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THE AURORED

Aurora's Community Newspaper

TheAuroran.com

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FREE

WEEK OF JULY 30, 2026

Max Domi is pictured with Jessica Diniz, President & CEO of Breakthrough T1D Canada, at Magna Golf Club on Monday, where Domi hosted an inaugural golf tourney to raise vital funds for diabetes research.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Max Domi launches first annual Golf Classic at Magna to raise \$1M for Type 1 Diabetes Research

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Injured and rehabbing Toronto Maple Leaf Max Domi limped gamely into the Magna Golf Club Clubhouse Dining Room on Monday morning and warmed up the room with his sunny disposition.

Domi chatted effortlessly with members of the media, accommodating numerous interview requests with a positive vibe

Dwayne Gretzky, Big Wreck to headline Aurora's Ribfest 2026

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

High energy will be the order of the weekend when Dwayne Gretzky and Big Wreck headline Aurora's Ribfest 2026 next month.

The Ribfest headliners were announced by Mayor Tom Mrakas at Concerts in the Park on July 22, with

Continued on page 6

and submerging the pains associated with his rehab program.

Domi's First Annual Golf Classic, a fundraiser aiming to raise \$1M for Type 1 Diabetes Research via Breakthrough T1D Canada, rolled out in beautiful tee-off conditions at 12 noon. The sold-out shotgun event was attended by an array of dignitaries, blending local politicians including Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas and playing partner Whitchurch-Stouffville

Mayor Iain Lovatt with numerous NHL players including teammates Chris Tanev, John Tavares, Easton Cowan, and Morgan Reilly, along with Josh Anderson of the Montreal Canadiens and New York Islanders Captain Bo Horvat.

The second-year Leaf was thrilled with what unfolded at Magna: "It's great—the whole thing, seeing the community coming together. We have so many people

Continued on page 14

MAKING "HISTORY" Young music fans Crosby and Dylan got into the Michael Jackson groove at Concerts in the Park on July 22 where George St. Kitts and his band paid tribute to the Jackson songbook. For more, see pages 10 & 11.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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NOTICE BOARD

July 30, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Week of August 3	No meetings		
Wednesday, August 5	10 a.m.	Video Conference	Mayor's Golf Classic Funds Committee
Thursday, August 13	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Week of August 17	No meetings		
Thursday, August 27	10 a.m.	Video Conference	Property Standards Committee
Thursday, August 27	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Cannabis Retail Review Task Force
Week of August 31	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.

What's Happening

TD PRESENTS

AURORA'S 2026

CONCERTS

IN THE PARK

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

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AUGUST 5, 12, 19, 26

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aurora.ca/SummerConcerts

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.

Stay connected to everything you need to know.

AURORA'S 2026 Municipal Election

AURORA VOTES 2026

SIGN UP FOR ELECTION NEWS

Important dates and deadlines

Voting information and locations

How to participate in the election

aurora.ca/ElectionNews

Fall 2026 Program Guide

The Fall 2026 Program Guide will be available to view online starting on **August 4**. Registration dates are posted online at aurora.ca/ProgramGuide. View the interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., A.R.C. or A.T.S.



File your nomination as a Candidate in Aurora's 2026 Municipal Election.

Deadline is August 21, 2026 at 2 p.m.

aurora.ca/Candidates

AURORA VOTES 2026

Be part of the plan

Take our survey and share your thoughts on watershed health and climate change

HaveYourSay.LSRCA.on.ca

Participate in the LSRCA Watershed Plan Survey by September 11

Help Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) understand the health of our waterways, identify what's putting them under stress, and guide future growth in ways that protect the environment. To protect the Lake Simcoe watershed, LSRCA is updating the subwatershed plans for the East Holland River, West Holland River, Maskinonge River, Barrie Creeks, and Innisfil Creeks, and they want your input. Visit HaveYourSay.LSRCA.on.ca and fill out the survey by **September 11**.

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CHRIS QUIKLEY HEADLINER

RONALD HAE

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Dwayne Gretzky

SATURDAY 9 P.M.

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aurora.ca/Ribfest

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engageaurora.ca/CannabisRetailSurvey

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Conservation Authority seeks local input on impacts of climate change, development

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

In a time of climate change, severe weather, flooding, and erosion are becoming more common – and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority would like to know what you’re seeing on the ground.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) is seeking public feedback as they revise and update their Subwatershed Plans – including the plan for the East Holland River Watershed in which Aurora sits.

“Subwatershed plans provide a snapshot of environmental health, identify stressors that are impacting that health, and actions to protect and enhance the subwatershed,” says the LSRCA. “These plans will help inform decision-makers (such as municipalities) on how their decisions will impact the subwatershed and promote responsible land-use planning.”

The public survey, which can be found at yoursay.lsrca.on.ca, will help the LSRCA “better understand what locals are seeing in these watersheds, and what your priorities are for those rivers and creeks.”

While Aurora might seem geographically removed from Lake Simcoe, what happens here can impact what happens downstream as part of the East Holland River System.

“I think it’s very common that a lot of people don’t realize that there is that interconnectedness with the systems that we monitor and look after as well,” says Sinem Connor, Senior Communications Advisor with the LSRCA, noting the Authority is currently at work on an Aurora low-impact development project near the Aurora Recreation Centre that will help mitigate nearby flooding.

“What we’re really finding is that due to climate change and an increased urbanization, we’re finding that these systems are kind of pressured a lot more and we’re seeing increasing trends of like chloride and other contaminants,” she continues. “Through our survey, we really want to know that, are residents noticing these impacts? Are they seeing these in the creeks or in the parks? Is there really a visual impact that they’re seeing through the eyes of climate change and the severe weather that we’re having?”

“We’re basically service providers for our municipal partners who want to get some of the work done as well. Although it might not be directly in their backyard, but if it is nearing their

communities and their properties, that’s still going to have an impact on them, right? Although watersheds are these natural boundaries, the impacts really go beyond that. From clean air to clean water to the ecosystems that grow, that’s really impacting the whole region as a whole, not just Newmarket, not just in Aurora, and not just Barrie or the Kawarthas. It’s really an interconnected system. I think with hearing from the residents, we really want to know what is their concern in their backyards? What are they really experiencing and how are they seeing these changes impact in their local parks?”

Pamela Strong, Integrated Watershed Management Specialist at the LSRCA, who is leading the survey, notes the last subwatershed plans were completed in 2010, and a lot has transpired since then.

Once the survey closes on September 11, Strong says they hope to have some of the results up for review in early 2027.

“There are a lot of great studies going on, there’s also a lot of development happening, and we want to make sure we’re capturing all of that, the latest practices that can be followed, and we just want to make sure we’re promoting all the latest development practices that can help to minimize the impacts – just trying to make the watershed as healthy as we can.”

Of particular interest within the East Holland River system, she adds, are invasive species, the impacts of climate change, specific areas prone to flooding, particularly viewed through the lens of more frequent and more intense storms, and, of course, water quality overall.

“We’ve had issues with phosphorous in the watershed, but we’re also looking at chloride from road salts – I know that municipalities have been doing a lot to reduce salt application, but just recognizing that it is an issue and trying to encourage people to use less is a big thing that we’re looking at.” Adds Connor: We just encourage people to explore. We always encourage people to be curious about their environment, ask questions and ask questions to those that are in power and in office and really question, what is happening in my neighborhood? Why is that happening? Why are we flooding here but not here? [These types] of questions really do bring these environmental issues up front, for sure.”

No hydrant service in July 22 fire

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

An Aurora home that was damaged by an electrical fire on July 22 was not serviced by fire hydrants.

Last Wednesday, at approximately 5.20 p.m., Central York Fire Services were called to a structure fire on Vandorf Sideroad.

“The property is in a rural area within Aurora with no hydrant water supply available,” said the CYFS in a statement. “Therefore, CYFS performed tanker shuttle operations. Richmond Hill Fire & Emergency Services assisted with

mutual aid and by providing a tanker truck and personnel.

“Upon arrival, the first arriving fire engine reported heavy black smoke coming from the main floor. Fire crews made entry [and] located a fire in the basement.”

CYFS quickly deemed the blaze an electrical fire. No injuries were reported.

“CYFS responded with four trucks, 17 firefighters, one Chief Officer and one Senior Officer. Other responding agencies included York Regional Police (YRP), York Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and the local utility company.”



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INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Budget Blues

Apparently, Aurora is falling apart.

That may sound overly dramatic, but we’re headed that way, based on a recent report from Town staff on our infrastructure status.

The reason, as is the cause for so many things, is lack of funds.

For years we’ve been told that setting aside 1% of taxes to reserves each year will ensure that our Town remains in good repair as we continue to grow. But now we’re being told that’s not even close to cutting it, and we need to at least double that amount quickly.

It may not seem like this is an issue at first glance as one putters around Town.

Roadwork goes on, parks and playgrounds are maintained, major projects like the new pickleball courts and splash pad at Fleury Park are well underway, and plans for other big ticket projects such as the revamp of Victoria Hall and the new multi-use path on Yonge south of the railway bridge continue.

But behind the scenes, things are apparently not so rosy. We are already seeing reduced levels of service. For example, no longer able to meet the Town’s benchmark of a 70% Pavement Quality Index, staff have been forced to reduce this by 5%, resulting in a bit more wear and tear on these surfaces before they are repaired or replaced.

5% may not seem like a lot, but unless our financial troubles are resolved, this percentage can easily continue dropping until suddenly there are more potholes than road surface. And who knows where else this practice may need to be applied ... letting the snow get a little deeper on the roads before they’re plowed, or planting fewer trees each year, perhaps?

As if this scenario wasn’t bad enough, this decrease in service levels is all based on existing infrastructure, and will only get worse as more is added. And there may be less of it than we’re used to, as due to the lack of funds, staff have noted that facility, parks and IT repairs and new projects have already been deferred.

As we all know from our experiences in our own homes, deferring things can work in the short term, but can only be done for so long. Sooner or later an increasingly large cash infusion will be needed.

So, how does Aurora address this issue?

The only word from Council so far has been to suggest that other levels of government should be paying for these repairs. While both the Federal and provincial governments absolutely should be pitching in, that’s not guaranteed. As well, even if funds are obtained, we can’t be sure when they’ll be received, or how much Aurora’s share will be. In any case, even then, they’re unlikely to cover everything. So, for the moment, the ball is in Council’s court.

Unfortunately, the timing on this announcement has coincided with the upcoming election, and Council is no longer meeting. Therefore, while this will likely be a great topic of debate, and potentially finger-pointing, for the candidates over the next few months, it will be at least November before the new Council - most of them rookies – will be able to start discussing this.

Therefore, a solid plan and at least the first phase of the necessary additional finances to support it will not be in place until sometime next year at the earliest.

Let’s just hope that the Town’s infrastructure can hang in there a bit longer.

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

A Long “Meme-ory”

Long before the enigma of “6-7”, the literary trope of “42”, and early internet-era “1337” was the phrase “23, Skidoo!” An early example of a meme, this mystifying assemblage of two terms with similar meanings persisted through the first decade of the 20th century. By 1900, “23” had come to mean something dismissive like “get out” or “move on”, while “Skidoo” (no relation to a snow-going vehicle) had a meaning like its likely relative “Skedaddle” – to get away quickly. In use, however, it varied wildly. This postcard from 1906 (2025.24.1) is a precious gem of a local example, sent to one Hugh Carfrae Dunlop of Goderich, Ontario. Dunlop was a pharmacist who would go on to lead recruitment for his local World War I battalion. He evidently had a friend who had been in Aurora, and who sent him this card, transcribed here: “Hello Carf, just a few days off. Am sending you ‘23’ under cover ‘Skidoo’ old boy, ‘Skidee.” There is more to this early meme mystery, not the least of which are the smeared initials of the sender!



MP SANDRA COBENA'S UPDATE

Sandra Cobena, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Responsible Spending Starts with Accountability

taxes, why is the government still running massive deficits?

It is a fair question.

This year, Tax Freedom Day fell on June 9. That means the average

Canadian worked from January 1 until June 9 simply to pay taxes. For 159 days, Canadians were working to fund the government before they could begin earning for themselves and their families.

Government spending is not free. Every dollar Ottawa spends must first be earned by a hardworking Canadian, either through taxes today or debt that future generations will be left to repay.

As your Member of Parliament and Shadow Minister for the Treasury Board, I will continue asking the tough questions, advocating for responsible spending, honest budgeting, and greater transparency.

Canadians deserve a government that treats every taxpayer dollar with the same care families use when managing their own household budgets.

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

We know that spewing greenhouse gases into the air, mainly by burning fossil fuels, is the primary driver of rapidly accelerating global heating, and that carbon dioxide can remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years. Some, however, is taken up by plants, soil and water as part of the carbon cycle.

Does that mean using technology to remove CO2 from the atmosphere is a viable or necessary climate change solution? Oil and gas companies, and their government enablers, think so — and they’re betting your money on it.

An agreement between the federal and Alberta governments and five oil companies includes significant incentives, including funding and investment tax credits, for the Pathways Project (costing up to \$30 billion — or more) to capture, transport and store oilsands emissions. The project is part of a deal to build a multi-billion-dollar taxpayer-funded pipeline to move diluted oilsands bitumen from Alberta to British Columbia’s south coast.

As the Pembina Institute states, “The oil and gas sector does not need further incentives to run or expand their operations, as market drivers should be the basis for these actions.”

The plan is part of range of incentives to boost oil production, and to use carbon captured from production emissions for “enhanced oil recovery” — injecting the CO2 into depleted oilfields to extract even more oil.

Every international climate agency and scientific body has stated there is no room for further coal, oil and gas exploration or development if we want to keep global average temperatures from rising to catastrophic levels.

Even the most optimistic projections

Clean power pathways beat carbon capture

say the Pathways facility will only capture six million of the 92 million tonnes of CO2 the oilsands produce a year by 2035. As the Pembina Institute reports, “Oilsands emissions have increased 177 per cent since 2005 and are projected to continue to rise” if the new pipeline is built and production increased.

And most emissions, about 80 per cent, are from end-use burning, not production. Because much of Canada’s bitumen is exported, those aren’t counted in Canada’s inventory.

The Alberta oilsands are Canada’s highest single source of emissions, at about 13 per cent, and growing. Oil and gas overall accounts for 30 per cent. The Carnegie Endowment’s Oil-Climate Index shows that “oilsands generate 2.2 times as many emissions per barrel than the average crude extracted in North America.”

Taking into account production and consumption, it’s clear that the Pathways Project will contribute to increased emissions, fuelling even more overheating and consequences, from heat domes and wildfires to floods, droughts, species extinction and migration crises.

Canada isn’t the only country asking taxpayers to subsidize this largely unproven, risky, energy-intensive and less-than-effective technology. The United States, United Kingdom and Australia are also funneling public money into carbon capture projects.

The oil and gas industry has been working for at least two decades to sell carbon capture as a way to continue producing its polluting, climate-altering product. An investigation by ProPublica and Drilled found that British oil giant BP “significantly shaped” a widely cited 2004 Princeton University study that “oversold the readiness of carbon

capture and storage” and “stretched the facts.”

A study in Petroleum Research concludes, “reliance on CCS as a cornerstone climate solution is deeply flawed, especially when more scalable and immediate strategies exist” and that it’s “a detour used to justify the continued operation of fossil fuel infrastructure.”

Burying massive amounts of CO2 also comes with environmental risks, including drinking-water contamination, potential toxic leaks from pipelines and storage facilities and even seismic activity.

There are better ways to reduce emissions, immediately — and better nation-building projects.

Canada should build a connected grid, expand less expensive and more effective renewables and electrify the economy, which would offer a huge boost in energy efficiency. Policies such as carbon pricing and emissions caps are also effective, but the federal government has abandoned the emissions cap and lowered ambition on carbon pricing. Protecting and restoring natural systems that sequester carbon, such as forests and wetlands, are also better, more cost-effective solutions.

It’s insane that obscenely profitable fossil fuel companies are allowed to continue putting all life at risk through unnecessary expansion of their deadly industry. That they and their government supporters expect us to help pay for it is unconscionable and suicidal!

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with David Suzuki Foundation Senior Writer and Editor Ian Hanington. Learn more at davidсузуки.org



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Dwayne Gretzky, Big Wreck to headline Aurora’s Ribfest 2026

From page 1

Dwayne Gretzky set to take over the stage at Machell Park on Friday, August 28, and Big Wreck on Saturday, August 29.

“Dwayne Gretzky brings to life the greatest songs of all time through their dynamic and theatrical performances,” said the Town of Aurora following the announcement. “Formed in 2011 in Toronto, Dwayne Gretzky is well known for performing classic songs with faithful precision. Get ready for a show that curates a nostalgic trip that captures the unique joy of turning a radio dial and being surprised by the familiar.

“Big Wreck has been a powerhouse in Canadian rock for more than two decades, captivating audiences with their signature blend of soaring vocals, powerful guitar riffs, and unforgettable anthems. Led by acclaimed singer and guitarist Ian Thornley, the band is renowned for hit songs including That



Mayor Tom Mrakas, joined by Wendy Browne of the Rotary Club, unveiled the Ribfest music lineup at Wednesday’s Concerts in the Park event.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Song, The Oaf (My Luck Is Wasted), and Albatross, earning a loyal fanbase across the country. Big Wreck is one of

Canada’s most celebrated rock bands.” Shelley Ware, Special Events Supervisor for the Town of Aurora, says Dwayne Gretzky previously played at Ribfest in 2022 and, since then, their profile has only skyrocketed, making it all that much harder to book a return.

This year, however, everything aligned.

“We’re thrilled to be able to have them come back,” says Ware. “They are such a smooth, completely tuned-in, in-sync band with ten performers – and, with their covers, it’s just one banger after another. It’s kind of like a concert completely of all greatest hits!”

Big Wreck, on the other hand, will be making its debut at Aurora’s Ribfest, and while Ware says audiences are well familiar with their songbook, being able to hear Thornley, who she describes as “one of the best guitarists in all of Canada,” will be an extra-special treat.

“They are really on a momentum ride right now, so we’re very, very fortunate to be able to attract them to our community,” says Ware. “I strongly believe that both bands are going to be strong multi-generational attractions.”

The musical program at Aurora’s

Ribfest 2026 kicks off Friday, August 28, when Desire: A Tribute to U2, hits the stage, warming it up for Dwayne Gretzky at 9 p.m.

Entertainment on Saturday, August 29, begins at 11 a.m. with From the Hip: A Tribute to the Tragically Hip, followed at 1.15 p.m. by Duvet; at 3.30 p.m. by Sheer Heart Attack: A Tribute to Queen; at 5.45 by Monkey Wrench; culminating in Big Wreck at 9 p.m.

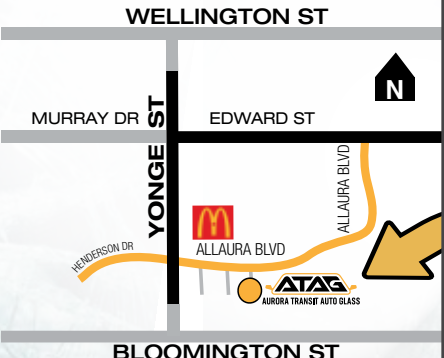
Closing out the performances on Sunday, August 30, will be: Vinyl Flux at 11 a.m.; Run 2 You – A Tribute to Bryan Adams at 1 p.m.; Gold Dust Woman: A Tribute to Stevie Nicks at 3.30 p.m.; and 2026 Aurora Teen Idol Scarlett Lau at 6.45 p.m.

This year’s Ribfest event is presented by Desjardins Insurance, with additional support from entertainment sponsor Magna International, event sponsor Aurora Home Hardware and St. Andrew’s College, rental sponsor Rent Source, and children’s zone sponsor Aurora Family Martial Arts.

For more information about Aurora’s Ribfest 2026, including a full roster of entertainment, activities, and more, visit aurora.ca/ribfest.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



CMHA, Oak Valley Health expand services for treatment-resistant depression

Province funds further rTMS services

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Depression can often be treated through psychotherapy and medication, but for those living with treatment-resistant depression, finding relief can be just out of reach.

New opportunities to get effective treatment close to home are now possible through a new partnership between the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe and Oak Valley Health, with a financial assist from the Provincial Government, to expand access to repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS).

rTMS is a non-surgical treatment and no anesthesia is required. The treatment involves a small magnetic coil placed on the head that delivers targeted magnetic pulses to areas of the brain involved in mood regulation. One course of treatment is typically 30 sessions at five days a week for six weeks.

The publicly funded rTMS program is available through Ontario's Neurostimulation Procedures Provincial Program, supported by an Ontario Government investment of \$5.4 million to expand access to treatment for adults with treatment-resistant depression

across Ontario. Approximately \$321,585 has been allocated to support service delivery at CMHA York Region South Simcoe in collaboration with Oak Valley Health. Ontario Health is leading implementation of the program through its Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence.

"Partnering with Oak Valley Health to launch our first rTMS delivery site marks a transformative milestone for mental health care in our region and province," said Andrew Chung, Chief Executive Officer of CMHA York Region South Simcoe. "By integrating this advanced treatment into the provincial program, we are directly breaking down barriers to specialized care. This collaboration embodies our commitment to building a high-quality and accessible mental health system that meets people exactly when and where they need it most, at no cost."

Ashley Hogue, Senior Director of Provincial Initiatives for the CMHA-YRSS, says the contribution from Queen's Park is part of the government's plan to "build out a pathway for treating people who are struggling with depression and anxiety" in Ontario by creating a "stepped care path" with a variety of evidence-based services available "that are the gold standards



Photo courtesy of CMHA-YRSS

in helping alleviate people's symptoms related to anxiety and depression."

"rTMS is... an important component of a more broad investment in helping people manage anxiety and depression," she says. "This is really that next step in supporting people where medication and psychotherapy just isn't working for them."

When it comes to medication and psychotherapeutic treatments for depression, success can vary. While it works for many, sometimes it can have partial effect or no effect at all, says Yaakov Keilikhis, Director, Mental Health and Allied Health, at Oak Valley Health.

"There are now a few more options to treat that depression if people don't respond well for medications and psychotherapy," he says. "rTMS is a very evidence-based, approved treatment, which actually works very well with people who are not responding to other types of treatment. We have had the [rTMS clinic at Oak Valley] for a few years, but it was very limited to our own patients within the program. Now, with the expansion and public funding of the program, we can expand it for the entire region and we don't need our psychiatrists to be very involved in the referrals. Referrals can come from family, physicians, nurse practitioners, [and] psychiatrists outside of OVH."

"This treatment is actually proven to [have a] 50 to 55% response rate for people with treatment-resistant depression and 30 to 35% remission rate, which makes it very close to something called electroconvulsive therapy, which is a golden standard for treating depression. However, rTMS actually is very non-invasive. It doesn't require [being] under anesthesia. It doesn't require a lot of time, doesn't require hospitalizations or outpatient treatment. ECT requires people to

stay in hospital for longer, requires anesthesia, they will not be able to work the same day. With rTMS, which has very similar effect as ECT, is probably a much more convenient and better treatment for people suffering from treatment resistant depression, which provides close, very close response rate and remission rates to ECT."

Every individual coming to the clinic from external referrals are assessed by psychiatrists who decide whether rTMS is the right treatment for them.

"Although rTMS has been around for decades and has been an evidence-based treatment with really great outcomes, it hasn't necessarily been accessible in this way before. Oak Valley has been providing rTMS for a number of years, but the pathway was within the hospital system," says Hogue. "I think the exciting part of this program is that now primary care doctors or your family physician or nurse practitioner can submit a referral for a client to obtain access."

Adds Keilikhis: "People who are going to ER department and seeking help from mental health professionals for depression, they just may come to our outpatient department and get the treatment scheduled for them during what's convenient for them during that time, instead of going to ER and then being admitted to mental health inpatient units and being discharged and then only getting that treatment. That may actually save all that resource, all that time for patients to just move around the system, instead of going straight to the treatment which is the best for them. I think it's really exciting. People who are struggling with depression for a while and have tried multiple treatments, in six weeks 50 per cent of them will have symptom reduction by receiving rTMS treatment, which I think is incredible."

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Carter, Williams students earn prestigious scholarships

Joining them in the Top 8 this year are Vivienne Liao of Markham's Milliken Mills High School and Matthew Weinstein of Thornhill's Westmount Collegiate Institute, both with 100 per cent; Srijana Basu of Maple High School and Chris Fu of

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I congratulate these top scholars and wish all of our students continued success in the future.”

Other YRDSB students to secure the scholarships are Brooklynn

“Each YRDSB recipient plans to pursue studies in STEM fields, with interests ranging from engineering and computer science to health sciences and research innovation.”

“Investigators with the York Regional Police (YRP) Guns, Gangs, and Drug Enforcement Unit have charged six people and seized drugs and firearms following a lengthy investigation into cocaine trafficking in York Region and the Greater

Antonio Augustino, 35, of Vaughan, is charged with one count of Weapons Trafficking, two counts of Unauthorized Possession of a Firearm, two counts of

Continued on page 19

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Live music returns to historic Downtown with annual Alley Jam

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Live music is set to return to Aurora’s historic downtown core this August with Alley Jam.

Beginning on Saturday, August 1, and running on each Saturday through to the end of the month, musicians will activate Machell’s Alley, located on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of Wellington, from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

“Alley Jam is all about creating memorable moments in one of Aurora’s most unique spaces,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “It’s an opportunity to slow down, enjoy incredible social musicians, and experience the charm and vibrancy of our downtown.”

This year’s season of Alley Jam is once again hosted by acclaimed Aurora jazz artist James Brown, who has curated a roster of performers offering everything from jazz, to Canadian rock, to soulful original works.

“I always like to incorporate some people who are Aurora or York Region performers, but I do like to get some other people from the city,” Brown tells The Auroran.

The lineup kicks off August 1 with the James Brown Trio, featuring Brown, alongside Clark Johnston and Ethan Ardelli.

The second installment on August 8 will feature Michael Allen on guitar and banjo with Saskia DeLang Lenters on vocals.

The August 15 show will feature The Tap Room Gang, which Brown describes as a “collaborative group

that brings fresh, interactive takes on classics and hidden gems from the 1920s and 1930s hot jazz repertoire.”

Original works will be offered by singer-songwriter Larra Skye, with Gord Girvan on keyboard, on August 22, followed by the final concert on August 29, featuring North of the Border, an Aurora-based cover band celebrating the rich legacy of Canadian rock music.

“It’s gathering strength,” says Brown of the Alley Jam music series. “It’s an interesting space because it’s an alleyway on Yonge Street, but when we get the music playing in between the two buildings, the sound reverberates quite nicely in between. It typically can be noisy, but it’s actually not much of a problem having Yonge Street right there. It adds to the excitement of the event. I’m looking forward to having a little bit more street action, if possible.”

Concerts, he adds, are timed to coincide with the end of each August Saturday of the Aurora Farmers’ Market, located at nearby Town Park, which is a great opportunity to stroll from your weekend shopping over to the historic downtown.

“Go to the Market, enjoy that in the morning, and then hit Machell’s Alley at around 12 noon and you’ll get two full hours of music,” says Brown. “There are picnic tables with umbrellas, so go to one of the local restaurants, go grab something to drink or eat, and come and sit down and enjoy the music.”

For further information, including a complete lineup of the series, visit www.aurora.ca/recreation-arts-and-culture/downtown.

History – starring dynamic George St. Kitts – delivers The King of Pop’s hits to thousands at Town Park

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

George St. Kitts is a dynamic performer and shares traits with the two most famous MJ’s in sports and entertainment history.

To the eye, St. Kitts has a remarkable resemblance to Michael Jordan as he leans into his songs center stage with the same ferocity that the six-time NBA champion would lean into hapless defenders on his way to another superhuman highlight.

To the ear, St. Kitts replicates the rich vocals of Michael Jackson, with remarkable precision and showmanship—much to the delight of nearly 2,000 fans on Wednesday night at Town Park.

St. Kitts and his talented History ensemble, comprised of a trio of backup vocalists and a four-piece band, delivered a song list that appealed to a broad audience ranging from 7 to 87.

Wednesday’s atmospheric conditions for an outdoor concert at Town Park were ideal for that wide-ranging demographic.

A steady breeze kept things comfortably fresh and the setting sun made the park’s maple and oak foliage shimmer—complementing St. Kitts’s own glittering apparel.

18-degree temps and clean, cool air were in sharp contrast to last Wednesday’s apocalyptic outdoor conditions which forced Queen Tribute band Sheer Heart Attack and its hundreds of fans into the Plaff Arena at ARC due to toxic smoke from firestorms west of Thunder Bay.

Fortunately, the only semblance of fire on Wednesday night was a red-hot lead singer fully in charge of delivering the Michael Jackson catalogue of songs to an audience hungry for post-Jackson-5 hits.

St. Kitts glided across the stage and moonwalked hundreds of fans down memory lane—all the way back to the late 70’s when Jackson released his first solo albums. He treated the boomers-- in search of such nostalgia—to a show-stopping, concert-closing version of MJ’s MTV masterpiece “Thriller.”

The concert opened with a montage of Jackson-5 song fragments flowing into one another—giving off a ‘Stars on 45’ vibe, but the dance floor filled immediately after the Prelude medley when St. Kitt’s locked down on his first full offering of the night, “The Way You Make Me Feel”, with its throbbing, catchy, and danceable basslines.

St. Kitts kidded about his age, suggesting he felt good “for a 45-year-old,” but the veteran showman moved seamlessly from self-deprecation into a rich and resonant version of “I Wanna Rock With You” backed superbly by his trio of vocalists. Bubbles flowed above the dance floor and the blended vocals helped the crowd “Dance the Night Away” as per St. Kitt’s invitation.

The talented vocalist switched costumes from a silver jacket to a shimmering sequined number that caught the band shell lights and set up an energized version of “Who’s Bad?”

St. Kitts slowed it down with the ballad, “She’s Out of My Life”, that featured the only shaky vocals of the night, but the consummate

showman quickened the tempo and re-filled the dance floor by moonwalking through “Enjoy Yourself” and charming the assembly with “Human Nature.”

Stellar four-part harmonies powered the popular number, and GSK hit some of those high notes that might scare away lesser Tribute artists.

Upon noting that “Michael Jackson is my all-time favourite artist,” St. Kitts took the capacity crowd into the break with “What About Us?”, penned by Jackson as a more thoughtful, self-reflexive artist as the working title of his 1995 environmental anthem “Earth Song.”

St. Kitts acknowledged that the timing of the intermission couldn’t have been better by admitting, “I gotta go the bathroom and it’s a long walk.” After this moment of levity, Mayor Tom Mrakas took centre stage and the Town of Aurora team announced that the two main acts at this year’s Ribfest would be Canada’s Best Party Band Dwayne Gretzky on Friday, August 28. Even bigger news was that Big Wreck would be rolling into Machell Park on Saturday, August 29 to deliver their catalogue of hits including “That Song,” “Blown Wide Open,” “Albatross,” and “The Oaf.”

George St. Kitts emerged from intermission in Jackson’s regal royal blue and gold jacket and blasted through the monster hits “Black Or White,” “Pretty Young Thing,” and “Billie Jean” during which the lead singer donned the famous black fedora and white gloves. George made us know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that “The kid is not my son.”

After St. Kitts belted out a few lines from “Sweet Caroline,” he curtailed the crowd’s rhythmic reaction with “No, no, no—wrong show” alluding to other tribute performances he has delivered at Town Park. Instead, he rolled into “Gotta Be Startin’ Somethin’” and the throbbing bassline and hypnotic choral clapping helped move the lead singer seamlessly into “Shake Your Body Down to the Ground.”

A sing-a-long emerged from History’s delivery of “Man in the Mirror.” The timely lyrics “If you want to make the world a better place/ take a look at yourself/ and make the change” resonated in a crowd that stretched all the way to MJ fans enjoying dinner and drinks at Slabtown Armoury’s patio.

The sing-a-long energized the audience and St. Kitts who moved into a soaring performance of “Thriller” during which the personable lead singer invited audience members to dance with him on stage.

As the sun set on GSK and the History ensemble, the talented octet delivered its encore: a pitch-perfect version of Earth, Wind, & Fire’s “September” led by St. Kitts’s background singers whose soulful delivery gave the audience a final burst of energy so they could get their arms in the air; fold up their lawn chair; make a spirited exit from the park, and commence their trek to the car.

In all, St. Kitts brought his A-game to Town Park on Wednesday night – just as MJ did at any hard court for decades and as MJ did at any music venue during his equally unforgettable career.

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“History” in the Making at Concerts in the Park



Aurora Town Park was jam-packed on Wednesday, July 22, when George St. Kitts and his band presented (Top Row) History – A Tribute to Michael Jackson. Out to enjoy the show were (Second Row) Taylor, Set, Teya, Naz, Daniel, Gabriel & Casey; Jai, a young Michael Jackson fan who wowed the Aurora Performing Arts Festival with his moves last month and was quickly booked to take the stage as part of the presentation; Farah, Maddie, Extra, Sophia; (Third Row) Michael, Aiden, Lizzy; and Diane, Sue, and Mitra.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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Foundations Festival brings fresh voices, new works to Theatre Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Theatre Aurora will be activated by new voices and new works in the month ahead as they host their inaugural Foundations Festival.

Set for August 22 from 7 – 10 p.m., the one-night-only festival will feature seven short plays and monologues in a presentation inspired by one-act-play events.

The Foundations Festival is the brainchild of Theatre Aurora veteran Chris Cluff, who had plenty of opportunities to sit in the director’s chair for the local theatre company last season, directing its production of Arsenic & Old Lace, as well as

playing the director in the stage farce Noises Off.

As his work in the season got deeper, he says he began “thinking about access points for brand-new creatives to direct, write, and even act, for that matter.

His pitch to the Theatre Aurora board was inspired by a similar program out of South Simcoe Theatre that encouraged playwrights to submit new works. Going down this path, he said, he envisioned Theatre Aurora becoming an “incubator space” for new works and honing new talents.

“It was a quick turnaround time from pitch to ‘let’s see what this looks like,’ and it took a lot of trust for them to say, ‘Okay, Cluff and team, make this right,’” he explains. “I saw this was just a space to bring new people into Theatre Aurora in less formal roles. If you come in as a director for any community theatre, you’re coming in with a pitch, kind of like an inspiration board, and you have to give some vision of where you’re going to take it. I thought, well, is there something beneath that where we can kind of test-drive some of those spaces?”

The name of the Foundations Festival is twofold; not only was it inspired by Theatre Aurora’s current building on Henderson Drive starting off life as a cement factory, but a chance for theatre-lovers and creatives to develop a strong foundation in the craft.

Once they put out the call for new works and artists, the response was swift as well.

They received more than 30 scripts of varying lengths, ranging from short monologues to short plays that ran 70 to 80 script pages, from writers as young as high school students to dyed-

in-the-wool community theatre vets.

The call for directors received a similarly enthusiastic response.

“It has been such a cool experience to go through and support both new directors and new writers,” says Cluff.

One such play, Pickles, was written by high school student Luna Gareri, which Cluff describes as “a farce between two individuals, where one of the characters is not having a great run at life” who may have met their match in an apparently unopenable jar of pickles.

Another, Acceptance, was written by first-year college student Riley Nepean. “It is a monologue written from the perspective of the main character, expressing remorse and expressing this idea of hope that they wish they could have been there for the person more. It’s a nice commentary on the woulda-coulda-shoulda.”

Ashlee Brewer’s Modern Convenience focuses on a happenstance meetup between strangers – a convenience store clerk and a young adult – “both of them with their own baggage to unpack at 3 a.m.”

Mire & Mud is a “western tragedy” by Christian Tribuzio. A revenge play, Cluff says “the protagonist is seeking clarity and comeuppance from an individual that has done something terrible to them and their family in the past.”

Also featuring in the Festival are Raccoon by Rick Butts, Charity Hot and Cold by Lynn Franklin, Vanessa’s Place and by Ron Fromstein.

There’s something for everyone and, as the Foundations Festival comes together, a key measure of success in Cluff’s eyes, will be discussions from the participants – what they felt, what they learned, and would they come

I think it’s important work in community theatre to have this kind of open space for creatives to come and test-drive some theatre

back for more?

“It’s a little bit of that joy factor,” says Cluff, adding it’s also a prime opportunity to gauge which plays could be developed further in production. “One element I’ve started to ask going into rehearsals is asking the actors, Would you actually want to mount this? Would you want to go further and do this as a full play? So far, three of the six plays I’ve gone to, they would be willing to give it a go at a full production.

“I think it’s important work in community theatre to have this kind of open space for creatives to come and test-drive some theatre. Considering community theatres do maybe anywhere from three to five shows a year, they can feel pretty intimidating for first-timers to even access that.”

For more information on the upcoming Foundations Festival, including tickets, visit theatraurora.com or call the box office at 905-727-3669.



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WEEK OF JULY 30, 2026

ASC's Annual Charity Games Fundraiser for soccer legend Eddie McNally attracts hundreds to Highland Park



The Aurora Soccer Club came together to support soccer champ Eddie McNally at their annual Charity Games Fundraiser over the weekend.

Aurora photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Hundreds attended the Aurora Soccer Club's Annual Charity Games on Saturday afternoon in ideal late-July conditions. Proceeds from the event—which featured two spirited matches on the Highland Park pitch—were donated to help defray the medical bills of soccer legend Eddie McNally.

The Aurora Sports Hall of Famer was joined by seven current inductees—Alan Dean, Marco DiGirolamo, Brian Stemmler, Steve Vickers, Erlinda Biondic, Ben Steenhorst, and Charles Leeming—as well as Shayne Stevenson and Paul Rosen who will be inducted in November.

The impressive red and green-shirted ASHoF contingent was led by three of the organization's administrators – President Javed Khan, Induction Chair Rocco Morsillo, and The Voice of the Hall of Fame Bob McRoberts – who showed up with hundreds of others in support of McNally.

Included among the dignitaries present were Ward 1 Councillor and President of Sport Aurora Ron Weese who was joined by fellow Councillors Harold Kim (Ward 6) and Michael Thompson (Ward 4).

The Aurora Soccer Club kicked off its Charity Games Fundraiser doubleheader with a spirited tilt between Team Canada Red and Team Canada White. The squads were comprised of club members from a wide demographic reflecting the ASC's diverse membership.

The newly-stained and sealed picnic tables—adorned with Tennent's umbrellas—gave the patio a fresh look for the Club's biggest day of the year. The press box—conveniently located close to a Tennent's pint and great Spotify musical selections being piped through the ASC's patio speakers—was shaded and comfy for ongoing coverage and interviews.

President Martin Ambrose, who welcomed guests with his usual grace and congeniality, performed double duties on Saturday afternoon. Ambrose was also between the posts for Team Canada Red and sported his lime green kit. Jithin "JJ" Jerard, bedecked in purple and black, guarded the west net for Team Canada White.

Fifteen minutes into the match, Team Canada Red controlled play and, with Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now" playing in the background, Jerard made crucial stops and kept his swarming opponents off the scoreboard. This would be the theme of the game. Ambrose flashed moments of brilliance, too, as he broke up Team Canada White's first scoring chance in the 25th minute.

After a hydration break amid the ideal late-July playing conditions, Fabio Benincaso made a nice steal and fired a laser to the lower right corner from the box that missed by millimeters. However, the free-spirited Benincaso converted his next scoring opportunity in the 44th minute when he split the D and left-footed the ball in to the lower right corner past JJ to give Team Canada Red a 1-0 lead. Before the half expired, Jerard made two more saves—#6 and #7 of the half—to keep his squad in the match.

JJ's big saves in the waning seconds of the first half would be significant because a half-time substitution by Team Canada White would make all the difference for the offensively-stalled club.

When dangerous striker Colin Kilner entered the fray, his team was trailing 1-0 and only Jerard's heroics in the crease had kept this one from becoming a laugher.

Kilner—after narrowly missing his first scoring chance off the left wing minutes into the second half—converted a 2-on-1 break by hoofing one into the lower corner past President Ambrose to tie the game 1-1.

In the 57th minute, Benincaso tallied his second of the match when he lifted the ball above Jerard into the upper right corner to restore Team Canada Red's lead to 2-1.

Three minutes later, the dangerous Benincaso just missed making it 3-1 and Jerard was called upon again in the 61st minute to foil another Team Red scoring opportunity.

In the 65th minute, Kitner finished a nice cross pass and kicked his second goal into the back of the net to pull Team White into a 2-2 tie.

Three minutes later, Jerard showed off his reflexive prowess by stopping a pair of point blank shots to keep the game tied at 2—much to the chagrin of the Team Red marksmen and much to the delight of the sizeable assembly being entertained on the



McNally acknowledges the crowd of supporters and sports fans.

Aurora photo by Jim Stewart

patio and in the bleachers.

In the 87th minute, after a hydration break and with Toto's "Hold the Line" playing in the background, Team White failed to hold the line and Team Red made it 3-2 on a pretty passing play by the forward group and finished by Jared Periera. Minutes later, Jerard took to the air and got his arm on a shot labeled for the upper right corner. His signature save helped set up a Team Canada White comeback.

On cue, Kitner completed his second-half hat trick when he slid the ball past the revered Club President to tie the game 3-3 in the 90th minute.

In a post-game patio interview, Kitner selflessly praised Team White's "Man of the Match" Jithin Jerard for his stellar play between the pipes.

"I had the displeasure of playing against him last week in league play up in Newmarket. I was happy that he was on my team this time. From a game perspective, we don't tie the game without his big saves in the second half. He rescued us after we left him high and dry so many times."

Kitner described his hat trick in terms of the collective effort that created three goals in less than forty minutes: "It was good to get the tying goal with a few minutes left. We made some great runs to create space and chances to score. It was a team effort."

Crucial to that team effort to earn a draw was a very tired Jerard who turned aside 14 shots, but heaped praise on Kitner's profound impact in the second half: "We needed more scoring touch in the first half. Colin's a fantastic scorer that sees the play really well—he made the difference today.

At the end, I can make all the saves, but it's goals that count."

Jerard offered context for his incredible pair of saves to thwart Team Red's strikers: "On those back-to-back saves, I was just happy to be able to make them. Those things just happen. It's the feel you have between the posts. It's a blessing."

Two of the three goals that got past Jerard were tallied by the charismatic Fabio Benincaso who was awarded "Man of the Match" honors for Team Canada Red.

"It was a pretty nice game to play. Pretty ideal temperatures, too. I've played sport for thirty years. Football is a simple sport—people complicate it too much. You see the ball and kick it. It was good fun out there. On the first goal, I checked the keeper's position and was able to find a good spot. JJ's a very good keeper. The second one was the result of good passing off the wings. As a striker, I just positioned myself and finished the opportunity."

In the second match of the day, Team Scotland trounced Team England 6-2 to earn club bragging rights til next Summer when the traditional rivals will renew their thirty-year tradition of representing their ancestral countries.

In the 35th minute, the swift, blue-clad Scots jumped out to 4-1 lead thirty-five minutes into the game and the rout was on.

At the end of the day, the legendary Eddie McNally looked on at the proceedings from his vantage point on the ASC patio rail—surrounded by close friends, family, club members, and an array of fellow Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductees – and there was much to like about what he saw on the pitch and patio.

The pre-game pageantry, the dignitaries, and two examples of the beautiful game that has been such a significant part of his life—all of it was played out in tribute to his significant contributions to the game, club, and community over the last fifty years. The legendary soccer player was helped in his hour of need.

Indeed, it was a poignant scene at the Aurora Soccer Club on Saturday afternoon and the venerable sports organization pulled out all the stops to make it a memorable celebration to support a local hero.



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Max Domi launches first annual Golf Classic at Magna to raise \$1M for Type 1 Diabetes Research

From page 1

working together to help achieve our goal of raising one million dollars. It's a sellout event in Year One. It's been a crazy ride, but it's great to have so many people here at one of the most beautiful courses in Canada."

Raising funds for Breakthrough T1D Canada is a cause near and dear to Max Domi.

The NHL veteran was stricken with Type 1 diabetes as a 12-year-old and was inspired by fellow diabetic Bobby Clarke—the rugged Captain of two Stanley Cup-winning teams in Philadelphia in 1974 and 1975.

"It's satisfying to give back. It all goes back to meeting Bobby Clarke when I was twelve. It was the biggest moment of my life. A turning point. I promised that if I can make a difference as he did when I get to the NHL, that I would maximize my voice the help fund research into diabetes."

The veteran NHLer is moved by his responsibilities to community as a professional athlete and noted the importance of fundraising in his life.

"It's the most satisfying part of my life. My one hockey goal in life is to win a Stanley Cup, especially for the Toronto Maple Leafs. But, even more importantly, it's great to see the looks in kids' eyes when you show up to help them and talk to them. They light up with hope."

Domi expressed a similar kind of hope for the Leafs 2026-27 season: "It'll be great. I'm rehabbing day to day and I can't wait to get back. There's been lots of change and we've brought in guys with lots of championship pedigree. I'm super confident to help in any way I can and we'll do everything we can."

The talented winger had one of his most productive NHL seasons playing alongside Patrick Kane in Chicago.

Domi discussed the impact of Kane's

recent free agent signing with Chicago and what an impact the veteran will have on the young Blackhawks team, including Connor Bedard: "Growing up, my two favourite players were Sidney Crosby and Patrick Kane. The main reason I signed with Chicago was to play with Kane. I learned more in six months from him than I had before I got to Chicago. It was a career highlight and he changed my game. They've got a lot of young talent right now and the Blackhawks fans will have lots to cheer for as Kane influences the younger players including Bedard."

Domi's own positive influence is not lost on Breakthrough T1D Canada President and CEO Jessica Diniz who joined us in the dining room and described the tournament host as "a beacon of hope, especially through his book No Days Off."

The best-selling autobiography encapsulates Domi's challenges of coping and living with Type 1 Diabetes and Diniz pointed to the random nature of "the autoimmune disorder."

"Anyone can get it—anyone from our four-year-old ambassadors here today to 60-year-olds. It's important to get the word out about the challenges of being a diabetic. They need insulin to stay alive—24 hours a day. It's hard to keep your balance—to look after your blood sugar, especially for the younger children. They have to learn to self-regulate. It makes the little ones more responsible and more resilient at an early age. You're always monitoring. That's why Max is such a great spokesman for us for the nine years. He proves that diabetes doesn't diminish one's life."

The President and CEO of Breakthrough believes that researchers are on the threshold of major breakthroughs regarding Type 1 Diabetes: "I know we're going to find a cure for this. It's not a matter of if—it's a matter of when.

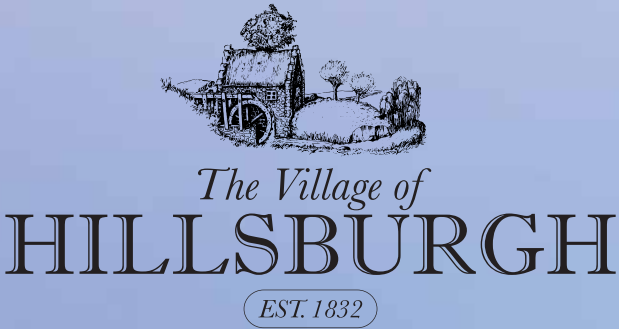


Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Type 1 Diabetes research is moving along so fast—advancements are happening every two months. It's exciting to see the programs yielding results. Thirty different institutions are doing research including the University Health Network in Toronto as well as other Canadian universities such as UBC, UAlberta, McGill, and Montreal. We continue to work as an intermediary between pharmaceutical companies and the researchers. There's a race right now—taking stem cells and turning them into beta cells and injecting them into test subjects. Ten different companies are in Phase 1 trials and many of the subjects no longer need insulin. Stem cell research is going to be the difference maker."

Diniz and Domi are the kind of

difference makers needed to help Type 1 diabetics and their families. It's evident that Domi is dedicated to his quest and offered a simple message of encouragement, especially to young people who are faced with the challenges of Type 1 Diabetes: "It's pretty simple. There will be days that will be challenging, but you can do it. I believe in you. You have a super power and you can turn it to your advantage. Diabetes will teach you to be accountable and responsible." The First Annual Max Domi Classic and its dedicated team of volunteers sent a strong message of hope during its inaugural tournament on Monday afternoon: that better lives for Type 1 diabetics are just around the corner.



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Aurora Sports Hall of Fame donates \$4,000 to Canadian Tire’s Jumpstart Program



Jeff Hodgkinson of Canadian Tire, centre, receives a donation for the Jumpstart program from Javed Khan and Mike Smith of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Proceeds from the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s 4th Annual Golf Tournament were donated to the local Jumpstart program in a ceremony at Canadian Tire on Thursday evening.

ASHoF President Javed Khan and Tournament Co-Convener Michael Smith presented a \$4,000 cheque to Canadian Tire Owner Jeff Hodgkinson to support an estimated 1,173 kids from low-income households which are unable to afford the expenses associated with organized sports.

Hodgkinson noted the positive impact the funds will have on the community.

“Just the number of kids this will help out in our Local Chapter is the best part of today’s cheque presentation. It’ll provide funds for registration for sports as well as the purchase of sports equipment. Over 100 kids will be better off due to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s donation.”

Smith, who also plays a leading role in the benevolent organization, “100 Men Who Give a Damn,” was pleased to see the golf tournament proceeds directed to Jumpstart: “It’s a cool program. Ultimately, the Aurora Sports

Hall of Fame is about inclusion in sport in the community. If this money helps Jumpstart get another 100 kids involved in sport, it’s a good thing for local kids. There are so many lessons about life to be learned through sport. We’ve been growing our donations from the tournament by 15% each year over the last three years and that means we’re helping 15% more kids to get a real jump start. It’s our second year giving to Jumpstart.”

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s commitment to community was evident during the ceremony and Khan echoed Smith’s sentiments about the organization’s social role in Town.

“Any time we can do something positive in the community, it’s extra special – especially to give the kids who need it some help so they can play a sport. It’s important for us as an organization to make the community better.”

In 2025, the Jumpstart Program helped 415 kids in Aurora through a disbursement of \$25,582 accrued by various community donors and partners. Since 2005, over 3,511 kids in Aurora have been helped through Canadian Tire’s Jumpstart initiative and over \$422,843 has been disbursed to low-income families to pay for kids’ sports-related expenses.

Mayor provides pep talk for National Championship-bound U15 Diggers

Ace pitcher Scoty Lewis praises her team’s “connection” during the Diggers’ magical season

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Mayor Tom Mrakas delivered a pep talk to the U15 Aurora Diggers fast pitch squad at Town Park’s pristine ball diamond on Thursday night.

In addition to Mayor Mrakas’s timely words of encouragement to the Diggers prior to their date with destiny at the Canadian Championships next week, Town of Aurora Specialist in Sport and Community Development Hailey Jones presented each player with a congratulatory certificate to commemorate the Diggers’ achievements in Ontario’s Tier 1 division.

Jones—an NCAA basketball player who concluded her collegiate career with the McMaster Marauders—praised the team’s #1 seeding and encouraged all the student-athletes to strive for a postsecondary sports scholarship.

One of those student-athletes looking to follow Jones’s footsteps into an NCAA sports program is Diggers’ ace pitcher and slugger Scoty Lewis.

In the team’s third base dugout prior to practice, the hard-hitting hurler disclosed her athletic and academic goals: “I really want to play ball anywhere in the States--as long as it’s at a high level of play. I’m interested in studying Kinesiology.”

Lewis, who is entering Grade 10 at Sir William Mulock Secondary School in September, has been a stellar two-way performer for the Diggers. She’s struck out a jaw-dropping 327 batters during the 2026 season. Lewis attributed her gaudy strikeout numbers, as well as her stingy 1.09

ERA and microscopic 0.78 WHIP, to the instruction she receives from her pitching coach Todd Martin.

“I have more command this season because he finds something in my delivery and fixes it. I’m a quick learner. He’s local so if I have a problem, we can work on it right away. I’ve never had any other pitching coach. He was with the Canadian National Team and coached [Cardinal Carter grad, Syracuse University star, and National Olympic Team co-captain] Jenna Caira.”

The resident of Newmarket, who has also contributed to the team’s success with her bat by hitting for a high average (.509) and belting big game home runs, explained why the U15 Diggers have been seeded as the top Tier 1 team in Ontario: “Our team has a great connection with everyone. Everyone’s truthful—it leads to how we get along and our good play on the field. Our communication both off the field and on the field is on point. When we’re playing defense and the ball is hit, everyone is screaming where the ball is, where the baserunners are, and where we need to throw the ball.”

Not only is Lewis pleased with how the Diggers have played as a team this Summer, but she believes her team’s unity will be an asset at the U15 National Fast Pitch Championship tournament: “We want to win. We want to try our best. We’ll win or lose as a team. We have to keep strong as a team and dig in against the strong competition we’ll be facing. We’ll need to be there for one another and we all need to be an uplifting presence to pick up our teammates.”

The Aurora Diggers’ quest for a national title commences on July 28 when they take on PEI in Fredericton, NB.

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Music and laughs set for Aurora Town Square this August

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Music and laughter will ring out through the Aurora Town Square this August as the cultural hub braces for a busy fall season.

The Aurora Town Square performance hall will host a Canadian music collective on August 8 when Rubber Tire Peep Show takes the stage with special guests Burs.

“Rubber Tire Peep Show is a Canadian musical collective whose eclectic repertoire spans decades and genres,” say organizers. “With deep musical roots and a love of performance, RTPS’ music is infused with jam-band dynamics, country-blues sensibility and rock and roll spirit that has captured audiences across Canada.”

Rubber Tire Peep Show was recently on tour in British Columbia and Phil Rose, Aurora’s Manager of Cultural Services, says next month’s concert will be something of a homecoming.

“Rubber Tire Peep Show was born and raised in the Aurora-Newmarket area,” says Rose, noting the band was also part of Aurora Town Square’s

grand opening celebrations in 2024. “They definitely have a vintage vibe to their music. They’re known for their performances and they put on quite a great show. They’ve got a really great dynamic as a group. They’ll be sharing the stage with the Burs. They’re a Toronto-based indie rock quartet, slightly different music, much more down-tempo kind of music, and... there’s an overlap because one of the leaders of the Burs used to sing with Rubber Tire Peep Show.

“The nature of Town Square has been a facility and a project to be able to support local; that’s always been one of the principles we’ve been behind, and Harrison [of Rubber Tire] has roots here. It’s a matter of celebrating the local talent that is successful out there in the world. We also don’t have a lot of concerts that have this type of music, so it’s a chance to fill a bit of a gap.

“We’ve realized that we have an opportunity to do something that’s a little bit outside of our wheelhouse over the last couple years. With Toronto kind of at our doorstep, there’s a lot of really interesting indie bands that are out there that



are emerging, that are looking for space to play in an audience outside of downtown Toronto, so I think if this one does well, we’ll probably try to do a little bit more...something similar. We’ll use this as a bit of a stepping stone to more indie rock-type shows.”

There will be no gaps as far as laughter is concerned on August 22 when comedians Chris Quigley, Ronald Hae, and MC Dan Brennan hit the stage in Yuk Yuk’s Comedy on Tour Improv & Stand-Up Comedy Show.

Nichole Campsall, Cultural Development Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, says the comedy tour has almost become a cornerstone in Aurora Town Square programming. Tickets invariably sell quickly and it’s clearly something the community wants to see.

“We always see the happy participants there and we have a good laugh with everybody, seeing how much fun they have on a girls’ night out, a date night, or a just a group of friends. Yuk Yuks really appeals to everybody, so we’re always happy to have them back,” says Campsall. “I’m particularly excited

for this upcoming show because one of the comedians is actually a teacher with a podcast on teaching – I know there’s a lot of teachers and parents in the community, so it will add some [relatability] as well. The best part is just seeing people there, just laughing and bonding over it, walking out still laughing. There’s a lot happening in the world right now that’s not so happy, so it’s nice for us to be able to bring a moment for the community to come together and just decompress, enjoy and laugh together.”

While these two shows are the only Town-produced events at Aurora Town Square in the month ahead, there’s even more to do throughout the Square.

The Aurora Cultural Centre will host a closing talk with artist Jing Fu on August 12, and a reception for incoming exhibitions the following evening. They will also host an opening reception for the new exhibition Arnie Lipsey: Past. Tense. on August 27.

Marquee Theatrical Productions will also take over the Performance Hall with their production of the award-winning Broadway musical Dear Evan Hansen, from August 18 – 21.

All this is leading up to an exceptionally busy summer season as Culture Days and Doors Open return to the community.

“Our team is currently working with the Library, the Cultural Centre and other cultural organizations,” teases Campsall of the programs to come.

For a full list of upcoming Aurora Town Square events and programs, including ticketing, visit aurora.ca/whatson.



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Rubber Tire Peep Show set to end tour in Aurora where members got their start

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Harrison Smith and Liam Slingerland knew they had a musical synergy going as teens when, as dishwashers at a Newmarket restaurant, the respective playlists they brought in to help pass the time dovetailed beautifully.

More than a decade later, the duo are founding members of Rubber Tire Peep Show, a 10-member Canadian musical collective, which is set to end its cross-country tour at Aurora Town Square on Saturday, August 8.

“The Aurora date will be a cool little full-circle moment. That’s definitely where I cut my teeth in high school playing gigs,” says Smith, adding that some of these early opportunities came through the Aurora Winter Blues Festival with friend Ray Gowdy, a member of the band Burs, which is joining Rubber Tire Peep Show on the August 8 bill.

“That was a big part of getting us opportunities to play and perform in front of crowds. Notably, [late former Aurora Deputy Mayor] John Abel was a big part of championing myself and Ray. It’s cool Aurora has this new venue and it’s a top-tier state of the art facility for music. We helped them open it up a couple of years ago when they had Sloan play as part of their grand opening. It’s cool to be coming back and putting on our own show, and we’re really excited.”

The best part of being in a music collective, Smith and Slingerland agree, is the fact that everyone comes to the table with a “different background, different upbringing, different cultures, and different music being played around the house.”

Slingerland says the eclectic backgrounds of the collective are reflected in the music they perform.

“We’re really inspired by music from all around North America and world music,” he says. “Someone will bring a country song to the table, we can work that in, and we’ll have a couple of country songs. All of a sudden, people will bring in an instrumental, with a bunch of different sections that people think sound like 70s Pink Floyd or something like that. Just lots of different music happening all at once is a big part of what we’ve developed into our sound.”

Each member of Rubber Tire Peep Show contributes to the writing process, leading to what Smith describes as a “diverse palette or toolbox of things to pull from.”

“We’ve been playing with Max for about five years now and when we first started playing with him, he was playing in a Toronto band called Love Wagon that Liam and I really admired and looked to as an inspiration because they were all doing exactly what Liam said, pulling from different cultures and such a diverse bag of influences, putting it all into this rock and roll feel without being overly nostalgic.

“It was taking from the things that we loved and something familiar while staying fresh and then when Max joined us, he had all these incredible compositions of his own and we were just following that as inspiration eventually when he moved into our group, which was really sweet.”

Some of the Love Wagon material, notes Max, has worked its way onto a new album from Rubber Tire Peep Show currently in the works, and it’s a good example of the eclectic mix that is invariably found on stage.

“We revived it, made it our own, and it’s got a dancey-kind of feel to it, but also a really good variety of different genres – some kind of country and folk stuff and blues, always a little bit of blues element to everything we do, and it’s kind of a touchstone for us,” he says. “We can’t wait for it to be out sometime in the fall.

“We all kind of live like separate lives for a lot of the years – I’m studying in school and Liam just graduated and Harrison’s living in Australia and David is working in Toronto – so we all have pretty different lived experiences these days, so a lot of our writing, I feel like it talks about our love for just playing music and being with each other and stuff like that. We just draw on our different experiences day-to-day and bring them together as a collective.”

As important as a collective is for the creative process, the band agrees there is nothing better than experiencing music as a collective, as well.

One such local “collective” music experience Smith says was particularly formative was a concert at Town Park in 2013 from iconic Canadian band Lighthouse, which played Aurora as part of the community’s 150th anniversary celebration.

“My mind was blown from the energy coming off that stage and particularly what was coming out of the electric guitar,” says Smith. “I needed to get an electric guitar and I did a month later. When you have these connections that are purely based online, the communal experience of going out to see a concert can be very gratifying for everyone involved. As people that grew up in Newmarket-Aurora area, I think it’s important to support these events as they go on and go out and see concerts. Go see a band that maybe you haven’t heard of before, or that you have been hearing of and you’ve been meaning to see but it’s never quite aligned. If you want to see this continue on in your community, you have to go out and show some support and let the Town know that this is something that is important to us. Our arts and culture is important to us.”

For more information on Rubber Tire Peep Show’s August 8 gig at Town Square, including tickets, and for all other programs happening at Aurora Town Square, visit aurora.ca/whatson. For more with Rubber Tire Peep Show, visit rubbertirepeepshow.com.

THINGS... you ought to know

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

Aurora’s Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 – 9 p.m. with Abbamania – A Tribute to Abba. “Abbamania is the world’s number one production of Abba, with amazing vocals, iconic costumes and authentic stage presence. Abbamania matches every song done, note for note, exactly as the original recordings.” Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

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

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

Aurora’s Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 – 9 p.m. with The Beatle Band. “The Beatle Band is a thrilling live recreation of ‘The Beatles’ remarkable journey from 1963 to 1969, blending iconic music and authentic detail into what audiences have called ‘a theatrical and cultural phenomenon.’” Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

Aurora’s Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 – 9 p.m. with Epic Rush – The Canadian Tribute. “A highenergy tribute concert honouring the iconic sound of Rush, featuring classic hits, exceptional musicianship, and an electrifying live performance celebrating one of Canada’s most influential rock bands.” Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

Aurora’s Movies in the Park Summer Series kicks off today at dusk at Aurora Town Park. The three-movie series lineup will be announced this month. Further movie dates will be Thursday, August 27, and Thursday, September 3. Movies are free to attend – and there will be free popcorn while supplies last. For your seating comfort, please bring your own portable lawn chairs. Food donations for the Aurora Food Pantry will be gratefully accepted.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

Victorian Flower Arranging: Tussie Mussie Workshop – Join the Aurora Historical Society and Garden Aurora for a Victorian Flower Arranging: Tussie Mussie Workshop at Hillary House National Historic Site. Discover the fascinating language of flowers while creating your own traditional Victorian bouquet to take home. Perfect for beginners and flower enthusiasts alike. 2 – 4 p.m. Tickets are \$40pp/ AHS Members receive 15% discount. For tickets visit www.aurorahs.com or call 905-727-8991.

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



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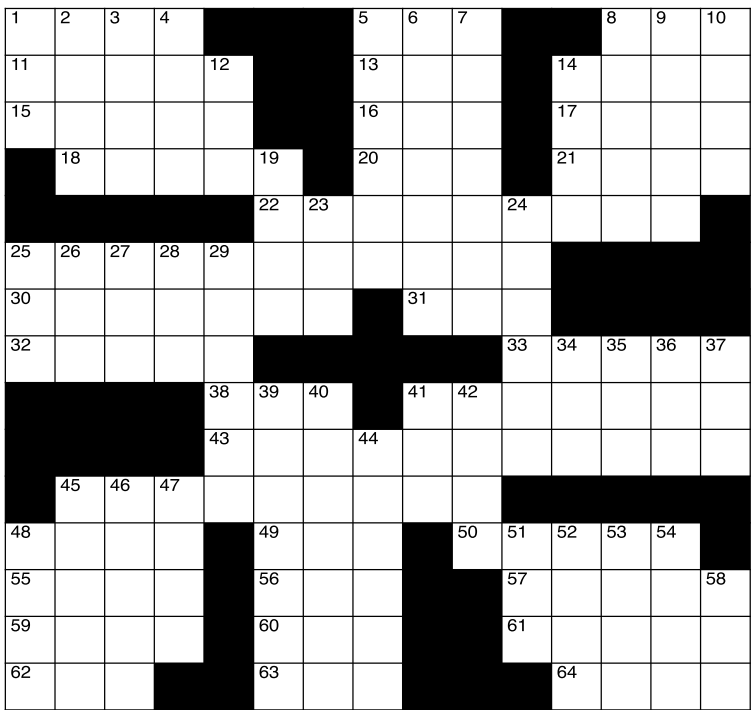
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- Santa’s helper
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- Sea eagle genus
- Broad volcanic crater
- Minneapolis suburb
- Actual commercial worth (abbr.)
- Exchange rate
- Ethnic peoples in Guinea
- Men’s fashion accessory
- Craft material
- Offerings
- Early
- Large room
- Soviet Socialist Republic
- One who hauls



CLUES DOWN

- Bridge building degree
- Expression of sorrow or pity
- Large, stocky, lizard
- Rumanian river
- Missive
- Stout-bodied moths
- Brings out
- Bird of prey
- King of Thebes
- Cleaving tool
- African antelope
- Three are particularly famous
- Satisfy
- European river
- Dictator
- Portion of (abbr.)
- The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet
- Consume food
- Woman (French)
- Scrape or wear away by friction
- Popular vegetable
- Pacific Standard Time
- Brazilian state capital
- Paddle
- Cause to become insane
- Drier and flakier
- Mimic
- ESPN host Kimes
- One who mooseys
- Secret political clique
- Behind the stem of a ship
- Supernatural force
- Sanctuary in Orthodox churches
- Swiss river
- Grayish white
- Engrave
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Community safety and growth key for Ward 5 candidate Thandi

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Harbinder (Binda) Thandi wants to be a part of a “united” Aurora Council. Thandi, an engineer by training and an insurance agent in trade, is the fourth Aurora resident to register as a Council candidate for Ward 5.

A native of the United Kingdom who moved to York Region with his family at the age of 14, Thandi is a resident of Ward 4, but has chosen to run in Ward 5 as that is where he and his family spend a great deal of time, and also because he feels Ward 4 is served well by incumbent Michael Thompson, who is also seeking re-election this fall.

“[Ward 5 is] where myself and my family spend a lot of our time in Aurora,” he says. “Other than the local Metro grocery...we tend to go towards Ward 5 for all of our other activities. We have the whole stretch there of large stores – the Longo’s, the Canadian Tire, Goodlife gym, the Superstore – we tend to use a lot of the facilities in Ward 5. On top of that, my children go to camp there, I’ve been to physiotherapy in Ward 5, and then we use parks in Ward 5.... When I really sat back and thought about it, with the way I feel that we’re adequately represented here in Ward 4, I thought to myself, Aurora is still such a small town, and really, truly, the concerns of residents in Ward 5, Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 6, they affect all the wards in Aurora, they affect Aurora as a whole, so... I think the issues are all



Harbinder (Binda) Thandi
Contributed photo

relevant. “[Candidates] are going to be looking at the same things that all residents want, which is basically community safety, we want to make sure that families can grow here, and we want to make sure that Aurora keeps its small-town appeal while we’re growing. We still want to welcome neighbours and make sure that there’s smart planning in place, growth through investments in roads, parks, traffic improvements, and community services.”

While his campaign is still in its early weeks, he says these are issues he’s hearing reflected as he knocks on doors and he looks forward to hearing more in the days leading up to the October 25 municipal election.

“I grew up in England in a small town called Wolverhampton...and we moved to Markham when I was 14-years-old with my family,” he says. “I’ve been an Aurora resident now for the last 11 years, so I’ve actually had the benefit of watching a small town

across the pond grow and being able to watch York Region grow in front of my eyes. I have a lot of family and friends that have spread out throughout York Region, so I feel like I have a little bit of a unique opportunity to have viewed different areas of growth and seeing how they grow and different issues that are arising even from different places, which we can all take a little bit from in how we conduct ourselves where we live today.

“I want to know exactly what it is that they feel could be done better in the community, and I’m a very good listener. I’m very passionate when it comes to these, because my family lives here. I want to make sure that everyone’s concerns are heard. I’m not going to sit here and tell you that everyone’s concerns can be rectified the exact way that they want them to be. However, I will take in all the concerns, bring it into Council, and we’ll speak about it.

“I feel like Aurora is a small town where one ward affects another. I also want to make sure that we bring Council together. We don’t have to agree on everything. However, sitting down and respectfully speaking about concerns that are brought up, especially when it comes to our residents, I hope that we can work together.... I want to help unite the Council in Aurora so that we can work together collaboratively. Because, let’s face it, we’re civil servants. This isn’t a job. This is an honour to be able to serve the community.”

Aurora residents charged with drug trafficking in Project Blade

From page 9

Shahriar Daliri, 33, of Aurora, is charged with Conspiracy to traffic in a controlled substance, Trafficking of a Controlled Substance x3, Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking x2, and Possession of proceeds obtained by crime over \$5,000.

Carmelo Parisi, 30, of Aurora, is charged with Conspiracy to Traffic in a Controlled Substance Trafficking in Substance x2, Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking x2, and Possession of Proceeds Obtained by Crime Over \$5,000.

Tyler Agnel, 29, of Aurora, is charged with Conspiracy to Traffic in a Controlled Substance, Trafficking in Substance, and Possession of Proceeds Obtained by Crime Over \$5,000.

None of the above charges have been proven and the investigation remains ongoing.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police Guns, Gangs and Drug Enforcement Unit at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 7817. Anonymous tips can be made by calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS or by visiting www.1800222tips.com.

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