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THE AURORED

Aurora's Community Newspaper
TheAuroran.com

VOL 27 | NO. 39 | 905-727-3300

FREE

WEEK OF JULY 2, 2026

PASSING THE BATON – Paulo Da Silva, right, was sworn in as Chief of the York Regional Police at a special ceremony held at York Regional Headquarters on Monday. An Aurora resident, Da Silva is pictured at the June 29 event with Jim MacSween, left, whose retirement as YRP Chief was effective June 26.

York Regional Police Image

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Future leaders in business, manufacturing and skilled trades honoured by Chamber of Commerce

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Graduating students looking to pursue skilled trade, commerce, and manufacturing in their post-secondary careers were honoured by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce last week with their annual Business Engaging Youth Scholarships.

It was a busy week for Carly Ferguson, Alissa Primiani, and

Fahad Sadig who began the week celebrating their graduations from local high schools, and bookended it at the Chamber's office at Industrial Parkway and Yonge to accept their scholarships and meet local business leaders whose sponsorships made these awards possible.

"This is the fourth year that we're handing out our Business Engaging Youth Scholarships," said Alison Mumford, Executive Director of

the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. "For the first two years, we did manufacturing and skilled trades only. Last year was the first year we added a Business Scholarship thanks to Lenard Lind and his generous support of that, and we're very happy that he has come back again this year with that contribution."

Sponsors BUNN and Alectra Utilities were also thanked for their

Continued on page 8



SUPPORTING GRADS – Aurora graduates Alissa Primiani, second left, Carly Ferguson, centre, and Fahad Sadig, second from right, are pictured outside the Aurora Chamber of Commerce office on Thursday afternoon after receiving the Chamber's scholarships in Business, Manufacturing, and Skilled Trades respectively. They're pictured with scholarship sponsors Lenard Lind of Lind Realty Team, Deepika Kumar of Alectra, Valerie Mabee of BUNN, and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Alison Mumford.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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\$2,188,000

TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

July 2, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Week of June 29	No meetings		
Thursday, July 9	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Wednesday, July 15	7 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board
Week of July 20	No meetings		
Week of July 27	No meetings		

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

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: Marni Appel - Escape

Step away. Breathe deeper. Let yourself wander. Escape is an invitation to leave the noise behind and slip into moments of stillness, beauty and wonder. Through sweeping landscapes and immersive city scenes, each image offers a quiet doorway, transporting you somewhere else, if only for a moment. Come get lost and find your escape. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.

What's Happening



PRESENTS



AURORA'S 2026 CONCERTS IN THE PARK

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

JULY 8, 15, 22, 29
AUGUST 5, 12, 19, 26
SEPTEMBER 2

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Aurora Town Park • 49 Wells Street

Concerts are free

Licensed beverages and food options available for purchase starting at 6 p.m.

aurora.ca/SummerConcerts

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

RegisterToVoteON.ca
1.866.242.3025

Register to Vote



Spring & Summer 2026 Program Guide



The Spring & Summer 2026 Program Guide is available to view online at aurora.ca/ProgramGuide. Registration is open for Recreation and Aquatic programs. View the interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., S.A.R.C. or A.T.S.

Civic Holiday Schedule – Programs & Activities

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

Summer Special Events

The Town of Aurora has many fun and exciting special events happening this summer. Including Cycle Aurora, Concerts in the Park, Movies in the Park, Aurora's Ribfest and more. Check out a list of upcoming special events at aurora.ca/SpecialEvents.

Volunteer at the Aurora Farmers Market!

Love local food and community vibes? The Aurora Farmers Market is looking for friendly volunteers for Saturday mornings from May to October!

Help with:

- Greeting visitors
- Vendor set-up/takedown
- Kids' activities
- General event support

Why join us?

Meet great people, support local businesses, and enjoy a fun outdoor atmosphere. Students are welcome!

Sign up: aurora.ca/Volunteers.

Contact: theaurorafarmersmarket@gmail.com.

SAFE SPORT DAY IN AURORA

WITH ALLISON FORSYTH & RICK WESTHEAD



Sunday, July 12, 2026

Session 1 - 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Session 2 - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Aurora Town Square • 50 Victoria Street

TICKETED EVENT • REGISTRATION REQUIRED

aurora.ca/SportWorkshops



TAX TIME



2026 final property tax bills have been mailed out and as the deadline approaches remember, there are many easy & convenient ways to pay final property taxes – including online via your banking institution, mail or pre-authorized payment. Learn more at: aurora.ca/PropertyTaxes.

Find your ward before you vote

Learn who's running for office



aurora.ca/Wards



August 22, 8 p.m.

Daive De Simone Performance Hall

Tickets - \$35: aurora.ca/WhatsOn



STRANGE ADVANCE



SATURDAY, AUGUST 1 8 P.M.

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aurora.ca/WhatsOn



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Weese will not seek re-election as Ward 1 Councillor

BY BROCK WEIR
 EDITOR
 LOCAL JOURNALISM
 INITIATIVE REPORTER

Ron Weese, who has served as Ward 1 Councillor since 2022, will not seek re-election this fall.

Weese announced his decision this week, stating his decision to step back came after “careful consideration and reflection” on his service on Council, to the community, and in consultation with his family, residents and friends.

“I have delayed this announcement to ensure that my performance in Council is not distracted because of my intentions and also to learn the qualities of candidates who have stepped forward to ensure the Ward and Town are well represented,” he said in a statement.

“Serving the residents of Aurora has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. I am deeply grateful for the trust, support, and encouragement that residents have shown me throughout my time on Council. I believe our collective goal is to strengthen our community, improve opportunities for residents, and make Aurora a welcoming, safe, and respectful place to live for everyone.”

Speaking to The Auroran after making his decision, Weese said he was particularly proud of his work to establish Ratepayer Associations in the communities he represents, advocacy for community engagement and citizen participation, promotion of amateur sport and recreation, and more.

“I’m proud of laying a foundation for advocacy in the community through the Ratepayer Associations,” he says. “I’m proud of the neighbourhood watches that have popped up as a result of that because community safety is top of mind for every resident. In certain circumstances, related to the developments that are, I think, in violation of our Official Plan (OP) and have received a lot of opposition from

local ratepayers, I have always voted with the ratepayers in mind.”

Some changes made to the operation of government since he was first elected, however, have presented certain challenges and were among the factors he considered before deciding to step back.

He characterizes Strong Mayor powers as a “frustration” since they were accepted by Mayor Tom Mrakas “upon the intent to build 8,000 new homes in the community.”

“The Strong Mayor powers have not been used to do that,” says Weese. “[Housing is] traditionally, year after year, well below targets, so that’s been a social experiment that’s failed. That’s been frustrating.

“Decisions around Heritage have been disappointing with a lot of infill projects moving forward, a lack of respect for our Official Plan in order to get more units built that the market doesn’t seem to support, the overarching



Contributed photo

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese will not seek re-election this fall.

problems that we have had with the budget in the previous years – I’m aware that the budget was scrutinized heavily by Council and approved by Council, and now the Budget is the Mayor’s Budget and we don’t get the same kind of opportunity to ask a lot of questions about it....

“I have always voted with the Ratepayers in mind so I don’t think Strong Mayor powers changed much

the way I have operated within Ward 1. I still wanted to represent them, I still wanted to create advocacy opportunities for them, and I wanted to represent their interests – and I think I’ve done that adequately over the last three-and-a-half years.”

Looking ahead to the 2026-2030 Council term, Weese says development with the Town Park area is going to be a “significant stress,” particularly with significant developments slated for the Berczy and Metcalfe areas, which could bring an estimated 1,500 new residents into the Ward.

“I think the Town Park area, as well as the whole Cultural district needs to have a strategy in place to be able to create a quality community here, so that’s going to require some resident advocacy,” says Weese, adding Metrolinx’ work to facilitate the new rail tracks will be another topic to watch.

“It’s going to be a significant change to everybody because of the two-track and the proposed 15-minute service. We desperately need a grade separation of Wellington Street and I hope that is completed correctly in favour of everybody that travels east to west in this Town because it splits the Town in half. The train itself and the number of travels up and down the line is going to change and I remain interested – and I hope the next Council [makes

Continued on page 19

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Nominate local caregivers for recognition

Every day, millions of Canadians step into the role of a caregiver.

They help aging parents, brothers, sisters, neighbors, and friends living with disabilities. They provide transportation to medical appointments, coordinate care, advocate for services, and offer emotional support while serving as a critical source of care and advocacy for their loved ones.

Much of this work happens behind closed doors and often goes unrecognized.

Caregivers frequently juggle jobs, family obligations, and personal challenges, while asking for little in return. The Canada Cares Awards were created to shine a light on these remarkable individuals and recognize the many forms caregiving can take.

Canada Cares has had the privilege of recognizing caregivers from all walks of life. Previous recipients have included an aging parent providing full-time care for their adult son with complex needs; a young caregiver raising a sibling while completing school; a grandparent supporting multiple family members facing health challenges; and professional caregivers who have devoted years to helping individuals live with dignity and independence.

While each story is different, they all share one thing in common: an extraordinary commitment to caring for others.

Canada Cares is now inviting Canadians to nominate caregivers, healthcare professionals, and community champions in their own lives. The Canada Cares awards recognize individuals whose contributions may not always be visible to others, but whose dedication and support has left a lasting impact on them.

Nominations are now open and will be accepted until December 31, 2026.

Do you know someone whose care and compassion have changed a life? Nominate them today, celebrate their contributions, and share how a One Wish Award could support them.

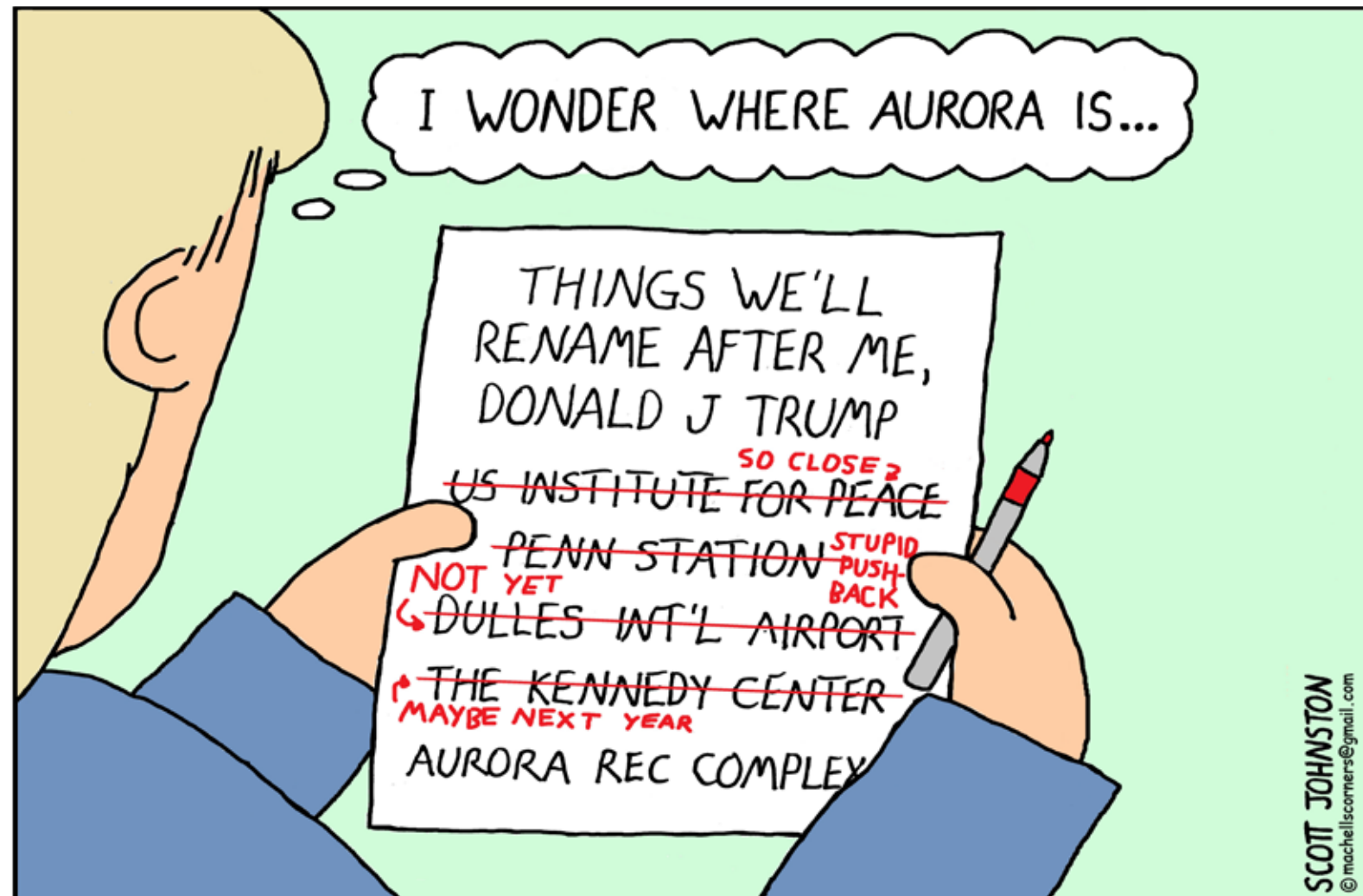
For more information, including nomination info, visit canadianabilities.org.

Canada Cares



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

Machell's Corners



SCOTT JOHNSTON
© machellscomers@gmail.com

The façade of our national story

We were given two choices on how to mark a time in our lives apparently well-spent: a trip to Quebec City or a trip to our nation's capital.

More than a quarter-century after my classmates in Grade 8 voted on Ottawa as the destination for our year-end graduation trip, I can't say hindsight has been kind on this decision, but maybe I say that through the jaded lens of someone who went to university in the city and lived there for several years thereafter.

Today, having "been there and done that," my personal vote would have shifted hard to Quebec City, but it wasn't the will of the majority I was once a part of — and, truth be told, I think the economy of a trip to the National Capital Region versus one of the most "ancient" parts of the country we now call Canada was certainly more appealing to school board brass and bean-counters.

But, once the decision was made, we had brainstorming sessions on what we would like to see, although I have my doubts on how influential these debates were on the tour company planning the jaunt. To the credit of my peers, suggestions thrown out for consideration were more in the museum family than not, although some in the group still pressed for a tour of some of the city's finest shopping malls and laser tag establishments.

My three suggestions were, I thought, simple enough: Parliament, particularly its Centre Block; Rideau Hall, the seat of the Governor General; and 24 Sussex Drive, the residence of the Prime Minister. All three sites, of course, were familiar to my peers, and the idea of getting up close and personal with landmarks so many of us only knew from newspapers and newscasts was pretty exciting.

Alas, only one of my three suggestions made the cut. Parliament was a given, 24 Sussex wasn't open to the public, and Rideau Hall was, for whatever reason, deemed of "insufficient interest" to... teachers? Tour guides? There was certainly sufficient interest in the classroom, but it wasn't worth a student walk-out.

By the time I moved to Ottawa for school, the historic and storied home at 24 Sussex Drive remained, at least from where I sat, a bit of a romantic destination. It was all so familiar but, at the same time, there was a certain mystique. This mystique trebled when in-school assignments had me staking out the residence along with my fellow journalism students — a protest related then-PM Paul Martin hosting Condoleezza Rice, then U.S. Secretary of State at the house comes to mind, hoping to see a sliver of



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

what went on inside every time the door opened to a dignitary.

In the subsequent decades, given how much we hear about our "quiet" Canadian pride, it has been somewhat disheartening to watch such a storied building, one of a suite of residences earmarked for leaders including the GG, PM, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker of the House, etc. languishing, crumbling, and otherwise shuttered due to political inertia.

The reasons for the inertia are understandable in some ways. It's not the best look for any public official to greenlight any spend of public money on his or her official residence, even if they are just temporary custodians of the dwelling.

Yet, on the other hand, I imagine it would be unthinkable to the British people to let 10 Downing Street and Chequers to fall apart before their very eyes. One could also, until very recently, say the same thing about Americans and the integral place in society the White House stands, but, admittedly, we're living in a very weird timeline.

I was therefore excited last week when Prime Minister Mark Carney announced the Government's plan to hold a national competition to restore and rebuild 24 Sussex Drive for the purposes for which it was designated.

While he conceded his time as Prime Minister was not likely to coincide with the building becoming a suitable home again, the same would not be said for his successors.

The national juried design and build competition will be open to Canadian businesses, guided by the Royal Canadian Institute of Architecture, to make the building "a secure, accessible, and sustainable official residence and working venue" for future Heads of Government.

Going down this design competition route, Carney said, would restore the building "in a manner that reflects the very best of Canada."

"At a time when much of the world is buffeted by crises, Canada's history, our institutions and our traditions matter more than ever," said Carney. "While these foundations are expressed in language, practiced in custom and convention and enshrined in law, they can also take physical form. They can be made of timber and stone, stand as landmarks, as testaments in which we recognize ourselves.

"24 Sussex is nearly as old as our country. First built in 1868, it sits on a rise above the meeting of three rivers: the Ottawa, the Rideau and the Gatineau. Home to 10 of Canada's Prime Ministers...from Louis Saint-Laurent to Stephen Harper. For more than 75 years, this house has welcomed leaders from around the world, including Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Sir Winston Churchill, [and] President John F. Kennedy. 24 Sussex Drive is more than a residence. It's greater than a mere backdrop to history. It's a symbol of the public office of the Head of our federal government and of the democratic traditions that office represents. Yet, it has not been cared for with the respect that it deserves.

"After decades of deferred maintenance and neglect, this house sits empty. It's been uninhabitable for more than a decade. For years, many have agreed that 24 Sussex should be saved, but it was left to languish, and so the damage spread. And the repair costs climbed. And now it's in critical condition. So today, our government is acting to renew this building, restore this institution, preserve our history, protect our heritage and traditions for generations to come, because that continuity matters. A nation is more than the people who live in it today. It includes everyone who came before us and everyone who will come after. Our institutions are how we carry forward what we were given and how we pass that on, at least intact, ideally improved to those who follow. 24 Sussex Drive is one of these institutions, and we will not let it crumble. We will set it right."

It might not seem like much in the grand scheme of things as many things in this country needs to be "set right" in this snapshot in time, it was, to me, a very welcome and long-overdue step in the right direction, and not a bad gift to the country as Canada Day approaches.

It is more than a house for the person at the helm of government; it's part of our national story.

It's part of our national story that is worth preserving and in taking an innovative approach to making it habitable again, will go on to be at the heart of future chapters in our national story, the story of a mature and proud nation.

THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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15213 Yonge Street, Suite 8, Aurora, L4G 1L8

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

Founder
Ron Wallace

Publisher Emeritus
Rosemary Schumaker

EDITOR
Brock Weir
brock@pcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Zach Shoub
zach@pcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Karen Nemet
karen@pcmedia.ca

GENERAL MANAGER
Zach Shoub
zach@pcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Diane Buchanan
diane@pcmedia.ca

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Cynthia Proctor
cynthiap@pcmedia.ca

TODAYS NEW HOMES
Zach Shoub
zach@pcmedia.ca

MOTORING
Heather Ervin
heather@caledoncitizen.com

CLASSIFIEDS
905-727-3300 ex.102
cynthiap@pcmedia.ca

PHOTOGRAPHY
Glenn Rodger
grdgrd@rogers.com

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
Sheila Ogram
sheila@pcmedia.ca

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



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Nominations wanted for 2026 Ontario Tree of the Year

Do you have a favorite tree that holds a special place in your heart? A towering oak in your backyard? A graceful willow near a river? Or a majestic roadside maple? Share a photo of your special tree along with a few words on what it means to you.

That's all it takes to lend your voice to the growing chorus that sings the praises of trees while highlighting their value to our economy and environment. You just might win a prize too!

Think of the competition as a beauty pageant for trees. Our biggest and best trees make our communities more attractive and inviting. Mature trees enhance our neighbourhoods and are good for business.

At the same time, there's more to "legacy trees" than looking good. You could say that their beauty is beyond "bark-deep." Tree of the Year reminds us why a love of trees is far from superficial. Our biggest and healthiest trees are stable, lifelong companions that just keep on giving. The carbon they store brings us cleaner air. Shade reduces the need for air conditioning. Root systems slow stormwater runoff, protecting our waterways. A natural habitat for birds and wildlife.

To nominate a tree, please email a high-quality photo to pageant@treetrust.ca. Include your name, the tree species (if you know it), the address or location of the tree and up to 30 words describing why it deserves a winner's lofty status. Nominations are due by August 3, 2026. The winning trees will be announced in September, with a celebration to be held before the end of the month.

Everyone who enters will be considered for one of three prizes: a \$100 Lee Valley Gift Card, a gift basket from the Royal Canadian Yacht Club and a 2027 Family Pass to Ontario Parks. A blue-ribbon panel of judges will review submissions:

Judy Maddren, M.S.M.
Retired CBC Radio Journalist

Mike Schreiner,
Leader of the Ontario Green Party
and MPP for Guelph

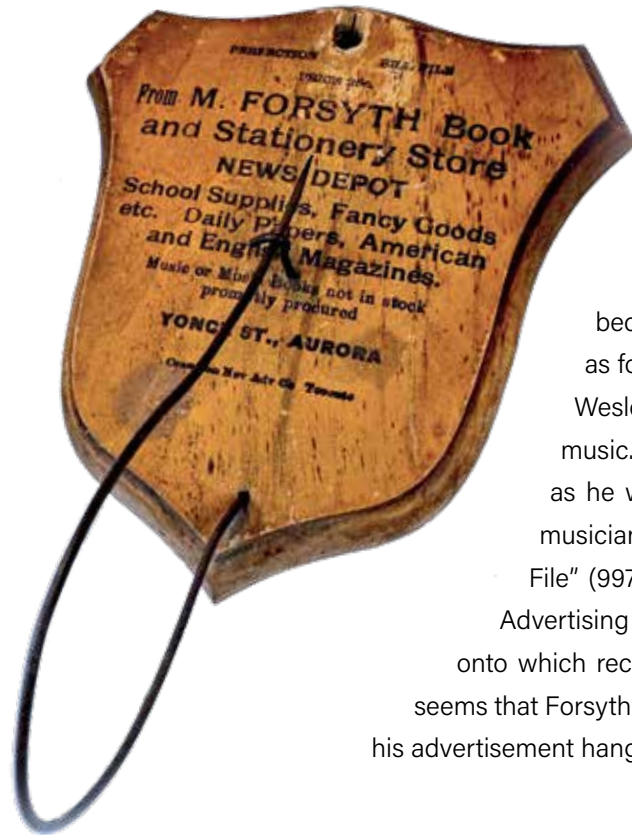
Terry Schwan,
Professional Forester; Member, Board
of Directors, Forest History Ontario

Paul Zammit,
Instructor, School of Environment
and Horticulture, Niagara College.

Very special thanks to our judges and pageant sponsor Ecclestone Financial Group.

Toni Ellis
Tree Trust Canada

*To submit a letter
to the editor,
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Deadline for submissions
is Sunday at 1 p.m.*



Sharps and Flats

Marshall Forsyth (1856-1933) moved to Aurora with his parents and younger brother in the 1870s. While Marshall became locally known for his stationery store on Yonge Street, as well as for working as the stationmaster for the Radial Railway, his brother, Wesley Octavius, became a prominent Canadian composer of piano music. Marshall's own contribution to the arts wasn't small, though, as he was the primary local purveyor of sheet music to the numerous musicians, both young and old, throughout Aurora's population. This "Bill File" (997.27) was made around 1910 in Toronto by the Cranston Novelty Advertising Co., and was a useful little device, akin to an oversized safety pin onto which receipts could be stabbed and accumulated for later accounting. It seems that Forsyth's store provided these for just 25 cents, as long as you didn't mind his advertisement hanging right on your kitchen wall!



MP SANDRA COBENA'S UPDATE

Sandra Cobena, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

generations of newcomers who arrived with little more than hope and helped build thriving communities from coast to coast by becoming Canadian.

And it is the country of backyard hockey rinks and snow-covered soccer fields, where winter defines our character and the cold runs through our veins.

These moments remind us that

This week, we celebrated the birthday of our home and native land, Canada.

Ours is a nation shaped by courage, sacrifice, and a people who believed they could build something greater together.

Canada is the country that united provinces into Confederation more than 150 years ago with the bold belief that people spread across vast distances could become one nation.

It is the country that drove a railway across mountains and wilderness to connect East and West.

It is the country whose soldiers stood at Vimy Ridge which helped define Canada's identity on the world stage.

It is the country that welcomed

Canada is always worth the fight.

As we reflect on the country we want to leave for the next generation, I want to share the vision that drives me every day: a Canada where families work hard and thrive, where businesses grow, where children can play safely and are hopeful about their future, and where seniors can age with the dignity and respect they have earned.

You can rest assured that I will continue fighting for a Canada that leaves no one behind.

Newmarket-Aurora, let us take this opportunity to reflect on what unites us: our shared history, our people, and our belief in this great country.

From my family to yours, Happy Canada Day!



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Let's take a look at some recent and upcoming events in Aurora through that well-known story telling device, the limerick.

Happy Canada Day

I say to those who claim there're signs
That's Canada's on the decline
You should hope you would
Look just half as good
When you reach one-fifty-nine

School's out

All your kids are annoying you
With cries of "There's nothing to do"
It's a lot to bear
But just hang in there
There's only nine weeks to get through

Enjoying Fleury Park

You went in spring, summer and fall
To its fields away from it all
But that calm green space
Will soon be a base
For eight courts to play pickleball

Summer Limericks

The new Council

There will soon be at least a few
Council members
who are quite new
And maybe some more
But ward change's in store
In at least one, five,
three and two

Infrastructure repairs

Setting aside funding is tough
For town repairs, fixes and stuff
We're now in a hole
'Cause the saving goal
Of one percent's
just not enough

Go Team Canada

As I watch each play,
pass and shot
My stomach gets tied in a knot

The stress that I get
Has me in a sweat
Or maybe that's 'cause it's so hot!

At the Farmers' Market

You buy plants, crafts,
pet treats and cheese
Fruit, baked goods, games,
and cookies
Good thing for this haul
To carry it all
They give you a tote bag for free

Council windrow update

"The program's been fixed"
we hear
Which is received with a cheer
But here is the thing
We all know in Spring
They'll say "oops
- just wait'll next year"

Some things never change

It's said that our Councillors' pay
Ranks poorly in the GTA
But attempts to fix
Are always nixed
So it's likely to stay that way

Feel free to e-mail Scott at:
machellscorners@gmail.com

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Residential building, heritage relocation approved for Yonge and St. John's

Sidewalk issue to be settled in future talks

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Plans for a five-storey residential building for the southeast quadrant of Yonge Street and St. John's Sideroad moved forward at Council this week, despite several Old Yonge Street-area neighbours coming forward to object to the development.

Council last week approved Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments for the properties located at 16003 Yonge Street, and 225 and 2019 Old Yonge Street.

The changes to the property include

the relocation of the historic Red House, which was most recently home to the restaurant Oakland Hall, to a different location within the property envelope and its restoration back to its origins as a single-family residence.

"The amendments redesignate and rezone the lands for medium-high density residential, detached residential, and environmental protection uses," said the Town of Aurora in a statement following last week's Council meeting. "Council also approved a Heritage Permit for the relocation and alteration of the historic

Red House, subject to a Conservation Management Plan and a future site plan and development agreement approvals. Implementing the bylaws will be considered at a future Council meeting."

Last week's Council meeting, the penultimate one on the schedule for the 2022-2026 term of Council, was a further opportunity for concerned residents to speak out – and several did so once again, reiterating their worries about the size of the development, its impact on area traffic, particularly the already congested area of St. John's and Old Yonge, and what they say is an insufficient transition from the long-established Tara Hill residential community nearby.

The majority of Council, however, said proponents of the development have worked to address residents' concerns, a position underscored by Oz Kemal, President of MHBC Planning, who outlined the changes made to the original proposal in light of public feedback.

"This process began in early 2024, during which we worked with the Conservation Authority over the course of the year to establish the proper developable limits of this site and protect the environmental features. From there, it was then that we prepared and submitted an application in April 2025, conducted public engagement throughout the fall, and made our final submission in the spring of this year," he said.

"I note that the approval tonight is not the end of this process. There's still a whole site plan approval process where we get into the real nitty gritty details, where additional design refinements can occur.... The proposed residential building will provide 148 residential units ranging from one- to three-bedroom apartments. Access to the apartment will be provided through an existing driveway along Yonge Street, and that will connect to two levels of underground parking."

While a municipal sidewalk is not currently on the west side of Old Yonge Street, a bone of contention for many residents, Kemal said there is a 4.5 metre buffer "should the Town choose to provide a sidewalk in the future."

The sidewalk, along with the overall issue of pedestrian safety, remains an issue with the plan, and one which Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, says can be hashed out at the site plan application stage.

"The next step would be for the applicant to submit a formal site application [which] will deal with some of the engineering and architectural details," said Ramunno. "That's where we would impose a condition on that site plan for the construction of a sidewalk along the west side of Old Yonge, along the frontage of the subject lands, out to the existing sidewalk on St. John's. That would then provide that pathway for any residents on the west side of Old Yonge to go north to

St. John's, and then west to the intersection at Yonge and St. John's, and cross to the west side of Yonge Street where there is a sidewalk and a trail system."

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said he was glad that the four-metre right of way for the sidewalk was incorporated into the plan, but said he still had concerns related to density, the transition from nearby single-family homes, and lack of affordable housing units in the plan.

"We haven't had any of this being considered affordable, have we?" he said. "Has the developer come to you and said he wants to do even 10 per cent, not even 25 per cent... being affordable? Has there been any chance to take some of these individuals and try to help make them affordable for using the 30 per cent gross income of an individual?"

Ramunno replied that discussion could also be a part of the site plan process and the application is aware of Aurora's requirements for "affordable" units.

"Just based on the rationale laid out in our staff report, we identify this type of built form as providing additional opportunities for varying housing types and smaller units," said Ramunno.

"I'll take that as a no," replied Councillor Weese, "because unless we have it in writing and we have it that they're interested in doing it, it's not going to be affordable according to our affordability index."

The issue of the sidewalk was also a concern for Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, who sought assurances as to who would be footing the bill for its completion. Ramunno said a condition of approval would be the applicant covering the cost of construction.

"I think that this developer has done everything they can do to make this building as good as it can be to fit in with the neighbourhood," concluded Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner. "It's gone to unusual lengths, but there's a basic fact and the basic fact is this building is too large for this neighbourhood. There's no compatibility with the neighbourhood, there's no transition. It certainly doesn't fit the intent of the Regional Transit Corridor."

"Our current bylaw is based on greenfield development, and now we're moving into a new phase of more urban development. We always go by the bylaw that is in place, I have been asking for the bylaws to be changed.... This development does not conform to this bylaw, and it doesn't conform to the York Region Corridor Policy. It's just that simple."

"Then, if we add on to that all the comments from residents in the neighbourhood, I don't see how we could possibly approve this development. I thank the developer for really amazing work, it's just not the right property for that building."

The amendments were advanced 5 – 1 with Councillor Gaertner voting against it and Mayor Tom Mrakas absent from the meeting.



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Heiniu investigators continue to seek witnesses as review continues

Findings could be made public as early as this month



Demonstrators demanding "Justice for Heiniu" filled Council Chambers on Tuesday where last week's virtual Council meeting was attended in Chambers by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Investigators looking into the circumstances that led to the death of Heiniu, an East Gwillimbury rottweiler, during an Animal Control call involving Aurora officers, continue to seek witnesses to aid in the investigation.

Council received an update on the investigation at last week's meeting amid a demonstration held outside Town Hall on June 23 calling for "justice."

The Town of Aurora has retained Canine Foundations to investigate the dog's death, a move defended by municipal staff amid concerns raised by Heiniu's family and supporters questioning whether their investigation would be concluded in an impartial manner.

Voicing these concerns at last week's meeting was Bailey Lester, who was an eye-witness to the May 4 incident.

"The friendly family rottweiler was killed at the end of two catch poles by two of Aurora's animal control officers in my family home's driveway," said Lester. "Looking back on May 4, I was coming to visit my mom with my daughter as we planned to go for an evening stroll and to get ice cream. Two stray dogs had wandered onto her property, and my mom had them secured and leashed at the time of my arrival. I had asked my sister to care for my daughter as I went to assist my mom with both dogs. Both dogs were calm, friendly, and exhibited zero aggression towards us. We could pet them and have them sitting close to us without hesitation."

"I called Aurora Animal Services, fully believing in my heart that I was doing the right thing. I am now trying to forgive myself for making this tragic decision. I trusted that those responding would be professional, fully trained, and knowledgeable in how to use any equipment, including catch poles. I fully expected them to handle the dogs in a humane manner, and then safely have them reunited with their families. What was to occur and to be witnessed by my family and neighbors was a nightmare, something that I would never wish on anyone to experience."

The incident, she said, has "forever changed us, leaving us deeply shaken, confused, and traumatised."

"Both my mother and I are in therapy learning how to deal with what we witnessed and dealing with our own feelings of guilt that we have contributed to Heiniu's death by trusting people that have no business in this field," she claimed. "The killing of Heiniu has galvanized many here and beyond. The entire situation, from start until now, has been so badly and coldly handled by the management of Aurora. Trying to make Heiniu the

guilty party in this scenario in order to protect yourselves has left not just me, but most of the individuals disgusted and saddened."

The retention of Canine Foundations, she contended, is problematic because investigators "are peers of Aurora Animal Control Services" and would not be able to be impartial, she said, as their use of the Dog Owner's Liability Act (DOLA) in prior investigations "has been criticized of unfairly punishing dogs when zero aggression has been proven."

"The Town of Aurora management has continued to be vague and non-transparent, using 'allow due process' as the excuse, but the continued detachment is only deepening the feelings of anger and distrust," she concluded. "The anger and outrage from people is palpable. This is only growing as we look for justice for Heiniu. I ask this Council and this Town's management to be courageous and ask the difficult questions internally of hiring and training standards and of your crisis management approach, to listen to what the [constituents] are saying and asking of you."

While Council members assured her that these voices were being heard, Town Solicitor Patricia De Sario said the selection of Canine Foundations was "the best option based on their qualifications and expertise."

"In our review, they were the only firm, lack of a better word, that included canine behaviour, animal handling, animal cruelty and welfare and animal control," said De Sario. "Given the specific nature of the incident, we wanted somebody who was more specific and had these types of expertise and not just a regular third-party investigator. Because they have done considerable work, if Council chooses to redirect with another team, then the Town would still have to pay this team that we've retained for all the work they've done so far."

"My only other concern is retaining anybody else at this stage is going to take time.... We were asked, not even asked, it was imperative that we chose a firm quickly, which is what we did. If we do anything further, it will delay this process. Like the public, we are trying not to delay the process. We would also like answers quickly."

The Canine Foundation, she continued, "is committed to providing their report within a reasonable amount of time."

"They have suggested that they would be able to provide us with a report by the end of July," she said. "I do want to caution that we still don't know what this process is looking like. There is potential for litigation; we have been advised of that. As we do in every potential litigation, we may not be able to disclose anything further to

the public – we'll have to cross that bridge when we get there – but I can disclose it to Council."

Responding to De Sario's update, Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said "public disclosure" was of particular interest and it was "imperative" that the public knows what is being done for an independent review.

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, who put forward a motion to allow Lester to speak as a delegate to last week's meeting and put forward an ultimately withdrawn motion for a special meeting of Council this month dedicated to the matter, sought assurances that all

"relevant witnesses" would be reached as part of the investigation.

"The investigator has reached out to a couple potential witnesses who would like to get legal advice prior to providing any statements," De Sario replied, adding a future meeting was "always staff's intention."

"The investigation team has also attended the site and are going, for lack of a better word, up and down the street and knocking on doors and seeing if there are any witnesses at home who are willing to speak to them. They have been able to reach at least one person who has provided them with a statement, but they are continuing that process."



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Future leaders in business, manufacturing and skilled trades honoured by Chamber of Commerce



Members of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce Board – Julien Laurion, Jennifer Walker, Amanda Vesterfelt, and Devin Cattelan – joined scholarship recipients, their families, and sponsors at Thursday's presentation. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

From page 1
 contributions to the program. This year's recipient of the Business Scholarship is Primiani who was also recognized by the Town of Aurora earlier in the week with one

of two John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarships. Primiani, a graduate of Cardinal Carter Catholic High School, is no stranger to business, having launched her own popular jewellery

the importance of manufacturing," he says, adding he finds careers in manufacturing are often overlooked as strictly assembly line jobs.

Sadig, a graduate of St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, is set to pursue Electrical Engineering at the University of Toronto this fall and is particularly interested in robotics, and how Artificial Intelligence is impacting the manufacturing sector.

"I'm focused on pursuing opportunities within U of T and also the Toronto-area of having start-up experiences and getting into tech start-up environments and pursuing opportunities such as hackathons and events where I'm able to network and meet with people who are as passionate as me about solving such problems," he says.

"I would say the biggest thing for people applying [for these scholarships] is always believe that you're enough with the experiences you have and you should show your passion for that industry."

Ferguson's passion for the skilled trades has been evident throughout her time at Aurora High School, particularly in her final years where she pursued co-ops in the field of carpentry.

Skilled trades are often seen as a man's game, she says, and this is a perception she says she hopes to challenge as she pursues her own path in the industry.

"This scholarship means a lot because there's a lot of second-thoughts of females going into the trades – it's very daunting," she says. "With this support and the scholarship, it's more motivation for that. Having this extra support kind of gives you the push you need and I am very honoured to have gotten it."

Ferguson says she intends to use the scholarship dollars to secure the tools and equipment she needs to make a go of it.

"I like being able to see the process [of carpentry] and the I-created-this-with-my-hands moment," she says. "It's just really fun and works different parts of the brain, it takes a lot of problem solving, and it's never a dull moment."

line. With her scholarship in hand, she will be pursuing Commerce at Queen's University this fall.

"Through my own business, I've seen how much you can make of a source of good for others and bring a light to other people," she says. "I thought that maybe I could pursue more through a really good business degree and it would help me a lot."

At Queen's, she plans to major in Marketing with an additional focus on sustainability in business.

"I think this is a really great opportunity," says Primiani of the scholarship. "If you're really interested in business and also leadership and using your business to help others, I think this is a really great opportunity to continue your post-secondary education and also further better yourself as an individual."

Sadig, who is this year's recipient of the Manufacturing Scholarship, sees similar value in the scholarship and the overall program.

"I believe that our Chamber of Commerce has put together this great program that's able to show students

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TOP 40 UNDER 40
2026 Recognition & Celebration



HEAR WELL BE WELL

Hear Well Be Well opened its doors at Yonge Street and Brookland last week, welcoming Mayor Tom Mrakas to formally cut the ribbon. Pictured here, from left, are Shayla Lockhurst-Crich of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Kathleen Tiede, co-CEO of Hear Well Be Well, Michelle Redgwell, Regional Education Leader at Hear Well Be Well, Mayor Mrakas, Hear Well Be Well co-CEO John Tiede, and Carlos Calderon, Hear Well Be Well Operations Manager. "Hear Well Be Well is proud to be family-run and Canadian-operated since 1984. We are pleased to join the Aurora community with the opening of our 14th location, where we look forward to providing trusted, family-focused hearing healthcare to local residents."

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Finalists announced for Aurora Chamber of Commerce's Business Excellence Awards



Finalists for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's 2026 Business Excellence Awards were recognized at Poached Dreams Diner on Thursday evening. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The nominations are in and the best of the best in local business are putting their best feet forward for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's annual Business Excellence Awards, set for October 22.

This year's nominees were announced Thursday evening at a special reception held at Poached Dreams Diner.

The awards represent "a diverse range of industries and demonstrate the entrepreneurial spirit, community involvement, and commitment to excellence that make Aurora's business community exceptional."

According to Alison Mumford, Executive Director of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, this year's process saw a record-number of nominations come in – 155 in all – across seven categories.

"I want to acknowledge that the decisions our selection committees had to make were incredibly difficult," said Mumford. "The strength and quality of this year's nominations made narrowing the field no easy task. Every nominee here tonight should be incredibly proud of this recognition."

"As I announce each of the finalists, I encourage you to reflect on the hard

work, dedication, and passion that each of these businesses and individuals bring to our community. Consider the impact that they have made, the challenges they have overcome, and the remarkable contributions they continue to make in helping Aurora thrive. Tonight, we celebrate not only the finalists, but all of the nominees whose efforts make our business community stronger, more vibrant, and more connected."

2026 BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARD FINALISTS

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

"Recognizing businesses, organizations, and individuals who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to community involvement and giving back."

- Artistica Ballroom Dance Studio
- Anthony Garramone
- St. Andrew's College
- Royal Rose Art Gallery

NON-PROFIT

"Recognizing non-profit organizations that have made a significant impact on the lives of residents through programs, services, and community support."

- Community Living Central York
- Yellow Brick House
- Rose of Sharon

- Hope House Community Hospice

RETAIL

"Recognizing retailers who provide exceptional customer service, innovation, and contribute to Aurora's vibrant shopping experience."

- KIBO Natural Body Care Products
- Our Dog & Company
- Sweet Dutchess Kitchen & Cafe
- The Glitter Hubb

NEW BUSINESS

"Recognizing businesses established within the last three years that have demonstrated early success, growth, and community impact."

- Saltbox Café
- LK Laser Aesthetics
- Gameday Men's Health
- Saffron Restaurant

TOP EMPLOYER (10+ EMPLOYEES)

"Recognizing organizations that create exceptional workplaces through employee engagement, professional development, and organizational culture."

- Apple Self Storage
- Highland GM
- Almac Industrial Systems
- Microtel Inn & Suites

WOMEN-LED BUSINESS

"Recognizing businesses owned or led by women who exemplify leadership, innovation, and business excellence."

- A4 Group Construction Services
- The Car Girls
- The Social Pup
- Monaco Interiors

PEOPLE'S CHOICE

"Recognizes an Aurora-based business in any industry that exemplifies excellence."

"This award will be voted for by the public in September for a business that shows outstanding customer experience, commitment to the community, as well as positive impact, connection, accessibility and inclusivity."

- Bessie Correa Real Estate
- Billyard Insurance Group
- Dekade Clothing
- Elliott Raben Productions
- Filly & Co.
- Ivish Interiors
- Love for Dogs Pet Care
- Sheldon Stanleigh Real Estate
- Swiss Chalet / Harvey's
- The Hive Wellness Collective
- Thrive Gymnastics
- Westview Golf Club

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EST. 2024





Aurora Cultural Centre launches summer countdown to Winter Blues

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The blazing July sun is here, but the Aurora Cultural Centre's recently-launched 2026-2027 season has some cool blues on the horizon.

The Aurora Cultural Centre's latest Performing Arts season went on sale Thursday, and a hallmark of this year's program includes a return of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival, a long-standing local musical institution, which is looking forward to its second year revived under the Cultural Centre's umbrella.

The 2027 Aurora Winter Blues Festival will kick off on February 24 with an evening concert by Crystal Shawanda, supported by Brock Stonefish. The Centre describes Shawanda as "one of the most electrifying voices in Canadian music."

"A JUNO Award-winner and former country star turned blues powerhouse, she brings her soulful artistry to Aurora," they said. "Joining her is Brock Stonefish, Delaware Nation luthier and winner of the 2023 Toronto Blues Society Talent Search. Together, they celebrate Indigenous roots and the deep, shared soul of the Blues."

The second concert in the series is Matt Andersen, supported by Campbell & Johnston, on February 25. Previously announced by the

Aurora Cultural Centre, the Andersen concert is part of their recently-launched Gold Circle concert series.

"A powerful giant in performance, Matt Andersen leaves it all on stage in an incredible display of energy, songcraft and guitar prowess. Audiences are left breathless from his full tilt blues roots renditions of original material. A consummate performer, he will move your heart with his honest, no holds barred emotion, humour and charm. Supporting the night with an opening set are rising stars Campbell & Johnston, the guitar virtuoso couple hailing from New Brunswick and PEI."

The Blues continue on February 26 with Dawn Tyler Watson, supported by Danny Marks, a double set of concerts on February 27 with Rhapsodious at 3 p.m., and Terra Lightfoot, supported by Jay Blues, at 7.30 p.m.

"A 2020 JUNO Award winner for Blues Album of the Year, first-place champion at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, and winner of over a dozen Maple Blues Awards and Quebec Lys Blues Awards, Watson is one of the most decorated blues artists in Canada," say organizers. "Her sound fuses jazz, soul, rock, and gospel into something that is entirely her own. Sharing the stage is legendary Toronto guitarist and JAZZfm91 broadcaster Danny Marks – an outstanding musician with a lifetime of blues in his hands.



Musician Danny Marks provided a flavour of what's to come, performing at a recent launch party signalling the countdown to the 2027 Aurora Winter Blues Festival. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

"Settle in for a soulful afternoon with acclaimed pianist, former CBC broadcaster, and Culchahworks artistic director Andrew Craig. A specialist in original Canadian theatre and Black history, Craig has spent years developing work that explores the rich and often untold stories of Black culture and experience in Canada. For this Blues Series matinee, he brings the same depth of thought and emotional honesty to a solo set spanning jazz, gospel, funk, soul, and R&B, played with the fluency of a lifetime spent inside this music. His masterful touch on the keys creates an experience that is intimate and profound – music that tells a story.

"Terra Lightfoot has spent years earning a reputation as one of Canada's finest live performers – a touring rock songwriter with JUNO nominations, Polaris long-list nods, and a loyal following built one show at a time. Now, with her intimate new album Home Front – recorded in a Haliburton Highlands living room, on a back porch, in the quiet hours after dinner – she reveals a softer, more personal side. Nylon strings, field recordings, and songs shaped by stillness. An evening of music that gets to the very heart of what matters."

The program concludes with Lance Anderson's An Afternoon of Blues and Gospel, on February 28, at 2 p.m.

"Close out the Blues Series with a joyful, uplifting celebration where gospel and the blues meet in their most powerful form. Lance Anderson – 'piano and organ genius' and a beloved Mariposa Folk Festival fixture – leads a spectacular ensemble featuring powerful vocalists Quisha Wint and Cheryl Luscom. Known for his masterful tributes to legends including Oscar Peterson and The Band, Anderson brings decades of musical excellence to this celebration

of where gospel and the blues were born together. Joyful, soulful, and impossible not to move to."

At a sneak peek of the 2027 Aurora Winter Blues Festival for Centre patrons and supporters held recently at Slabtown Armoury, Cultural Centre Executive Director Suzanne Haines said she was "so pleased" to work with Music Aurora, one of the original proponents of the AWBF, on this season's program – an appreciation that was echoed by Music Aurora's Stewart McLaren.

"It was more than just a series of concerts, it was a community event," he said of the first formal Blues Festival in 2012, which was born out of house parties hosted by Jamie and Helen MacDonald. "We had just one night.... It became a festival in the fact we did lots of events other than just putting on performances. We engaged youth in music through performances and pop-ups around Town, and we held workshops in the Library and in different locations around Town...."

"We're thrilled to be back working with the Aurora Cultural Centre. Suzanne and Derek [Andrews, Performing Arts Manager] and our team have done a great job. Last year was a wonderful success. We had great performances, great shows. I think everybody enjoyed it. It was sold out, so we're very proud to be happy to partner with Aurora Winter Blues Fest and the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Town of Aurora, to put this on again."

Added Andrews: "It is a terrific story of revival, a word that we used and overused a little bit, but we carry on with the next edition of AWBF."

For more information about upcoming AWBF programming and the Centre's entire 2026-2027 Performing Arts Season, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/performing-arts.



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FREE

WEEK OF JULY 2, 2026

Hundreds of fans at local World Cup Watch Parties witness Canada's dramatic 1-0 win over South Africa

BY JIM STEWART
 LOCAL JOURNALISM
 INITIATIVE REPORTER

After Team Canada's 2-1 loss to Switzerland in mid-week, it looked like the fun ride for soccer fans from coast to coast could be over.

A pair of unprecedented World Cup performances created sky-high expectations, but the undefeated Canadian Men's Soccer Team crashed back to Earth on Wednesday afternoon.

The narrow 2-1 loss to Switzerland was, indeed, a costly one for the national side.

Not only did Les Rouges fail to capture first place in Group B by at least tying the Swiss, but the one-goal defeat in front of 52,497 fans at BC Place cost the squad its home field advantage for the rest of the World Cup.

The first-place Swiss (2-0-1) stayed in Vancouver to play in the comfy confines of BC Place. Sadly, the Canadians (1-1-1) were "exiled" to Los Angeles to play South Africa in the sudden-death Knockout Stage of 32.

Then, something magnificent occurred at So-Fi Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

Those assembled at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 385 Watch Party leapt out of their chairs in celebration when Stephen Eustaquio kicked the ball decisively and accurately into the lower corner of the South African cage one minute into extra time to give Les Rouges a narrow 1-0 lead.

Elation swept the Legion as Eustaquio's kick settled into the back of the net. When Canadian goaltender Maxime Crepeau snared a high shot fired as a last gasp by South Africa in the waning seconds of injury time, the netminder atoned for allowing an easy first goal by the Swiss on Wednesday, preserved his clean slate, and allowed millions of Canadians to exhale.

One of those active viewers savoring the moment at the Royal Canadian Legion was Eddie McNally who was inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in 2014 to commemorate his brilliant career as a member of the national men's soccer team in the 1980s, as a professional player with the Toronto Blizzard, and as the inspirational coach of the Aurora Hearts. It wasn't a stretch to describe McNally as the happiest of the crew.

The Canadian soccer star expressed some relief as he described the significance of Eustaquio's goal and praised the national team's efforts in Los Angeles.

"The best part was just seeing the ball go in the net. I admired the team's resilience and how they fought to get the ball today. We played through the calls we didn't get. The South Africans play a different game than we play. They're rougher and our team had to battle through it."

McNally was clearly moved by the historically-significant goal by Eustaquio and he offered succinct, heartfelt praise amid the joyful vibe of the Legion Watch Party.

"I'm very proud of our boys."

Sunday's significant victory—catapulting Canada into a sudden-death match with either the Netherlands or Morocco on Saturday, July 4, in Houston—bordered on miraculous, given the disappointing loss to Switzerland in Group Play on Wednesday.

The first 45 minutes of the Switzerland-Canada match created hope for Les Rouges as TSN showed footage of fans assembled at Watch Parties across the country. At Aurora Town Square, a hometown hero's play caught the fancy of over 150 red-clad fans inside the Davide De Simone Performance Hall.

The locals cheered every play that Aurora's Alistair Johnston made defensively and offensively.

Much to the delight of the young fans assembled who admire Johnston as role model, TSN commentators described the Glasgow Celtic star "as made of solid stuff."

The graduate of Aurora High School was front and centre in the first half as he was involved in a nasty midfield collision. Later, he made a key defensive play to prevent a Swiss go-ahead goal with two minutes remaining. The Maple Leaf flag-waving soccer aficionados were treated to Johnston's heroics as well as free popcorn—courtesy of the dedicated Town Staff—and an excellent viewing experience in comfy red theatre seats.

The scoreless first half wound down between the evenly-matched competitors with Canada carrying the play after the hydration break and the Swiss dominating the opening twenty minutes of play.

Half-time raffles of soccer jerseys and soccer balls revved up the all-ages crowd. MPP Sandra Cobena called the winning raffle tickets from the main stage and exhorted the standing crowd with a "Go Canada Go" cheer to move the white-jerseyed lads to victory.

Alas, the second half opened as badly as possible for the Canadian side.

As I departed Aurora Town Square for rest-of-game viewing at Filly and Company on Yonge Street, the Swiss knifed their way on to the scoreboard when Ruben Vargas kicked the ball through Canadian keeper Crepeau just forty ticks into the second frame.

However, the patrons at Filly and Company were undaunted and cheered on the Canadian squad.

Bar Manager Nem Vasiljevic, who with running partner Taylor Wright raises thousands of dollars annually for the Aurora Food Pantry, described the upbeat vibe in the south-end, neighbourhood pub.

"It's fun to work these games. I get paid to watch soccer. The World Cup's great—we've been really busy for England and Canada games. As an English style pub, we've been filled with English soccer fans. With their presence, the environment has been great and the outcomes have been great, too. Seeing the first Canadian



World Cup Watch Parties were held last week at Aurora Town Square, The Filly, and the Royal Canadian Legion.

Auroran photos by Jim Stewart

men's team goals and wins at the World Cup has been a blast."

Fragmenting the fun at the Filly was Johan Manzambi's goal for Team Switzerland in the 57th minute of play, but the Canadian side showed some fortitude and pressed onward.

The hydration break was perfectly-timed for both the Canadian team to recalibrate as they did in the first half and for "the event hopper" to savor his complimentary Creemore and chat with the friendly patrons at the bar.

The misted, hydrated Canadian crew got on the scoreboard in the 75th minute when Promise David hoofed one into the yawning Swiss cage to make it 2-1—much to the delight of the dozens of vociferous fans at the Filly.

Prayerful patrons could be heard invoking divine intervention-- "Please, just one more" – and the intensity ramped up as Team Canada pressed for the valuable equalizer.

In six minutes of added time, the Canadians made three more spirited pushes and I added one more Creemore to my tab in hopes that it would be a celebratory pint rather than a desultory one.

With 3:38 on the clock, a header from outside the box by local hero Johnston just missed the mark and elicited groans from the assembly.

The roof would've blown off the pub if Johnston's header would have found mesh.

Consequently, patrons clapped in defeat and the atmosphere at the Filly was upbeat because Team C had advanced to the next stage of the World Cup for the first time in tournament history by finishing second in Group B.

It was 20 ounces of consolation for all assembled and deepened our appreciation for the bigger and better developments on Sunday afternoon.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, "Reports of the death of the Canadian team's World Cup chances were greatly exaggerated."

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Roller skaters lace up at Community Centre for new drop-in program



Local roller skaters – whether expert-level or just lacing up for the first time – flocked to the Aurora Community Centre on Tuesday, June 23, for the first in a series of Roller Skating Drop-Ins. The inaugural event featured a curated set list of vinyl, spun live by David Heard of Dave's Vinyl Party, the theme of which was Old School Funk, R&B, and Disco. Drop-ins will take place each Tuesday evening through July 28 from 7.30 – 9 p.m. and upcoming theme evenings include So Nice Reggae on July 7, 80s on 8 on July 14, Film Roll on July 21, and a return to Old School Funk, R&B and Disco on July 28. Pre-registration is required. To book your space, visit www.aurora.ca/recreation-arts-and-culture/recreation-programs-and-drop-in-activities/drop-in-activities/skating-activities. Pictured here at the first outing were (Top Row) Isla and Scarlett; Brian, Blas, and Bruce; Iman, Sumaya, and Arian. (Second Row) Heard is pictured in the Steve Mitchell Media Booth spinning records; The Town had plenty of fresh popcorn for participants.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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Shaolin MMA combatant Aggam Bawa captures first Canada Fight League match in Stoney Creek

Shaolin Martial Arts instructors Colarossi and Wakefield earn Master Shifu status at investiture ceremony

BY JIM STEWART

Martial Arts instructors Rocco Colarossi and Daniel Wakefield earned their next level of coaching certification on Sunday afternoon at their Shaolin training facility on Mary Street.

After the investiture ceremony, Jiaolian Rocco and Jiaolian Daniel were greeted respectfully by students and their parents as “the new Shifu.”

Among the dignitaries bestowing Master Coaching status on Shifu Colarossi and Shifu Wakefield were Grand Masters Richard Long, Richard Palmer, and Tim Wakefield.

On Saturday morning, the rising star coaches ran a three-hour Kung Fu Workshop—marketed as a way to “kick start the Summer Break with a special day of awesome Martial Arts Skills and great grub.”

After elevating the skills of dozens of young martial arts enthusiasts, Shifu Colarossi and Shifu Wakefield mingled with the attendees and enjoyed a celebratory post-event BBQ in the facility’s parking lot.

In the quieter confines of Shaolin’s reception area, Colarossi identified the most satisfying aspect of reaching the next level of martial arts coaching: “Getting through the extraordinary difficulty of the test and working through it was nice.”

He also cited a timeless Biblical proverb to describe his ongoing relationship with his martial arts students: “The old adage ‘Iron sharpens iron’ applies to improving one another’s skills and character so I am looking to create those connections with our athletes.”

The most satisfying aspect of the ceremony for Wakefield was the completion of a key stage in his life.

“For me, it’s the culmination of 20 years of training. This is a journey I’ve been taking and I want to understand the mindset of a Master. It’s going to be enjoyable to stand with the guys that I’ve admired. It’s about the competition and the discipline that comes with a lifetime of training.”



Shaolin Martial Arts Coach Rocco Colarossi and MMA Combatant Aggam Bawa hoist hardware in Stoney Creek. **Contributed photo**

BY JIM STEWART

Shaolin Martial Arts combatant Aggam Bawa defeated Gurmehak Turna in a three-round MMA bout to capture her first Canada Fight League match at the Winona Vine Estates in Stoney Creek last Saturday.

Bawa—who has trained at Shaolin Martial Arts in Aurora since 2021—credited her training and coaching at the Mary Street facility as a key factor in her victory.

“It’s been great to train here—it’s a nice place to come to and throw myself into the training. It’s a healthy escape for me.”

Shaolin Martial Arts Coach Rocco

Colarossi, who recently competed in an MMA tournament and will achieve Master’s Level status at the end of the month, praised his protégé’s progress, diligence, and talent as it manifested in Saturday’s match: “Aggam’s been putting in a ton of effort and she’s doing the prescribed work here and at other gyms where we’ve sent her to get more specialized coaching. She’s fantastic and it showed in her match against Turna. She was dominant in the first two rounds of the fight and she won all three rounds. When Aggam got Gurmehak in a rear naked choke, from my view, it looked like the fight was over, but she was saved

by the bell at the end of the second round. In the third round, she stayed away from Aggam.”

Bawa concurred with his coach’s assessment of the match: “I beat this Thai boxer who’d been training for ten years. She was really advanced in boxing, but by the end of Round 1, I was taking her to the floor where I had the advantage of grappling. She was the superior boxer and I had to stay away from her, but when I got her in a choke hold, she was losing consciousness, and she was saved by the bell.”

The ten-year King City resident and graduate of St. Anne’s School in Aurora was pleased with her performance in the three-round match.

“Just seeing my skills put together and seeing everything I’ve worked for over the last five years in my first MMA match was satisfying. Obviously, my striking and grappling abilities were the difference as well as reading the fighter and realizing how to get out of holds because of my training. It felt good to say to myself ‘I know how to get out of this one.’ Finally, being able to use all my skills in one place was satisfying, too.”

The 18-year-old is heading off to New York University in the Fall to earn a degree in business, technology, and entrepreneurship and is “looking forward to balancing my studies and maintaining my skills. I want to get my blue belt while I’m in the USA and I’m looking forward to the gyms and the coaching styles as well as opportunities in New York.”

However, before she starts her studies at NYU in September, Aggam Bawa has one last goal in Ontario: “Before I leave, I want to have another MMA fight.”

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Seniors' Centre, Virtual programs get Provincial funding boost



Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Mayor Tom Mrakas were joined at the Aurora Seniors' Centre by members of its Board of Directors for last week's funding announcement.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Seniors' Centre's virtual programs took on new resonance during the global pandemic, but continue to go from strength to strength with support from dedicated volunteers, and vital funds to make it a reality.

The Aurora Seniors' Centre and its Senior Centre Without Walls program received a funding boost from the Province of Ontario.

On Tuesday, June 23, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy visited the Centre to announce the Town of Aurora's receipt of \$122,578 to support seniors programs in the local community, with \$57,288 of the total grant amount dedicated for these virtual programs.

"When I think about what makes a strong community, I think about places like the [Aurora Seniors' Centre] because its places like this that bring people together," said MPP Gallagher Murphy. "It fosters connection as well and it ensures that seniors, older adults, have opportunities to stay active, to stay engaged involved in the

community that you have all helped build.

"I think this is a great announcement and this includes \$57,288 for the Virtual Aurora Seniors' Centre, which has become quite the success, [serving] more than 2,000 older adults across Aurora as well as York Region and beyond through their virtual programming. It also includes \$57,640 for the Aurora Seniors' Centre and this supports more than 2,000 older adults through in-person, online, and hybrid programming, focused on fitness, recreation, social activities, and life-long learning. Together, all these programs help seniors stay active, healthy, informed and connected."

The Town of Aurora itself, she added, will receive a further \$7,650 through Ontario's Seniors Community Grant Program to deliver a six-part program, Living Your Best Life in Aurora, which focuses on healthy eating, mental wellness, community engagement, and local transit options.

"At its core, this investment is about ensuring seniors in Aurora have access to the programs and opportunities that help them remain active, independent, supported and

connected all close to home.

"As we mark Seniors Month in Ontario, I am proud that this year we do so for a second time under the official Provincial recognition, and this is following my Private Member's Bill that received Royal Assent in December of 2024 to mark Seniors Month, officially proclaim it as Seniors Month in the province of Ontario, which is the first ever jurisdiction in all of Canada to do so. To everyone involved with the Aurora Seniors' Centre, the virtual Aurora Seniors' Centre, and the Town of Aurora, thank you to everyone here."

Thanks was returned by Mayor Tom Mrakas, who noted MPP Gallagher Murphy's commitment to and advocacy for the community.

"We have so many good programs and they're going to continue because of this funding and they're going to continue to grow because of this funding," he said.

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Leaders of Tomorrow honoured by Town, Council with Memorial Scholarships

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
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Catherine Wang and Alissa Primiani emerged as student leaders during their time at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School and Cardinal Carter Catholic High School, respectively.

As the recent graduates prepare to go out in the world and pursue their post-secondary careers, they were recognized by the Town of Aurora last week as Leaders of Tomorrow – and received a boost from the municipality to further their future endeavours.

The students are this year's recipients of the John West Way Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship, a program created through a bequest from late Aurora mayor John West to recognize in-school and community leadership rather than strict academic achievement.

"Whether through community events, volunteer initiatives, artistic achievements, athletic accomplishments, or acts of service, Aurora's youth continue to lead by example and remind us that the future of our community is in very capable hands," said Sparrow Als, Youth Programmer for the Town of Aurora, who presented the awards virtually at the June 23 Council meeting. "This award honors students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, service, character, and commitment to making life better for others. This year's recipients embody the values that John West championed throughout his life: Community service, compassion, leadership, and a dedication to helping others succeed. Through their actions, they have strengthened our community and inspired those around them."

"Catherine's story is one of inclusion, collaboration, and advocacy. Throughout her time at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, she has consistently sought opportunities to bring people together and create meaningful connections within her school and community. As student Council president, she recognized that many student groups shared common goals but often worked independently of one another. Rather than accepting that as reality, she helped foster a culture of collaboration, encouraging clubs



Graduates Alissa Primiani and Catherine Wang formally received the 2026 John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarships from Mayor Tom Mrakas and Robin McDougall, Aurora's Director of Community Services, at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex's Loft youth space on Monday afternoon.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

to combine their talents and resources to create stronger and more impactful initiatives for students.

"Her passion for inclusion extends far beyond student government. As co-founder of the Asian Students Association, Catherine helped create opportunities for students to celebrate cultural diversity, challenge stereotypes, and build greater understanding amongst her peers. Through educational initiatives and community events, she worked to ensure that students from every background felt represented, respected, and welcomed. One of Catherine's most meaningful contributions involved helping create an art gallery and workshop program focused on raising awareness and acceptance of individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Through art, education, and direct engagement with children and their families, she helped foster a more inclusive environment where everyone felt valued and supported. Perhaps most importantly, Catherine has demonstrated the courage to stand up for others, even when doing so is difficult."

Wang is set for McMaster University this fall.

Primiani's story is "one of compassion, resilience and service others" in the Cardinal Carter community and beyond, Als continued.

"Alissa has consistently demonstrated that leadership is not defined by titles, but by actions," said Als. "Whether supporting younger students, mentoring future leaders, or creating opportunities for

children to thrive, she has made helping others the foundation of her work. Alissa's commitment to community service is deeply personal. Inspired by supporting her younger brother through leukemia treatment, she transformed a difficult family experience into opportunities to help others facing similar challenges.

"Through her business, Alissa Nicole Designs, she has donated handmade gemstone bracelets to paediatric oncology patients and youth involved in mental health programs, providing comfort, encouragement, and hope to young people during difficult times. She has also volunteered with the Super Sophia Project, helping prepare care packages for children in hospitals and ensuring they feel supported and cared for.

"Closer to home, Alissa has become a familiar face within Aurora's recreation programs. Over the past few years, I have had the pleasure of working alongside Alissa as both a volunteer and now a program leader with the Town. She has helped create positive and inclusive experiences for children and youth through sports, dance, camps, and community events. Her ability to make participants feel welcomed, valued, and confident reflect the type of leader our community is proud to celebrate. What is perhaps most impressive is her ability to balance her achievements while remaining focused on helping others. Whether mentoring future leaders, supporting children in rec programs, or giving back to families facing medical challenges, Alissa consistently uses

her talents to improve the lives of those around her."

Checking into the virtual meeting, Primiani, who will be attending Queen's University this fall to study Commerce, expressed her gratitude for the recognition.

"This is truly an honour and I'm incredibly grateful for the John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship," she said. "This award will really help me pursue my future education and also I'm just truly honoured and grateful for everyone's support."

Following the presentation, the students were saluted by Council members, including Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who expressed a particular interest in Primiani's bracelets.

"It's always nice to see people who are leaders in this community and entrepreneurs like you are. Thanks for all the work you do and congratulations on your awards," said Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese.

Added Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim: "I just want to congratulate again Alissa and Catherine. For young people like you to have the empathy that you do because the leadership, you don't have effective leadership unless you have empathy for those around you. These days to get anywhere in life, to get a job or whatever, having a high emotional IQ is always up there. And for you guys to have it at this young age is pretty extraordinary. I just want to thank you and keep it up and best wishes in your future endeavors and school."



SOMETHING SWEET AT THE SATURDAY MARKET – The Aurora Farmers' Market held their annual Strawberry Festival on Saturday and many residents came out to Town Park to take it all in, including Maryia, Olga and Jasmine; Frankie and Sam; Monica and Charlotte; and Randal, Alexandra, Jasper, and Jenny who met up with Mayor Mrakas.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

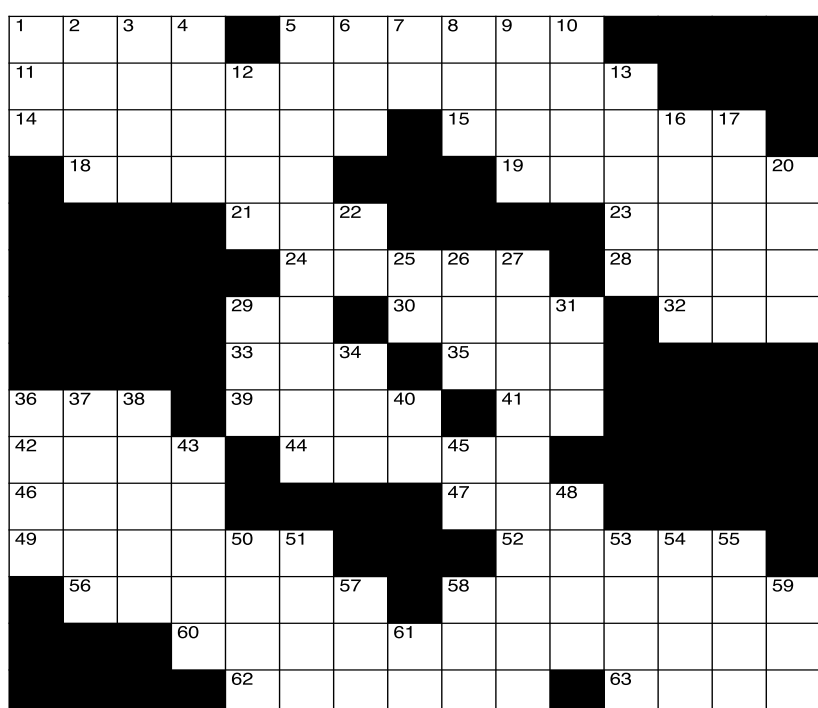
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CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. TAJULY226 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

1. ___ chat
5. Statue near the Pyramids
11. A process to change the look
14. Herb
15. Think about excessively
18. Bass vocal part
19. Supreme Allied Cmdr. of NATO
21. A major division of geological time
23. New Zealand parrot
24. Cognitive contents
28. Lump of yarn
29. Atomic #109
30. Let go of
32. Indian title of respect
33. Whereabouts unknown
35. Electronic data processing



CLUES DOWN

1. Corporate executive
2. A plant used for flavoring food
3. Opinion or belief
4. Sheep in their second year
5. Intensities of sound
6. Indicates support for
7. Expression of laughter
8. OJ trial judge
9. Pointed ends of pens (abbr.)
10. True bugs genus
12. Lawyers argue theirs
13. Body parts
16. Closes tightly
17. World Heritage site in Nigeria
20. Islamic calendar month
22. Commercial
25. "Westworld" actor Harris
26. They ___
27. Religious guilds
29. Woman (French)
31. Parts per billion (abbr.)
34. Brew
36. Spiritual leader
37. Indigo bush
38. Burn with a hot liquid
40. Older citizen
43. Scad fish genus
45. Morning
48. Line passing through the center (abbr.)
50. Double S-shaped curve
51. Small, thin person
53. Older
54. Mars crater
55. Humanities
57. Word element meaning ear
58. To the ___ degree
59. Residue
61. It cools your home

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THINGS... you ought to know

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

ONGOING

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

SATURDAY, JULY 4

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

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

SATURDAY, JULY 11

The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from

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.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 - 9 p.m. with History - A Tribute to Michael Jackson. "Relive the magic from 'Smooth Criminal' to 'Man in the Mirror.' This isn't just a tribute; it's a journey through history. Starring the incomparable George St. Kitts, it's time to moonwalk down memory lane. Hold onto your glove - this Michael Jackson Tribute is a real Thriller! Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

Garden Aurora's speakers Series continues with Leanne Sexton, speaking on the Truths and Myths of Growing Lavender. Join us for free at The Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Pkwy North (lower rear entrance) Doors open at 7:00pm for second hand table, information exchange, exhibitions, coffee, and snacks. Speaker starts at 8 p.m., followed by our flower show. For more information please visit www.gardenaaurora.ca.

Partagez le Francais: Ce groupe accueille les ADULTES / 18+ (des francophones aux débutants capables de converser) - qui cherchent à mettre en pratique leurs compétences Conversationnelle en français. Over Zoom with a nominal fee of \$2.50. RSVP by visiting meetup.com/Partagez-le-francais. For more information, visit www.meetup.com/partagez-le-francais.

Support AbuseHurts' Delivering Hope Full Circle Program textile recycling and donation program. A greater number of people are wanting to donate or get rid of unwanted items, increasing the need for more outlets being available to receive the items. This program will provide a convenient way for people to donate or get rid of used/unwanted clothing, blankets, linens and furniture and will help lessen the amount of items ending up in landfills. Materials that were previously perceived as waste will now be seen as a valuable resource further encouraging redistribution. The items will be recycled in the following ways: To be given to individuals who are survivors of violence and are transitioning from shelters into new homes; To be sold in our store; To be sold to a textile recycler, which makes for an ongoing source of funding for Abuse Hurts enabling them to provide their services to the thousands of people that require them each year. When and Where: Monday and Wednesday, every week, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., with 30-minute time slots - only 1 drop off per time slot. If you do not have an appointment, we cannot accept your donation. The Abuse Hurts Warehouse is located at 1208 Gorham St, Unit 4, Newmarket - rear unloading dock. Visit AbuseHurts.ca to select your drop off time slot.

Weese will not seek re-election as Ward 1 Councillor

From page 3

sure] the train whistles are stopped because they're a stress for hundreds of homes along the train tracks, and other communities being up to the highest standards of safety because no one wants to sacrifice safety for the sake of the train whistles."

Councillor Weese's decision leaves Wards 1, 2, 3, and 5 up for grabs in this fall's municipal election, with the incumbents in Wards 1, 2, and 3 not seeking re-election, while incumbent Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo vies for the Mayor's position.

Unlike Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, Weese says he's not yet ready to make an election endorsement in Ward 1.

At press time, both Lauren Hanna and Rocco Morsillo have filed to run for the Ward 1 Councillor position.

"I'm going to remain vigilant and listen to the campaigns of the other candidates in my ward, just like every other resident should do," he says. "We need to learn what their interests are and what their values will be, and I will identify somebody. Of the two people, I know I have a preference at this point, and it's always going to be based on whether they do or don't support Strong Mayor powers and whether they do want to advocate for resident advocacy and want to be a representative of the community."

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