isolated, spaces like these matter deeply.

“Our upcoming exhibitions engage the community in a diverse range of culturally relevant conversations through a variety of artistic practices and media. Our galleries also play an essential role in supporting artists. We are committed to amplifying the voices of diverse artists. We work with artists who have exhibited on a national and international scale, but we’re also strongly committed to celebrating emerging and local artists.”

To explore the Aurora Cultural Centre’s 2026-2027 season, visit [auroraculturalcentre.ca](http://auroraculturalcentre.ca).



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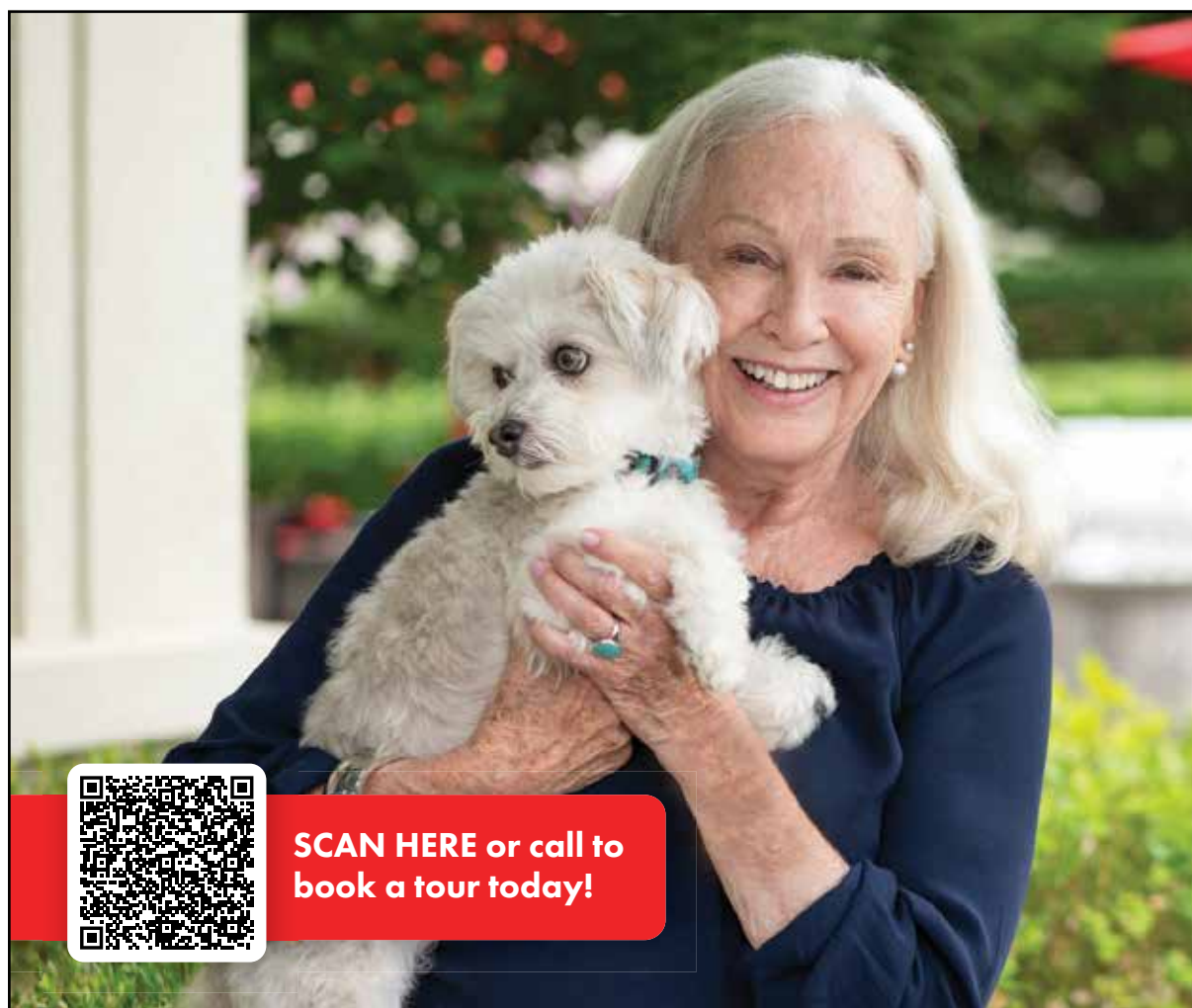
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# BUSINESS & FINANCE



## Aurora to play a part in automotive, mobility development

From page 1

“Today’s announcement reflects the power of collaboration, and the shared commitment required to turn innovative ideas into real-world solutions,” said York Region Chairman Eric Jolliffe at Megalab on June 19. “Today’s announcement is an exciting milestone for York Region and for Ontario’s innovation economy. Across our communities, we see tremendous growth in advanced manufacturing, automotive technologies, artificial intelligence, and connected industry. We are home to a diverse network of entrepreneurs, researchers, technology companies, and global industry leaders who are developing solutions that will shape the future.

“But innovation does not happen in isolation. Companies need opportunities to test new technologies in real-world environments. The access to infrastructure, expertise, partners, and customers can help move promising ideas from concept to commercialization. Exactly what Regional Technology Development Site is designed to provide.”

The site will help create a “pathway” for small- and medium-sized businesses to “validate technologies that accelerate development time and bring innovation



Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

and solutions to the market faster,” Jolliffe continued.

“Just as importantly, it strengthens the connections between government, industry and academia, creating an ecosystem where innovation can thrive. This work aligns with York Region’s Economic Development Action Plan and our commitment to fostering business

growth, supporting entrepreneurship, and attracting investment that creates high-quality jobs for our residents. It also reinforces York Region’s role as a destination for innovation, and a place where new technologies can be tested and scaled.”

York Region’s RTSD is one of nine announced by the Ontario Government which are intended to serve as hubs “connecting infrastructure, talent and expertise to accelerate solutions that address both current and emerging challenges,” said Mona Eghanian, Assistant Vice President and Deputy Head of the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN).

“York Region is a critical part of this network, supported by nine municipalities and a strong ecosystem of private sector partners. Together, these collaborations are driving real results and helping companies test, prototype and bring innovations to market faster,” she said. “York Region, in particular, has built a strong reputation as a hub of smart materials, electrification and heavy-conductor innovation.... This type of collaboration is essential not only for economic growth, but as we respond to the rising global demand for advanced automotive and smart mobility solutions, both to meet today’s needs and the future needs.”

The development of the RTSD in York Region was hailed by community leaders gathered for Friday’s announcement, including Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, who said the announcement itself was about “much more than technology.”

“It’s about creating opportunities,” she said. “It’s about supporting local businesses, and it’s about ensuring that York Region remains one of the best places in Ontario to invest, innovate, and create good-paying jobs. I’m proud that

York Region has been selected as one of Ontario’s RTSDs, supported through the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network. This is supported by an investment of up to \$2.5 million from our government. This initiative will help entrepreneurs and businesses develop, test, and commercialize the next generation of smart mobility technologies.

“From connected and autonomous vehicles to electrification and emerging transportation solutions, York Region will play a leading role in shaping the future of this rapidly-growing sector.... Together, we are creating an environment where businesses can access tools, the expertise, the infrastructure, and the talent that they need to succeed.... York Region is already home to a thriving technology and innovation ecosystem. Through this investment, we are building on that success and positioning our region as a leader in the future of mobility and advanced technology.”

Unable to attend Friday’s announcement due to a family bereavement, Mayor Tom Mrakas welcomed the Aurora’s connection to the RTSD in a statement.

“The Town of Aurora is proud to support the York Regional Technology Development site,” he said. “Through the testing and engineering expertise of Aurora-based Megalab Group, businesses will be supported as they develop and validate new technologies. This partnership strengthens our shared commitment to innovation and economic growth.”

In addition to Megalab Group, participating partners in the RTSD include Siemens, The MathWorks, Google Cloud, DVLR Electric, FyeLabs, Wurth Elektronik, Innovance Solutions, Bhole IP Law, Mantle, Zeroto One Strategic, Ramudden Digital, Synopsys, SolidWorks, OVHcloud, and Microart Services.

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Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

## Additional community supports coming to help victims of human trafficking

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
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Hundreds of thousands of dollars recovered from the proceeds of crime will be reinvested in the local community to support victims of human trafficking.

Funds from the Province's Ontario Civil Remedies Grant Program have been allocated to the Newmarket-based Bridgenorth, which works with and provides services to sexually-exploited women and girls through survivor-led support, prevention, education and advocacy, as well as Cedar Centre, which provides similar survivor-led support for children, youth, and adults recovering from interpersonal childhood trauma.

The funds will support Bridgenorth's intervention program, assisting youth between the ages of 12 and 19 who have experienced sex trafficking or sexual exploitation, while Cedar Centre will use their share to establish York Region's first Child and Youth Advocacy Centre.

The funds were announced at York Region's Newmarket headquarters on Friday afternoon by Doug Downey, Attorney General of Ontario, and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy.

"Government makes a choice. Government can create new programs, and sometimes they are flashy and you can explain what you are trying to do. What we have chosen to do is invest in you, the people doing the real work, already on the ground, serving people, and we are adding capacity instead of adding administrative structure," said Downey. "The work that both Bridgenorth and Cedar Centre are doing is really remarkable. There is no denying the challenge that we have, the magnitude of the challenge that we have."

The funds, he said, were derived from proceeds of crime, including seized assets, "whether cash, cars, purses, any number of things," and putting the money "in use for proper purposes."

"Through the Ontario Civil Remedies Grant program, our government is investing in initiatives that provide meaningful support, create opportunities for healing, and help protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation and abuse," added MPP Gallagher Murphy. "I am pleased that up to \$200,000 will support Bridgenorth's Life Edge intervention program, helping more youth between the ages of 12 and 19 who have experienced sex trafficking or sexual exploitation to allow them to access survivor-led and trauma-informed support services.... You are the boots on the ground, and you are making a difference.... I am equally pleased that up to \$200,000 will support Cedar Centre, another phenomenal organization. This will work to establish York Region's first Child and Youth Advocacy Centre. This important project will bring together specialized supports in one safe, trauma-informed environment, helping children and youth navigate difficult circumstances while reducing the risk of further trauma.

"These investments go beyond funding dollars. The investments will help ensure that young people know that they are not alone. They are about providing families with support when they need it most. It's also about building a stronger York Region where children and youth can feel safe, supported, and empowered to move forward. Every young person deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. Every family deserves the access to support and care. Every community benefits when we invest in prevention, protection, and recovery."

The real-world impact of these dollars were outlined by representatives from both organizations.

"Bridgenorth exists because, sadly, sex trafficking is happening right here in York Region," said Executive Director Karen Todd. "We help youth experience freedom from sex trafficking through advocacy, education, and awareness and direct services. I am pleased to share that the grant being awarded today will help us do two things.

"We will build capacity in at least 25 frontline service providers from other agencies to recognize the signs a youth is being exploited or trafficked. Youth often don't recognize that what they are experiencing is exploitation and don't always identify themselves as victims of crime. Three additional spots in our program are also being funded for both this year and next. It provides low-barrier, trauma-informed, individualized support for youth aged 12 to 19 who have experienced sex trafficking or sexual exploitation."

Allison Clark of Cedar Centre added the funding will help them address the residents they serve in new and innovative ways.

"Protecting children is hard and demanding work within the systems that have been created for us, and that we create and perpetuate in our responses," she said. "If we are going to ask children to be brave enough to navigate, titrate, and survive our systems of response, then you best believe...we need to be brave enough to question, to disrupt, to correct, and to envision a brighter way together. Our Child Youth Advocate Program is the first pillar of York Region's emerging Child Youth Advocacy Center, Project HOPE, and it represents our first brave step together. I couldn't be more excited for it."

Addressing the leaders in attendance, she added: "It requires bravery to lead, to hold a vision, to remain curious and compassionate, and always, always to express conviction. That's why we're here. Our Civil Remedies Grant is a partnership between all of us, but we wouldn't have had the opportunity without you being brave enough to support our children, because that's what this is really all about. In York Region, on the days when children and youth face their most challenging moments, this is about them being brave. This is about us being brave with them. This is about you being brave enough to believe in all of us."

# Milestone anniversary of R.A.I.L.'s arrival in Aurora on track for community celebration

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Canada is a nation built on the foundations of a railway – and, as a community, so is Aurora.

As the country looks forward to its 160th birthday next year, the Aurora community may have a milestone of its own to celebrate in 2028 as historians and community groups come together to mark the 175th anniversary of the first train arriving in Town.

Plans for a 2028 observance – dubbed R.A.I.L., an acronym still being kept under wraps – is the brainchild of local historian David Heard.

Heard first raised the possibility of a community-wide, month-long celebration in the spring of 2028 at a recent Council meeting, and a subsequent motion from Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, approved by Council, has got the ball rolling.

“The arrival of the rail service from Toronto to Aurora in 1853 was a defining moment in the Town’s history, contributing significantly to its economic development, population growth, and long-term prosperity,” said Councillor Gallo in his motion. “2028 will mark the 175th anniversary of this historic milestone, presenting a unique opportunity to celebrate Aurora’s heritage and educate residents and visitors about the Town’s railway history.”

Noting the idea was first brought forward by Heard, the motion added organizations such as the Aurora Historical Society “have a strong track record supporting local heritage through programming, exhibitions and community engagement.”

“The Town of Aurora has previously delivered successful commemorative initiatives, such as the 100th anniversary of the War Memorial, through a coordinated model led by the Museum in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders,” he continued. “Staff have indicated that the museum team is already in discussions with

neighbouring municipalities and partners regarding this milestone and the Town’s Special Events team may play a supporting role.”

The motion, as endorsed by Council, has tasked municipal staff with developing a “coordinated plan” for the R.A.I.L. 175 program, and identifies the Town’s Museum and Cultural Services initiative to join Heard at the table in making it a reality, alongside the Society, municipalities that might be sharing this milestone anniversary, and other community partners.

Should everything go to plan, municipal staff are expected to report back on detailed plans by the end of the second quarter of 2027.

“For many years, maybe since childhood, I envisioned R.A.I.L.,” said Heard, making his pitch to Council. “From an Eaton’s catalogue wishing for a train set to counting freight cars here as a child in the 1960s, I always wanted my own train – I think we all did – so, how do we transfer that passion into four weeks of a wonderful train celebration?”

The vision is a series of events from mid-May to mid-June 2028 which Heard said has significant potential to bring the community together.

He pitched a potential budget of \$250,000 shared between community partners, stakeholders, fundraising and grants, adding that having the Aurora Historical Society on board with the plan is vital for their fundraising and grant-writing ability.

“The budget is based in these early stages [on] four events, four weeks,” he said. “Could we turn a profit? I’m very proud to say that I’ve talked to some staff and they do believe in this project, that maybe we could actually make some revenue out of it. I believe we can.”

“I’m not going to tell you what the [R.A.I.L.] acronym is, we’re actually planning a little contest to see if people can figure out what it is, but it tells Aurora’s story...and it’s pretty powerful.”



**WORKING AT THE CAR WASH** – Central York Fire Services threw open the doors of its Ian Laing Headquarters on Saturday for its annual Car Wash for the United Way. Members of the CYFS got their hands dirty getting local vehicles clean, collecting donations for the cause, including Chief Rocco Volpe.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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## Grade 8 Graduates



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## Grade 12 Graduates



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WEEK OF JUNE 25, 2026

## Over 300 soccer fans at Aurora Family Leisure Complex “Watch Party” cheer Team Canada to shocking 6-0 win over Qatar



(LEFT) Staff and Team Canada soccer fans mingled at Wicked Eats' Watch Party on Thursday night. (RIGHT) Over 300 soccer fans cheered on Canada's national men's team to a 6 – 0 win over Qatar at the AFLC. The Town of Aurora enhanced the viewing experience with free popcorn at their Watch Party. **Auroran photos by Jim Stewart**

### Pubs across town enjoy upswing in business as World Cup fever sweeps through Aurora

BY JIM STEWART

When Cyle Larin kicked in a rebound in the 16th minute of Thursday's match versus Qatar, over 300 fans at the AFLC erupted in celebration.

The black-jerseyed Canadian side had taken its first lead in two 2026 World Cup games and delighted 52,497 fans at BC Place in Vancouver.

The lineup for free popcorn at the AFLC, courtesy of the Town of Aurora, tripled in length after Larin's go-ahead marker.

When Team Canada veteran Jonathan David drilled the ball into the lower left corner at 29:11, the first of his three goals tallied against Qatar, the party was on in Aurora.

The spirit of David's goal celly travelled from Vancouver quite seamlessly to the Judy Sherin Memorial Arena on Industrial Parkway as hundreds of Team Canada supporters reveled in the squad's 2-0 lead.

The festive atmosphere was generated by an all-ages crowd seated in lawn chairs and stretching from the visitors' faceoff circles past the home side's blue line. The fans were clad in red or black Team Canada gear—a spirited group using maple leaf-shaped noisemakers to back the upstart national squad—and the huge projection screen set up Town staff offered a crystal clear view of our national team's dominance of Qatar.

When David's second goal the match beat Qatar goaltender Mahmoud Abundada in the third minute of added time in the first half, the rout was on and fans across the country were witnessing

history. The national men's soccer team was rolling towards its first World Cup victory with a comfortable 3-0 lead at the end of the first half.

In quest of a pub setting for the second half, I raced across North Aurora and settled in at Wicked Eats at Yonge and Orchard Heights. The popular neighborhood restaurant was jammed with Team Canada supporters—all tables and bar stools filled with patrons – and the national side did not disappoint the assembly by scoring three more times in the remaining forty-five minutes of play.

Nathan Saliba, who was substituted into the game to replace the severely-injured Ishmael Kone, scored in the 63rd minute and gave Canada an insurmountable 4-0 margin – much to the delight of the 100+ patrons cheering on the national men's team with the same fervor as those who gathered at Wicked Eats during the Olympic Hockey final on February 22.

The outcome last Thursday evoked more joy than the devastating OT loss to the US in the gold medal game and when Jacob Schaffelburg was credited with a marker on a Qatar own goal, the Canadian side took a 5-0 lead and made history with the greatest scoring outburst by a CONCACAF team in World Cup play.

David—who had been held scoreless in his previous four World Cup matches dating back to 2022—made up for lost time and completed his hat trick in the second minute of stoppage time as the one-sided match drew to a close.

Although Kone's gruesome injury—the vital veteran suffered a broken leg requiring surgery – cast a pall over the proceedings at Wicked Eats, an otherwise happy group cheered the winning side's moment of victory. The vocal crowd exited the pub having witnessed an historical 6-0 drubbing of Qatar that rocketed undefeated Team Canada into

first place in Group B.

Canada's final Group Stage match is Wednesday, June 24 versus Switzerland in Vancouver at 3 PM EDT. The Town of Aurora World Cup Watch Party for

Team Canada versus The Swiss will be held at Aurora Town Square in the David De Simone Performance Hall. Pubs and clubs around town will also be welcoming guests for the big game.

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## Cycle Aurora returns for another season with Canada Day launch

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Canada Day is a great day to spend outdoors enjoying the wonders this country offers, locally and broadly – and Aurora is encouraging you to explore on two wheels as Cycle Aurora pedals forward for a brand-new season.

Cycle Aurora is an interactive Town-wide program that encourages residents to get up on their bikes and fan out in the community, taking in a list of landmarks, businesses, and more, with participants collecting points along the way.

And, yes, there are prizes for top point-getters!

The Cycle Aurora initiative is powered by the free Goose Chase platform which offers an easy way to connect with the program's missions, and much more.

"Explore Aurora while enhancing your cultural connection with interesting cycle destinations," say organizers. "There are a variety of cultural points of interest predetermined throughout Aurora. Whether it's your first time on two wheels or you're a regular cyclist, let's all get out and enjoy the simple pleasure of riding a bike. Collect points and see where you land on the leaderboard.

"Explore interesting spaces and local landmarks. Your mission map will guide you across Town – one pedal at a time. Ride with friends, spark a little competition with coworkers, or enjoy the journey on your own - it's all about staying active and discovering more of our community."

The Cycle Aurora initiative will run July 3 – 31 and prizes for those on the leaderboard will be awarded weekly.

There is also the opportunity to plot your own challenges along the way.

For more information on Cycle Aurora, visit [aurora.ca/CycleAurora](http://aurora.ca/CycleAurora).

## Savy's 5K Memorial Walk honours Aurora flight student

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The legacy of Savanna May Royes, a 20-year-old Aurora resident who lost her life in 2025 in Manitoba while training for her pilot's license, will be furthered in a community walk next month.

Savy's 5K Memorial Walk will take place Sunday, July 5, at Lambert Willson Park, directly behind the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Industrial Parkway North, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Proceeds raised through the Memorial Walk will benefit the Savanna May Royes Aviation Safety Grant established by the family in their daughter's memory back in February.

"The event honours the vibrant life of Savy, who died tragically in a mid-air collision while pursuing her pilot's license in Manitoba last July," say organizers. "The event will raise

funds for the Savanna May Royes Aviation Safety Grant, which empowers young, minority female pilots within the Urban Pilots Network."

Parents Tim and Loraine Royes came together

with Urban Pilots Network (UPN) to establish the scholarship to support young women of colour within UPN with expenses related to their training, including costs to attend safety conferences, "empowering them to grow, learn, and pursue their aviation dreams safely."

"Savanna's passing deeply affected the Aurora community and surrounding areas with more than 800 people having attended her celebration of life," said the Royes family at the time of the scholarship's establishment. "A common theme among the speakers in attendance, including six of her Northern Lights Public School teachers, was Savanna's kindness, thoughtfulness, generosity, and the bright spirit she brought to everyone around her."

A GoFundMe page was established by the family shortly after Savanna lost her life in the July 8, accident in Steinbach, MB, with the expressed purpose of funding a scholarship in their daughter's name."

"After a month of searching for the right home for her scholarship, we knew it belonged with UPN, whose mission reflects everything Savanna believed in," said Tim in a statement. "Thanks to the generosity of so many people, more than \$42,000 was raised."

## CELEBRITY GOLF CLASSIC



The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame (ASHOF) held its fourth-annual Celebrity Golf Classic on June 11 at Pheasant Run Golf Club. Among those who turned out to play and support the event was Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena, pictured here with Mike Smith and Stu Bundy of the ASHOF. "The Hall of Fame plays an important role in recognizing athletes, builders, and volunteers while keeping the community's sporting legacy alive for future generations," said Cobena after the event's reception. "The evening highlighted how sport not only builds individual achievement, but also strengthens community identity, connection, and pride."

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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# Packed house looks at housing options at documentary screening, seminar



Contributed photo

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It was a packed house in Brevik Hall last Tuesday night when Aurora Cares – Housing For All hosted a screening of the documentary “Thinking Beyond the Market: Rethinking Canada’s Housing Crisis,” followed by a question-and-answer period with filmmaker Dr. Brian Doucet and local experts and advocates.

Thinking Beyond the Market follows Doucet as he travels across Canada exploring different policies, programs, and projects that are helping to address Canada’s current housing crisis, one that is typically compounded by the ongoing crisis of affordability.

Among those in attendance was Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, who said the evening provided plenty of food for thought on housing models and policies that could benefit a community like Aurora.

“Some that resonated, for instance, was

one in Whistler, BC where employees that they need desperately couldn’t afford the cost of homes there, so they put a housing project together that had multiple ways of financing it and to take it out of the market so you could come in, get a place to live, but when you left, you had to leave it at the same price that you bought it. It was getting rid of this inflationary spiral upwards that happens with most homes.

“Another one in Montreal was interesting in that you have a first right of refusal on certain properties so if somebody wanted to sell a property, they would go and get a quote from somebody who wanted to buy it, and then they would have to bring that to the municipality [which] would have the right to buy it at that price. There are some really unique things that are going on and one of them, of course, was renovations in order to try to maintain the inventory of affordable rental products.”

Councillor Weese has been a leading voice in putting local bylaws on the books

that would assist residents in the cases of renovations and he says he hopes staff will bring bylaw options forward by the end of the current Council term.

In the meantime, he hopes the discussions that took place last week following the screening will bring about continued momentum towards solutions.

“The film showed what can be done and I think the direction that Aurora Cares may take is to look at what’s feasibly possible to do given the circumstances we have here in our own Town because, if you look at all those options and the way things have been done in other locations, they’re all different, there’s no one size-fits-all in terms of affordable housing. We know that’s a very difficult concept and it’s relatively new in the history of Aurora and Ontario, so we have to come up with some creative ways to get people to think about housing as a human need and a human right and not something that is negotiable and is driven by a market, because the market can’t be relied upon to provide affordable housing.

“What will work in Aurora may not work in a larger community or even a smaller community, so we have to pick and choose the things that need to be done, and I think the other message is we have to do something. We can’t do nothing, so start looking at ways to be creative.”

One individual looking to bring about change to the community who served on the working committee who planned the screening was Ward 1 Council candidate Rocco Morsillo who said attendance was encouraging.

“It was encouraging to see our community come together to have meaningful conversations and explore solutions around housing inclusion,” he said. “Diverse housing options help build

stronger, more resilient communities while supporting employment opportunities, economic growth, and creating places where everyone has the chance to thrive.

“A big thank you to our guest speakers, Dr. Brian Doucet, Michael Braithwaite, and Brent King, for sharing their knowledge and perspectives on the complex challenges surrounding housing solutions. And special thanks to our title sponsor, Wasim Jarrah of Concierge Realty, for supporting this important conversation. Together, by listening, learning, and collaborating, we can continue working toward stronger and more inclusive communities in Aurora.”

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# Top 40 Under 40 form strong network of business support

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Small businesses are the backbone of every community, and Aurora, Newmarket, and East Gwillimbury recently came together to celebrate young business owners, and their local network of peers who support business and economic development.

The Top 40 Under 40, a collaboration between the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and the Central York Chamber of Commerce, which serves Newmarket and East Gwillimbury, celebrated their inaugural group of honorees this month at a special reception held at Stonehaven Banquet Hall on Eric T. Smith Way.

It was an informal way to celebrate younger local business leaders who are making a difference in areas the Chambers support.

“Business owners, entrepreneurs, and professionals do not operate within municipal boundaries,” said Alison Mumford, Executive Director at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. “The collaboration between the Aurora Chamber and Central York Chamber reflects the reality of our regional economy. By recognizing these 40 individuals together, we celebrate not only their personal achievements, but also the strength, innovation, and leadership that exists across Aurora, Newmarket, and East Gwillimbury.”

Over the next several weeks, The Auroran will share profiles of those honoured by the Chambers, highlighting their business contributions as well as the ways they support the community.

## YASS MOTAMEDI Operations Manager, NewMakeIt

“She leads programs and initiatives that make skilled trades, creative technologies, and hands-on learning more accessible to the community. She works closely with instructors, makers, and community partners to develop opportunities that support skill-building, innovation, and lifelong learning for people of all backgrounds and experience levels. One of her key accomplishments is leading the Beer Mug Project, a community-driven initiative that brings makers together to create handcrafted mugs in support of the Newmarket Food Pantry. The project has raised approximately \$3,000 to date while fostering collaboration, creativity, and community engagement among local makers. Yass is also involved in expanding access to skilled trades training and participates in community initiatives such as the Distinguished Gentleman’s Ride in Newmarket.”

## KELLINA POWELL Deaf entrepreneur, speaker, author, and coach

“She is focused on empowering young adults with disabilities through confidence, self-belief, and advocacy. Her work centres on accessibility, inclusion, mental health, and resilience. She speaks across Canada, sharing her experiences as a hard of hearing woman and promoting disability awareness and representation in schools, workplaces, and communities. Kellina is also a four-time bestselling author who uses storytelling to inspire healing and personal growth. She mentors youth

within the disability community and is committed to bridging deaf and hearing communities. In 2025, she was recognized as a Top Black Woman to Watch in Canada.”

## ELLIOTT RABEN Founder, Creative Director, Elliott Raben Productions, Inc.

“It is a full-service corporate multimedia company serving clients across Ontario and Quebec. Over the past eight years, he has grown it from a solo venture into a trusted production partner focused on storytelling, political communications, and live media production. His work includes producing content for more than 60 election campaigns at municipal, provincial, and federal levels, supporting candidates who have gone on to hold major public offices. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he launched ERP Live!, a broadcast-quality live-streaming service that supported virtual events, including a fundraising gala that raised over \$10,000 in one evening. Working with a wide range of clients and community organizations, Elliott and his team communicate their clients’ message in multiple languages, allowing stories to reach wider audiences. He is recognized for helping clients of all sizes share their vision with clarity, professionalism, and impact.”

## RAY RAUTH Vice President, Corporate Engagement & Partnerships, Job Skills

“He leads partnership development and strategic initiatives across the GTA, York Region, and Peel Region. He has over a decade of experience with the organization, progressing through multiple roles in employment services, program design, and communications since 2015. He has helped develop programs such as Inn from the Cold Employment Program, which achieved an 85 per cent success rate, and the Job Skills’ Client Emergency Fund, which supports job seekers with essential barriers. Ray has also led initiatives like the York Region Side Hustle Summit, Compass Magazine, and campaigns including Work in Georgina and Shop Local. He is recognized for creating programs and partnerships that strengthen employment access and community impact.”

## ARYAN SADGHIAN Student, Researcher, Community Advocate focused on innovation, leadership and social impact

“He has co-led initiatives addressing food waste and food insecurity, including campaigns supporting the Newmarket Food Pantry and a Halloween pumpkin drive that redirected food waste to community benefit. He has mentored youth to help expand the initiative, which has grown internationally and saved thousands of pounds of food. Aryan also volunteers with after-school programs and Dog Tales Rescue and Sanctuary. Academically, he is completing a Masters at Western University focused on digital health and behaviour psychology. He has received the Canadian Graduate Scholarship and has been admitted to a joint PhD program through the University of Toronto and the University of Melbourne, where his research will focus on digital behaviour interventions in cancer care.”

## ISABELLA SHETTLER Founder, Saving Strides

“[Saving Strides is] a non-profit initiative that collects new and gently used shoes for individuals and families in need. What began as a small idea connected to her passion for running and community involvement has grown into a program focused on combining fitness and giving back. Through

Saving Strides, she organizes group runs, fitness classes, and donation drives that encourage community participation while supporting those in need. A volunteer trip to an underserved community in Africa deepened her understanding of global inequality and reinforced her commitment to the cause. Isabella is proud of Saving Strides’ growth and continues to expand its impact through events, partnerships, and community engagement.”

## DEANNA SIMONE Founder, Rosewood Marketing Group Inc. & Rosewood Financing

“[These are] two Newmarket-based companies that support local businesses and non-profits with marketing and fundraising solutions. Through Rosewood Marketing, she provides services like branding, websites, digital marketing, and strategy to help businesses grow and modernize their presence. Rosewood Fundraising supports charities and community groups with accessible raffle and fundraising programs. Deanna focuses on building community-minded businesses that help organizations succeed and increase their impact.”

## STEPHANIE SOAVE Real Estate Professional

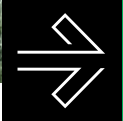
“Soave is a long-standing Aurora real-estate professional and business owner with deep roots in the community. Over the past decade, she has supported more than 300 families through major real estate decisions, building her business primarily through referrals and trusted local relationships. In addition to residential real estate, she has helped support local commercial growth by assisting small businesses in securing space in Aurora, including NOW Health Clinic and GRCO Grill. Stephanie is also active in community giving through initiatives such as Million Dollar Smiles, the Salvation Army, and the annual “Gift for a Family” program and is recognized for combining real estate expertise with community involvement.”

## DAN STEFFENS Founder, MyoDynamicHealth

“[MyoDynamicHealth is] a multi-location healthcare organization focused on rehabilitation and wellness care. His work centres on helping patients recover from injury, restore function, and improve their quality of life. What started as a single clinic in Barrie has grown into multiple locations in Innisfil and Newmarket with a team of over 100 healthcare professionals. The organization has received recognition such as new Business of the Year, reflecting its growth and community trust. Dan is committed to a strong workplace culture and community involvement through sports sponsorships and charitable partnerships. He is most proud of building the company alongside his wife while raising their two children.”

## BRITTNY STEVENSON-BYERS Economic Development Officer, Town of East Gwillimbury

“[She supports] local business growth, entrepreneurship, and community development. She connects entrepreneurs with resources, mentorship, and opportunities to help them succeed. She has helped expand regional programming with Georgina and York University’s YSpace and supported hundreds of businesses through workshops and mentorship. She also helped launch the EG Loves Local initiative during the pandemic to support small businesses and encourage shopping locally. Brittney is focused on strengthening the local economy and building strong community connections.”



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# Steele hopes time as Citizen of the Year will inspire others to give back

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora's 2026 Citizen of the Year, Doug Steele, will be at the heart of Canada Day celebrations on July 1 as he helps lead the celebratory parade up Yonge Street on July 1.

It's an honour long-enjoyed by Citizens of the Year, but it's decidedly outside the comfort zone for Steele, who prefers to do his work behind the scenes. But Citizen of the Year duties call, and he hopes that however reluctant he might be to be at the centre of attention, it might inspire others to find ways to give back to their community.

Steele was named Aurora's Citizen of the Year at the 2026 Community Recognition Awards evening held at Aurora Town Square on May 25.

Surprised by the honour, Steele was a man of few words that night, but had more insights to offer once the reality of the award set in.

"It's really about all the people I've worked with," says the former Welcoming Arms Executive Director, who now serves as Board Chair for the ecumenical organization founded by local churches to help local residents make ends meet through financial and nutritional support. "That's just the way I feel. Others have said, 'Don't be so humble,' but sorry, I don't know how to do otherwise."

Looking ahead to his role in Canada's birthday celebrations, he jokes, "I'd rather be hiding under a rock," but this is not necessarily the case.

"I certainly hope to leverage the notoriety of the award to help

Welcoming Arms, which is my main focus now – from exposure, perhaps from a fundraising standpoint, or drawing new clients who don't know about us," he says.

Steele's community volunteerism is not limited to Welcoming Arms.

He first became active in the community as a member and eventual Chair of the Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School Council.

"I wanted to be engaged in the school my children were in," he says. "In Year Two, I was chair of the Welcoming Arms Council and I guess that just lit a fire. To be honest, my mom was a massive volunteer in Toronto where I grew up and she was a great example. She was president of Bloorview Hospital and also the Bloorview Foundation. I took notice of her volunteer activities when

Continued on page 32

## Aurora Canada's Birthday Town!

That title has deep roots. Inspired by the wave of patriotism that swept Canada during the 1967 Centennial, Aurora became one of the first municipalities to establish July 1 as a true annual community celebration. What began as a spirited block party on Richardson Drive grew into a town-wide tradition that drew visitors from Newmarket, Bradford, and beyond. By 1969, Aurora had proudly claimed its identity as Canada's Birthday Town.

No one understood what that meant more than Ron Wallace. The founder of The Auroran, Aurora's own community newspaper, Ron was known simply as "Mr. Aurora" — a man who loved this town deeply and worked tirelessly to celebrate it. He captured what July 1 meant to this community better than anyone, noting that Canada Day was the one day that brought all corners of Aurora together. Before it, the town was north, south, east, and west. On July 1, it became one.

That spirit endures today. On behalf of your local officials, we are proud to mark another Canada Day in this remarkable town. While communities across the country come together in red and white, Aurora does so with something extra — a sense of history, identity, and purpose that few other places can claim.

This day reminds us of the values that bind us: kindness, fairness, and a deep respect for one another. We see those values in every parade, every flag waved by a child, and every neighbour who shows up to share in the fun.

We are also deeply grateful to the local businesses whose support makes celebrations like this possible. You are the backbone of this community. Your hard work and commitment to Aurora keep this tradition alive.

To every family joining the festivities today — welcome to Canada's Birthday Town. This is your celebration, your community, and your Canada.

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As we celebrate Canada's birthday, let us take pride in the values that make our country strong — kindness, diversity, freedom, and community.

Canada Day is an opportunity to come together with family, friends, and neighbours to reflect on all we are fortunate to share and to celebrate the many people who make Aurora such a wonderful place to call home.

I wish you and your family a safe, happy, and memorable Canada Day.

*Tom Mrakas*  
**Tom Mrakas**  
Mayor, Town of Aurora

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## Heritage Conservation District to get special street signs to mark anniversary

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Aurora's Heritage Conservation District (HCD) and, to mark the occasion, street signs in the neighbourhood are set to get a makeover.

New street signs to celebrate the milestone of the community, located in the northeast quadrant of Yonge and Wellington Streets, were put in motion by Council this spring following a motion from Mayor Tom Mrakas.

Additional gateway signage is also planned for the Yonge Street side of the HCD.

In his motion, Mayor Mrakas said the designation of the HCD "has been instrumental in guiding the preservation" of the area, "known as one of the first major residential expansions of Aurora, spurred by the arrival of the railway in the mid-1800s."

"2026 marks the 20-year anniversary of this designation and the creation of the Northeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District," he said, noting the original plan for the HCD "encourages" the installation of street name signs unique to the community's structure.

"Promotion of the HCD through dedicated signage will further enhance awareness and encourage the preservation and celebration of this distinct and historically and culturally significant part of Town."

The motion, which was unanimously approved by Council, called on staff to come up with some design options and costs to come back to Council.

Preliminary designs got their first review at this month's Heritage Advisory Committee meeting.

The initial design has a unique shape compared to other street signs used in Aurora, but denote "Northeast Old

Aurora Heritage Conservation District." The mock-up leaves space for a specific logo to be included, and while the draft included the Town of Aurora's corporate logo as a placeholder, black-and-white renderings of landmarks, including Hillary House, were offered as alternatives to the corporate brand.

"The street sign blade is designed to be more decorative than traditional street signage and feature a finial as well as [the] text," said the report before Committee, noting that approximately 28 signs will be needed for the HCD's 14 intersections.

The report notes the cost for replacing these signs in question could reach \$3,500.

Aurora's Heritage Planner, Adam Robb, told the Committee last week that staff believe the costs were "quite reasonable" and could be paid for out of Aurora's existing Heritage Reserve Fund.

Members of HAC were generally pleased with the project and the overall mock-up presented, but suggested more work could be done in font and overall design to better reflect the HCD's heritage attributes.

Additional suggestions included wrought-iron framing for the new street signs, again being in keeping with the area's heritage nature, and the incorporation of additional wayfinding, including potential QR codes, to allow neighbours and Aurora residents alike to scan and learn more about not just the HCD overall but specific landmarks within the area.

The committee also weighed in on plans to construct the special gateway feature to the HCD. While a final location for the gateway feature has not been set in stone, staff have suggested an ideal place might be at Yonge and Catherine Streets near the existing Lions Parkette adjacent to Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church.

## Havenwood Academy celebrates providing "paths for every learner"

From page 1

now it's time to do it for my kid and his community, so that's what we ended up doing."

Havenwood prides itself on its "holistic" approach to education and helping students "build confidence, communication, independence, and meaningful connections within their community."

"There is actually no other school in Aurora that offers a secondary program," says Caporiccio. "We have a secondary program where kids who want to earn a high school diploma can come to us and earn a high school diploma with the proper supports that an autistic learner might need. Right now there's nothing like that as far as I know in York Region and that's a huge hole that's being filled here."

"We approach things [through] a holistic lens where we have everything that you might expect in a regular high school where there's assemblies and a music class, a gym class – all of those things are happening within this building, which doesn't always happen in autism schools, but then is supplemented by therapy. I think the big difference is there's a lot of therapy centres that do education, but we're really a school first. We're a school that is supplemented by all the different therapies that an autistic person might need to be successful in school, and the education is very individualized."

"There is a saying in autism that if you ever met a person with autism you've met one person with autism, meaning that their needs and the way they learn, the way they communicate are very different, even from each other. Their education has to match

that. Each kid who comes here has an individual education plan that's catered to their specific interests, their strengths, their challenges, and building their capacity."

Havenwood held an end-of-year celebration for the community on Saturday. While it marked the end of the academic year, the Academy had been in operation just eight weeks at that point.

Asked how they will measure success at the end of their first full year of operation, Caporiccio says their measures of success might look a little different from the conventional school.

"It's not about EQAO tests, grade scores, or how many kids are going to post-secondary," she says. "All of those things are great measures of success, but for our kids, I think their emotional and social wellbeing is paramount for us. The world is a difficult place sometimes for students who are autistic and that's sort of why we chose 'Havenwood' because we want this to be a safe haven for them, a place where they can be met where they are because, in our mind, that's the only way learning can happen."

"We often say 'progress over perfection.' If that's one kid learning how to tie a shoe or another who gets an A on their physics test, they're all equally as successful to us. We have one [teen] student who has been with us for the eight weeks who is a non-speaking individual who said his first three words in the last three weeks so, for us, that's a success, and it was a really beautiful moment for us all when he came into his own wanting to express himself and it came out really naturally – and I think that's because he was feeling safe and supported."

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# Aurora-based Equipe Francobotique captures first place at International First Lego League robotics Championships in Mexico



Equipe Francobotique displays its haul of hardware won at the International First Lego League Championships in Mexico.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

based on the twenty-four sponsor patches adorning their official vests including the Town of Aurora; RBC Wealth Management Dominion Securities—Anwar Wealth Partners; Value Mobile; Maria DePrisco—Barrister and Solicitor; DanAngel Inc.; AFRY—Association Des Francophone de la Region de York; Michelle Manganaro—Investment Advisor—RBC Wealth Management; First Canada; The Town of East Gwillimbury; Caring Touch Home Health Care; Mon Avenir—Consiel Scolaire Catholique; DSF—Devry Smith Frank LLP—Lawyers and Mediators; Tangles Hair Salon and Spa; EEC Saint-Jean; Academie de la Moraine; Abtek Ltd; CanCODE; Aurora Family Eyecare; Witron; Subash Suntharesan; Lions Club International; Peace of Mind Massage; and AS.

Coach Northrup expressed her gratitude towards her club's sponsors whose generous contributions made the trip to Mexico possible. She also shared insights into the composition of her regional robotics all-star team — comprised of youngsters from Aurora, Newmarket, Vaughan, East Gwillimbury, and Richmond Hill.

“The ten students on Équipe Francobotique attend four different French-language public and Catholic schools in York Region. Seven are team members in Grades 6 and 8, and three are high school students who mentor the younger students. We are a not-for-profit community team coached by two parent volunteers. Équipe Francobotique represents l'AFRY (Association des francophones de la région de York). This is the fourth year in a row our team has been selected to represent Canada at an international FLL championship.”

After listening to their inspirational stories and enjoying a slice of victory cake with Équipe Francobotique, it was easy to see that the “Brave New World” of automation and automatons will be a much better place with Ayden Arabi, Allegra Buchanan, Amaya Gajadhar, Ethan Gajadhar, Patrick Northrup, Madeline Northrup, and Chase Sullivan leading the way and solving the problems of the 21st century.

**From page 1**  
robotics competition savvy — was on full display in Mexico from May 27-30 as they captured the First Place Champion Award at the International Open First Lego League Championships.

“The Magnificent Seven” earned an unprecedented four major awards — Robot Performance Award Finalist; Core Values Award Champion; Winning Alliance; First Place Champions Award — at the prestigious STEM competition and competed against 67 robotics teams from more than 20 countries.

Renee Northrup, one of the two volunteer coaches on the Equipe Francobotique staff, praised the unique achievements of her robotics squad in late-May in Mexico.

“We won 1st Place in the robot game Alliance Challenge, beating the 2025 FLL World Festival Champion team from Brazil in the final match by five points! [Our] four major awards [were] more than any other team in attendance. No other Canadian team has ever returned from an international FLL championship with four major awards, nor won the 1st Place Champion Award in an international Alliance Challenge. Through the hard work and determination of the ten students (including three high school mentors) on our team, Canada earned a reputation [for] innovation and robotics excellence on the world stage. The Canadian national anthem was played when the winning alliance was announced. It was a truly special moment for our team and for Canada.”

The hardware haul to which Coach Northrup referred—comprised of keeper plaques and colorful Lego-bricked trophies — was on full display atop a Canadian flag at their clubhouse in Aurora on Thursday night. The table brimming with awards was a focal point and conversation starter at the robotics team's celebration event which included an engaging chat with local media and a victory cake-cutting ceremony.

Veteran robotics team member Madeline Northrup described the awards that the septet captured at the Centro Cultural Universitario in Zapopan, Mexico: “The Robot Performance Award was based on how our robot performed on a table. Each mission by the robot has an amount of points—the max score is 545

points. We earned a perfect score. We also earned a perfect score at the competition in Worcester, Massachusetts.”

Patrick Northrup was pleased with the robot's performances in Mexico in the international spotlight: “Our robot accomplished all its missions. It has a 95% reliability. We've measured it during competition during a modified collaborative game.”

The robot, designed by Équipe Francobotique, was not only 95% reliable, but it also demonstrated grace under pressure during some razor-thin victories, described with great enthusiasm by Chase Sullivan.

“The five-point difference in the Winning Alliance competition was even closer than we wanted. It was a big win for us and it was fun working with our Mexican partners. We beat Brazil—the 2025 Champions—in the Alliance Challenge after playing four games against them.”

Allegra Buchanan described the suspense felt by the team while they waited for their Alliance scores: “We were waiting to hear the announcement. I wasn't at the table and I was so nervous when they played it, but when they announced we won, I was in shock and I thought ‘What's going on?’ It felt so amazing—it didn't feel real for at least a few minutes.”

Buchanan's teammate, Amaya Gajadhar, expressed similar sentiments when the team's final scores were read publically: “When we won, I felt really happy and proud. We did a really good job this season. I felt like we accomplished something really big. Now, we've got a great reputation in robotics.”

Ethan Gajadhar, a rookie on Équipe Francobotique, described the best part of winning a world championship in Mexico: “One of the best parts was meeting so many different teams from around the world at the competition. After nine months of hard work, it was fun to complete my first year with a championship. I learned that you can't always finish everything yourself and that teamwork is always involved in a successful, new project.”

The importance of teamwork and learning new skills was reinforced by Ayden Arabi who reflected on the incredible journey undertaken and the final results earned by Équipe Francobotique: “First Lego League offers the kinds of

experiences that we can use in the future. It opens doors that you didn't know existed. It's amazing to experience this kind of competition and it sets us up for leadership roles as well as positions in Engineering and coding a robot as well as software jobs. I enjoyed the quick decision-making, the troubleshooting, and the problem-solving we had to do during the competition.”

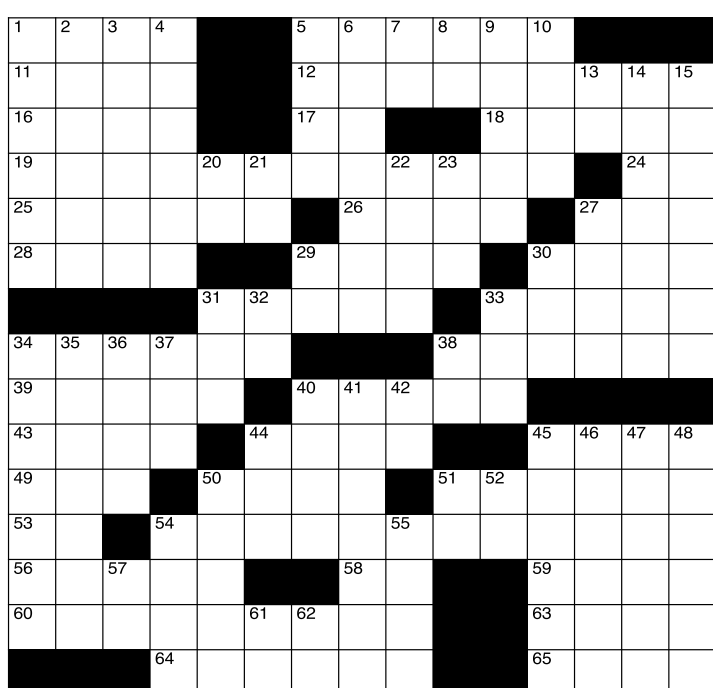
After competing in international robotics championships for five years, Madeline Northrup is “ageing out” and offered some closing thoughts as she moves on from her role as player to mentor for the 2026-27 season: “One of the things I learned over the years is that travel is stressful, but when you do it with friends, it feels so much better to travel. These championships—we also won the worlds in Arkansas in 2023-- made me feel proud to be a Canadian. I also saw the differences between the countries at the competition.”

The Aurora-based team—decked out on Thursday night in their archeology-themed khaki vests adorned with a Canadian flag and set off with vivid red Club 44642 t-shirts for their clubhouse celebration—has been embraced by the local community.

This widespread support was evident,

## CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. TAJUNE2526 • Solution in Classifieds



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Nocturnal S. American rodent
5. Requesting
11. Give temporarily
12. Excitedness
16. Armed Forces branch
17. Actor Harris
18. Middle Eastern capital
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to “Pa”
25. Percussion instrument
26. Popular computers
27. Reduce light
28. Asian mountain range
29. Every one of two or more
30. Absence of difficulty
31. A public announcement of a proposed marriage
33. Whittles
34. Impact



### CLUES DOWN

38. Serviceman
39. A French river
40. Prehistoric people
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. \_\_\_ Clapton, musician
45. Ancient Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. Singer Hansard
51. A way to disentangle
53. Atomic #93
54. Manifesting approval
56. Indigo bush
58. Former AL MVP Vaughn
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Small Eurasian deer (pl.)
64. Relating to passerine birds
65. Arrange systematically
1. Colorless fluid
2. Of a main artery
3. Photographer's tool
4. Blues Traveler hit “But \_\_\_”
5. Grew older
6. Not the leader
7. \_\_\_ Lang (country singer)
8. A driver's license is one
9. Nests of pheasants
10. Wildebeests
13. Equal to one quintillion bytes
14. Japanese three-stringed lute
15. Type of cat
20. It cools your home
21. The ancient Egyptian sun god
22. Pouches
23. German trigraph
27. Form of Persian
29. Measurement unit
30. Body part
31. Bridge building degree
32. Indicates position
33. Political action committee
34. Snack food
35. Front part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. \_\_\_ myself and I
40. City in Utah
41. They play in the trenches
42. “Can't Touch This” rapper \_\_\_ Hammer
44. Type of tree
45. Performers
46. Slang for mistake
47. More open
48. Most slick
50. Needles
51. University of Dayton
52. Atomic #11
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not any
57. \_\_\_ and behold
61. Popular sports highlight show (abbr.)
62. “The Great Lakes State”

# Steele hopes time as Citizen of the Year will inspire others to give back

From page 24

I was young and that was probably in the back of my mind all the time while I was getting involved in the community.”

He credits his wife and children for first getting him involved in Welcoming Arms as his two youngest sons gained their high school community service hours with Welcome Table, one of the organization’s much-valued weekly meal programs.

“While our youngest was doing that, my wife joined the team as well, and it was a ‘put your money where your mouth is’ kind of thing. She suggested I might enjoy it, so I volunteered to be a dishwasher, mostly because it was

behind the scenes; that’s sort of my modus operandi, to be quiet and do things, but not looking for notoriety.

“From there, I spent a few years washing dishes and it was great. You could feel what you were doing was good for the community. While I was doing that, I was also on the Board of Governors for Villanova College in King City because my children went there – so I’m a big protective daddy kind of guy, I guess.”

Steele forged his professional career in the hardware and housewares industry and says he learned a lot from the business people involved at Villanova.

“I didn’t know the first thing about charities apart from knowing it’s good

to give back to your community,” he says. “It was during this time that I reconnected with my faith. Welcoming Arms is an ecumenical Christian organization – that was big for me and continues to be. They’re a joy to be chair of. If they want me, I’m here. I love working with the organization. [Current Executive Director] Sally Freitas keeps me coming back because she’s just so engaged and so good at what she does. That’s the best thing I was ever involved in with Welcoming Arms – being on the committee that hired her.”

If he can help shine a light on volunteerism during his reluctant time as Citizen of the Year, that wouldn’t hurt, either. For those

looking to get more involved in their community, he has one word of advice: “Don’t be nervous.”

“If you feel like it might be a good thing, go for it and give it a good chance. That’s what I did with the dishwashing and with all my volunteer efforts. I said, ‘Well, let me give it a try.’ Once you get involved, you’ll find quickly either you don’t like it or it’s been fantastic and you want to keep going. I’ve been very fortunate, I’ve been engaged in a number of different things and they’ve all been really rewarding for myself – and thankfully for others, too, because that’s really what I do it for.”

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# THINGS... you ought to know

**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/canadaday](http://aurora.ca/canadaday).

**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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Graduates of the Pickering College Global Leadership Program are creative, innovative, and courageous agents of ethical and positive change, true to Quaker values.



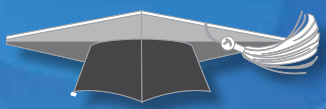
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**73**  
**Graduates**

hailing from Canada, China, Denmark, Hong Kong, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sint Maarten, Saint Kitts and Nevis, South Korea, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Vietnam.



**93%**

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**97%**

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University of Guelph  
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University of Ottawa  
University of Toronto (Mississauga)  
University of Toronto (Scarborough)  
University of Toronto (St. George)  
University of Waterloo  
Western University  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
York University

### CANADA



Dalhousie University  
McGill University  
St. Francis Xavier University  
University of British Columbia

### UNITED STATES



Berklee College of Music  
Boston University  
Case Western University  
Cornell University  
New York University  
Pepperdine University  
San Diego State University  
Tulane University  
University of Arizona  
University of California, Irvine  
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)  
University of California, Merced  
University of California, Riverside  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of Detroit Mercy  
University of Miami  
University of South Carolina  
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### AUSTRALIA



University of Sydney

### UNITED KINGDOM



University of Birmingham  
University of Bristol  
Durham University  
Imperial College London  
Lancaster University  
Queen Mary University of London  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
The University of Manchester  
University of Southampton  
University of St Andrews  
University of York



**The Class of 2026**  
will pursue  
post-secondary studies in:

#### STEM (57% of graduates)

Applied Mathematics  
Applied Sciences  
Biology  
Chemical Engineering  
Computer Science  
Engineering  
Forensic Science  
Geology  
Health Sciences  
Information Science  
Kinesiology  
Life Sciences  
Mathematical & Physical Sciences  
Mathematics  
Medical Sciences  
Nursing  
Physical & Environmental Sciences  
Pre-Dental Biology  
Psychological & Brain Sciences  
Psychological & Health Studies  
Public Health  
Science  
Software Engineering  
Statistics  
Track One Engineering

#### Arts & Humanities (27% of graduates)

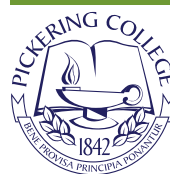
Arts  
Arts & Humanities  
Communication, Culture, Information & Technology  
Communications  
Liberal Studies  
Media & Communication Studies  
Performance  
Philosophy  
Social Sciences  
Visual and Performing Arts, Arts Management & Media

#### Business (16% of graduates)

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Business  
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Commerce  
Management  
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