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A MOTHER'S STORY, A COMMUNITY STORY

Artist Tracey-May Chambers shares the story of her son, Parker, at the Aurora Cultural Centre with textiles overhead representing individuals lost to the opioid crisis. The fabric is woven together to tell a story that impacts everyone.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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“You can’t be a part of the community and not see this” – artist, mom gives grief a voice at Cultural Centre

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Artist Tracey-May Chambers had a lot to process when her son, Parker, died from overdose in 2023. There were the unimaginable feelings within that were so difficult to express, the quest to find an outlet to express her grief.

In the immediate days after Parker’s passing, however, an unlikely conversation

emerged: just what he would be laid to rest wearing.

That detail was the furthest thing from her mind at the time, she says, “but then I realized how important that was to people.”

As far removed as that conversation was from the things that were important to her, she saw the impact of having something tangible to tell a story, and the story of Parker – and many others lost

to the opioid crisis – are now being told through a new textile installation now on at the Aurora Cultural Centre entitled “They are loved – an epidemic of grief.”

“They Are Loved” opened at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Thursday evening and was the focus of an August 13 reception where Gallery Manager Ashlyn Gregory described the enveloping piece as a “site of commemoration and

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ADDRESSING HISTORY, CHARTING A COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

Community leaders, including MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councilors Harold Kim and Michael Thompson and more joined members of the Aurora Black Caucus, Aurora Black Community Association, and the Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association (NACCA) as they observed Emancipation Day at Aurora Town Hall on Friday meeting. For more on the event, which included a call to action, see pages 14 and 15.

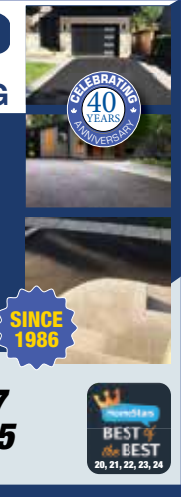
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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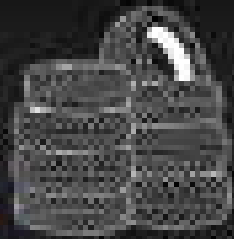


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Local filmmaker’s short film tapped for CBC competition



Aurora filmmaker Beth Evans' short film, Unit 303, will be featured in CBC's Short Film Face Off.

Contributed photo

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

When Beth Evans and her husband bought a unit in the Wells Street Schoolhouse Lofts more than 15 years ago, they initially secured it as an investment property – in more recent years, however, it’s provided a backdrop for creativity which has recently caught the attention of the CBC.

Unit 303, a short film written and directed by Evans and produced by her company, Windrun Media, is one of nine Canadian short films tapped by the national broadcaster for the latest season of its CBC Short Film Face-Off.

The selected short films will be showcased on the CBC over three evenings beginning August 29.

Each film screened as part of the series will be evaluated by a panel of judges, with the ultimate winner receiving a cash prize of \$30,000.

In recent years, when a tenant moved out, Evans saw a prime opportunity to flex her creative muscles in a local location.

She conceived the idea for Unit 303 and completed the script in little over half-an-hour.

“It just came to me, I don’t know what else to say,” says Evans of the film, which follows a man and a woman looking through the eponymous suite.

The circumstances of what brought them there and why aren’t clear until the end of the five-minute reel and Evans tasked herself with shooting the piece in one day with just two actors in the condo suite overlooking the Town Park area.

“I just thought, with two people in there, what would they be doing? If it’s empty, they are either coming or leaving,” says Evans of the initial idea.

Unit 303 made its local debut at Aurora Town Square last year ahead of a screening of York Region director Sean Cisterna’s documentary, Silver Screammers, and the couple’s on-screen journey unfolded in front of a packed house.

“I think the saddest thing that can happen in a relationship is when it just doesn’t work, when somebody’s done

something that maybe could be forgiven, but just can’t be overlooked by the other person,” says Evans. “They are two good people who can’t make it work, and it’s about the heartbreak of that. In my mind, there was no cheating, there was no clear finger-pointing in this relationship, but the deep sadness of it is that despite their efforts, despite their love for one another still, it’s not going to work.

“It’s just one moment in the course of an entire relationship, and it’s just encapsulated in a little five-minute scene.”

Unit 303 will be beamed across the country in the August 29 season premiere of the CBC Short Film Face-Off, alongside two other shorts.

Evans says she’s not only eager to hear feedback from the series’ assembled film critics but to showcase Aurora to the wider country. Of course, the \$30,000 top prize certainly doesn’t hurt!

If she’s lucky enough to win, Evans will invest the money into producing and directing her first full-length feature film. She plans to shoot the feature Aurora – and, inspired by Silver Screammers – with

local residents taking part wherever possible.

The planned feature will follow a woman “feeling erased by the demands of marriage and motherhood who decides to rekindle a connection with a former high school teacher who she had a secret relationship with as a teen.”

“The decision forces her to confront what lies beneath her broken confidence and the quiet inertia that has shaped her life,” says Evans. “It deals with the themes of loss of identity within a marriage, motherhood, and other sensitive topics. It’s a psychological drama and also a dark comedy. The heartbeat of the story is the fact that she has lost her connection with herself as she has immersed herself in her role as a wife and a mother. This loss of identity has led her to search for herself down paths that she probably shouldn’t go.”

Still working on the script, Evans says she’s been workshoping the project in the career accelerator program Women in the Director’s Chair, where feedback has been invaluable.

Whether or not the CBC’s prize money comes her way, Evans is committed to seeing the feature through to completion.

“I am committed to finding a way to make the film regardless, see what support I can muster up within the community and what funds I can put together because this really is the next step for me as a filmmaker and director,” she says. “I’ve done four short films now and it’s time for me to level up to the longer format.

“I’ve been really inspired by [what Cisterna did with Silver Screammers] and I am really hoping with my future film to find similar ways to involve the community in the creation of the film. I think it’s a way to expose people to the filmmaking process and inspire people to tell their own stories. It’s just another way to build community – and to build up that sense of arts within the community.”

For more on the CBC’s Short Film Face-Off, visit shortfilmfaceoff.ca.

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Canada can stop the Bad Bots Blitz

Humans are now outnumbered on the internet. According to researchers, bots account for more than half of all internet traffic. The consequences of this development are starting to show.

A bad bot, or a stealth bot as it is also called, is a crawler that intentionally conceals or falsifies its identity or purpose, circumvents access controls or rights reservations, or impersonates human traffic. A new bipartisan proposal in the United States – the Stealth Bot Prohibition Act – starts from a simple principle: automated crawlers should say who they are and why they are visiting websites. It is an idea WAN-IFRA, the World Association of News Publishers unreservedly endorses and that lawmakers around the world should embrace.

For news publishers, the consequences of today’s bot invasion are increasingly serious.

Malevolent actors use bad bots to steal news content – also behind paywalls – to then put it on what media analysts have called a billion-dollar reseller market, one where AI developers buy from the owners of the bots, not the journalists and publishers. They then use the stolen journalism to create substitutive products that directly compete with the publishers’ websites.

In the words of A.G. Sulzberger, “This theft isn’t just happening because publishers are leaving their toys out on the lawn; it’s happening when they are locked up safely in the house.”

Uninvited bad bots can hit pages millions of times in a single day, slowing down websites for human readers and potentially leading to extra bandwidth charges or even total outages. In August 2025, one UK technology site was taken offline after being scraped 1.6 million times in a single day. The problem has only escalated since: The Wikimedia Foundation, which hosts Wikipedia, now blocks or throttles roughly a quarter of all automated requests hitting its infrastructure, amounting to billions of requests a day from crawlers that ignore its access policies.

This new flood of traffic is changing the makeup of the internet itself, and in the process, creating a significant financial burden for newsrooms both large and small. Publishers have tried to stop these bots on their own by deploying sophisticated blockers, but it’s almost impossible to stop them when malicious bots are able to disguise themselves and act with impunity. Local news providers, already operating at razor-thin margins, can’t afford the higher technical costs.

The US Stealth Bot Prohibition Act is deliberately straightforward. It would require AI bad bots to disclose their identity and purpose, giving news publishers and other content providers the information they need to protect their work from actors that currently often disguise themselves as humans.

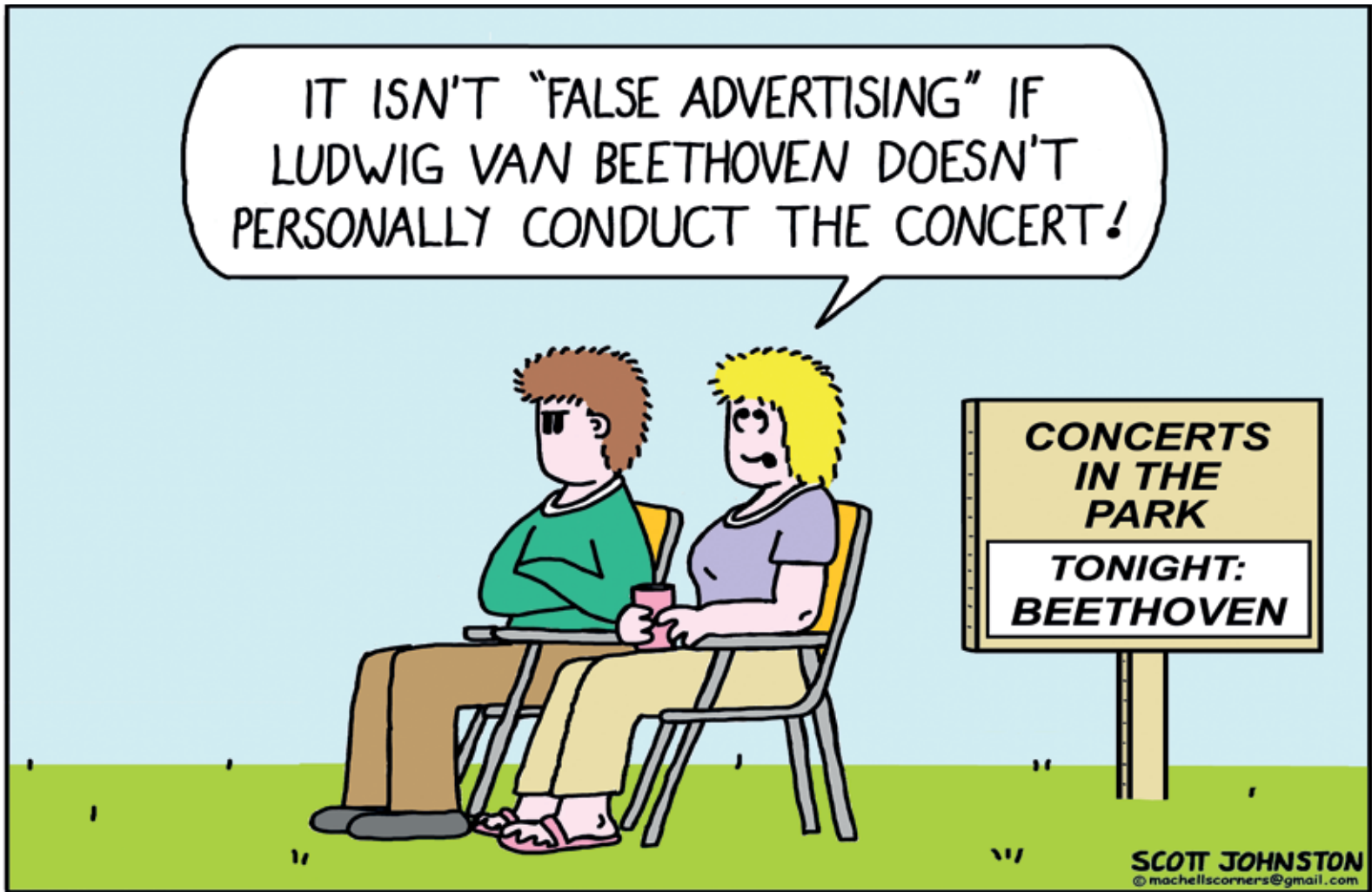
The proposal has received broad support from news publishers. News Corp Chief Executive Robert Thomson has described stealth bots as “the silent scavengers of the internet”, while Condé Nast CEO Roger Lynch has warned that disguised bots scrape original journalism “with zero accountability.”

Transparency is also the essential first step towards a functioning licensing market. Publishers cannot negotiate with companies they cannot identify or protect content when they cannot see who is

Continued on page 13

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

Machell's Corners



Sounds of summer and silence



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

Nails on a chalkboard. The sound of an animal in pain. The voice of someone with whom you don’t have a particularly warm relationship. All of us have certain sounds in our lives that we would rather not hear again, whether the very tone of them makes the hair on the back of your neck stand on end, or triggers a swell of emption you’d prefer not to feel.

Most of us avoid them wherever we can. If we can’t, and know that there’s a good chance of catching that audible trigger somewhere on the wind, we brace ourselves as best we can.

Personally, I try to avoid them wherever I can. But, of course, that’s not always possible.

In a previous job, one such audible trigger was the voice of a co-worker who I dealt with mostly over the phone, only having in-person dealings occasionally.

She was a lovely woman, as far as I know, but there was just a certain something about her voice, an element I’ve never been able to put my finger on despite nearly two decades of hindsight working in my favour, that set my teeth on edge.

More than that, no matter how pleasant our dealings may have appeared if a court stenographer was nearby providing a running written transcript, it was a voice that simply left me feeling depleted after every conversation and I’d need to take at least 15 minutes out of my day to decompress and move on with the rest of the tasks at hand.

Some sounds that make me grit my teeth have thankfully largely come and gone, but a few remain as potent as ever.

I still can’t stand to be in the same room as someone filing their nails with an emery board, for example. The sound of the grit racing against the grain on the nail is one that not only makes those aforementioned hairs stand up and take notice, but leave my eyes darting to locate the nearest exit, just in case.

The sound of someone winding a jack-in-the-box? I don’t really care whether the monkey or the weasel comes out on top in their race around that mulberry bush. No, thank you.

How about June bugs?

In the early days of my career before finding some semblance of work-life balance, I would sometimes pull near-all-nighters to get what needed to be done complete before the weekend. Sitting at my desk in the wee hours of the morning with only the mild buzz of the fluorescent light in my home

office keeping me company – along with the ratta-tat-tat of those brown beetles beating up against the glass of my window, drawn to light.

While I have no quarrel with the June bugs themselves, I always found the slightly hollow sound of that distinct ratta-tat-tat against the pane just a little bit unnerving – and, if one happened to have the misfortune of finding one unexpectedly underfoot, so much the worse.

But there’s truth in the adage of not knowing what you have until it’s gone.

While I am sure this is not the case for everybody – depending, of course, on where you happen to live, the amount of light coming out through your windows at night, or the environmental conditions on your property – I realized the other day that this was the first summer in as long as I can remember where I didn’t once hear that ratta-tat-tat against the window.

I might be alone in this, but its absence, as much as I bemoaned it when it was a near-constant in summers past, is almost as unsettling as the ratta-tat-tat that was part and parcel of their busy season.

It’s recent absence – or, perhaps, rather, my own antennae finally picking up on their absence – made me sit up and think about what else we might be missing, or losing, as the world around us changes.

I was lucky enough to grow up on a home that had a couple of acres to explore. The soundtrack to my summer days, if I was feeling especially outdoorsy, was a near endless playlist of birdsong, the buzzing of bees, and the general hum of other critters adding to the symphony. I write this not out of any misplaced nostalgia, but simply to say that whether I am walking through my current neighbourhood or revisiting some of my old stomping grounds, what was once a rich natural orchestra has dwindled to minimalist Muzak.

Of course, outside of our insect

cousins, whether they’re part of a creepy-crawly equivalent of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir or closer to the one-man-band offered by Dick Van Dyke at the start of Mary Poppins, there are other benchmarks that we subconsciously use to mark the change of seasons.

Not too long ago, there was a general window in time where it was safe to pack away your winter woollies and bring out some of your lighter gear for the spring and summer. Now, doing that is simply a matter of tempting fate.

Given the volatility of the weather, it’s getting harder and harder to leave the house with a safe outfit choice that will get you through the whole day. In fact, I’ve now taken to keeping a couple of changes of clothes in the office, along with an “emergency” pair of boots, just in case any beachy weather in the morning gives way to wind and hail a few hours later.

Heck, even if you’re in the comfort of your own home and have no intention of going out for the day, you only have to look at the microburst that hit northwest Aurora a couple of months ago, leaving a trail of destruction behind it, as just one example on how so much can turn on a dime – and how off-guard we can all be caught.

Whether it is the volatility in our weather or the once-cacophonous medley of our insect brethren winding down to a Billie Eilish-like whisper, it’s getting harder and harder to ignore – and deny – the rapid environmental changes happening in the world around us.

By the same token, it’s also getting harder and harder to allocate patience for those who choose bury their heads in the sand, and either pretend it’s not happening, refuse to look at the big picture, or, worse, resign themselves to the idea that there is nothing we can do here at home because other far-flung populations and governments are doing far more to exacerbate the problem.

While I’d still be hard-pressed to be in the same room as someone filing their nails with reckless abandon, take a stress-free phone call from a past-co-worker, or show any kind of interest waiting for the top to fly off a jack-in-the-box, I have a new appreciation for that hollow ratta-tat-tat against the window.

Is it something I’d seek out? Probably not, but if they came tapping again, I’d welcome them with open arms (not open windows) and hope some other signs of natural healing aren’t too far behind.

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Time Travellers Diary

Originally written by Michael White
Summer Intern, Aurora Museum & Archives.
(Updated by Aurora Museum & Archive
staff for re-issue on August 18, 2026)

A Brief History of the Voting Structure in Aurora

With the municipal election just around the corner and Aurora residents returning to the polls, it is an appropriate time to look back at the history of voting in Aurora.

Beginning in 1887, the Village of Aurora convened a committee consisting of the Reeve, Deputy-Reeve, and one Council member to divide Aurora into three wards to institute a ward voting system for municipal elections. This action by the Village Council coincided with Aurora’s incorporation as a Town in 1888.

The committee’s work, and subsequent by-law, established the North Ward (north of Wellington, either side of Yonge), the Centre Ward (south of Wellington, north of Mosley and Tyler), and the South Ward (all south of Mosley and Tyler). In dividing Aurora into three wards, the committee was looking to evenly allocate Aurora’s population among three easy to remember areas.

The ward system is the division of a municipality into specific areas (or wards) with residents voting only for Councillors running in their ward (similar to federal and provincial elections). In contrast, the Plurality-at-large system allows for a general vote within a municipality with residents voting for any city council candidate running regardless of where the candidate or voter lives within the municipality.

Citizens of the newly formed Town of Aurora, under this new system, would elect three Councillors (for a total of nine) in addition to one school trustee to represent each ward. The Mayor, Reeve, and Deputy Reeve continued to be elected by general vote. The ward system was used by the Town of Aurora for 11 years until municipal voting within the Town was drastically changed.

Fast forward to 1898, an amendment was added to the Municipal Code by the Provincial Government stating that municipalities with populations of fewer than 5,000 people would no longer elect Reeves or Deputy Reeves. Instead, these municipalities would elect a Council consisting of a Mayor and six Councillors only. In addition to these changes, this amendment also directed Municipalities with a population less than 5,000 to no longer use the ward system but rather use a general vote to elect Council members.

Since 1898, Aurora has continued to refine its system of municipal governance. In 1907, the office of Reeve was reintroduced, followed by the office of Deputy Reeve in 1926, at the expense of one city Councillor. Council grew to six Councillors in 1944, and then to eight in 1970 to reflect the growing population; 1970 also saw the end of the offices of Reeve and Deputy Reeve.

Update since the time of original 2018 publication:

Council composition remained at eight Councillors plus one Mayor until the 2018 municipal election at which point Council was reduced to six Councillors.

On July 14, 2020, Aurora Council passed a by-law to establish Ward boundaries, and several options were considered. Ultimately, a six-ward structure was selected, which came into effect for the 2022 Municipal Election.

After 124 years, Aurora’s at-large municipal election system came to an end, and the ward system remains in place for the 2026 Municipal Election.



Stranger Tongs



There are few kitchen tools more useful than a good set of tongs. While simple scissor-style or rear-sprung designs are most common today, this convoluted little number (994.4.8) was a popular enough style in the middle of the 20th century to have at least three different manufacturers. Our example here is completely unbranded, and possibly a Canadian-made copy of the tongs made by the popular (and fantastically-named) brands “Gadget Master” and “Handy Things.” Just squeeze to select your spinach, turn your tuna, or pick your pepper!

For generations, Canadians have believed that hard work and responsible choices should lead to a better life. Families could count on the promise that by working hard and managing their finances wisely, they would be able to afford a home, support their children, and build a secure future.

Today, that promise feels increasingly out of reach. After more than a decade of Liberal economic mismanagement, Canadians are paying the price. This past year Canada recorded the weakest GDP growth in the first term of any recent Prime Minister, with the economy contracting by 0.5 percent. The bottom 80 percent of Canadians are falling behind as household costs continue to outpace incomes. A recent Ipsos poll found that 70 percent of Canadians say high taxes are eroding their standard of living. At the same time, investment is leaving Canada, more than 61,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since January 2025, and businesses are increasingly looking south to the United States.

Liberals argue that today’s economic challenges are the result of global events beyond Canada’s control. While inflation, supply chain disruptions, and international uncertainty have affected countries around the world, government policy determines how well a country responds. After years of decisions that increased taxes, expanded red tape, delayed major projects, and discouraged investment, Canada has been left less competitive and less resilient. Global challenges may be unavoidable, but poor policy choices have made them harder for Canadian families and businesses.

I have sat in the House of Commons and heard Liberal ministers celebrate announcements while dismissing Canadians’ concerns. But Canadians do not experience the economy through speeches in Parliament. They experience it at the grocery store, at the gas pump, and around their kitchen tables. After all the announcements, spending, and promises,



COSTAS’ CORNER

MP Costas Menegakis
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

they are left asking one simple question: do you feel better off?

Every week, I hear from residents in Aurora and Richmond Hill who are doing everything right but are still falling behind. Young families have given up on home ownership. Seniors struggle to stretch fixed incomes through another month of rising grocery bills. Working parents wonder how they can continue providing for their children as the cost of virtually everything continues to climb.

The affordability crisis is not simply an abstract debate. It is the defining challenge facing Canadians today. Few statistics illustrate this reality more starkly than the unprecedented demand for food banks. Food Banks Canada recently reported nearly 2.2 million visits in a single month—the highest number ever recorded. Even more troubling, many of those seeking assistance are employed. Food banks were created for temporary emergencies, not as a permanent support system for working families.

Another troubling reminder came in UNICEF’s latest report card on child well-being among wealthy countries. Canada ranked well below expectations on measures including life satisfaction and child poverty. In one of the world’s most prosperous nations, too many children continue to grow up in households struggling to meet

their basic needs.

Behind these statistics are real people. Parents are skipping meals so their children can eat, seniors are choosing between groceries and medication, and young Canadians are delaying marriage, children, or home ownership because financial stability seems further away each year.

Canadians understand that government decisions matter. Public policy can either ease financial pressures or make them worse. When spending fuels inflation, taxes increase, and excessive regulation discourages investment and housing construction, families ultimately bear the cost.

Canada needs a renewed focus on creating the conditions for prosperity. That means encouraging investment, rewarding work, lowering unnecessary taxes where possible, removing barriers to housing construction, and restoring confidence that the next generation will enjoy a better standard of living than the last.

Economic growth is not an abstract concept. It allows businesses to hire, workers to earn higher wages, governments to fund essential public services, and families to build financial security.

Affordability is about more than economics; it is about dignity. That is why restoring it must be our top priority. Canadians deserve policies that make life more affordable, encourage economic growth, and restore hope that the promise of this country remains within reach for everyone willing to work for it. The record demand at food banks and the troubling findings on child poverty are more than statistics. They are a call to action. Our country is strongest when Canadians have the opportunity not simply to survive, but to thrive once again.

I will keep fighting for these fundamental principles by continuing to hold the Carney liberals to account and by proposing common sense policies that can provide much needed relief to our community and to all Canadians.

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

Knowingly causing harm or death to innocent people — not to mention other life forms and natural systems — is a crime. But that’s what the fossil fuel industry and its supporters have been doing for decades. In a just world, they’d face consequences. Instead, they’re being richly rewarded.

As far back as the 1970s, scientists working for oil giants including Exxon and Shell accurately warned that burning oil, gas and coal would cause global temperatures to rise, with “potentially catastrophic” effects. Other studies show the oil companies knew about the risks as early as the 1950s.

Instead of heeding the warnings, executives launched a massive campaign to cast doubt on and even outright deny the evidence. That campaign is ongoing.

Why would people knowingly put human health and survival at such great risk? Sadly, it comes down to money — a lot of money. Wars help drive those profits up, and many of the world’s wealthiest people care more about money and short-term profit than future generations. As writer George Monbiot notes, “Almost all the very rich are heavily invested in [fossil fuels].”

In just the first three months of the

Climate change is evidence of intergenerational crime

United States war against Iran, the eight largest oil companies raked in profits of more than \$90 billion — double from the same period last year. Analysis by the Guardian found Aramco, BP, Shell, Equinor, TotalEnergies, Eni, Chevron and ExxonMobil “made more than \$700,000 of profit every minute over the spring quarter.” Every minute!

Another study “found the emissions from any one of the 14 biggest companies were each enough to cause more than 50 heatwaves that would otherwise have been virtually impossible,” the Guardian reports.

Meanwhile, ordinary people struggle to pay for food, housing and transportation as gas prices spike.

This has many people calling for a “windfall profits tax.” That’s a start but it doesn’t go far enough, especially as the consequences of rapid global heating continue to mount: unprecedented wildfires and smoke-clogged cities, deadly heat domes, extreme drought, massive flooding, refugee crises, plant and animal extinctions, increasing spread of insects and diseases, sea level rise and more.

Those who have fuelled or supported this global crisis must be held legally accountable — and lawsuits have been

launched in many jurisdictions, with varying degrees of success.

A woman in Washington state is suing the biggest oil companies for wrongful death after her mother died on the hottest day the state’s history, during a 2021 heat dome that killed 1,200 people in the region and that scientists say would have been virtually impossible without fossil fuelled climate change.

The David Suzuki Foundation has supported a lawsuit by 15 young people who claim the Government of Canada is contributing to dangerous climate change. It’s expected to go to trial in October.

As I’ve often said, though, it shouldn’t be up to young people. As parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and simply adults who care about others, we should be doing all we can to prevent the climate crisis from worsening. That means pushing back against the fossil fuel industry — from advocating for windfall profits taxes to ending subsidies to halting further industry expansion.

Some organizations have even called for “Nuremberg trials for Big Oil.” But as Public Citizen’s Climate Accountability Project director Aaron Regunberg writes in the Guardian, “there are already

Continued on page 23

Check your voter information for accuracy before October 26 Election

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The 2026 Municipal Election is fast approaching and it's time to double check to make sure your voter information is accurate before Aurorans go to the polls on Monday, October 26.

This year's Voters List went public August 12 at aurora.ca/Vote2026 and between now and October 1, residents are asked to take a look and see whether any changes need to be made.

"The Town of Aurora is encouraging eligible voters to take an important first step towards participating in the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election by ensuring their voter information is accurate and up-to-date," says the Town of Aurora. "Taking a few minutes to review voter information now can help make sure you receive important election-related information without delay. This includes checking your school support, birthdate, updating your mailing address, adding eligible household members, or removing individuals who have passed away.

"Voting is your chance to have a say in the future of Aurora. Every ballot helps shape the decisions and priorities that will guide our community in the years ahead."

To be eligible to vote in the upcoming election, you must be a Canadian citizen, at least 18 years of age, must live in Aurora – or you or your spouse must own or rent property in Aurora – and you must not be prohibited from voting by law.

The deadline to register as a Mayor, Council, or Education Trustee candidate is this Friday, August 21, and here's where the ballot stood at the start of the week:

- MAYOR**

Shawn Deane
John Gallo
Tom Mrakas (incumbent)
- WARD 1 COUNCILLOR**

Lauren Hanna
Rocco Morsillo
- WARD 2 COUNCILLOR**

Angela Daust
Marco Di Girolamo
Phiona Durrant
Brynn Lansdown
- WARD 3 COUNCILLOR**

Nikki Alber
Alexandra Bonham
Robert James Fraser
Reza Vaez Ghamsary
- WARD 4 COUNCILLOR**

Shaheen Moledina
Michael Thompson (incumbent)
- WARD 5 COUNCILLOR**

Charity Dela Cruz-Toupin
Jessie Fraser
Milton Hart
Harbinder (Binda) Thandi
George Tremtsidis
- WARD 6 COUNCILLOR**

Jibraan Khan
Harold Kim (incumbent)
- TRUSTEE - YCDSB**

Brendan James Cescolini
- TRUSTEE - YRDSB**

Emma Sears
Bruce Yu



Shania Twain tribute artist "Shania Twin" will return to Saturday Night Fever next month in a tribute to Twain and Keith Urban.
Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger

Saturday Night Fever goes country for September street party

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local music lovers might be counting down the days until Dwayne Gretzky and Big Wreck headline next week's Aurora's Ribfest, but there is plenty more music where that came from in September as the community shifts gears to Saturday Night Fever.

The annual September street party, which sees Yonge Street closed between Wellington and Mosley Streets for an afternoon of music and family-friendly fun extending well into the evening, will take place this year on Saturday, September 12, from 4 – 11 p.m., and will be a celebration of all things country.

"Residents and visitors are invited to enjoy an evening of live entertainment, dancing, shopping, food and community fun in the heart of Aurora," says the Town of Aurora. "This year's country-themed event will have guests singing along, kicking up their heels, and embracing the spirit of Nashville right here in downtown Aurora.

"Explore local shops and vendors while enjoying delicious menu offerings from downtown restaurants and food vendors throughout the evening. Whether you're a dedicated country music fan or simply looking for a great night out with family and friends, there's something for everyone at Saturday Night Fever."

Music kicks off at 4 p.m. with Whiskey Glasses: A Tribute to Morgan Wallen, followed at 5.30 p.m. with line dancing in front of the stage led by New Age Country.

Lighting up the stage again at 6.30 p.m., will be The Ultimate Garth Brooks Experience, followed by another round of line dancing before the Country Thunder Show: A Tribute to Keith Urban and Shania Twain leads the evening entertainment at 9 p.m.

Shelley Ware, Special Events Supervisor for the Town of Aurora, says this year's country theme was inspired, in part, by the tremendous response they received last year, where Saturday Night Fever

was a celebration of all musical things Canadian, particularly when "Shania Twin" took the stage in tribute to the iconic homegrown artist.

"We were fortunate enough to have the tribute to Shania Twain last year when we celebrated Canadian artists and it just felt it was the right moment when we were thinking about 2026 to have the Tribute to Keith Urban back as well, and brand new to this area is the tribute to Morgan Wallen. When you look at the four different artists, I feel like they are four different slices of the country sound.

"We're so happy to have New Age Country as they are going to be doing two 45-minute sessions of line dancing while the stage is being turned over between the three bands. All we need now is for Mother Nature to cooperate!"

In addition to the stage entertainment and dancing, there will be plenty of activities to keep people engaged and having fun throughout the evening. Among the added attractions this year will be lasso twirling, axe throwing, and the debut of Slabtown Armoury's new food truck, which will not only be grilling up some tasty treats but offering an array of their signature ciders as well.

Local businesses in Aurora's historic downtown core will also be getting into the act.

Royal Rose Gallery, for instance, will host a hands-on art activation outside their storefront which will help keep creative juices flowing. Chalk artist Kim Egan will also be on hand leading residents in the chance to decorate picnic tables which will later be distributed in parks throughout Aurora.

"With this casual atmosphere, it can really be a hugely memorable evening," says Ware of Saturday Night Fever. "Our downtown is beautiful and even if some of the stores aren't open, I really hope that people realize how accessible it is and how close it is. There's a buzz of activity going on down there, so it's time to dust off our boots and grab our hats!"

For more on this year's Saturday Night Fever event, visit aurora.ca/SNF



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Province announces \$16.6 million in funding to support Southlake

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Nearly \$17 million in Provincial dollars are coming to Southlake Health’s Newmarket campus to improve accessibility and infrastructure.

The funding was announced at Southlake’s Cancer Centre on Friday morning by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, who said \$3.7 million through Ontario’s Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund (HIRF) will support significant infrastructure upgrades, while the balance of \$12.9 million would support ongoing hospital operations.

“Across Ontario, our government is investing more than \$281 million in critical upgrades and repairs at hospitals and community health care facilities, which includes \$266 million through the HIRF investment,” said MPP Gallagher Murphy. “Our support for Southlake also extends to services that patients rely on every day. Our infrastructure is critical because without infrastructure we don’t have a building where people can come to for care. Last year, we did see more than \$14.8 million in support of emergency care, expanding CT operating hours,



Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy was joined by Southlake Health President & CEO Paul Woods, Chief of Staff Charmaine Van Schaik, and other members of the Southlake team for Friday morning’s funding announcement.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

operational funding to reduce wait times, as well as surgical recovery times. These investments, they all matter because our community is growing and our local health care system has to grow with it.

“It takes a village and Southlake has the cream of the crop when it comes to

the professionals who help care for our community members. Every investment we make ultimately supports the people who walk through the doors, who are seeking urgent care, who are seeking comfort, who are seeking hope. That... is what it’s all about: making sure that when someone in our community needs care, they can receive it close to home in a safe and modern environment.”

Dr. Paul Woods, President & CEO of Southlake Health, said the \$12.9 million increase in operational funding comes at “an important time for Southlake” and the communities of northern York Region and southern Simcoe County they serve.

“As our communities continue to grow, so too does the demand for leading-edge care,” said Woods. “A new patient arrives at Southlake approximately every four-and-a-half minutes and when they do, we need to be ready. Today’s investments will help ensure that we continue to deliver the safe, timely and compassionate care every patient deserves.

“Operating funding is what allows hospitals to provide care every day. It supports the people, programs and services that patients rely on, from emergency and inpatient care to surgery, diagnostics and specialized regional programs. It also gives us greater flexibility to respond to the growing needs of some of the fastest-growing and aging communities in Ontario, while continuing to invest in quality, innovation and the patient experience. It is especially timely as we look towards the future and our vision to build a distributed health network that delivers leading-edge care even closer to home. We recognize that every public dollar comes with a responsibility to use it wisely and Southlake remains committed to responsible financial stewardship, continuously improving

how we deliver care and ensuring investments are directed where they have the greatest impact that benefits patients, visitors, staff and medical staff.”

Speaking to the impact of the HIRF funding, Nathan Robinson, Southlake Health’s Director of Capital Development, said the \$3.7 million will help renew critical behind-the-scenes and front-of-mind resources that support patients, staff, and physicians there every day.

“The funding will support priority infrastructure projects that includes dealing with our emergency power systems as well as our heating, cooling and air conditioning systems. These projects are important to create a safe and reliable environment for patients, families and care teams,” he said. “This ensures critical systems remain energized during a power outage, air management systems are reliable and that our infrastructure is in alignment with infection control standards.

“This funding also has a secondary benefit that sometimes isn’t considered. When critical infrastructure projects like these are funded through the HIRF program, the hospital is able to move forward with other high priority projects to improve or enhance the patient experience. This year, the capital that Southlake would have been allocating to deal with those infrastructure projects is going to be reallocated to renew the lobby of our East Building. That project is going to improve accessibility and safety for all patients and visitors that visit the hospital.

“The reality of operating a busy hospital is that the infrastructure requires constant attention and that attention is critical to ensuring clinical teams and patients can focus on what matters: high quality care.”

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Community Corn Roast supports Aurora Food Pantry

It was a busy Saturday at Town Park on August 15 as the Optimist Club of Aurora (TOP ROW) joined forces with the Aurora Farmers' Market to grill up some locally-grown bounty at the Market's annual Community Corn Roast. On hand enjoying the day were (SECOND ROW) Tauryn, Nicoli, and Taeja; Maddie and Brad; (THIRD ROW) Rocco, Paul, Javed, Shane, and Bob of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame; and Lori, Kelly and Ken of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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You can't be part of a community and not see impact of mental health: artist and advocate

From page 1
a catalyst” for important community dialogue.

“This installation represents [lives lost to opioids] materially by using textile donated by families surviving the loss of a loved one,” said Gregory. “[Chambers] described her art as a way for her to speak. It occurred to me that not only has she created a way for herself to speak, but she’s made a space for countless others to be heard as well. What an incredible thing to do – to create something that extends the platform and amplifies the voice of others, that makes them feel seen. That’s real advocacy and it makes a difference.”

The exhibition forms a web of interwoven pieces of fabric, each varying by colour, texture, and material, each one representing a life lost, and each life represented in a catalogue that walks the viewers through an emotional journey of who and what each swatch represents.

Holding up a small piece of greenish-blue fabric, Chambers explained to those at the reception that it was a piece of the hospital gown Parker had died in.

“I keep it with me because I wanted to remind myself all the time not just how important he was, but how important all of us are,” she said. “All of the people who are contained in this body of work, all of you here, everyone out there, too. There’s no hierarchy, there’s just people, and I think sometimes we forget that.”

Speaking to The Auroran, Chambers, a Metis textile artist, says much of the work she creates has a basis in a drive for social justice. Working with textiles comes



Artist Tracey-Mae Chambers, joined by Ashlyn Gregory of the Aurora Cultural Centre, displays a fabric swatch from the hospital gown her son, Parker, died in. Portions of the gown have been incorporated into Chambers’ new textile installation at the Centre. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

from “not knowing how else to talk about these things,” she says.

“I’m not particularly well-educated or well-spoken, but I can speak in this kind of form,” she says. “Building something out of textiles just seemed like a natural way to do it, considering there was a big conversation when my son died about what he was going to wear. It wasn’t important to me at the time. The hospital sent his hospital gown home as a comfort

to his dog and I had to keep looking at that hospital gown. It was messing me up, so my husband put it away and I said I’d figure out what to do with it later. This is what I figured out what to do with it, because I wanted other families to have a voice as well – but in a physical, tangible sense.”

As so many stories weave into the installation, there are additional common threads that bind the individual stories, and one of those pieces is the need for access to care.

“Parker had been on a waiting list for 11 months to get into a space and we found out two weeks after he died that there was a space for him,” she says. “That’s not helpful in a first-world country to not have access to mental health supports for someone who wants them. The caveat is you can’t make someone go into recovery. Parker was ready to go into recovery and get some help, but that is one of the common threads I hear – the stigma around mental health aspects of addition.”

Another common thread the artist found from people who submitted textiles representing a loved one lost to the crisis was a feeling of being unseen and unheard by the powers-that-be.

“Being seen is part of it, and also being connected to someone else, so I think it’s a community created from someone with known experience, with lived experience.”

The catalogue accompanying the textiles themselves has become

something of a living document as well, she notes, as grief changes over time. People who have submitted their stories have modified what they wanted to say about their loved one as their grief has evolved, and that is something she has welcomed.

She also welcomes dialogue from the community as a whole, she says, as everyone has been impacted by the opioid crisis in one way or another.

On August 31, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Aurora Cultural Centre and CAYR Community Connections will host a special event in association with this installation to mark International Overdose Awareness Day, which will feature keynote speakers, including Chambers, and information about harm reduction.

“How can you live in a society and not be affected by the things going on around you? What I want them to take away from this is that each story is individual and each of these people was deeply loved, whether they were housed or unhoused, none of that matters – they’re human beings and there is a way through this, right? It’s through community and the most important thing is community.

“You can’t be a part of community and not see this. It’s affecting someone. It affects every single person. You can’t walk down the street, any street, and not be affected by the sun, the rain, the bump in the sidewalk that trips you. It doesn’t matter what it is, you’re affected by the things around you, including this.”

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ENTERTAINMENT LINE-UP

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

8:30 p.m. Boats
— Tribute to Lil

8 p.m. Dragon Duet

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

11 a.m. From the Hip
— Tribute to The Temptations Hip

1:15 p.m. Duet

3:30 p.m. Silver Heart Attack
— Tribute to Queen

5:45 p.m. Monday Women
— Tribute to Pop Culture

9 p.m. Big Band

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30

11 a.m. Vinyl Fun

1 p.m. Run 2 You
— Tribute to Bryan Adams

3:30 p.m. Gold Dust Women

5:30 p.m. Professional Rib Judging

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York Region artists put fresh spin on collage art in REMIX

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Collage is a time-tested art form, but seven York Region artists have come together to put a fresh spin on the medium in Remix, a new gallery exhibition launched by the Aurora Cultural Centre last week.

Remix, which features the work of Elif Giray, Kate Greenway, Catherine Marshall, Sheresha McIntyre, Alysha Rocca, Julia Spittel, and Edward Tsui, is on now through November 15 in the Aurora Cultural Centre’s Great Hall Gallery.

“Using collage as a metaphor for the construction and continual evolution of identity, Remix considers how collage-making mirrors the ways in which lived experiences, cultural influences, and memories shape our self-perception,” says Ashlyn Gregory, Gallery Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre. “The artists in this exhibition embrace collage not only as a technique, but as a perspective. By bringing together seemingly unrelated fragments, they articulate an understanding of identity as intersectional and, at times, contradictory.

“Drawing on the rich history of collage, the artists in this exhibition create works that are simultaneously referential yet completely unique. Their influences – ranging from abstract expressionism and surrealist automatism to pop art and protest art – are a testament to the versatility of collage and artists’ long-standing fascination with the medium.”

Speaking at last week’s Opening Reception for Remix, Gregory said she was pleased to help bring these visions together and the exhibition



Pictured here at the Thursday night opening of Remix are, from left to right, Edward Tsui, Kate Greenway, Alysha Rocca, Sheresha McIntyre, Julia Spittel, and Catherine Marshall.

to life. “The greatest and most rewarding part of my job is collaborating with artists and finding meaningful ways to bring their work to the community,” she said. “It’s been a pleasure to work with all of you.”

About the Artists:

Elif Giray
(@egiray)

Elif Giray is a Toronto-based, self-taught collage artist of Turkish-Canadian heritage. Influenced by the Automatiste movement and impressionism, she explores memory, relationships, and the passage of time through intuitive practice. She received the Gladstone Award at the Toronto Outdoor Art Fair.

Kate Greenway
(@beaglesofballantrae)

Kate Greenway works in watercolour, mixed media collage, and glass – stained, fused and mosaic

– sometimes blurring the distinction between mediums. She completed an award-winning Masters in Arts-Based Research, and a widely exhibited Ph.D. on artistic representations of closed adoption.

Catherine Marshall
(@catherinemarshall.art)

Catherine Marshall is a visual artist and long-time resident of Aurora. She uses a diversity of mediums and unconventional texture tools to create intriguing paintings. Inspired by nature, emotions, and imagined landscapes, Marshall invites viewers onto a path of exploration. She has exhibited in various galleries including Twist Gallery and Latcham Art Centre.

Sheresha McIntyre
(@collaji.p.henson)

Artist, photographer, and curator, Sheresha McIntyre works predominantly with analog collage. Her works touch on various themes including fantasy, retro play, and the Black experience, taking form in colourful abstraction.

Alysha Rocca
(@oushies)

Alysha Rocca is an emerging artist with a BFA from OCAD University. Exploring feminism and environment consciousness, Rocca’s practice is rooted in community, sustainability, desire, and consumption through the use of fabric and fibre.

Julia Spittel
(@juliaspittelartist)

For long-time Aurora resident Julia Spittel, nature is at the heart of every work of art she makes. Julia’s expressive media have evolved over her career from pottery and photography to painting and glass making. Outside of Julia’s artistic practice, she can be found walking in local forest trails with her Golden Retriever, Ellie.

Edward Tsui
(@edward_tsui_artist)

Based in Thornhill, Edward Tsui studied art in Hong Kong followed by architecture study in the UK. His practice is an exploration of the built environment and how the self responds to architecture. For Tsui, buildings resonate meanings with stories to be told.

Canada can stop the Bad Bots Blitz

From page 4

taking it. The EU’s Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive gives rightsholders the legal right to reserve “in a machine-readable way” their content from text and data mining, and since 2 August 2026 AI developers can face fines of up to €15 million or 3% of global turnover for ignoring those reservations. But that right is hollow if the machines knocking on the door are allowed to lie about who they are. An opt-out only works if the crawler reading it identifies itself honestly in the first place, and enforcement is only as strong as the ability to tell truthful crawlers from dishonest ones.

The consequences of the bad bot invasion are real. Publishers bear the cost of producing original reporting and maintaining the digital infrastructure from which it is distributed. Yet bad actors can extract that work, sell access to it and help create AI products that compete directly with the original sources.

The strip-mining of journalism must end not by pitting publishers against AI companies, but by fixing a market that currently cannot function at all. Transparency about who is crawling, and enforceable consequences when they lie about it, are the precondition for any functioning digital marketplace, whether that market rewards publishers, AI developers, or the readers both ultimately serve.

Canada, which has been a leader in smart media policy, should introduce bad bot legislation as a first step toward building a fair AI licensing market

Stig Ørskov is Chief Executive Officer of WAN-IFRA (the World Association of News Publishers), representing 20,000 publications in more than 120 countries.

Paul Deegan is vice chair of WAN-IFRA’s Committee of Directors and president and CEO of News Media Canada



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Emancipation Day looks to the Leaders issue call to action at



(LEFT) Ron Kellman, Milton Hart, and Mayor Tom Mrakas. (RIGHT) Adedoyin Adetayo represented the Aurora Black Community Association.



Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The community came together at Town Hall on Friday evening to mark Emancipation Day, commemorating the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1834.

Led by the Aurora Black Caucus’ Milton Hart and Ron Kellman, it was an evening that was both steeped in history and focused on the future as leaders shone a light on proactive ways to address historic wrongs, the impacts of which are still being felt today.

The evening, which was held in Council Chambers, included remarks from Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Mayor Tom Mrakas, a video message from Ontario Premier Doug Ford, and messages delivered on behalf of Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena, who was unable to attend due to the birth of her daughter earlier in the week, and on behalf of

Aurora Black Community Association Founder and CEO Phiona Durrant.

Poignant reflections were also offered by Jerisha Grant-Hall, Founder and Executive Director of NACCA (Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association), Dr. Jeffery Thompson, Chair of the York Region Alliance of African-Canadian Communities, lawyer Maxine Palomino, and Aurora Black Caucus’ Michael Corniffe.

While the speakers reflected on the history of Emancipation Day, which Hart said the Caucus has extended to an Emancipation Month, they also focused on the future, and the efforts that all community members need to make to achieve true equity.

As important as it is to focus on the history of Emancipation Day, those who fought for freedom, and the impact it had on so many individuals around the world, Grant-Hall said it is important to not lose focus on what we can do today and the actions that can be taken in the here and now.

“Freedom was fought for, defended, demanded, and I want us to know this. The people who need to be in this room to hear this, unfortunately, are not here – the conversation disruptors,” said Grant Hall, adding freedom was carried in every single act of resistance and rebellion. “There is no need for us to debate the past. Today, what I want us to ask, what I want us to talk about is the future. The greatest question is, what does repair require? For too long, our response to slavery has centered remembrance, plots, proclamations, museums, and so on. These things matter. Memory matters. But memory alone does not heal trauma. Memory alone does not reduce health inequities. It does not improve Black maternal health. Memory alone does not create culturally-responsive mental health care, nor change educational outcomes. Memory alone does not build wealth, create leadership, or dismantle anti-Black racism.

“If we truly believe slavery was one of history’s greatest crimes against humanity, then our response cannot stop at commemoration. It must include repair. And this is why the conversation around reparations is important.”

When people say “reparations” all too often people think “handouts,” and that is far from the case, she continued.

“It means building structures, putting structures in place to repair the harm that we’ve inherited from slavery and colonialism,” she continued. “Ontario has already begun showing us what repair can look like, not by using the word ‘reparations’ per se, but by recognizing that anti-Black racism continues to shape health outcomes. Ontario Public Health Standards acknowledges that Black communities experience unique and persistent health inequities rooted in the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and systemic

Continued on page 15



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past with a focus on the future: Aurora Black Caucus event



(FROM LEFT) Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, lawyer Maxine Palomino, and NACCA Founder and President Jerisha Grant Hall.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger and Brock Weir

From page 14

anti-Black racism. That matters. That recognition matters. It matters because once we acknowledge that history continues to shape health, we also accept responsibility for changing those outcomes. That is why Black mental health is not a niche issue. It is a health equity issue, a justice issue. It is reparative justice issue.

“People often imagine reparations as a cheque. I imagine something much bigger. I imagine Black-led mental health systems, Black-led research, Black-led organizations being adequately resourced, Black-led leadership being developed. I imagine scholarships, food sovereignty work, housing stability, community wealth, Black data sovereignty, spaces where our children see themselves reflected, where they don’t have to prove themselves worthy. Every one of those things repairs something that slavery and systemic racism attempted to destroy. That is reparations, my friends, not simply compensation. That’s recovery. That’s repair. That’s restoration.”

Grant Hall added she doesn’t want her own children to just learn stories about resilience, rather she wants them to “inherit systems that no longer require them to be resilient.”

“I want them to inherit communities where thriving is ordinary, where belonging is expected, where culturally responsive mental health care is available, where Black leadership is not exceptional, it’s expected,” she said. “I hope we leave here with the understanding that reparations are not about paying for the past; the reparations that we’re talking about is about building a future where the harms of the past no longer determine who gets a future, and if we truly believe that health is a human right, then repair is not optional. It is our shared responsibility and commitment towards full emancipation.”

These sentiments were echoed by Palomino, who delivered an address entitled “The Legacy and Responsibility of Emancipation.”

The lawyer said her views on Emancipation Day were filtered through her personal lens of a Jamaican and Canadian “with roots that reach before enslavement, like all of us, through enslavement, like some of us, and into resilience, achievement, and victory.”

“When I think about Emancipation,

I think about our ancestors before enslavement. Their families, their governance structures, their laws, their traditions, their histories, their learning, their stories, their conflicts, their joys. I think about Timbuktu in present-day Mali, an important centre of scholarship centuries before emancipation, and I think about the leaders and the ordinary folk like us, walking, working, sleeping, loving, traveling, cooking, dancing, simply living,” she said. “Enslavement did not begin their lives. It interrupted their lives already being lived. I think about our ancestors who were ripped from their homes and those who remained. The belly-bottom pain, anguish, and terror of not knowing what happened...”

“When I think about Emancipation, I think about Marcus Mosiah Garvey and his ideas around Black economic power, Black institutions, Black dignity – the organizations here that were spoken about echo those words. In 1920, the Universal Negro Improvement Association adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World. They spoke about racial discrimination, employment, education, equal treatment under the law, political representation, and economic opportunity. What year was that? 1920. More than 100 years later, what are we talking about? Anti-Black racism, employment equity, representation, Black entrepreneurship, education, fairness in our institutions. Sounds familiar...”

“Emancipation Day, Black History Month, the days come, the days go, or the months come, the months go, and I look around this room and there are organizations and community leaders doing the work. Some we know, some I know do the work quietly. Yet people working toward connected goals can find themselves competing simply to survive or for limited resources. The needs are too great for that. That is why reparations are important, not simply because of what is owed for the past, but because of what is required to repair what continues into the present and into the future.

“I think of Emancipation, I wonder what it really says about the society, that the people experiencing injustice, name the problem, suggest the solutions, act on the solutions, but yet no matter what is accomplished, the hill still seems harder to climb. When we say ‘Happy Emancipation Day,’ yes, we celebrate our victories,

we honor our history by knowing who our ancestors are, the steps they took, not simply what happened to them. We build on their work, we acknowledge that we are not starting from nothing. They did not arrive empty, that’s a myth. They laid foundations for us to build on and go beyond.

“Ask yourself, from what you have heard today, from the speakers before and just now, what will you do with it, how will you connect with your community, the organizations doing the work, how will you connect with them, how can we work together, how will you help move all of us forward, the Black community forward, and perhaps just as importantly, how will we know whether collectively we are actually moving forward instead of the cycle of restarting? Emancipation, for me, it is a continuous lesson. The learning is already there. Are we listening? Are we doing?”

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Vasiljevic and Wright ready to run to Toronto to raise \$10K for Aurora’s Food Pantry

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora’s most magnanimous marathoners are locked and loaded to raise over \$10,000 for the Aurora Food Pantry next weekend

For the fifth consecutive year, Nem Vasiljevic and Taylor Wright will start their 42.2 KM charity fundraising trek to Toronto from the Filly and Co. where Vasiljevic is the congenial Bar Manager. The dynamic duo will complete their arduous journey at the CN Tower on Sunday, August 23.

Taylor, who just graduated from Teachers’ College, is ready to raise much-needed funds for the local food bank.

Helping food banks has been a long-time tradition in her life.

“I did my high school community service hours at a food bank. It seemed like an important thing for us to do five years ago. It hard to believe, but we’ve raised over \$34,385 over the last four years and, including this year’s amount so far, it’s over \$43,000 all together.”

The aspiring teacher and part-time server is moved by the community’s support of their annual Charity Run.

“It’s cool that we have posters up in bars across Town. The Filly has the best community spirit—they’re so supportive. I can’t believe we’ve been doing this for five years. The support has been so impressive.”

Vasiljevic, whose wife Laura volunteered as a food bank deliverer in Barrie until the program ran out of funds to operate, knows the importance of raising funds to battle food insecurity.

“Giving back to the community is definitely first in terms of the most satisfying aspect of our annual run. A close second is a couple of cold Steam Whistles at the end

of the run. We always end the run around 10:45 at the Steam Whistle Brewing Roundhouse by the Rogers Centre. It opens at 11 a.m.”

In quick-fire response to her running partner’s insights, Wright discloses their traditional post-marathon combo at Steam Whistle: “Two pints and a pretzel for carb loading and then someone comes to pick us up.”

Vasiljevic and Wright have come to embrace the sights and sounds of the GTA when they set off from the Filly and CO at 5:45 a.m.

Vasiljevic explains, “I like the early morning start—we try to stay out of the hottest sun of the day. It’s really quiet on Yonge Street and it’s so historic. It’s also a scenic run, but a mundane drive. We recognize every detail as we’re running, including Miller Tavern, which is very tempting once we get into Toronto.”

Wright echoes her running partner’s insights about the tranquility of running a marathon early on a Sunday morning: “It’s great to see the city wake up and to see the street lights turn off one by one. We also pass TMU where I went to school.”

Both Vasiljevic and Wright expressed their gratitude for the \$8,627 they’ve raised so far and are closing in on their \$10,000 goal to support the Aurora Food Pantry.

Vasiljevic encouraged prospective benefactors to “Donate what you can.”

“If you can’t give, share our message and make a quick re-post on social media.”

Wright concurred and the long-time food bank volunteer added, “If you can’t donate money, donate your time at the Aurora Food Pantry.”

Time has been of the essence for both Vasiljevic and Wright as they prepare their bodies for the 26-mile jaunt down Yonge Street.



Nem Vasiljevic and Taylor Wright are pictured at The Filly & Co, the starting point for their fifth-annual Charity Marathon supporting the Aurora Food Pantry.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

The marathon is second nature to Wright, but it has its own special challenges.

“I’ve loved running all my life since I raced in an elementary school cross country meet. I don’t love going to the gym, but I’ve been going with a group of friends which makes it more fun. Strength training is an important part of injury prevention while you’re preparing for a marathon. I went to Guatemala in February and hiked volcanoes to build endurance. All the prior training comes together because you have a goal in mind and the training gets done.”

Vasiljevic provided his own training update: “I’m entering my deloading week since it’s a week today so I’ll be cutting

down on running Normally, I’m running 25-20 KM a week and biking for over an hour to do another 25 KM. Any low impact exercise will be in place this week, including swimming. The bike has been a lifesaver because being on my feet for 10-12 hours behind the bar is a killer when you still have to put in your miles.”

To donate to Nem and Taylor’s Charity Marathon and support the Aurora Food Pantry, go to <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/pages/nem-taylors-5th-annual-charity-marathon> or visit the Aurora Food Pantry’s website for their promotion of this annual fundraiser at <https://aurorafoodpantry.ca>

Junior Panthers Martone, Lazarou, and Hicks selected to play for Team Canada’s 18U squad versus the USA



BY JIM STEWART

Three Central York Junior Panthers were selected to play for Team Canada’s U18 squad that took on the USA in a three-game series at the Olympic Oval in Richmond, BC from August 12-15.

High-scoring forwards Audrey Martone and Demi Lazarou, as well as big game goaltender Claire Hicks, were selected to the national squad after excellent performances with the

Panthers in 2025-26. The terrific triumvirate took the momentum from the best season in Junior Panthers’ history and showed those skills and winning ways at tryout camp.

While Martone, Lazarou, and Hicks were prepping to play the Americans in British Columbia, their Head Coach Steve Dempsey was putting the remaining Junior Panthers through their preseason paces at Rink 2 of the Aurora Community Centre last

Monday night.

After the spirited workout, the veteran bench boss extolled the work ethic of all three national team selections.

“The credit goes back to the players. They’ve put in the time. They’ve taken the feedback and applied it to their game. They’ve bought in to all our offseason activities—our conditioning workouts and our team-building. We even do a Book Club on *Legacy* where each player reflects on a chapter that connects to laying a foundation and leaving the program better for future generations of Panthers.”

Coach Dempsey noted that his players “have been applying the skills we learn in the summer in purposeful practices.”

“Our program is immersed in the details. For these players, they know practices are not a time to rest on laurels. It’s valuable time to master skills

and always look to improve. Audrey, Demi, and Claire made Team Canada because they’ve taken care of those details. They’ve shown both mental and physical preparation to create opportunities for themselves. That was a highly competitive national camp and there were some surprises when the final roster was selected. It really shows that you can leap over people if you get better each day.”

After stepping off the ice surface at ACC2, Central York Girls Hockey Association President and U22 Assistant Coach Mark Dubeau reveled in the players’ selection to Team Canada 18U.

“We’re certainly very proud of these three players and their accomplishments. We’re also proud of the twelve Panthers who were selected to attend the High Performance Camp for the Ontario Summer Games. It’s great to see.”



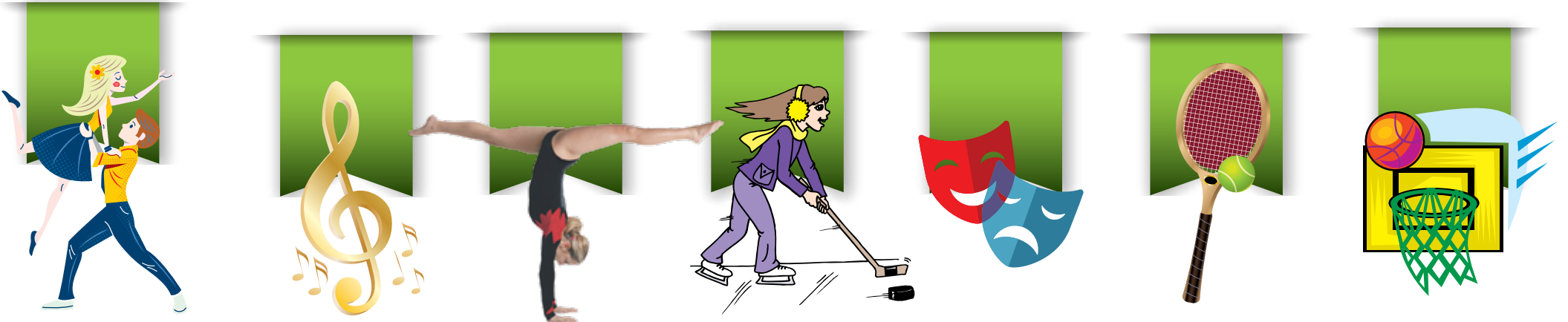
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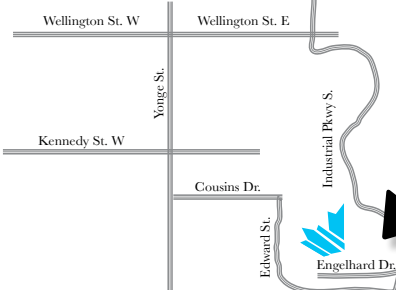


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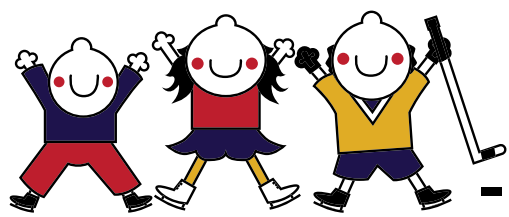




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At International Gymnix, Everley Perry, Maddeleine Pourgoutzidis, and Michela Circelli were crowned All-Around Champions, Emilia Selman won Gold on Floor, and Isla Gerson represented Team Ontario while also earning silver on both Beam and Floor.

At the Provincial Championships, Everley Perry also earned Silver on Floor, Lily Manzo won Bronze on Beam, and Parker Dolmage captured Silver on Floor while receiving the Special Award for Beam.

Congratulations to all of our athletes on an incredible season!

Eva Hamid – Silver medal on Beam at the Provincial Championships and qualified to represent Team Ontario at the National Championships, where she earned a team Gold Medal.

Everley Perry – All-Around Champion at International Gymnix; Silver Medal on Floor at the Provincial Championships.

Lily Manzo – Bronze Medal on Beam at the Provincial Championships.

Parker Dolmage – Silver Medal on Floor and recipient of the Special Award for Beam at the Provincial Championships.

Isla Gerson – Qualified to represent Team Ontario at International Gymnix.

Maddeleine Pourgoutzidis – All-Around Champion at International Gymnix.

Michela Circelli – All-Around Champion at International Gymnix.

Emilia Selman – Gold Medal on Floor at International Gymnix.

Epic Rush rocks Town Park with majestic musicianship and spot-on renditions of seventeen progressive-rock gems

BY JIM STEWART

Despite an ominous forecast, Wednesday’s Epic Rush Concert in the Park dodged a climate change bullet.

No wildfire smoke. No microburst. No freakish thunderstorm or deluge.

The intrepid audience members who uttered “Damn the Torpedoes” and set up their lawn chair with a Slabtown Armoury libation in hand were treated to a stirring evening of 17 Canadian progressive rock classics.

Remarkably, the thunder, lightning, or sideways rain never arrived, but a hurricane of hits rolled out by a Rush tribute band made the trip to Town Park a midweek treat.

Set One opened with “Subdivisions,” then Epic Rush rolled through a whirlwind of Lee, Lifeson, and Peart’s complex compositions – the range of which appealed to both casual Rush fans and hard-core aficionados of the prog-rock triumvirate.

“Distant Early Warning,” “Freewill,” “Time Stands Still,” “Digital Man,” “Hemixan,” and “YYZ” featured Alex Kuthy scaling the heights of Geddy Lee’s vocals and replicating his bass guitar magic; Don Dewulf’s perfect representation of Alex Lifeson’s smoldering lead guitar work; and Eric Kuthy’s rapid-fire drums and percussion as homage to Neil “The Professor” Peart.

All three caught the eyes and ears of the assembly.

Set One ended with Kuthy’s rousing rendition of “The Spirit of Radio” and the layered song inspired an obligatory trip by many to the Slabtown tent for second half reinforcements on a beautiful summer evening.

Set Two featured a costume change for the guitarists as Kuthy donned a red tie and Dewulf donned a red blazer; perhaps in homage to the mid-point song of the second half: a hard-driving

delivery of “Red Barchetta.”

The second set exploded into the Town Park air with two of Rush’s commercial hits which receive regular rotation on FM classic rock stations: “Tom Sawyer” and “Limelight.” Peart’s lyrics—a nod to The Bard—were delivered with sterling clarity by Kuthy: “All the world’s indeed a stage / And we are merely players / Performers and portrayers / Each another’s audience / Outside the gilded cage.”

Epic Rush excelled as “performers and portrayers” in the second set. They plunged headlong into an acoustic delight entitled “Broom’s Bane” delivered by the debonair Dewulf who had his electric guitar strung over his shoulder in readiness for a smooth transition into the classic ballad “The Trees.”

The parable, penned by Peart in 1978 for the Hemispheres album, has even more relevance today as a cautionary tale, given the impact of far-right forces on our politically-polarized continent.

Following the band’s full-throttle rendering of “that song about a red car,” Epic Rush took us back to the soaring lyrics and falsetto notes featured in “Closer to the Heart” with its unique use of Peart’s bells and Lee imploring the audience to “mold a new reality closer to the heart” – more timely words for folks that has fallen into heartless echo chambers to seek day-to-day meaning.

Hard core Rush fans fell into the tribute band’s climactic combo of “Overture—2112” and “Grand Finale” and clamoured for one more song.

The Kuthy brothers and Dewulf obliged with the pulsating “Working Man” as an encore. Their tight, concert-ending rendition reinforced the sad reality that such a range of vocals could only be delivered by a Rush Tribute Band in 2026.

Continued on page 21



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(Clockwise from Bottom Left) Epic Rush hit Town Park on Wednesday, August 12, with a full program of music that got local music lovers up on their feet. Among the residents who came out for the party were the Carnegie family; Denise, Andrew and Alison; and Lissa, Susan and Heidi.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



Epic Rush rocks Town Park with majestic musicianship and spot-on renditions of seventeen progressive-rock gems

From page 20

Coincidentally, Rush was performing on Wednesday night—their third of four concerts at Scotiabank Arena as part of the revamped band’s comeback tour featuring two 73-year-olds and a new on-stage supporting cast that has enabled them to be back on the road after an 11-year hiatus.

Here’s why the savvy audience at Aurora’s Town Park got a better deal.

The hundreds who surrounded the bandshell on a perfect summer night enjoyed a free outdoor concert rather than dropping between \$400 to \$960 for lower bowl seats to take in Lifeson and Lee at The Bank.

Epic Rush’s lead vocalist, bass player, and keyboard player Alex Kuthy covered ALL of the canonical songs in Lee’s former vocal range—alas, Geddy’s husky 73-year-old pipes won’t allow the performance of many of Rush’s signature songs in 2026.

I found these omissions disappointing and Lee’s cracking voice was tough to listen to back in 2015 at the ACC when the fabulous trio of Lee, Lifeson, and Peart took their final bows on Bay Street.

I can’t imagine what the legendary Lee offers in vocals eleven years later, but Wednesday night’s vocal performance in Aurora by Kuthy was advantage Epic Rush.

Eric Kuthy, Epic Rush’s drummer and Alex’s brother, could be heard amid an array of percussion instruments nearing Peart’s complex, 40-piece kit.

He donned Peart’s head gear and, most importantly, provided the other-worldly rhythms and rapid-fire percussion to impel his Tribute Band

along all night.

Peart passed away tragically in 2020 and although Rush has brought in a very talented drummer from Germany to perform Peart’s technically-challenging beats, Rush purists at Town Park listened in abject amazement at Kuthy’s brilliant percussive acumen.

Epic Rush’s lead guitarist Don Dewulf showed off his outstanding skills from the opening chords of “Subdivisions”—complementing the introductory keyboard tones in Rush’s most popular and commercial song. It was a great choice to open a concert and show off Dewulf’s considerable skills. Dewulf performed with the same steady and understated performance style of Alex Lifeson who has always allowed his guitar to do most of his talking on-stage. Lead guitarist Dewulf and bass player Kuthy were in perfect unison all evening—displaying the kind of chemistry that the two Rush legends, Lifeson and Lee, have demonstrated on stage for decades.

In addition to enjoying these three masterful musicians render the complex Rush catalogue with seeming ease, Concert in the Park denizens enjoyed Slabtown Armoury ciders and beers for \$8 rather than paying \$25 for a libation at Scotiabank. The same Town Park fans also enjoyed the gustatory pleasures of a “Grabby Meal”—2 x 4-ounce beef patties, cheese, onions, pickles, and Smash Sauce complemented by a bag of kettle chips and a cold drink for \$16.99-- from the Smash & Grab Burger Co. Food Truck. The same combo meal is over \$35 at The Bank on Bay.

Lead guitarist Don Dewulf, in our

on-stage post-concert interview, noted the most satisfying aspect of performing all the amazing guitar solos that Lifeson has created: “It’s fun to play and it’s challenging, too. I could play ‘Tom Sawyer’ a thousand times and never grow tired of it.”

When asked what it was like to watch a Rush concert on Tuesday night in Toronto and play their music on Wednesday night in Aurora, Dewulf differentiated the concerts: “They’re separate events. We loved their songs so when they retired after the Final Tour in 2015, we thought we should try this. We wanted to fill a gap in the market. Tonight, we have communion with the 18,000 fans that were at Scotiabank this week.”

Dewulf was pleased with his band’s performance on Wednesday night and when asked which song was his favourite to perform in the Town Park Bandshell, he answer was swift and deferential: “YYZ—it’s got such a hard base line and Alex was great tonight performing it.”

He praised the great music that Lee, Lifeson, and Peart have provided for

generations and acknowledged that “We’re not Rush—we don’t pretend to be.”

Perhaps the die-hard Rush fans in attendance at Town Park would disagree with Dewulf’s self-effacing remark. For two hours on Wednesday night, Epic Rush’s masterful performance might as well have been Rush and captured an era when the Rock and Roll Hall of Famers were at their physical peak as performers. Wednesday night was not about nostalgia or genuflecting to Canadian progressive legends as folks did during their pilgrimage to Scotiabank Arena this week.

Instead, the hundreds who air-drummed, played air guitar, and bobbed in their chairs with the best of them – and judiciously avoided the dance floor – enjoyed a rich playlist performed note for note by a full range vocalist, a sublimely-talented lead guitarist, and a fully-committed drummer who conjured up collectively many fond memories of three of the greatest musicians in Canadian history.

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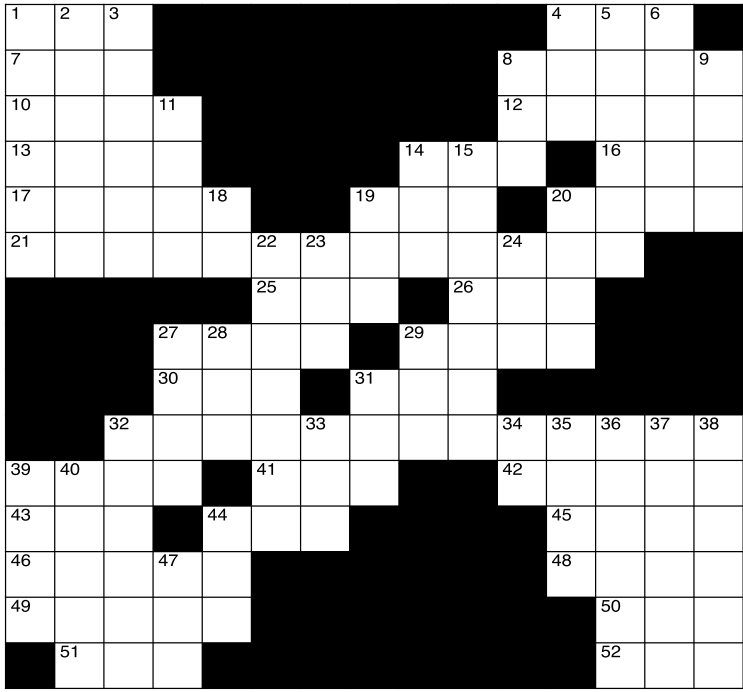
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Microgram
- 4. Fixed charge
- 7. Each
- 8. Feeling of humiliation
- 10. Coat with sticky substance
- 12. Powerful “Severance” family
- 13. Japanese city
- 14. “Pulp Fiction” actress Thurman
- 16. Hat
- 17. Place where rockers work
- 19. Psyche
- 20. Snakelike fishes
- 21. Where people live
- 25. Body part
- 26. Old towel
- 27. One’s essential being
- 29. Japanese alcoholic beverage



CLUES DOWN

- 30. Boxing’s GOAT
- 31. Wet muddy ground
- 32. Christian Laettner is one
- 39. A place to store lawn tools
- 41. Large tub for liquid
- 42. Old World lizard
- 43. One-time European member group
- 44. Healing student
- 45. Nuclear weapon
- 46. “Kiss of the Spider Woman” actress Sonia
- 48. Silk garment
- 49. About some Norse poems
- 50. Woman religious community member
- 51. Congressman (abbr.)
- 52. Two-year-old sheep
- 1. An insane person
- 2. “Homeland” actress Danes
- 3. Buttock muscles
- 4. US federal agency
- 5. Birds of prey
- 6. Electronic communication
- 8. Ocean
- 9. Terminates
- 11. Low-pitched sound from a bell
- 14. Exclamation: yuck!
- 15. A place to attach a boat
- 18. Exclamation of surprise
- 19. Make a mistake
- 20. Border line
- 22. Have religious faith
- 23. Klutz
- 24. Large tree
- 27. House of __ rulers
- 28. Red deer
- 29. Small coin (French)
- 31. Popular sandwich
- 32. 10-year period
- 33. Not good
- 34. Government lawyer
- 35. Egypt’s intelligence agency
- 36. Without an occupant or incumbent
- 37. Stain with one’s hands
- 38. Crippling
- 39. One point east of southeast
- 40. Large, united groups
- 44. __ and cheese
- 47. Alcoholic beverage

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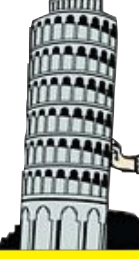
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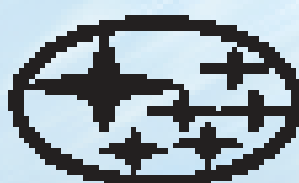
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