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Aurora's Community Newspaper

TheAuroran.com

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WEEK OF JULY 9, 2026



Residents in Aurora's northwest survey damage as municipal crews clean up trees felled in last week's storm.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Cleanup continues in Aurora's northwest after violent July 3 storm

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Cleanup efforts continue in pockets of northwest Aurora after a powerful storm ripped through the community on Friday, uprooting trees, upending sidewalks, and causing significant damage to homes, vehicles, and parks.

Municipal workers were still working hard to clean up some stretches of trails and parks, but all municipal roads were quickly re-opened and cleaned of immediate hazards.

"Cleanup efforts are ongoing throughout the community," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in an update on Tuesday afternoon. "While urgent

safety concerns have been resolved, the full cleanup and restoration process, including removing damaged trees, stump removal, and replanting will take some time.

"The Lakeview/Willow Farm trail system remains closed while crews continue clean-up and addressing fallen trees and washouts. Residents

Continued on page 13

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CANADA CAVALCADE - Aurora, Canada's Birthday Town, celebrated Canada Day in style on Wednesday with the traditional Yonge Street Parade and a full day of programs at Lambert Willson Park that defied last week's heatwave. For more, see Pages 18 and 18.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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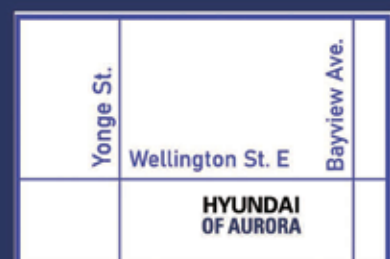
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CMHA revamps Mental Health in Motion to help address urgent needs in community

New moves meant to make fundraiser more accessible



Photo courtesy of CMHA

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Demand for mental health support continues to grow in York Region and South Simcoe, and indeed across the country – and the local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association is urging residents to lace up in support vital care services close to home.

After a year's hiatus, the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region & South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS) is set to re-launch a re-vamped version of their popular fundraiser, Mental Health in Motion.

Set for Sunday, September 13, at Newmarket's Tom Taylor Trail and AOK Park, the CMHA-YRSS has set a fundraising target of \$100,000 while making it easier than ever before to take part.

"A recent poll conducted by Mental Health Research Canada found that youth and equity-deserving groups are more likely to use artificial intelligence tools for mental health support,

underscoring ongoing gaps in access to care," says Catherine Matzig, Senior Director of Philanthropy, at the CMHA-YRSS. "The need for community mental health supports that bridge those gaps is profound. That's why we're proud to reintroduce Mental Health in Motion to our community – with no registration fee. Every step the community takes, and every dollar fundraised, reinforces that we don't want anybody left behind when they need the care the most."

CMHA-YRSS meets youth, adults, families, and caregivers right where they are to provide immediate, compassionate, person-centred support. Funds raised will go towards CMHA programs that need it the most, such as the Mobile Youth Walk-In Clinic – MOBYSS.

"Mental Health in Motion is first and foremost a fundraiser and this year our goal is to raise \$100,000 for mental health services in York Region and South Simcoe. By making registration free and the event accessible, we are hoping that what we're doing is inviting more

people to get involved, to fundraise, and to help us reach that goal," says Matzig. "Everybody who participates represents an opportunity to make a difference in the conversation around mental health and about reducing the stigma that still, unfortunately, can surround mental health.

"We're hoping that literally hundreds of people will join us, that when they register, they will create their own fundraising pages, that they will rally their friends, family, and co-workers to support them financially, but also hopefully come out and participate themselves.

"We're hoping that this event raises funds so that our community can access mental health supports when they need it. We want to create connection. We also know that being outside, being together, creating community, and having conversations around mental health is incredibly important. We know that that all creates senses of wellbeing, of community, and we hope this walk gives people the opportunity to experience those benefits while supporting mental health in our community."

While the event is, again, a fundraiser first, she adds it's also about promoting "healthy habits," of "encouraging people to take small steps that support their own wellbeing – and what easier way than walking?"

"Mental health doesn't improve in isolation. It only improves when communities come together, when people come together, and that's what Mental Health in Motion is all about," says Matzig. "It may look a little different than it has in years past, but there is an amazing energy and synergy when literally hundreds of people walk together and send a message

throughout our community that mental health matters.

"I really encourage people to participate if it's their first time, and if they've done it a lot in the past, just come out and be part of that incredible energy. I hope people leave feeling connected – connected to their community, connected to their own well-being, and connected to the idea that support for mental health is available. If people walk away knowing that they're not alone, and that we can all make mental health a priority, then I think we have achieved everything we set out to do."

The CMHA-YRSS' 2026 Mental Health in Motion 5K Walk will take place at Newmarket's Tom Taylor Trail, AOK Park, on Sunday, September 13, starting at 10 a.m. The day will include a tour of the MOBYSS bus, guest speakers, light refreshments, and a Kids Zone.

For more information, to register, or to sponsor a participant, visit cmhainmotion.ca.

CORRECTION

In the print edition of last week's article, Residential building, heritage relocation approved for Yonge and St. John's, we misstated the final vote count approving the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments for the properties located at 16003 Yonge Street, and 225 and 2019 Old Yonge Street. The vote was 4 – 2 with Councillors Ron Weese (Ward 1) and Wendy Gaertner (Ward 3) voting against, and Mayor Tom Mrakas absent from the meeting. We regret the error.

NOW HIRING!

Election Workers Needed for Aurora's 2026 Municipal Election

The Town of Aurora is recruiting customer-focused individuals for a variety of temporary positions supporting the Municipal Election in October.

Who can apply

To be eligible for a temporary election position, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be 18 years of age or older
- Legally entitled to work in Canada
- Applicants cannot be a candidate, registered third party advertiser or the spouse, sibling, parent, child, grandparent, or grandchild of a candidate running in the October 26, 2026 Municipal Election
- Applicants cannot volunteer for a candidate running in the October 26, 2026 Municipal Election
- Customer service and/or election experience is considered an asset
- Fluent in English (additional languages are an asset)
- Access to reliable transportation
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Available to attend a full-day mandatory training session held on September 16, 2026

Please note:

- Selected candidates may be asked to participate in a brief 5-to-10-minute virtual interview to determine suitability for employment
- Applicants must be available to work long shifts.

How to apply

Interested individuals are encouraged to visit aurora.ca/ElectionJobs to view full job descriptions and complete the online application form. Applications must be received by July 31, 2026.



aurora.ca/ElectionJobs

Plastic bans do work, says Environmental Defence

When I tell people I work to end plastic pollution, they tell me their concerns about all the plastic in their everyday lives – and how impossible it is to avoid it. Unnecessary plastic packaging and products are the most visible and tactile reminder of the plastic pollution crisis. The evidence is everywhere – not only in our overflowing recycling bins and landfills, but also in our rivers, lakes and oceans, on beaches and in parks, and even in our bodies.

This Plastic Free July, we're looking back on Canada's first signature policy: the 2022 ban on harmful single-use plastics that are commonly found littered in the environment.

As I testified recently at Parliament's Environment Committee in Ottawa, the bans were a first step toward getting rid of the worst of the worst – bird-strangling six-pack rings, turtle-stabbing straws and whale-starving plastic bags. They also launched a national conversation about how much plastic we use and throw away in this country and around the world: way too much.

That means the bans have been successful for what they are today, and what they can lead to in the future.

It's worth remembering that the flimsy plastic film checkout bags given out like candy – to the tune of 15 billion bags in 2019 – disappeared almost overnight when the bans came into effect in 2022.

Like magic, stir sticks turned back into wood – and even reusable metal spoons. Those four straws tossed into the bottom of a takeout order or onto the floor of the local bar without being used? Mostly gone too.

The proof the bans are effective in protecting the environment is found in rivers and on shorelines across Canada. The groups and individuals who conduct litter and coastline cleanups can attest: bans work.

Ocean Wise reported that the number of single-use plastic bags, utensils and straws collected during clean-up events dropped dramatically after 2022, even as non-banned plastics – especially single-use cups and lids – nearly doubled since 2017.

When Surfrider Canada launched cleanups along the west coast of Vancouver Island starting in 2016, they found significant amounts of single-use plastics. The group helped usher in the first municipal bans on single-use plastic straws and polystyrene containers in Canada – in Tofino and Ucluelet – and one of the first local bans on single-use plastic checkout bags. These items have largely disappeared.

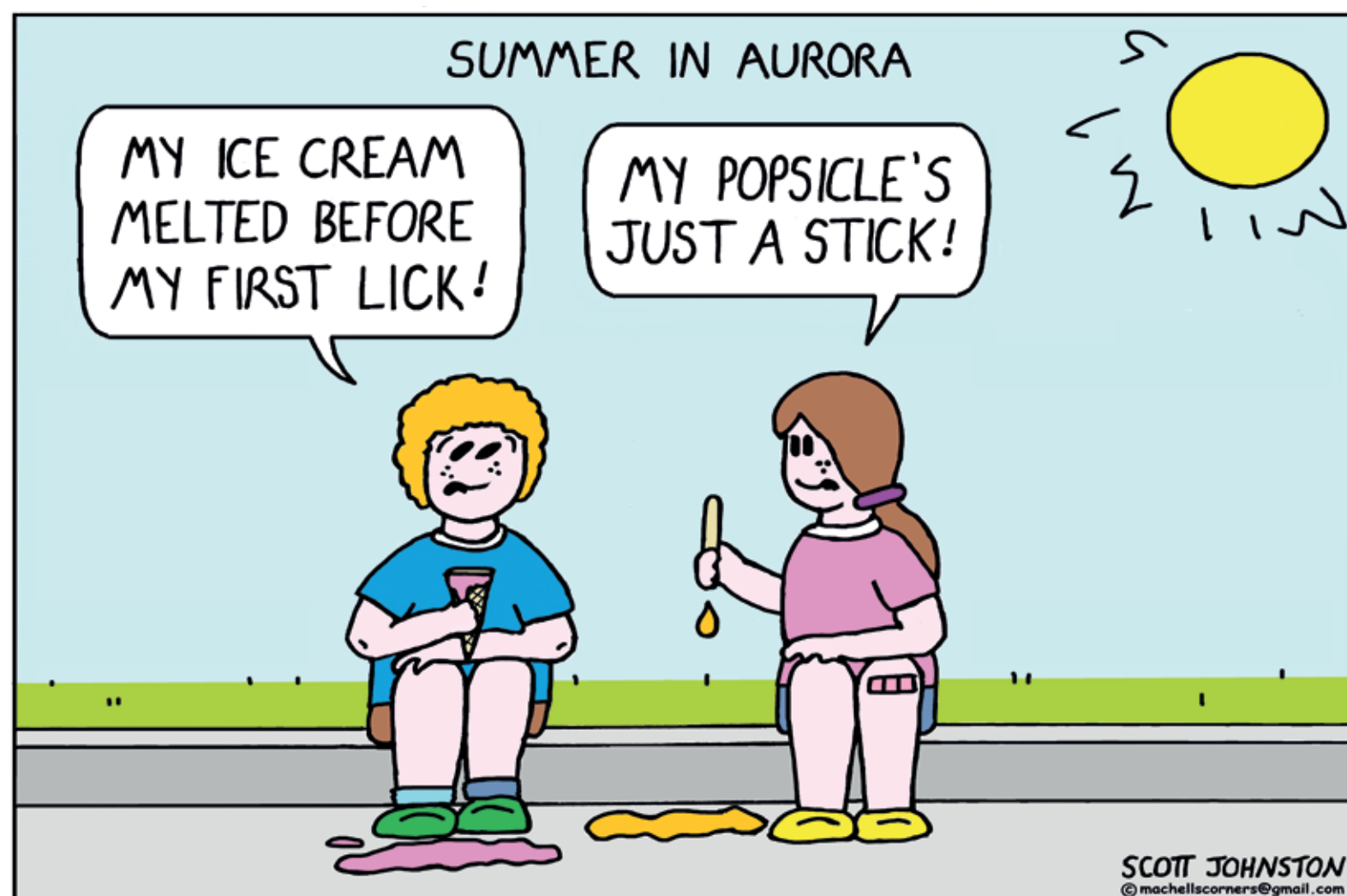
The Great Lakes, where concentrations of microplastics are higher than in ocean garbage patches, are not immune to single-use plastic pollution that breaks down during use or after disposal.

Don't Mess with the Don, a group devoted to Canada's most urban river – Toronto's Don River, which empties into Lake Ontario – recently told us they've all but stopped seeing plastic bags since the 2022 federal ban.

Gran Cleans the Beach still finds way too much plastic when she picks up trash from the shores of Lake Huron, but the banned items have stayed away. That's led her to identify other items that should also be banned, like helium balloons.

Other groups have also shifted their efforts to get other items banned. Surfrider recently celebrated a local ban on small-format water bottles in Tofino and is aiming for a local ban on single-use coffee cups and lids in the near future. Don't Mess with the Don

Continued on page 21



Courage, conviction, and contrast

It's strange how as often as some folks like to claim "Canada's broken," followed by an incongruous laundry list of reasons to justify their claim, it's often these same folks who balk the loudest at the idea that Canada's history is imperfect, has had some dark historic chapters, and still has its work cut out to be the best it can be.

The very idea of identifying some of the skeletons in our collective closet, ones that would be far more convenient for our shared consciousness if they weren't there at all, and pointing out ways in which we can try to begin a healing process, is somehow seen as insulting to those who came before us. Unless it works in their favour.

It's created a situation where those who are clear-headed about our history are sometimes derided for perceived political stances, even when it's just the facts, but others are given free rein to point out all the country's shortcomings with near-complete impunity – as long as the objective is to score political points and further a distinct narrative.

It's not a phenomenon that is unique to Canada, of course. It's one our neighbours to the south have experienced for years, albeit with increasing intensity in the last decade or so.

It was through this lens that it was fascinating to watch one nation celebrating its 159th birthday on Wednesday, and the other marking its 250th anniversary on Saturday.

Our anniversary, admittedly, is not the biggest of milestones to celebrate, certainly not in comparison to a quarter-millennium, but our respective approaches to these occasions was an interesting study in contrasts.

In many respects, at least through these non-American eyes, it seemed the United States was not only celebrating 250 years of history – as they rightly should – but doing so for a yearning for what once was, even if it wasn't. It was not just a matter of looking back at history in the context of providing the foundation blocks for today, but the idea that a return to many of those halcyon days of yore would solve the issues facing the country today.

No matter the progress made in the last few decades.

No matter the hard-fought rights established in those ensuing years.

No matter the fact that those "halcyon days" were anything but for large swaths of the population.

And, for some people leading the celebration, it was seen as an appropriate venue to attempt some score-settling, partisan haranguing, and the dusting off of well-worn soundbites that somehow still strike a chord with their intended audience.



BROCK'S BANter

Brock Weir

While we didn't have a big milestone to celebrate this year – Canada could still, however, amp things up for our 160th next year – it was still heartening to see that our leaders from all levels of government were largely focused on what's right with Canada, while also looking to a future that, for better or worse, we're all in together.

"Canada is a beacon of hope and opportunity for people from around the world, which is reflected in the incredible diversity of cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of the people who make up our great province and country," said Premier Doug Ford in a statement. "As we celebrate Canada, let's recommit to working together as Canadians to continue defending the values of freedom, democracy, and justice that make our country great. Let's also continue to keep fighting to protect our country, its communities, and its workers, unlocking new opportunities that will make Ontario and Canada more prosperous and more secure."

Many of you spent Canada Day this year wisely enjoying air conditioning as Mother Nature delivered a scorcher. It was understandable, and I admit I fully indulged in it, but it was still a shame not to be able to celebrate the day communally under the sun, as is the tradition for so many families.

But it was a great chance to see the festivities from the Nation's Capital on TV. Until it wasn't, and Mother Nature scattered the crowds – those who were brave enough to show up, anyway – with torrential storms.

She was, however, kind enough to hold off on unleashing her fury until after the Prime Minister delivered the traditional Canada Day speech at the noontime show – and, again, those clear contrasts in nation, leadership, and where we are headed, couldn't have been in sharper focus.

Drawing on the Artemis II mission and the participation of Canadian astronaut Colonel Jeremy Hansen, Carney chose the theme of strength and bravery in his

remarks.

"From such great heights, Colonel Hansen brought back home a perspective on the values that make us who we are and the values that can propel us to achieve extraordinary things – courage, connection, and conviction," said the PM. "He showed courage in the face of the possibility of never returning; courage to take a calculated risk to achieve what had never been done before; showed connection because that mission was only made possible by everyone working together within a family, within a team, within a community. He showed conviction about what we are capable as a country, about the need to take risks in order to do big things. Courage, connection, and conviction: they're what it takes to reach the dark side of the moon. And they're what it takes to make the greatest country in the world even better. And we can do it."

Noting that courage is "the ability to act despite fear" rather than the absence of fear itself, he pointed to the courage demonstrated year in and year out by members of the Canadian Armed Forces around the world, the staggering number of police officers this year alone who lost their lives in the line of duty, and those first responders preparing to head out to fight dangerous wildfires.

"If courage is how we must face the world, connection is how we accomplish what can seem impossible," he continued. "Jeremy Hansen has observed that while individuals can feel powerless in the face of global challenges, humanity's true strength lies in our ability to collaborate. That is how the Artemis team accomplished what had never been done before. That's what a united Canada makes possible...."

"One hundred-and-fifty-nine-years-ago, Canada saw the light of day. It was not perfect. It offered a foundation, a starting point, founded on a deep conviction: the conviction that we can always do better. Every generation of Canadians inherits something that was built by the generations before – a railway, a seaway, a charter of rights, a path towards reconciliation, a country that's more prosperous, more just, more inclusive than the one they inherited from their parents.... None of us builds on empty ground. We build on those platforms raised by those who came before us. And our job, our duty even, is to raise it higher still for those who come after."

A study in contrasts indeed, and one that instilled me with Canadian pride.

All too often we, as Canadians, define ourselves by what we aren't rather than by what we are, and that's a shame as we have much to be proud of – but last week, I think we can be forgiven for indulging in a bit of that definition. Just a little.

THE AURORAN

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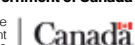
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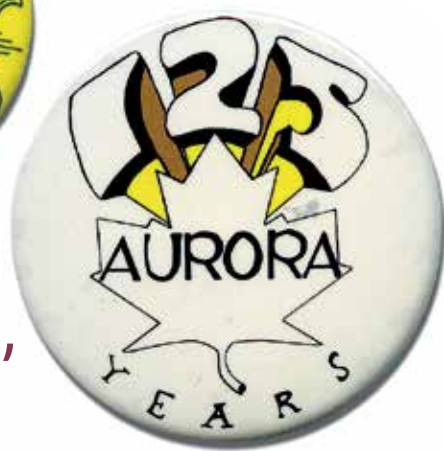
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Anniversaries, Assemble!

There comes a point when birthdays stop being quite so much fun, and the number creeps ever higher. The same is true for Aurora! Here are three examples of wearable commemorative items from past anniversaries of either Aurora's incorporation as a Village (1863) or as a Town (1888). This small silk ribbon (80.51b) demonstrates that the graduation from a village to a town was still an important milestone to locals. By 1963, the yellow button (77.5.24) indicates that the centennial of Aurora's incorporation was more on people's minds, regardless of the municipality's official status! Finally, in 1988, the two dates came together – the 125th of the Village and 100th of the Town. Although the button (988.54.1) doesn't show it, the word the Town selected to describe this bizarre dual-anniversary was "Cenquar." This term was coined in 1940 in Ashland, Ohio, for a regular old 125th, but Aurora gave it a new double-meaning. We'll leave the pronunciation to you!

As summer is officially here with us and with warmer temperatures creeping in, the natural urge is to spend more time outdoors enjoying it. Everyone wants to feel the sun on their face, tend to their gardens, go for walks, and have those sweet summer moments.

While being outdoors and spending time in the warmth and fresh air is good, there are some things that should be considered for seniors spending continual time in warm summer weather.

Listed below are some tips and precautions for staying safe while enjoying the summer sun and warmth.

Summer is the perfect time to get outside and have some fun!

However, an older adult's idea of a "good time" is usually different than what younger age groups typically like to do for recreation and entertainment – especially when those activities take place outdoors.

Older adults and seniors are more prone to heat-related illnesses. They often tire more easily and are more likely to be hurt in a fall.

Here are some tips for summer activities that are safe and fun for seniors – along with some precautions to ensure their experience outside is a positive one.

Optimal Time of Day: The best times of the day to be outside are those when the sun will not be shining down directly onto you. For example, if you plan to have an outdoor activity, have it be in the morning, or evening times.

Taking Breaks to Cool Off: If you plan to spend as much of your day outdoors as possible, make sure you have an air-conditioned area close by that you can pop into for breaks to bring your body temperature back down. This will prevent over-heating, dehydration, and exhaustion.

Stay Hydrated: It's important to remember to stay hydrated if you're spending prolonged time in the heat. Drinking things like water, clear juices, and other liquids that do not contain alcohol or caffeine. Liquids with caffeine and alcohol are diuretics, they will cause you to urinate



Senior Scape

By Christina Doyle

more and dehydrate you. For this reason, it is crucial to stick to clear liquids without these contents when spending time in the heat.

Choosing the Proper Attire: When spending time in the heat, it is important to dress accordingly. This means wearing light, airy, light-colored clothing. This will prevent heat absorption. In addition to this, it is best to wear a wide brimmed hat to shield yourself from the sunrays.

Finally, Sunscreen. Most dermatologists will recommend using SPF 30, which blocks 97% of UVB rays. Protect your skin from UVB and UVA rays by using a sunscreen with broad-spectrum protection. Follow the directions on the bottle by using the appropriate amount of product and reapplying often. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours, especially after swimming or sweating. There is no such thing as too much sunscreen, so there is no harm in being generous with your application.

PLAN A PICNIC: Enjoy fresh air and take in all that nature offers. Summer picnics are great for seniors wanting to spend an afternoon with family and friends even if it means sitting on a bench with a homemade sandwich. Just remember to pick an area with comfortable seating and shade.

PLAY OUTDOOR GAMES: Low-impact sports, such as horseshoes, miniature golf, bocce ball, bean bag toss, badminton and croquet are great outdoor activities for seniors who are able to play.

Participants can play at their own pace, and these activities are good exercise options for a senior's body – and their mind.

DRINK PLENTY OF LIQUIDS:

The most important thing seniors can do to maintain their health in the summer is to stay hydrated and consume plenty of liquids – especially water. Stay away from too much caffeine or alcohol, especially while participating in an outdoor activity.

BE VIGILANT FOR SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION, HEAT EXHAUSTION AND HEAT STROKE:

A flushed face, headache, nausea, rapid pulse, dizziness and confusion all can serve as signs that you've had too much exposure to the warm weather. If you have any of these symptoms, go indoors to cool down and seek help immediately.

By combining these tips, you will be prepared to safely spend time in the summer sun. Just remember, if after spending prolonged periods of time in the sun and/or summer heat, you feel unwell, please seek medical attention. Enjoy the beginning of summer everyone and see you next month!

Renewal and New memberships are half price until year end so take advantage of this!

A perfect time to let your friends and neighbours know of all the ASC has to offer older adults!

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



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

July is here, and as I reflect on the past month, I'm reminded of just how much we can accomplish when we work together to strengthen our community. June was a busy and rewarding month across Newmarket-Aurora, filled with opportunities to celebrate local organizations, support important initiatives, and invest in the people who make our communities such wonderful places to live.

Earlier in the month, I was pleased to host my third annual Seniors' Expo, which brought together hundreds of local seniors, caregivers, and community partners for a morning of connection, learning, and support. Events like this play an important role in improving health and well-being for older adults by connecting them with services, resources, and programs that support healthy aging, independence, and quality of life.

As we celebrated Seniors Month, I was also proud to highlight our government's continued investment in local Seniors Active Living Centres. This year, Ontario is investing a record amount of nearly \$23 million to support 416 Seniors Active Living Centre (SALC) programs across the province, including 97 new programs, ensuring more older adults have access to services that promote healthy aging, independence, and social connection. Here in Newmarket-Aurora, more than \$237,000 is being invested in three organizations serving Newmarket-Aurora, including \$127,640 for the Aurora Seniors Centre, \$57,376 for the Newmarket Seniors' Meeting Place, and \$57,640 for Communauté du Trille blanc. These investments help ensure older adults have access to programs that promote physical activity, social connection, lifelong learning, and overall well-being, allowing more seniors to remain active, engaged, and independent in their communities.

June also brought several important funding announcements that will make a meaningful difference here in Newmarket-Aurora and across York Region. I was proud to announce \$400,000 in provincial funding for BridgeNorth and Cedar Centre through the Civil Remedies Grant Program. This investment will help expand trauma-informed supports for vulnerable children and youth, including those affected by sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse. By strengthening these critical services, we are helping young people access

Continued on page 8

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

Far too many people seem intent on destroying this precious planet. Whether it's through ignorance or greed or both, one thing is clear: they don't understand how it works. Even those of us who want to protect Earth and the life it supports don't fully comprehend its marvels.

A new global mapping study illustrates just how much there is to uncover. The research, by Society for the Protection of Underground Networks, or SPUN, finds that "if every arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal hypha in the world from the top 15 centimeters of soil were laid end-to-end ... they would stretch from Earth to the sun — about a billion times. That's roughly 110 quadrillion kilometers of hyphae."

"There could be up to 10 metres (32ft) of mycorrhizal network in just a teaspoon of soil," study lead author Justin Stewart said.

Why is this important? SPUN explains: "Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi shuttle water, phosphorous and nitrogen to 70 percent of land plant species. In exchange, these fungi receive carbon from plants, drawing down the equivalent of roughly 4 billion tons of carbon dioxide, or 11 percent of the CO2 emissions

What the fungal networks can teach us

from fossil fuels. Through this relationship, mycorrhizal fungi helped shape life on land for 450 million years."

This and other recent research into the role of fungi and mycorrhizal networks have implications for everything from forestry to agriculture to human survival.

Many of our activities are harming these life-supporting networks. Stewart notes that agricultural practices such as tilling and fertilizer and fungicide use destroy or disrupt the essential symbiotic relationships between plants and fungi.

The researchers found that network densities in cropland were 47.3 per cent lower than in wild ecosystems. Grasslands have the densest systems, but these "are often poorly protected and are becoming increasingly degraded," the Guardian reports.

Protecting the networks could prevent chemicals such as nitrogen and phosphorus from entering waterways and could reduce agricultural fertilizer use, as the fungi help plants obtain nutrients naturally, and improve carbon storage in soils.

Research by Canadian forestry scientist and author Suzanne Simard and others has shown that mycorrhizal networks also contribute

to healthy forests, something not widely understood as industry started replacing diverse older forests with single-species plantations after logging.

Although fungi have been around for a billion years, they weren't classified as separate from plants and animals until the 1960s. Previously thought of as plants, they actually have more in common with animals, as they "lack chlorophyll and cannot carry out photosynthesis," the Canadian Encyclopedia notes.

So far, we've only identified a small percentage of the estimated 3.8 million fungi species that exist.

What the fungal networks illustrate is something that many Indigenous Peoples have long known — that everything is interconnected. It also illustrates the hubris of colonizers and capitalists who have long seen the planet as little more than a source of "resources" for the taking. Even Western science, with its propensity toward reductionism, has often missed the bigger picture. It's a short-sighted view of the world — unlike the world view of many Indigenous Peoples, who look back and forward many generations.

When we log old-growth forests, blast mountains away for minerals or clear land for large industrial agriculture operations or residential developments, we're not just taking resources or replacing barren areas with more useful (to us) infrastructure; we're destroying natural systems and creating cascading effects throughout the very systems on which our health and lives depend.

Those who seek only short-term profit and power — through extracting minerals and gas, coal and oil or clearing rainforests to raise cattle or damming valleys for power — fail to consider the impacts they're having. Not only do they lack understanding of the complex processes beneath their feet, they don't seem to know or care about the intricate connections above.

As we learn more about this fragile but resilient planet, our only home, we see how everything is interconnected and how critical it is to tread lightly, to protect and restore natural systems and to find harmonious ways of living with nature, of which we are a part.

We still have much to learn, but we now know enough to realize that we must quickly find better ways of living. We can't go on wrecking the complex, interconnected systems on which our health and survival depend.

Di Girolamo, Bonham set sites on Wards 2 and 3 this fall

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

With three incumbent Councillors opting to not seek re-election in 2026, there will be plenty of new faces on the municipal campaign trail this fall – but two candidates who stepped up in the 2022 Municipal Election have done so again this year.

Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Inductee Marco Di Girolamo, who first stood for election for Ward 2 four years ago, has once again thrown his hat into the ring for the Ward – as has Alexandra Bonham, a first-time candidate in 2022, who is once again vying for Ward 3.

MARCO DI GIROLAMO WARD 2 CANDIDATE

In his first campaign to become an Aurora Councillor, athlete, coach and business-owner Marco Di Girolamo won the support of approximately 500 voters.

As he weighed whether to run again, he says he felt he “owed” it to those who placed their trust in him in 2022 to “give it another shot and make good on the promises that I made to them at the doors – that I want to help make it a Town for everyone to live in, inclusive, and carry on with the priorities that were laid out in the last campaign” including the revitalization of Aurora’s historic downtown core and the protection of stable neighbourhoods.

An additional pillar of his campaign this time around will be an emphasis on community safety.

“Lots has happened in the last couple of years; people are feeling unsafe in



Marco Di Girolamo is seeking election as Aurora’s next Councillor for Ward 2. **Contributed photo**



Alexandra Bonham filed her nomination papers to be Aurora’s next Councillor for Ward 3 last week. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

their communities, and I think there’s a lot we can do at the municipal level to reassure people that we’re a very safe community,” he says. “Over the last campaign, there were a lot of questions [around] Town Square and now that Town Square has been open... it’s had some positive reviews, lots of concerts and events for people, there’s still a huge need for our downtown to get some work done on it and bring the people back downtown. Think of [Town Square] as an anchor tenant in a shopping centre. You’ve got the anchor tenant, now we’ve got to help bring in the rest of the tenants so that we can have a thriving downtown core.”

In his first municipal election, Di Girolamo faced off against incumbent Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who is not seeking re-election. While he doesn’t

have a registered challenger for Ward 2 at press time, he says the election will come down to “who they feel is going to represent their priorities on Council going forward and move the agenda of Ward 2 residents.”

“I think people are going to have to make a decision on who they would like to represent them,” he says. “Rachel did a great job. She was very accessible, and whenever I called her she answered my phone call... I’m hoping this Council will be more united in their opinions and their views. Last Council seemed to be a bit dysfunctional at times. We just keep moving the agenda of the Town forward, which is stable growth, making sure communities are safe, and making sure that the residents are well taken care of.”

ALEXANDRA BONHAM WARD 3 CANDIDATE

Life-long Aurora resident Alexandra Bonham has strong roots in the community, and perhaps they’re strongest in Ward 3.

Bonham, who works in Fire Safety, is seeking to represent the Ward after standing for election in 2022 and having stayed engaged in municipal affairs and maintaining support in the community.

Looking ahead to this campaign, she says she would like to foster further engagement in Aurora’s southwest, and work with the Province to encourage changes to the Ontario Municipal Act to give residents a greater “ability to hold people accountable.”

“One thing that hasn’t changed at all in the four years [since the last election] is there’s not a lot of support in terms of activities,” she says of engaging the residents of Ward 3. “They don’t have a hockey rink, not really, they don’t have a community pool that’s close by, which makes it difficult for people that don’t necessarily have easy transport, have kids, and things like that.”

While engagement is key, so is

community – and community is what Bonham says defines her.

She’s a member of the Aurora Community Band, has been an active volunteer with the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, and that community-centredness powers her forward.

“Whether people are 14 years old or 80 years old, you have one thing in common and that’s either performing something beautiful, or creating or working towards something with an end goal. You can be completely different in terms of your age, your experiences, your lifestyle, but that is one thing that connects you, and that’s exciting,” says Bonham of her time on the Aurora Community Band. “It’s no different when you’re on Council. Everybody’s going to come from different experiences, different life choices, different age groups, different ethnicities, the whole nine yards. You’re all working towards one common goal. At the end, you all just want what’s best for Aurora.”

“You’re not always going to agree with one another. You’re going to have differences, but everybody brings something different to the table that we can all learn from. I think that is what needs to be looked at – you need to be able to value everybody’s input and views around the table, whether it is around the Council table, whether it’s the residents you’re representing, or even represent the residents you’re not representing.”

At press time this week, three candidates were vying to represent Ward 3. In addition to Bonham, the candidate field includes Nikki Alber, who has received the endorsement of outgoing Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, and Robert James Fraser, who ran to represent Ward 6 in the 2022 Municipal Election.

Residents have until August 21 at 2 p.m. to file their candidacy for the October 25 election.



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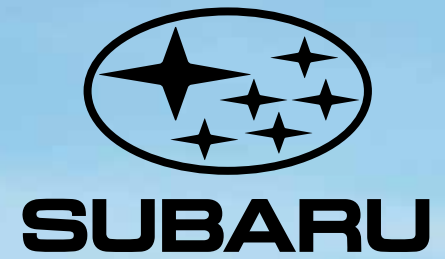




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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Renoviction support pilot nixed by Council amid uncertainty on need

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A potential support pilot program to help protect renters against “renovictions” – evictions due to renovations – has been put on ice by Council amid questions on costs and the ultimate need for new legislation.

The potential pilot followed long-standing work from Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese.

Approximately 12,000 Aurora residents are renters, he said, and while most residents are in rental buildings that are “relatively new,” some are in a more “vulnerable” position living in older buildings that might be up for renos.

These older units are often the most affordable, he said, and bringing back a program for Council’s consideration no later than the end of 2027, the development of which would be supported by a part-time contract staff member, was important.

“The purpose of the bylaw is to make sure that when an eviction occurs, and the eviction occurs because of an updating, that the tenants are protected,” said Councillor Weese. “We have to protect the affordable rental properties that we have now.

This is simply a way to do it. I’m in favour of this...pilot project with a part-time administrative support that is funded out of the [tax rate stabilization reserve....] I know that staff is interested in managing employee time, but this is an important thing for those people who are on the cusp of eviction and may become homeless as have, in some cases, been identified through some of the delegations that come to Council.”

Moving in this direction was seconded by Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner who said the cost of the program would be worth the reward.

“I used to say that this was a Town with a heart, and I would like to prove that,” she said. “We have a lot of vulnerable renters.... However you look at it, [they] are at the mercy of their landlords and for these renters, some of whom have been renting for many years, this is their home and we need to protect them.

“I think this is a small sum of money compared to the care it hopefully will take of many vulnerable people in Aurora.”

While Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland said while she supported initiatives to help residents, she

thought this move was “putting the cart before the horse.” More information was needed, she said, on both the need for a renoviction program, and the staff resources required to develop the pilot, before proceeding further.

“I believe that some of the Big City Mayors had looked at this... and, from my knowledge... they decided not to do it for various reasons,” she said. “One of the biggest was that it could actually deter landlords from actually doing any type of improvements to any of their properties and would deter them [from] even wanting to make any sort of investment and could actually encourage landlords to let properties become disheveled or unkempt and just no real investment at all.

“I think there’s a delicate balance that can be had here. I don’t know what that looks like, but I feel like we’re kind of swinging the pendulum from one side to the other in a fairly strong way without understanding what the balance is in the middle yet.”

The Councillor asked Bylaw Manager Alexander Wray for further details on how a pilot would unfold and the ultimate need for one within the community.

He said there have been five to seven N13 notices – legal documents giving notice to end tenancy – filed in Aurora over the last five years, or “1.2 renovictions” on an annual basis.

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson agreed there were a number of questions still outstanding before Council could move forward, including what the program would actually achieve.

“There are some definitive things because of provincial legislation that really restrict our abilities, and I wouldn’t want residents to think, ‘Great, the municipality now has this pilot program and that’s going to help me out,’ only to find at the end of the day that, no, this program wasn’t geared to be able to do that because Provincial legislation takes precedence,” he said.

But Councillor Weese said while some Council members wanted this information up front, information gathering is part of any pilot project.

“The Province has been wrestling with this for two years now and

they’ve not brought forth anything that would be helpful when people are being evicted for renovation purposes,” said Councillor Weese. “The issue is they are being evicted and it is eviction because the landlord wishes to improve their property, and they have a right to do that. What we’re talking about here in a renoviction bylaw is that a landlord must go through a step that says, and maybe [it] belongs in the Business and Building Code, that when they want to renovate, they have to prove that the renovation is not going to be evicting vulnerable people, and that when they come back they’re going to be offered the rent at a reasonable rate... because what happens is that these people are being evicted, they’re given maybe three or four months. That’s what the Landlord-Tenant Board talks about, or what is right in terms of the landlord offering them some compensation for leaving.

“What this is all about is to be a leader in this so that the 12,000 people that are here, and again, many of them are not vulnerable, but...some of them are. In a couple of cases, these are elderly people who’ve been living in an apartment for maybe 10 years, 15 years, they have very low rental rates. If they are asked to move, they’re out of a home. All I’m asking for is some interest in trying to help people who may be facing this in the future and be a leader, not a follower.

“I think it’s a time for us to do that in this community. We have very good landlords in this community, and many of the good ones are not even thinking in this way, but some of them maybe are thinking about changing, and they’re not worried, and they’re not so worried about the effect on the tenants. And that’s our job. I think we’re a legislative body here. We should be here trying to make bylaws that help our rental stock, our affordable rental stock, and the people who live in them.”

The amendment to implement the renoviction support pilot program was voted down 4 – 2 with Councillors Weese and Gaertner voting in favour, and Mayor Mrakas absent from the meeting. The staff report was received unanimously for information.

DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

From page 5

the care, support, and resources they need to build brighter futures.

We also celebrated a \$100,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for Rose of Sharon to help launch the Youth Thrive Community Hub. This new collaborative initiative between Aurora Black Association and Bridge North and the Women’s Support Network of York Region will provide accessible, community-based programming for pregnant, parenting, and at-risk youth, creating a safe and supportive environment where they can access resources, develop new skills, and build meaningful connections.

In addition, I was proud to announce \$55,000 for York Pride Festival through the Experience Ontario program. This investment supports a vibrant community event

that promotes inclusion, celebrates diversity, and attracts visitors who contribute to our local economy. Honoured to walk alongside Premier Ford and many of my caucus colleagues at the Pride Parade on historic Main St in Newmarket.

As summer gets underway, I’m looking forward to spending more time out in our neighbourhoods. Over the coming weeks, I’ll be knocking on doors and speaking with residents of Newmarket-Aurora. These conversations help shape the work I do as your voice at Queen’s Park. I truly value the opportunity to hear your thoughts, answer your questions, and learn more about the issues that matter most to you and your family. If you see me in your neighbourhood this summer, please don’t hesitate to say hello—I look forward to meeting you and hearing from you directly.

Endorsement on House of Commons letterhead a “clerical error,” MPs contend

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

An endorsement of incumbent Aurora mayor Tom Mrakas from local Members of Parliament Sandra Cobena and Costas Menegakis courted controversy over the weekend after their words were first published on House of Commons letterhead.

Both Members of Parliament say the use of the House of Commons letterhead was a “clerical error” and was rectified “within minutes” of Mrakas’ initial post, with the House of Commons logo replaced with Mrakas’ campaign graphic.

While the endorsement was re-issued without the official House of Commons graphic, social media

posts have longevity and this one was quickly screen-grabbed by residents, who called for official action.

One such resident raising alarm bells was Leah Taylor Roy, who served MP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill until her defeat in the last Federal election by Menegakis, and remains the party’s local candidate of record.

“This is a violation of the House of Commons Members bylaws,” she said in a Facebook post. “MPs may endorse candidates personally, but not in their roles as MPs, nor can they use any House of Commons resources, including stationary or any other resources from their office.”

Taylor Roy, who has endorsed Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo in

Aurora’s Mayoral race, said she “trusted” the municipal integrity commissioner would be looking into the matter.

“It was a clerical administrative error from our staffers and it was rectified within minutes,” said Newmarket-Aurora MP Cobena. “Somebody took a screen shot, clearly, and has been pushing it. There’s literally nothing else to it.”

“We inadvertently used the logo,” added Menegakis. “We made a mistake, so we fixed it right away over three minutes, and it’s over.”

Cobena noted that their endorsement of Mayor Mrakas was in their capacity as “residents”

It was a clerical administrative error from our staffers and it was rectified within minutes

– “nothing official, which is why everything was removed. It should have never gone out. Everything was removed within minutes, and the proper one is out now.”

Francophone seniors get Provincial boost as work to build community continues

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As work continues to build a community for Francophone seniors in Aurora’s southwest, Communauté du Trille Blanc (CTB) has received a financial boost to support its ongoing initiatives.

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy recently presented the organization with a grant of \$57,640 for the Village Vitalité initiative, which helps to promote the independence and wellbeing of Francophone and Francophile seniors across York Region.

“Ontario’s Francophone and Francophile seniors deserve opportunities to remain active, engaged, and connected in their own language and community,” said MPP Gallagher Murphy. “I am proud to see our government investing in services that celebrate and support the vibrant Francophone community in Aurora and beyond.”

The contribution to Communauté du Trille Blanc is part of a \$23 million Ontario-wide investment supporting nearly 420 Seniors Active Living Centres (SALCs) programs, including 97 new initiatives.

“Through a variety of activities, including educational workshops, social events, and support sessions, the organization creates a welcoming, engaging, and inclusive environment,” said the Province on CTB. “Programs are offered both in person and online and include pickleball, yoga, meditation, walking groups, card and board games, workshops on wills and powers of

attorney, Canada Revenue Agency information sessions, restaurant outings, and annual holiday celebrations.”

Communaute du Trille Blanc is the driving force behind a planned Francophone seniors community on Bloomington Road, just west of Yonge Street, behind Cardinal Carter Catholic High School and the York Catholic Education Centre.

Announced last summer, it is intended to serve as a central hub for a multi-purpose community not only serving French-speaking seniors through programs, but a 160-bed long-term care residence and, eventually, multiple housing types, a community centre, and five acres of recreation space which will be developed by the Town of Aurora.

The land was deemed surplus by the Government of Ontario transferred to CTB through fundraising and an essential \$10 million donation made to the project by philanthropists Steve and Carole Mirkopoulos.

“This site will be transformed into a new planned community anchored by a 160-bed, fully air-conditioned long-term care home operated [by the CTB],” said Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Minister of Long-Term Care, at the time of the announcement. “A new, modern 160-bed long-term care home, five acres of recreational land on the western parcel, which will increase the level of resident activity while, at the same time, help reduce social isolation, a French village, a campus of care that includes different types of housing, and a French-language hub – a continuum of health and community services for residents.”

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Kids let imaginations run wild at Cultural Centre summer camps

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Summer can present a world of wonder and the Aurora Cultural Centre is showing kids how these wonders can be transformed into art through a series of camp programs.

The Cultural Centre is in the midst of its Summer Camp season and this year's programs offer a wide range of art forms for kids to explore and try out.

"We believe that children learn best by doing," says Aitak Sorahitalab, Education Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre. "We design the curriculum based on artistic experiences and they really explore the materials – testing their ideas and solving problems by making their own creative decisions. We don't give children a template to copy, we introduce them to real processes and campers really have a chance to try a wide range of art forms,

from storytelling and drawing to sculptures, printmaking and animation."

This is the second week of the Aurora Cultural Centre's Summer Camps and, through July 10, campers are looking at the world of fantasy, myths and legends in "Fantastical Artistic Imaginations."

The theme for Week 3, which runs July 13 – 17, is The Enchanting Natural World.

"Campers will have a chance to explore found objects, for example, and explore how they can make art with the objects that are in nature," says Sorahitalab. "One of the things we do is highlight famous or local artists who work with the theme of nature.

"Each week, we hire one of the artists that are related to our theme. For some of the weeks, animation, for example, we will go visit the Aurora Public Library and this is a collaborative project with the Library and we use their facility to create artwork in their studio.



Aurora Cultural Centre image

"This year, all of our counsellors are professional artists, art educators, or even post-secondary art students, and we have expanded our team to include a dedicated behavioural management specialist, and her role is to support the camper's social and emotional wellbeing. We wanted to make even more supportive environments for children."

Themes for the remainder of summer include:

Art of the Digi-verse: "Get ready to journey into the Digi-verse! Inspired by video games, memes, and characters, campers will draw inspiration from online spaces to create projects around pop culture and digital creativity using traditional materials. Character drawing, collage, and elements of cartooning will be explored, learn about various mediums, and experiment with the vast expanses of the digital world. (July 20 – 24)

Prehistoric and Futuristic Art Adventures: "Rawr! Zap! Zap! This week, campers will dive into a world where the prehistoric era and visions of the future collide. They'll explore sculpture, drawing and painting, while imagining themselves alongside dinosaurs and in high-tech futuristic worlds that have yet to be discovered." (July 27 – 31)

Comics, Anime, and Cartooning: "Get ready to draw, draw, draw! Inspired by exciting and action-packed comics, anime, and movie magic, campers will immerse themselves in activities practicing storytelling, worldbuilding, and character building, experimenting through marker, ink, comic-paneling, painting, sculpture, craft, and other exciting traditional mediums!" (August 4 – 7)

Artmaking for the Senses: "Inspired by touch, smell, sight, movement, and auditory play, campers will utilize different senses to create artworks and nurture the art-making process and allow experimentation with new, fun, and engaging art mediums." (August 10 – 14)

Famous Artists & Their Styles: "This week, unleash your inner Basquiat, Monkman, or Group of Seven! Inspired by International, Canadian, Indigenous, recognized, and culturally groundbreaking artists and their work. Delve into the styles and techniques used by some of the most famous artists in history, and learn about various mediums and experiment with recreating iconic artworks." (August 17 – 21)

Neverending Summer Fun: "This final week of camp celebrates Summer 2026, giving campers the chance to reflect on the best parts of their summer. Through a variety of creative activities, they'll celebrate the last few sunny days before heading back to school." (August 24 – 26)

Long Live Summer '26 (One Day Camp): "This final camp celebrates Summer 2026, giving campers the chance to reflect on the best parts of their summer. Through a variety of creative activities, they'll celebrate the last few sunny days before heading back to school." (August 27)

In addition to these camps for children and youth, education programs for adults in the community are also available, including an Intro to Watercolour course on July 18, Acrylic and Still Life Workshop on August 15, both for ages 16+, and World Rhythms: A Community Drum Experience for everyone five-and-up, on August 22.

"Led by professional artists, as the programs are throughout the year, they are one-day workshops to get people introduced to the practice and hopefully engage them for fall programming," says Sorahitalab, noting the Drum Experience will take place in the Aurora Town Square's outdoor piazza for up to 40 drummers.

For more information about these and other education programs on tap throughout the summer at the Aurora Cultural Centre, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

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Dance in the Park kicks off Canada Day party



Last week's heatwave didn't deter too many party-goers in getting their Canada Day celebrations started early with the Town of Aurora's annual Dance in the Park on June 30. The bash included (Top Row) headliners The Spoons, with (Second Row) the entertainment beginning with the band Murray Drive. (Third Row) Barbie, Tracy, and Louisa were among the revellers. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

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Cleanup continues after violent July 3 storm

From page 1

are asked to respect all trail closure signage and avoid the area until it is safe to reopen. Within Town parks, playgrounds remain safe and open for use. There are some downed trees in parks and we ask residents to avoid those areas and allow space for crews to address those.”

At the start of the week, the Mayor said he thanked residents for their ongoing “patience and understanding” during the cleanup effort.

“As our cleanup efforts continue, please note that tree debris from private property is the responsibility of the homeowner, including debris that may have fallen onto your property from a neighbouring residence,” said Mayor Mrakas. “Town crews are focused on removing debris from Town-owned trees and municipal properties only.”

Friday’s storm came at the peak of a heatwave that gripped Southern Ontario last week, keeping many residents home during Canada Day celebrations and through the subsequent days.

The area was under an Environment Canada Severe Thunderstorm Watch.

One resident whose property was impacted by the sudden storm was Rob Gaby, who said he was at a local bank when he received a call from his wife to come home after the event uprooted an oak tree on their property estimated to have been more than 200 years old.

The tree, which stood approximately 80 feet high, fell on two neighbouring properties, leaving a 14-foot wide “crater” in its place.

“It was just absolutely astounding. The area in Aurora where I live was just a war zone,” he said, adding the

neighbourhood lost about a third of its sugar maples, which neighbours come together each spring to tap in what has turned out to be an award-winning maple syrup collective.

“Major kudos to the Aurora Operations team – they were out there the same day,” says Gaby. “Willow Farm probably had 10 trees down on it, a very small area, and they were out there cleaning almost right away. They were there Saturday, Sunday, yesterday, and today (Tuesday), and I have never seen so many chippers. I can’t say enough good things about Operational Services. They have been tremendous.”

If you’re still working to clean up your own properties, the Town of Aurora reminds residents that branches can be collected in regular yard waste pickup.

Branches put out in collection must be no larger than 10 centimetres in diameter, and must be bundled and tied together with twine. Each bundle must weigh 22kg (50 lbs) or less, and must not be longer than 1.2 metres.

By press time this week, the Mayor said the Town was unable to provide information on insurance claims received at the Town level for damage caused by municipal trees and other infrastructure damaged in the weather event.

“When the Town receives a claim alleging damage involving municipal property, it follows a standard claims process. Residents are asked to submit the details of the incident, along with any supporting documentation for review. Each claim is assessed on a case-by-case basis. At this time, we do not have an update on individual claims.”



Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger



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VOL 27 | NO. 40 | 905-727-3300 *TheAuroran.com* FREE WEEK OF JULY 9, 2026

Aurora's Andrew Nembhard scores 23 for Team Canada in 110-84 rout of Puerto Rico in The Hammer



Andrew Nembhard

Photo courtesy of Canada Basketball

BY JIM STEWART

There was another Team Canada in action this weekend.

It featured two Aurorans who have distinguished themselves in the NCAA and NBA and now they're sharing the backcourt with the national men's basketball team.

Andrew Nembhard of the Indiana Pacers and Ryan Nembhard of the Dallas Mavericks took to the hardwood in Hamilton on Friday night in Team Canada's 110-84 win over Puerto Rico.

The Nembhard brothers were joined on the TD Coliseum's shimmering new planks by fellow NBAers Dillon Brooks (Phoenix Suns), Nickeil Alexander (Atlanta Hawks), Kyshawn George (Washington Wizards), Leonard Miller (Chicago Bulls), and reigning league MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (Oklahoma City Thunder), as well as a supporting cast of Canadian ballers playing professionally in Europe who suited up in white and red versus the red-jerseyed Puerto Ricans.

The atmosphere in the newly-

refurbished TD Coliseum in downtown Hamilton would have been terrific to experience and I would have enjoyed my vantage point from Section 112, Row 15, Seats 13-14—especially after securing the seats in an irresistible Ticketmaster 2-for-1 deal that reduced the prices of our lower bowl corner chairs to \$37.50 each plus service charges.

However, a falling 80-foot maple tree, toppled by tornado-like winds, dragged down two 50-foot maples on to my house, pool, and deck during a freakish afternoon storm that did millions of dollars of damage to northwest Aurora.

So, I tended to the domestic crisis of property destruction, secured an emergency arborist to start hauling away giant trees cracked in half by the wind burst, and cut through the wet brush piled against the patio doors armed with a pruning saw.

Alas, I was forced to miss the swirling courtside performance by Team Canada on Friday night.

The offensively-explosive squad jumped out to an 18-point half-time lead

and never trailed.

I also missed driving down the QEW to see superstar Gilgeous-Alexander thriving in his hometown.

The appreciative crowd chanted "MVP" every time Hamilton's favorite son touched the basketball. The 2025 NBA Champ and Finals MVP poured in 26 points to lead all scorers as Canada improved its pristine qualifying record to 5-0.

Even more depressing was not seeing the Nembhard brothers, the pride of Aurora, deliver their hard-nosed, up-tempo playmaking, three-point scoring brand of basketball on the big stage at TD.

Due to tons of falling maple wood, I missed Andrew's big night in The Hammer.

The Indiana Pacers' combo guard scored 13 of his 23 points in the first half, shot 5 for 7 from 3-point range, and added 4 assists and 4 rebounds for the white-jerseyed Canadians.

Ryan Nembhard, who just completed his rookie NBA season with the Dallas Mavericks, added four points in his national team debut with Team Canada.

As compelling as it's been to watch

Aurora's Alistair Johnston star for Team Canada on soccer's biggest stage over the last three weeks at Watch Parties all over town, seeing two Aurorans play alongside the best basketball players in the world was doubly delightful for local basketball fans who trekked down to Hamilton or viewed it on TSN.

Game Notes:

Not playing in Hamilton versus Puerto Rico and Jamaica this weekend due to injury and/or contract situations were Kelly "Captain Canada" Olynyk (San Antonio Spurs), RJ Barrett (Toronto Raptors), Benedict Mathurin (LA Clippers), Dwight Powell (Dallas Mavericks), Zach Edey (Memphis Grizzlies), and Lu Dort (Oklahoma City Thunder). Although they weren't on the court on Friday night, Edey, Olynyk, and Barrett signed autographs for fans and took pictures with them. All six are fully committed to the Canadian national team for the next three years. The thirteen NBAers form the core of the team that is seeking to qualify for the 2027 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

World Cup comes to a close for Canadian Men's Team

BY JIM STEWART

All those World Cup Team Canada Watch Parties have been so much fun.

However, there was no joy in Aurora on Saturday afternoon as Team Canada's quest for a World Cup in men's soccer ended in Houston not with a bang, but with a whimper.

A 3-0 loss to powerhouse Morocco in the Round of 16 marked Team Canada's deepest progress in the FIFA event and the valiant squad's performance over five games put men's soccer on the map.

The Red and White finished the tourney 2-2-1—by far its best finish compared to prior forays into the

World Cup in 1986 and 2022 when the national team produced records "unblemished by victory" – 0-3 and 0-3.

With a young core and a nervy coach in tow for the next World Cup, there's much to look forward to for even the most casual of soccer fans.

Perhaps the best local story that emerged from the communal experience was watching hundreds of soccer fans in Aurora take great pride in the performance of Alistair Johnston who figured prominently in Team Canada's success on the pitch as the nomadic national squad meandered through its five matches in Toronto, Vancouver, Los Angeles, and Houston.

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Junior Tigers trade leading scorer Cayden Smith to Cobourg for Aurora's Nic Ferrante

BY JIM STEWART

It's a cooling thought to contemplate the Tigers' upcoming OJHL season on a stifling 44C Humidex day in Aurora.

The Junior A Club jumped back into the Town's consciousness amid a heat wave and World Cup fever by engineering a significant early-summer trade.

The Tigers dealt last season's leading scorer Cayden Smith to the Cobourg Cougars (formerly the Haliburton County Huskies) for Aurora resident Nic Ferrante.

Smith—the team's on-ice and off-ice leader—tallied 20 goals and 32 assists in 49 games for the Tigers, including 8 PPG, 8 PPA, and 3 GWG.

His gritty, consistent play was a constant for the OJHL club that missed the playoffs in 2025-26.

Ferrante, who split 44 games between the Markham Royals (5) and the Huskies (39), notched 6 goals and 17 assists.

On paper, it would appear that the Huskies-turned-Cougars got the better of the deal, but Tigers' owner Jim Thomson offered a rationale for the trade: "First and foremost, Cayden's agent said if he didn't stick in the OHL with the Erie Otters, Cayden was heading to the BCHL so I had to get something of value."

"Cayden's going to be a depth forward with Erie, but, if he returns to the OJHL, his preferred destination was with a contender like Haliburton—now Cobourg. It's similar to the Howard brothers not coming back last year and that's why we traded them to the

Patriots for three really good young players. That's the backdrop for this trade."

The former NHLer extolled the qualities that Ferrante brings to the Junior Tigers.

"He's a cultured veteran—an experienced 20-year-old and an asset to the organization. I think he'll have a really good offensive season in his last year of Junior hockey and he's a local boy—an Auroran—who's coming home."

Ferrante played his rep hockey with the AMHA Tigers for twelve seasons and also skated for the SAC Saints for two years at the AAA and PHL levels.

A key factor for Ferrante, according to Thomson, was the desire to complete his Junior hockey career in his hometown where "I get to finish where it all started" after playing in Markham and Haliburton last season.

The Huskies' transfer to Cobourg from Haliburton earlier this Spring filled a void in "Ontario's Feel Good Town" after the struggling last place Cougars pulled up stakes, rebranded as the Toronto Warriors, and re-established the franchise at the Scotiabank Pond in Downsview for the 2026-27 OJHL season.

Ferrante will miss all the franchise transfer complications and growing pains in Cobourg and Toronto. Instead, he'll be back in Aurora leading a young Junior team in his hometown. There's nice circularity for Nic in this transaction and he'll be on the ice on July 12 when the Tigers re-open summer camp at the ACC.

Seven six-person lawn bowling teams from Richmond Hill and Aurora compete in friendly tournament at ALBC

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A bevy of bowlers competed in a regional tournament at the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club's McMahon Park facility on Sunday, June 28.

The all-day competition between Richmond Hill and Aurora showcased the shot-making skills of dozens of bowlers on the spongy, golf green-quality turf impeccably maintained by Town of Aurora crews.

Gordon Weir, who rolled in a beauty against the jack just prior to our chat, described the most satisfactory aspects of organizing the regional competition: "The lunch! The turnout!"

"Richmond Hill stepped up and brought in so many good players. There were some very good bowlers out there. We're grateful to them and we're rewarding the Richmond Hill club with a nice lunch in our clubhouse and we have some great prizes, too."

The engaging convener provided a succinct overview of the tourney: "We have over 42 competitors here today, seven balanced teams of six players each and over fifty participants. It's a good crowd on the greens. Everybody's happy. It's a perfect day. It's a little shorter than

a regular game – we're running three six-point ends instead of three 10-point ends to speed play. We've mixed up the teams so the players get a chance to meet as many bowlers as possible. We ranked the players A, B, and C in terms of skills, and intermixed the levels so we have experienced players demonstrating the game to players new to the sport."



Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

Gordon Logan, who's been a club member for seven years and serves on the ALBC Board of Directors, discussed the importance of intermixing the clubs for the tourney: "We always mix the teams. Meeting other people from the visiting clubs is the most important thing — but there's some good competition, too. Every bowling club culture's the same—everyone's friendly and everybody enjoys each other's company. There's a good community feeling here and you don't have to be that good to play in these tournaments. We love to see new people play and embrace the sport. Many club members have great skills, but bowling is like putting. Every day is different."

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Virtual Active Living Fair will give seniors valuable tips from comfort of home

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As temperatures rise and roofing and parking lot work continues at the Aurora Seniors' Centre and Town Hall, the Centre is going virtual with tips on how seniors can stay active and engaged in the community.

The Centre will host a virtual Seniors Active Living Fair on Tuesday, July 28, over Zoom and telephone.

It's a bonus version of their in-person Seniors' Active Living Fair, traditionally held in September each year, designed to promote accessibility and break down barriers.

"Accessibility is one of the biggest things we really want to promote within the Centre, so if you're at home, you don't drive, we want no barriers to be a factor, and it's the full day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.," says Andrew Bailey, Adult/Older Adult Coordinator for the Town of Aurora.

The virtual Seniors' Active Living Fair will feature several guest speakers, seminars, and activities, including talks on safeguarding yourself against frauds and scams, chair fitness, a session on

maintaining and improving balance, cooking demonstrations, a live tour of Ripley's Aquarium, and much more.

"This definitely brings the community together," says Bailey, adding the Centre has seen ever-growing success with its virtual programs, a menu of offerings which were really honed during the global pandemic. "We have really strengthened our virtual programming. A lot of our programs are accessible via Zoom and we have hybrid models. We do offer outreach programs as well, whether it is our Without Walls program, which is done over the phone or Zoom, offered six days a week for free by the Town. We also have a Seniors' Centre in the Mail program that goes out [to almost 500] monthly – a pack our team puts together with various Sudoku, crosswords, colouring pages, and information about the Centre. It's a great way for members who don't frequently come into the Centre, those who have moved away, for them to really see all that is going on and stay connected.

"The Centre is not just a hub for our members to come and enjoy. We really are just a crucial space for a lot of our members. We're so fortunate to have a lot of support from our Council and Mayor as well as

the Provincial Government and we're really fortunate to just have a lot of great tools for us to deliver programs in-person and virtually to Aurora residents and the community."

Additional support recently came to the Centre from the Provincial Government.

As The Auroran reported last week, the Centre has received a grant of \$7,650 from the Ontario Seniors Community Grant Program, to create a multi-part program for older adults this fall called Living Your Best Life in Aurora.

"It's a six-part series helping older adults in the community explore landmarks in the Town," says Bailey. "We're going to be doing seminars, lunch off-site, provide information sessions on healthy eating,

mental health, and an introduction to public health as well to allow older adults to tap into that resource. We have a lot of members with mobility challenges as well and we wanted to make a program that was as accessible as possible for our members and the community.

"We also have a lot of folks who are hesitant in using public transit, and we're trying to create that education piece to allow them to be more comfortable to use public transit and explore some options that are available in the community other than the Seniors' Centre. This will be the first time we're offering something like this."

For more information about the Aurora Seniors' Centre, its upcoming events, and membership, visit auroraseniors.ca or call 905-726-4767.



A WICKED ANNIVERSARY – Wicked Eats, the Yonge Street eatery just south of Orchard Heights, recently celebrated its fifth anniversary in Aurora – and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy was one of the many local leaders on hand to congratulate restaurant owner Robert and his team on their milestone. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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Canada Day Parade takes over Yonge Street



Last week's high temperatures may have kept some residents away from the Town of Aurora's annual Canada Day parade, but enthusiasm remained high throughout the morning as colourful cultural displays, marching bands, and more processed from Murray Drive in the south, northward on Yonge Street to Aurora Heights Drive. Among the participants were MPPs Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Michael Parsa, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Councillors John Gallo, Harold Kim, and Michael Thompson, 2026 Aurora Citizen of the Year Doug Steele, and the Royal Canadian Legion Colour Guard.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

Cross-Country Adventure at Lambert Willson



The Canada Day party continued over at Lambert Willson park for a full day of activities, including a "passport" program with activities themed to every Canadian province and territory, on-stage performances, the cutting of Canada's Birthday Cake - where dignitaries were joined by MPs Sandra Cobena and Michael Parsa, a citizenship affirmation ceremony, and more. Stormy weather may have led to the cancellation of evening headliner 54-40 due to stage damage, the fireworks show capped the night as planned.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

OBITUARIES - FOREVER IN OUR Hearts

FLORA JACOBA CORNELIA NYDAM (LIEFHEDBER)

Flora Jacoba Cornelia Nydam (Liefhebber), in her 81st year, of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ontario, passed away peacefully on June 26, 2026, with her family by her side. Despite a valiant struggle and tremendous strength put forth by Flora and the best efforts of the doctors and nurses at Sunnybrook and Southlake Hospitals, treatment was unsuccessful.

Born October 25, 1945, in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Flora was the daughter of Jan and Adriana Liefhebber. When she was seven, she moved with her parents and older sister, Louise, to Aurora, Ontario, where she graduated from Aurora High School in 1964. She completed one year at York University, devoted herself to raising her children, and later built a valued career as a Library Technician—work well suited to a life marked by quiet dedication and a deep respect for life, learning, and books.

From an early age, Flora found joy in the natural world, especially horses, and over time she held a special affection for foxes and donkeys as well.

Her love of architecture, design, and gardening, notably of historic properties, was reflected in her thoughtful attention to home and place. Among her most meaningful accomplishments was her studied contribution to the design and aesthetics of the buildings, gardens, and trails of her home, Foxhall Farm—an enduring expression of care, discernment, and an eye for beauty.

Flora will be remembered as an avid reader and collector, someone whose steady curiosity and appreciation for ideas were part of daily life.

Flora is survived by her loving and caring husband, Bill. She was a dedicated mother to Todd (Patricia) and Jennifer (Jason Wilson), and a cherished grandma to Alysia and Lauren. She will be deeply missed by her nephew, Paul Davies, and her grandnephews, Nathan and Zachary Davies. Also mourning her passing are Bill's family and her friends.

Flora was predeceased by her niece, Natalie, her aunt, Flora, and her sister, Louise.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Canadian Mental Health Association.



Every Detail Remembered | Dignity

ROBERT EDWARD SMEREKA

Robert Edward Smereka died June 27, 2026 at Southlake Hospital. He is survived by his mother Virginia, sisters Karen and Susan and brothers-in-law Jamie Campbell and Kevin Donegan. He is also survived by his many friends in Aurora who gave an outpouring of love and support when he went into the hospital.

Robert was a fun loving person who found unique ways to connect with people from all walks of life. He was able to befriend anyone, anywhere, make them feel seen and bring out their joy. If you were in Robert's circle, he was loyal and helpful whenever needed. Underneath his incredible sense of humour that united us all in laughter was a tender heart. He loved a good time and lived his life to the fullest.

He loved music and went to many, many concerts with a wide variety of friends over the years. He was an excellent golfer and skier and a keen fisherman. He enjoyed good food and wine. His dislike of Google Maps came up frequently as Robert had a desire to be spontaneous and get lost.

His last years were spent being the primary caregiver for our mother. This was an act of compassion and love for Mom, who wanted to stay at home, and for his sisters who lived a distance away. Thank you, Robert. You will be missed by all.

A Celebration of Robert's Life will be held on Wednesday, July 22, 2026 at AW. Shucks, 15230 Yonge St, Aurora, ON L4G 1P2 from 3 – 6 p.m. with Words of Remembrances shared at 4:30 p.m.

Every Detail Remembered | Dignity

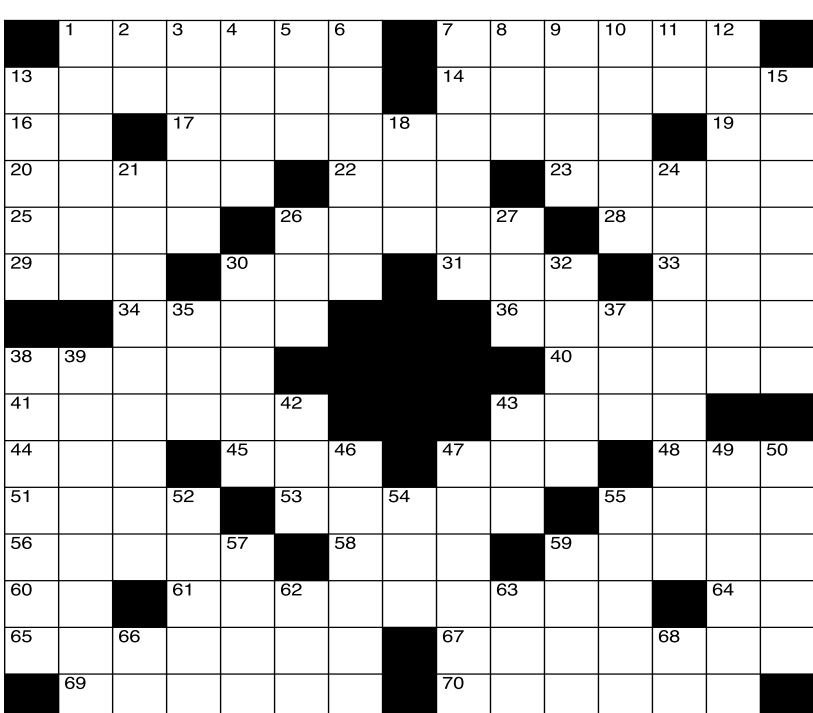


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CLUES ACROSS

1. Mended
7. Hymns
13. Commercial transport of goods
14. Poked holes in the ground
16. They precede C
17. Branch of knowledge concerned with wealth
19. Larry and Curly's pal
20. Injured
22. Popular type of dance
23. Moon crater
25. American state
26. Places to lock valuables
28. Stalk that supports the capsule
29. Keyboard key
30. "... death do us part"
31. A type of cage
33. A place to sleep
34. Annual music awards show
36. Made over
38. Hard, stony substance



CLUES DOWN

1. Hard things to kick
2. Collective of countries
3. Letter of Hebrew alphabet
4. One-time Alabama running back Eddie
5. One's sense of self-esteem
6. Of the teeth
7. Treat with care
8. Type of whale
9. Curved structure
10. Emits coherent radiation
11. One of the Gospels (abbr.)
12. Smallest interval in western music
13. Netherlands seat of government
15. Gives to charitably
18. Lout
21. Pastas
24. Release from restrictions
26. Female sibling
27. Title of respect
30. Silver coins
32. Region in India
35. Partner to cheese
37. Dark or dusky
38. Pacific Northwest tree
39. Exaggerate
42. Toddler
43. Touch lightly
46. Fundamentals
47. Jeopardies
49. Curved structures
50. Isolated, flat-topped hills
52. Forming the bottom layer
54. Reciprocal of sine
55. Genus of Old World birds
57. New York college
59. Cloak
62. Kawhi Leonard's team (abbr.)
63. Vietnamese offensive
66. "The Great Lakes State"
68. "... myself and I"

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From page 4

THINGS... you ought to know

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

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

SATURDAY, JULY 11

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 - 9 p.m. with Sheer Heart Attack - Tribute to Queen. Celebrating the music of Britain's Royal Majesty, Sheer Heart Attack is dedicated to recreating the iconic sound and theatrical energy of Queen, that made them the unforgettable rock legends they are today. They will put on a show you're sure to remember, because they will rock you! Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

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.gardenaurora.ca.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29 WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

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.

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.

ONGOING

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.

has also turned its attention to single-use plastic beverage containers and coffee cups and lids.

In January of this year, a win at the Federal Court of Appeal confirmed the federal government's role in stopping plastic pollution. Despite challenges from the plastics industry, it's time for Canada to move full-steam ahead with additional measures to stop plastic pollution and transition our economy away from harmful and unnecessary single-use plastics:

- Expand the bans, starting with takeout cups and lids, nuisance packaging, and tobacco-related products;
- Support and require accessible and affordable reuse and refill systems to replace single-use plastic packaging and waste with containers that can be used many times;
- Get rid of dangerous chemicals used in plastics and plastic products, including softening and hardening agents, flame retardants and PFAS "forever chemicals"
- End public subsidies to plastics, petrochemical and oil and gas production - which allows plastics to compete unfairly with safer and more durable materials, including glass and metal.

Tell your MP you want to see Canada step up action to end plastic pollution.

Karen Wirsig
Plastics Program Manager
Environmental Defence

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