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THE AUROREDAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

TheAuroran.com

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FREE

WEEK OF AUGUST 27, 2026



SHOWTIME IN AURORA – Aurora's three-part Movies in the Park summer series is now underway following opening night at Town Park last week. Here, Edward and Callum settle in for the double feature of Moana and Legally Blonde. For more on the Movies in the Park series, see Page 13.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Registrations close and the race is on in the 2026 Municipal Election

Four-way race for Mayor with last-minute registration

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It will be a four-way race to be Aurora's mayor in the next Council term after photographer and journalist Yafang Shi threw her hat in the ring on August 21, the final day to register as a candidate ahead of the October 26 municipal election.

The final week of registration brought out further candidates in the Council races for Ward 3, Ward 5, and Ward 6.

Aurora's Mayoral mayoral campaign kicked off on the first day of registration, May 1, when incumbent Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo and resident Shawn Deane formally filed their papers. Incumbent Tom Mrakas, who

was first elected Mayor in 2018 formally registered to vie for a third consecutive term on May 8.

This year's municipal election will bring a new face to Ward 1 as Councillor Ron Weese opted to not seek re-election.

In the running to represent the Ward this fall are Lauren Hanna, Chair of the Aurora Public Library

Continued on page 6



MAYORAL STAKES – In the running to serve as Mayor of Aurora for the 2026-2030 Council Term ahead are, from left, Shawn Deane, John Gallo, Tom Mrakas, and Yafang Shi.

PHOTOS BY BROCK WEIR & CONTRIBUTED

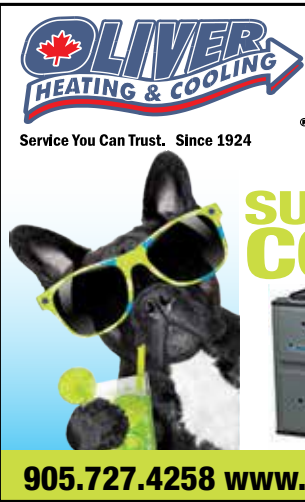
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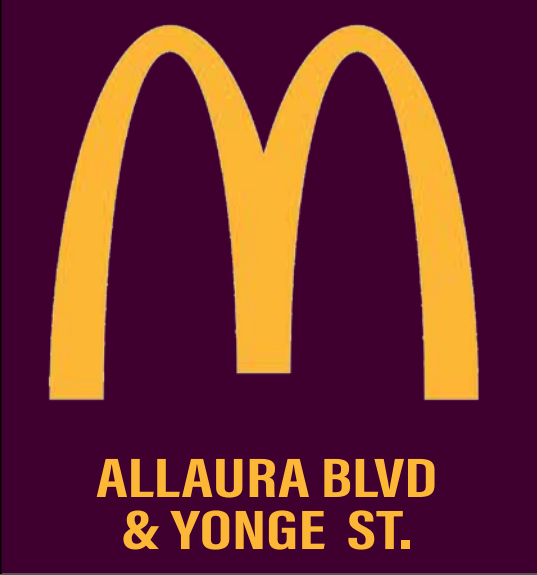
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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

August 27, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Thursday, August 27	10 a.m.	Video Conference	Property Standards Committee
Thursday, August 27	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Cannabis Retail Review Task Force
Tuesday, September 1	9:30 a.m.	Newmarket CC	Joint Council Committee (CYFS)
Tuesday, September 8	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, September 8	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Committee of the Whole
Wednesday, September 9	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, September 10	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Monday, September 14	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Heritage Advisory Committee
Wednesday, September 16	6:30 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board (6:30-7 p.m. Public Meeting)
Wednesday, September 16	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board
Tuesday, September 22	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, September 22	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Week of September 28	No meetings		

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

What's Happening

PRESENTS

AURORA'S

RIBFEST

The Tastiest Event of the Year

AUGUST 28-30, 2026

MACHELL PARK • 2A AURORA HEIGHTS DRIVE

FANTASTIC FOOD & LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

FRIDAY 9 P.M.

Dwayne Gretzky

SATURDAY 9 P.M.

BIG WRECK

aurora.ca/Ribfest

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: Joanne LaMantia - Somewhere Else

Somewhere Else celebrates the world around us, bringing the outside in, taking us to a place once travelled to or a memory that feels like home. When I paint, I'm a million miles away from the whispers of everyday life, transporting me to Somewhere Else. I love to find the whimsical realism in nature, whether in the bark of a tree, the ripples of a lake or in the ocean's waves. These paintings invite the viewer to wander and discover their own Somewhere Else. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.

YOUR TOWN.
YOUR VOTE.

Check your voter information
before **October 1, 2026**.

aurora.ca/Voters



AURORA'S
2026 Municipal Election
CERTIFIED CANDIDATES

aurora.ca/Candidates

Volunteer at the Aurora Farmers Market!

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

Sign up: aurora.ca/Volunteers.

Contact: theaurorafarmersmarket@gmail.com.

STRONG IN
SPORT
PROGRAM

September 26 to
November 14, 2024

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Aurora Family Leisure Complex
Gymnasium

\$40 for 8 weeks (Thursday's)
Girls ages 10 to 12
Registration required

aurora.ca/GenderEquity

TD PRESENTS

AURORA'S 2026

CONCERTS
IN THE PARK

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Aurora Town Park • 49 Wells Street

SEPTEMBER 2

The 99s

aurora.ca/SummerConcerts

AURORA'S 2026

MOVIES
IN THE PARK

Double Header Movie Nights!

Aurora Town Park • 49 Wells Street

Thursday, August 20

Thursday, August 27

Thursday, September 3

For more details and to see what's playing visit:
aurora.ca/MoviesInThePark

A MONTH OF
CULTURE
SEPTEMBER

ART

DOORS OPEN

EXHIBITS

MUSIC

FILM

PERFORMANCES

ARTIST TALKS

WORKSHOPS

LEARN MORE

auroratownsquare.ca/MonthOfCulture

DUST OFF YOUR BOOTS, AURORA!

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COUNTRY
FEVER

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

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aurora.ca/SNF

AURORA'S 2026

MULTICULTURAL
FESTIVAL

Global Cultures, Local Connections



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Aurora Town Park • 49 Wells Street

12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Aurora Town Square • 50 Victoria Street

#AuroraMulticulturalFestival • 905-726-4762

aurora.ca/MulticulturalFestival

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Best of community set for spotlight in Aurora’s “Month of Culture”

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Town Square will be a celebration of all the communities that call Aurora home as the Town celebrates a “Month of Culture” this September. A collaboration between the Town of Aurora and its cultural partners, including the Aurora Public Library and the Aurora Cultural Centre, the program of activities promises dance and poetry, food and films, and commemorations both celebratory and poignant.

The program begins September 9 with an open studio session hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre, and an interactive and hands-on session on Indigenous beadings and teachings hosted by the Aurora Public Library. “Culture includes visual arts, performing arts, heritage and history,” says Nichole Campsall of the Town of Aurora. “We wanted to make sure that each of the different partners was touching on different types of experiences for the community. September includes National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, so each of us have been looking at what we have to offer and making sure that we [present] the community a well-rounded experience with something for everybody.

“One of the ways I like to think about culture is how people spend their time, where they go when they’re looking to make memories and how they like to make those memories. I think we’re uniquely positioned here [at Aurora Town Square] to become part of people’s everyday lives and habits.”

Included within the Month of Culture program is the Town’s annual



Aurora’s annual Multicultural Festival, set for Saturday, September 20 at Town Park and Town Square, will be at the heart of the Town’s Month of Culture program.
Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger

Saturday Night Fever street party, which will take place on Yonge Street between Wellington and Mosley Streets on September 12, from 4 – 11 p.m., featuring a celebration of all things country music. Also on for September 12 is a performance from the Tabriz Ensemble, representing the music and dance of Azerbaijan, from 2 – 3 p.m.

The Library continues its programming on September 14 with a screening of Sounds & Pressure: Reggae in a Foreign Land. Hosted in partnership with the National Film Board, this presentation will take place from 6 – 8 p.m.

On September 17, the Aurora Cultural Centre will host Laila Biali in concert, with her presentation “Joni Mitchell & the Canadian Songbook” at 7 p.m., followed on September 18 by a screening of Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 classic Romeo & Juliet, which Aurora Town Square will host as part of its Flashback Film Series. Pre-film activities begin at 6 p.m., followed by a 7 p.m. showtime.

The Aurora Cultural Centre will

showcase their newest artist-in-residence, Nancy Hallas, in studio on September 19 from 12 noon to 2 p.m., amid the colourful cavalcade that is the Town of Aurora’s Multicultural Festival, which takes place at Town Park and Town Square from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“We’ll be starting off the celebrations at Town Park, in partnership with the Aurora Farmers’ Market,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Supervisor for the Town of Aurora, noting that the Town Park festivities will once again feature a Community Zone, where local organizations can reach new audiences. “We’ll have eight different cultural dance performances showcased at Town Park back-to-back until 12.30 p.m. Then, starting at 12.30, we’re outside at Town Square with back-to-back different cultural performances.”

One such returning favourite is Chinese dance, says Ware, while the cultures of Spain, Mexico, Egypt, Brazil, Greece, and several South Asian cultures will take the stage as well.

“Back by popular demand is the face-changing opera, which was wild last year, and we’ll also get to wake up the dragon in a ceremony,” she says. “Throughout the building, we’ll have many activations, such as face-painting, balloon-twisting, henna art, a caricaturist, crafts, and we’ll also be celebrating food from around the world, offering three different foods each hour – nine different flavours within a three-hour time span.”

One such local culinary offering will be a corn roast, hosted by the Optimist Club of Aurora, which will feature condiments – “cob-diments,” says Ware – highlighting how different cultures season the popular field-fresh treat.

“It’s all about tempting your tastebuds and taking them on a journey,” says Ware, adding some additional attractions will include a belly dance and Bollywood dance workshops, an exhibition of Chinese art, including calligraphy, and more. “Our three options per hour might be a main, an appetizer, and a dessert

Continued on page 13

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Sandra Cobena
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
NEWMARKET-AURORA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Article highlighted
need for mental health
services in the community

(Re: “You can’t be a part of the community and not see this” – artist, mom gives grief a voice at Cultural Centre, August 20)

Thank you for the very thoughtful article this week on the, “They are loved - an epidemic of grief” textile installation at the Aurora Cultural Centre. The opioid epidemic is real and taking lives in our community.

The fact that Parker was on the wait list for mental health services for 11 months is a tragic outcome--and illustrates just how much work we have to do to help those needing services in our community.

We have all seen with our own eyes the vulnerable among us, sleeping in the stairwells of the GO Train station or the ATM vestibule at the bank.

We can and need to do better.

Robert James Fraser
Aurora

(Editor’s note: Robert James Fraser is a Council Candidate for Ward 3 in this year’s municipal election)

Region seeks
community leaders
for Agriculture and
Agri-Food Advisory
Committee

York Region is seeking applications from individuals with knowledge, experience and a passion for the agriculture and agri-food sector to serve on its Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committee for the 2027 to 2030 term.

Members provide advice to York Regional Council and staff on issues affecting the sector and help inform the implementation of York Region’s Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy.

York Region is currently recruiting seven members of the community and industry groups including:

- Agricultural businesses, organizations and associations in York Region
- Agri-food value chain businesses, including input suppliers, food processors, distributors, food service providers and retailers
- Citizens-at-large with demonstrated knowledge, experience or interest in the agriculture and agri-food sector

Learn more about the opportunity to join the Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committee at york.ca/form/agri-food-advisory-committee.

Deadline to apply: Friday, September 25, 2026 at 5 p.m.

Region of York

Canadians shouldn’t
be asked to subsidize
oil industry: reader

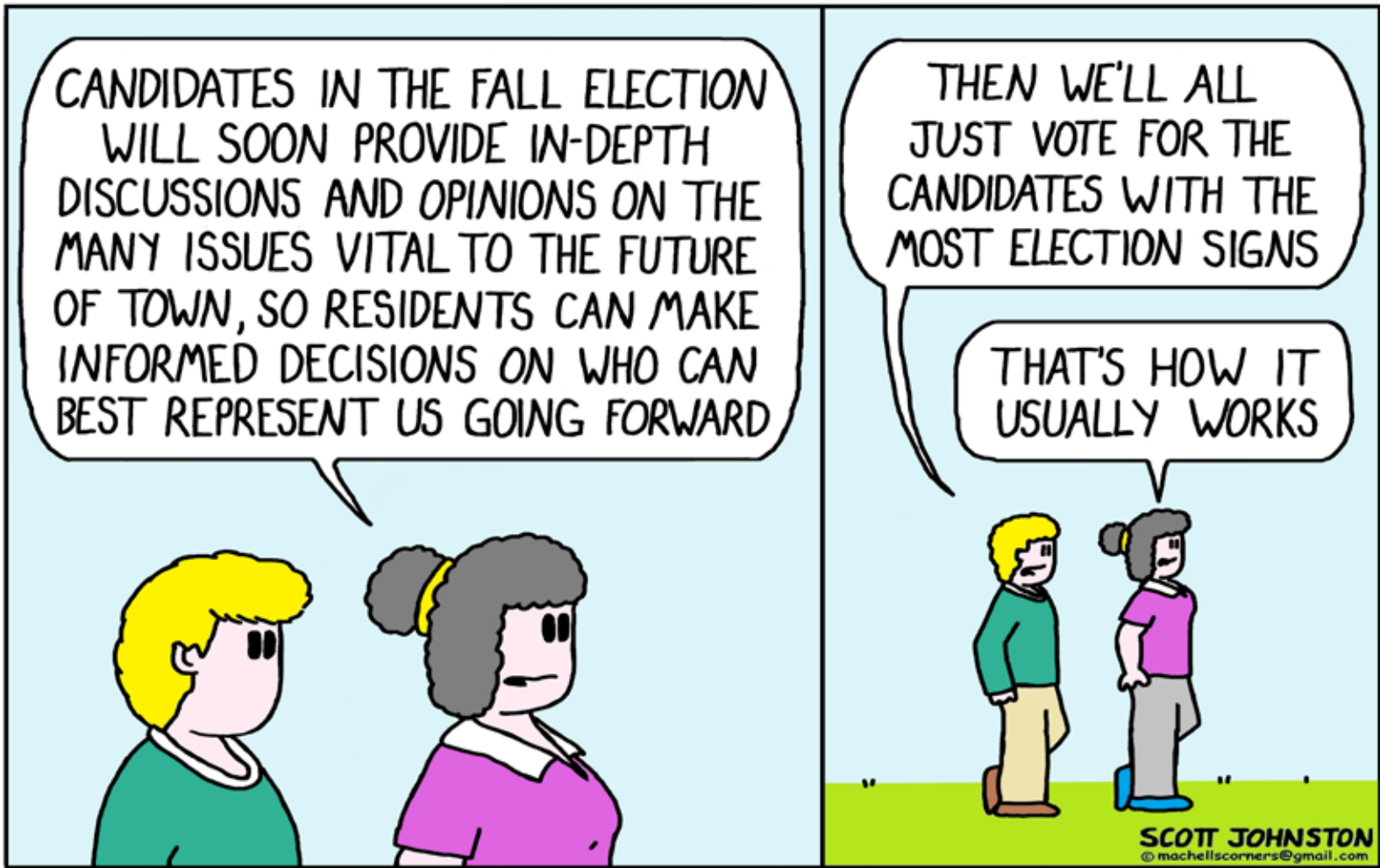
While communities battle floods, heat waves, and wildfire smoke this summer, oil and gas companies are posting record profits. That is not a coincidence. It is the business model.

Rather than taxing this windfall or holding polluters accountable, the federal government is handing the industry billions in public support for new pipeline projects. That is money that could fund healthcare, wildfire response, or a genuine transition to renewable energy.

Canadians should not be asked to subsidize the same industry that is driving the disasters we are living

Continued on page 5

Machell’s Corners



Ripping off the Band-Aid



BROCK’S
BANTER

Brock Weir

national unity over Provincial interest at a majority level,” the poll found. “Seven-in-10 (69 per cent) Canadians want a ‘Team Canada’ approach from their province; majorities in every province agree, ranging from 57 per cent in Saskatchewan to 75 per cent in Manitoba.

“This, despite elevated concern from Canadians that this trade dispute will hurt their province. Two-thirds (66 per cent) believe the trade war will very or badly affect their province, including 68 per cent in B.C., 70 per cent in Ontario and 70 per cent in Quebec who say this. Those three provinces are expected to be the epicentres of any job losses caused by the latest round of Trump tariffs.”

There is a lot to iron out domestically in the coming days, weeks, and months, and a lot of uncertainty, fear, and frustration will need to be weathered by just about every Canadian in just about every sector as we re-calibrate our collective direction amid the disintegration of one of the most reliable international relationships we have had in our history.

By the same token, however, I am surprised one word failed to make the Angus Reid cut: Relief.

It sounds counterintuitive to say “relief” was one of the myriad feelings that coursed through my veins on Saturday morning as we waited for the Prime Minister to detail some of the factors that led to the collapse of trade talks, but it is true.

Given Trump’s propensity to continually change the goal posts in any talks, no matter the benefit to his people, it was clear from the outset that Canada was going into negotiations in anything but good faith. It was clear from the outset that we, as Canadians, would be expected to do all of the giving in this relationship, would be expected to settle for a deal that would inevitably be worse than what we’ve got, would be expected to settle for a deal that just

one side could blow out of the water, whenever they felt like it, for whatever reason, and we would be expected to live with a deal that wasn’t worth the paper it was written on.

“Our government understood, before many, that America would transform all its commercial relationships, that it would put a series of tariffs on its closest allies, and use economic integration as a weapon,” said Carney in his Saturday morning address to the nation. “That its signature was written in pencil.

“While the U.S. has imposed a seemingly endless stream of tariffs and threatened more, Canada has, by contrast, taken several steps in good faith to find compromise and secure a comprehensive deal in the best interest of Canadians and Americans. Our negotiators sought not only to reduce tariffs, but also to restore a degree of certainty and stability – through a new, comprehensive agreement that Canadian businesses and workers could rely on.”

This, of course, was not to be – and many saw the writing on the wall. While “relief” might be a strange word to use in this context, it’s like a weathered Band-Aid, holding onto the remains of a wound with as much light as its adhesive allows, has finally been ripped off, we can no longer avoid what was clearly a reality, and now that we know where we stand, we can forge a new path ahead being masters of our own destiny as a nation.

It will take a lot of hard work, it will require enduring many tough days ahead, but we have the tools to build a strong economy with new partners and renewed relationships rather than hitching our economic wagon to a horse more than willing to kick us in the teeth whenever it’s feeling the proverbial zoomies.

And, if there is any doubt that this would – and would always be – the case, one only has to look to missives sent out by the White House musing upon changing the name of Lake Ontario because they didn’t get the deal they wanted. It was never about making a serious deal.

Those devilish details of what ultimately led to the collapse of trade talks are yet to be released in full. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre is calling for a special Parliamentary session to get those details released to the public – and rightly so – but, if reports stating the United States wanted control over our foreign and trade policies to ink the deal, effectively annexing our nation, are true, that’s really all we need to know.

THE AURORAN Aurora's Community Newspaper The Auroran Newspaper Company Ltd. 15213 Yonge Street, Suite 8, Aurora, L4G 1L8 Main number 905-727-3300 Fax number 905-727-2620 Founder Ron Wallace Publisher Emeritus Roemary Schumaker Subscriptions available within Canada and U.S. email: administration@auroran.com	EDITOR Brock Weir brock@ipcmedia.ca ADVERTISING Zach Shoub zach@ipcmedia.ca ADVERTISING Karen Nemet karen@ipcmedia.ca	GENERAL MANAGER Zach Shoub zach@ipcmedia.ca ADVERTISING Diane Buchanan diane@ipcmedia.ca	PRODUCTION MANAGER Cynthia Proctor cynthiap@ipcmedia.ca TODAYS NEW HOMES Zach Shoub zach@ipcmedia.ca MOTORING Heather Ervin heather@caledoncitizen.com	CLASSIFIEDS 905-727-3300 ex.102 cynthiap@ipcmedia.ca PHOTOGRAPHY Glenn Rodger grodger@rogers.com DISTRIBUTION MANAGER Sheila Ogram sheila@ipcmedia.ca	EDITORIAL POLICY Opinions expressed by columnists, contributors and letter writers are not necessarily those of The Auroran. Letters must include name and phone number, although number will not be published. Letters may be edited or refused. All contents protected by copyright. ADVERTISING POLICY Publisher is not liable for slight changes or typographical errors that do not lessen the value of an advertisement. Disputes must be brought to the attention of the publisher prior to the following edition.
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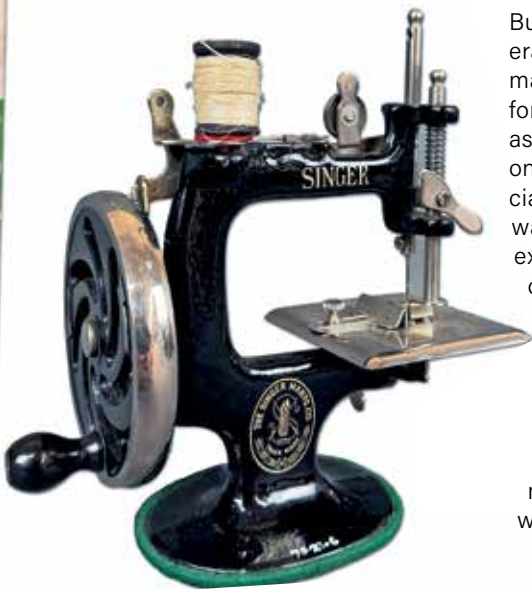
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To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@ipcmedia.ca. Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

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A Just-Sew Story



“NOT A TOY” – they were quite insistent! But it’s true – this fully functional crank-operated Singer Model 20 miniature sewing machine (75.23.6) was initially advertised for children’s use, but later was promoted as a convenient portable option for proper on-the-fly repairs. This model was also officially named, at times, the “Sewhandy”, and was produced at least up to the 1950s. Our example here is from before the cast body of the machine was changed from iron to aluminum in the 1940s, but even this earlier, heavier version truly required a clamp to keep it from moving around the table. We wonder how many young people learned their sewing skills (and maybe a healthy respect for rapidly moving needles) on one of these little workhorses.

From page 4

through. We need leaders willing to make polluters pay, not underwrite their expansion.

I work outdoors, and not long ago, it looked like the apocalypse. We couldn’t go outside without masks. This is ridiculous. We’ve known for decades what the problem is, quit the pretense and get on this. Fix things instead of stealing from us and our futures. The time for half-measures is over. We need real action. No pipelines on a burning planet.

Travis Moon
Tottenham

Make helmet safety a priority: Region

Whether you are riding a bike, e-scooter, skateboard or rollerblading, one item should always come with you: a properly fitted helmet.

Every year, thousands of Canadians are seriously injured in preventable crashes. Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk of serious head and brain injuries by up to 85%.

In Ontario, anyone under the age of 18 is legally required to wear a Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved helmet when cycling or riding an e-bike. Riders must also be 16 years of age to operate an e-scooter. Helmets must be worn by children riding in bike trailers or carriers.

To ensure a proper fit for your helmet, use the 2V1 Shake, Shake, Shake Rule:

- 2: The helmet should sit two fingers above your eyebrow to the bottom of your helmet
- V: Make sure straps make a “V” shape around the bottom of your ears
- 1: Ensure there is only one finger that can fit under the chin strap
- Shake, shake, shake your head up and down and side to side to ensure a snug fit
- Avoid wearing hats, headphones or high ponytails under your helmet, and never use a secondhand helmet with missing parts or signs of damage.

Adults are powerful role models. Research shows that 98% of children wear helmets when their parents or guardians do. Safety is a shared responsibility, so help make helmet use a habit by leading by example.

As students prepare for another school year, helmet safety can help support safe trips to and from school. Through York Region’s Vision Zero Traveller Safety Plan, we are working to reduce serious injuries and fatalities and create safer roads for everyone. Whether travelling by bike, e-scooter, skateboard or on foot, making safety part of your daily routine can help prevent injuries and keep you moving safely.

If you’re planning to ride an e-scooter, it’s important to know the rules in your community. Under Ontario’s e-scooter pilot program, municipalities can choose whether to permit e-scooters and establish local rules for where they can be used. Before riding, check your local municipality’s website for rules, permitted riding locations and safety requirements.

Learn more about helmet safety by watching the video below or by visiting york.ca/CyclingSafety.

Region of York

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

You have told me time and again that if you are ever forced to defend yourself or your family from a home invasion, you want to know that the law will stand with you, not with the criminal who put you in danger.

That is why I introduced the Stand on Guard Act. This legislation would strengthen protections for law-abiding Canadians who are forced to defend themselves or their families during a home invasion.

The bill would create a legal presumption that the force used to protect yourself or a loved one was reasonable, unless evidence proves otherwise. It would also establish a rebuttable presumption that someone who knowingly and unlawfully enters



MP SANDRA COBENA’S UPDATE

Sandra Cobena, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

The Law Must Protect Victims, Not Intruders

an occupied home intends to use force against those inside.

This is about restoring common

sense to our justice system. Your home is your safe place, and it deserves special protection under Canadian law. If an intruder unlawfully enters your home and puts your family in danger, you should not have to fear that defending your loved ones could turn you into the accused.

Introduced this spring, the Stand on Guard Act is expected to come before Parliament for debate and a vote this fall. I look forward to making the case for legislation that strengthens your rights and puts the safety of victims ahead of those who threaten them.

I will continue listening to you and fighting for a justice system that protects victims, supports those who keep us safe, and puts your safety first.

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

We’ve been lulled into believing that all technological advancement is good — or at least inevitable. Of course, much depends on how we use and regulate it.

Many of us remember pre-internet times. It was supposed to speed things up, to make life easier for everyone. But most people are working the same number of hours as before, and spending more of those hours glued to screens. We’ve become connected to our devices and computers and disconnected from real life.

Now we’re being told to accept the inevitability of artificial intelligence, or AI — computer technology that performs tasks once requiring human intelligence. Like the internet, it will ostensibly make life easier, speeding up access to information and reducing the routine work required to create “content” and accomplish other tasks.

Will that lead to reduced work hours or better quality of life for a majority of people? If the rapid development of the internet is anything to go by, probably not. There are undeniably positive applications: “It is helping doctors detect diseases earlier, enabling scientists to analyze enormous amounts of data, improving transportation, making education more personalized, and allowing businesses to work more efficiently than ever before,” Science News Today reports.

But AI also creates many social and environmental problems. Without thoughtful implementation and regulation, it can lead to job losses, misinformation spread, algorithmic bias, cybercrime, overdependence on technology, security risks and diminished human learning and creativity, among other problems.

As for environmental issues, the massive data centres being built

to facilitate it require enormous amounts of energy and water. In a world already reeling from the consequences of fossil-fuelled overheating, that should give us pause.

“The world’s data centres used about 485 terawatt-hours of electricity last year, similar to that used by Germany, and the International Energy Agency expects that to double by 2030,” a Nature article reports, adding, “Five technology companies — Amazon, Alphabet, Microsoft, Meta and Oracle — are expected to spend a total of more than US\$600 billion on AI infrastructure this year; a decade ago, the same five companies spent less than \$40 billion. Data centres concentrate this extraordinary energy demand on the electricity grids of the specific communities where they are built, despite concerns about water use, noise and equity.”

Opposition is growing. A recent Gallup poll found 71 per cent in the United States oppose data centres in their areas, with 48 per cent “strongly opposed.”

A proposed \$70-billion, nine-gigawatt facility covering 65 square kilometres in drought-stricken Alberta faces opposition from First Nations and locals. The nearby Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation has expressed concerns regarding the Alberta government’s decision to exempt the Wonder Valley project from an environmental impact assessment and has applied for a judicial review regarding its water licence.

Utah State University physicist Robert Davies, commissioned by the First Nation to assess the project, warns it would be “one of the largest single-site heat sources on the planet.”

He wrote that the project, led by

celebrity investor Kevin O’Leary, would layer “an enormous new thermal, acoustic, air-emissions, and water demand on top of an environment already fragmented by resource extraction — across territory in which the Cree Nation exercises Treaty and harvesting rights.”

“This is a massive project with significant emissions, water use and, most alarming, [would] create a heat island in an area already ravaged by wildfire, drought, and climate change,” Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation Chief Sheldon Sunshine said.

As well as water and energy use, AI and its data centres can worsen climate change and other environmental impacts by making it easier for the fossil fuel industry to find and exploit oil and gas wells, Bill McKibben writes.

Fears have also been raised about threats posed if AI acquires enough autonomy to harm humans. A United Nations report cautions that AI’s “capabilities are outpacing scientific understanding and governments’ ability to adapt.” But the immediate threats alone show the need for caution.

The Nature article notes that data centres, while extremely profitable, aren’t the only option. “Researchers must pioneer the adoption of open-weight AI models that run locally on institutional servers,” they write.

There may be no stopping the AI juggernaut, but we must at least demand regulations and oversight to reduce its environmental and social impacts and to slow or stop developments when risks outweigh benefits.

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

Photographer, journalist Shi rounds out Aurora’s 2026 Mayoral ballot

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Journalist and photographer Yanfang Shi is the fourth and final candidate to put themselves forward to be Aurora’s next mayor.

Shi was the final mayoral candidate to file their papers on Friday for the October 26 municipal election.

A significant factor in putting herself forward for the position, she says, is the belief Town Hall “does not reflect the diversity of the population.”

“Aurora needs a mayor who truly understands the needs of residents from diverse backgrounds and can help build an equitable and inclusive Aurora,” said Shi in an email to The Auroran. “I decided to present my vision of Aurora and my capabilities as a candidate to Aurora voters in the upcoming municipal election. The issues I would like to address, the vision I have for Aurora, the policies and practices I can help establish to transform Aurora into an equitable and inclusive Town are all at the Town level. Therefore, I decided to run for the mayoral positmion.”

In her role as a photographer, Shi has been part of a Human Rights Tribunal case against the Town of Aurora and the Aurora Public Library over what she describes as “censorship” following a 2023 photo exhibition at the Library.

The Library objected to two images within the exhibition they said violated of the Library’s public art policy. The Aurora Public Library Board eventually voted to allow the exhibition to continue.

The experience, she says, highlights the need for the Town to address human rights issues.

“As a racialized woman who has been advocating for systemic changes, I can lead Aurora to navigate through the transformation,” she says, citing a letter to the Town from the Ontario Human Rights Commission related to the rejection of a proposed transitional housing project in Aurora’s south end. “The process of advocacy for systemic changes has also revealed the issues

of transparency in the governance of our Town and the public institutions it funds.

“I am also concerned about how heritage buildings such as [the] Armoury and Victoria Hall have been used, the closed-door decisions about them, and the impact of those decisions on residents.”

If elected, Shi says her top priorities include: “Building an equitable, diverse, and inclusive municipal government and fostering the same values, policies, and practices at public institutions funded by the Town; enhancing transparency and accountability in municipal governance. If elected, I will respect Town Councillors as representatives of their constituents, and put an end to Strong Mayor powers that have been frequently exercised by the incumbent; while committing to fiscal responsibility, securing adequate funding for community services to ensure a healthy, vibrant community where residents of all ages and those with specific physical or mobility needs to receive quality services. Furthermore, I am committed to meaningfully fulfilling the Land Acknowledgement, protecting the environment, and preserving green spaces and trees.”

Shi holds a Master’s Degree in Sociology from the London School of Economics, has worked for a number of media outlets, served as editor of the online platform lovingsister.com, and trains her camera lens on issues related to social justice.

“My passion for making the community and the world better places and my commitment to human rights,” says Shi when asked what makes her stand out as a candidate. “I am very fortunate to have the support from my family, my friends, and organizations and groups I collaborate with. The endorsements for my running for mayor were from all six wards and I am truly grateful for the support from all the residents from diverse backgrounds across Aurora for my running for the mayor’s office, with my vision for Aurora.”

Fall election brings four-way race for Aurora’s top job

From page 1

Board, and Rocco Morsillo, a member of Aurora’s Heritage Advisory Committee. This is the first municipal race for both candidates.

A new Councillor is also coming to Ward 2 after Councillor Rachel Gilliland, first elected in 2018, announced her decision not to seek re-election after moving from the Aurora community. She is now running to be Deputy Mayor of her new hometown, The Town of The Blue Mountains.

Seeking to represent the citizens of Ward 2 from 2026 to 2030 are long-time community advocate Angela Daust, business owner and Aurora Sports Hall of Fame member Marco Di Girolamo, Aurora Black Community Association Founder and CEO Phiona Durrant, and life-long resident Brynn Lansdown.

This is Di Girolamo’s second Council campaign in Ward 2, following his challenge to Gilliland in the 2022 Municipal Election, while Durrant challenged Mrakas and Anna Lozyk Romeo for Mayor in the same campaign.

Another new representative is on the horizon for Ward 3 after Wendy Gaertner, who has served as a local Councillor for more than 20 consecutive years, announced her retirement.

In the race to represent this community are Nikki Alber, Alexandra Bonham, Robert James Fraser, Harold MacDonald, and Reza Ghamsary Vaez.

This is the first local election for Alber and Ghamsary Vaez, while Bonham, Fraser, and MacDonald are no strangers to the campaign trail. Bonham and MacDonald sought the support of Ward 3 residents in the 2022 municipal election, while Fraser campaigned in Ward 6.

Over in Ward 4, incumbent Michael Thompson is seeking his fourth term on Council. He is being challenged by local business owner Shaheen Moledina.

While just two candidates put themselves forward for Ward 4, it’s a record-breaking situation in Ward 5 where six candidates are seeking the spot, which will be vacant this fall as incumbent Councillor John Gallo seeks the Mayorship.

In the running for Ward 5 are Charity Dela Cruz-Toupin, Jessie Fraser, Milton Hart, and

Harbinder (Binda) Thandi, along with George Tremtsidis, and Terrence Zhu, both of whom threw their hats into the ring in the last week of registration.

This is the first municipal campaign for many of these candidates, while Hart previously ran in the ward in 2022.

Incumbent Harold Kim is seeking his third term on Council, once again representing Ward 6. Challenging him for the position are Nicholas Kashef, Jibraan Khan, and Zivka Kicic.

Beyond the Council campaign, the race is on to be the community’s next Education Trustees.

In the running for Trustee with the York Catholic District School Board, a Board which remains under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and amid uncertainty on what this role will entail following the October 26 vote, are Brendan James Cescolini and Eduardo Juarez.

The York Catholic District School Board Trustee role is currently filled by long-time trustee Elizabeth Crowe, who is stepping back from the Board after more than two decades of service.

It’s a three-person race for the York Region District School Board to replace Trustee Melanie Wright, who has represented Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville since 2022. In the running are Bill Radia, Emma Sears, and Bruce Yu.

While Hanane Jaouich-Diakité has been acclaimed as Trustee for Conseil scolaire Viamonde, Christella Basosila Lome, and Ibrahim M. Elias seek the rule in Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir.

The 2026 Municipal Election will take place Monday, October 26.

Internet voting opens on Friday, October 16, at 10 a.m., closing on Sunday, October 25, at 12 noon.

Advance in-person voting opens on Saturday, October 17, at the Aurora Seniors’ Centre. Voting times include October 17 from 12 noon to 6 p.m., October 18, from 12 noon to 6 p.m., October 19 from 4 – 8 p.m., and October 20 and 21 at the same time.

For further information on this year’s Municipal Election, including how to register and verify your information on the existing voter roll, contact candidates, and find your ward, visit aurora.ca/your-government/elections-2026.



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Williams students Hackathon reached students around the world



The NGN Hacks event was led by Dr. G.W. Williams students Amirali Zhian, left, and Hanif Tajalli. **Contributed photo**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

More than 340 students from over 50 countries came together online this month for a 40-hour hackathon hosted virtually by two local students.

The NGN Hacks event was the brainchild of Hanif Tajalli and Amirali Zhian, two Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School students who will be entering Grade 12 this fall.

NGN – Next Generation Hacks –

hosted their hackathon from August 7 – 9.

Through the event, students built projects addressing a variety of issues facing our world today, such as education, health, Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, sustainability, finance, and more. It also entailed 10 free educational workshops covering everything from web development to machine learning, and keynote speeches from Raffi Krikorian, CTO of Mozilla, entrepreneur Daniel Martínez, and representatives from

Lyft, PayPal, Microsoft, Motorola Solutions, and Lucid Motors amongst the judging panel.

Hanif and Amirali brainstormed the hackathon idea at the Aurora Public Library, initially conceiving it as an in-person event to help Aurora students create something meaningful for their portfolios. Eventually, however, they shifted the event online, opening it up to students far beyond the local high schools.

“Originally it was a local idea, but as it went on, we realized we had the potential for something way bigger,” says Amirali. “We wanted high school students all across the world to have free and accessible hands-on STEM education. At the start, we weren’t really thinking about goals, we just wanted to get as many participants as we could, have some impact, help some students, and have as many projects as possible. That’s how the community is built and the whole goal of the hackathon.”

The community certainly responded.

Hanif says in the first months of registration, they got 100 registrations. Things hit their stride, however, in the head up to August.

“You have to have a passion for something,” he says. “If we did this in the first three months and we saw barely any impact, barely any participants in those first three months, we probably would have quit if we had no passion. We did this because we actually found joy in this, that’s what got us to push further, and that’s what got us all the participants and the impact that we actually made.”

This passion will extend into the school year ahead as they continue to build NGN within the Williams, Aurora, and broader York Region communities.

They hope to have another hackathon bringing in a breadth of local students and host more in-person and hands-on workshops.

“You can easily learn technology by

building a project and it’s the best way to learn,” says Amirali of the importance of these hands-on sessions. “If you can watch a whole YouTube video on how to code an application and don’t even open the code editor and start working on it, then there is no way you can finish the application. What I feel interests a lot of people younger than us, especially, is we kind of have our life planned out after high school. Now that we’re going into Grade 12, we kind of have to, but younger people don’t and what interests them are the projects.

“The projects are interesting because it reflects their own personality, it reflects what they are interested in, they can build whatever they want, and solve any problems they want. It comes into their creativity and what they can build.”

Looking back on the hackathon, Hanif and Amirali say they couldn’t have built what they did without their first sponsor, the Town of Aurora, giving them a bedrock of support, the industry professionals who helped them along the way, and, in turn, the enthusiasm event participants brought to the table.

“What matters is students who participated in our hackathon went from, ‘How do I build a project? Where do I start?’ having no idea where to start, to finishing the hackathon with a project submitted and something they can be proud of,” says Amirali. “Obviously, it’s a hard thing to do to come up with an idea, be creative, and have something that reflects your own profile as well. I think I’m most proud of that, helping students, and making hands-on-STEM education free globally.”

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- 3rd Place – Aphasia Bridge

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OPEN FOR BUSINESS – Mayor Tom Mrakas and Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim stopped by Hive5 Interactive STEAM Park on Saturday for its grand opening at 43 First Commerce Drive, Unit J2. Hive5 is a hub for innovative STEM-based education “designed to cater to the curious minds of school-aged children, focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. We go beyond traditional teaching methods. Our STEAM education is centred around an interdisciplinary and applied approach, providing a cohesive learning experience rooted in real-world applications. We believe these skills are the building blocks for future success.” For more information, visit hive5.ca. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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Former mayoral candidate Durrant seeks Council seat in Ward 2



Ward 2 Council Candidate Phiona Durrant is pictured here at Town Hall with a soccer ball, demonstrating her son's philosophy that you "miss 100 per cent of the shots you don't take."

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora Black Community Association (ABC) founder Phiona Durrant is running to be Aurora's next Ward 2 Councillor.

Durrant, who previously ran for mayor in 2022, was not initially planning to be on the ballot this year but said community feedback persuaded her that the reasons to run were greater than the reasons to step back.

"You miss 100 per cent of the shots you don't take," says Durrant. "One thing that hasn't changed, regardless of if I ran or didn't run, is that it's about community engagement and being a voice that is taking action in our community."

The local business owner, who is completing her education as a paralegal, says a recent interaction with a customer of her former spa, Coconut Village, helped seal the deal. The customer

praised Durrant for creating a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere for herself and her transgender son, and for looking for ways to bring people together rather than divide.

"This kind of [feedback] really humbles you because my ultimate goal is not to be put in any box," says Durrant, adding she's from the community for the community. "I'm very grateful that people just see me as Phiona, the girl who is showing up in our community authentically and nothing else."

An Aurora resident for more than 20 years, Durrant and her family recently found their "forever home" in Ward 2. When looking at the possibilities for this year's municipal election, she says it was very important to run where she lives.

As she's gotten to know the Ward, she says she sees a community that has a large population of mature residents. If elected, she wants to engage seniors at the

community, while also keeping a focus on property standards, particularly neglected rental units.

She also wants to address community safety amid rising crime, community cohesion, and providing further opportunities for youth.

"We need to be a cohesive Town," she says. "We have to learn to have that in kind dignity and respect for one another. We don't have to agree, but when I see someone in a grocery store, they're just my neighbour, and until we get to that understanding, we can become very divided."

That said, however, she pledges to be an independent voice at the Council table should she win the

support of Ward 2 voters.

"I am not a one issue person, I'm not a Black issue person, and it's very important to understand that," she says. "When the ABC was birthed, the first [program] was for white people to come and cook – it was about how we can blend and bridge cultures. I'm for the issues of the world, it's as simple as that."

"I'm always going to be an independent voice. That's so important. I don't compromise on any point. If I don't agree with you, I don't agree with you. If I agree with you, I agree with you, and I stand by that word. I'm going to be communicating with everybody, but when it comes to making a decision it's my decision and the people who vote for me's decision."

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speaking

by Derek Andrews

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Imagine being acknowledged in a Grammy category with Barbra Streisand, Lady Gaga, Elton John, Brandi Carlile, Jennifer Hudson and Laufey! Laila Biali thought she was being punked for twenty-four hours, until her nomination was verified! The nomination stood out since she was the only independent artist in the Traditional Jazz Vocal category, and a rare Canadian representative.

The “Wintersong” release has been described as a love song to Canadian winter, setting the stage for Laila’s cover of Joni Mitchell’s “River”, from the 1971 release of “Blue”, which includes the lyric “...I wish I had a river that I could skate away on...”

“It’s been almost two decades since I first began exploring ‘The Canadian Songbook.’ As a musician who comes from jazz, a genre hugely influenced by The Great American Songbook, I love to put my own spin on Canadian classics, including audience requests. I’ve also been thinking about how to represent artists from coast to coast to coast, and it’s a privilege to include songs by trailblazing Indigenous voices as part of our program alongside icons like Joni Mitchell and Gordon Lightfoot. We can’t wait to debut some of these new arrangements in Aurora on September 17 – and share the story of how I almost met Joni Mitchell on the GRAMMY red carpet earlier this year!”

Laila Biali “owns” CBC Radio with the weekly broadcast of “Saturday Night Jazz” across the nation, mixing masters of the genre with Canada’s favourites and emerging talent.

Born in Vancouver, Biali began playing piano at a young age. She studied classical piano for many

years. At the Royal Conservatory of Music, she was attracted to jazz, and when she was 19 she entered Humber College in Toronto. Four years later she released the album Introducing the Laila Biali Trio.

She moved to New York City and found work as a pianist and vocalist for other musicians. While touring with Paula Cole, she met drummer Ben Wittman, and she and Wittman later married. In 2009 she sang background vocals for Sting’s DVD A Winter’s Night: Live from Durham Cathedral. She toured with Chris Botti and Suzanne Vega. She has performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City and at Glenn Gould Theatre in Toronto.

Her second album, Tracing Light (2010), received a Juno Award nomination. For this album Biali wrote songs and the arrangements. A few years later she appeared as guest host for Tonic, a jazz program on CBC Radio 2, then became the regular host for Saturday Night Jazz. Her self-titled 2018 album won the Juno Award for Vocal Jazz Album of the Year.

Laila initially submitted Wintersongs to the alternative jazz category. The Recording Academy automatically reclassified it into Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album, pitting her against global icons. Biali has openly shared that making it to the Grammy red carpet after feeling ready to “change course” stands as a testament to the grit, resilience, and adaptability required by modern independent art-makers.

“Biali’s voice – spanning registers – is pure and warm. She’s also fearless on piano and, above else, in her imagination.” – DownBeat Magazine

Aurora Public Art Festival will showcase common threads, celebrate anniversary

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A two-week celebration of the ties that bind us together will form the heart of the inaugural Aurora Public Art Festival.

Common Threads: Aurora Public Art Festival will take place in Mirkopoulos Plateia, the outdoor gathering space at Aurora Town Square, from September 16 – 27 and feature three large-scale art installations by artists Khadija Aziz, Yifu Ding & Zishuo Li, and Roda Medhat.

Hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Festival will not only be a contribution to Aurora’s Month of Culture, but also serve as a celebration of the Centre’s second anniversary back at its traditional home within the Town Square complex.

This is the Centre’s first gallery installation in the outdoor square.

Having this space available to be used in this way has been a “great extension,” to what the Centre can offer, says Executive Director Suzanne Haines.

“The Town has been using it in a number of different ways and, for us, bringing art out there that can be shared and enjoyed just passively is a real gift, especially bringing people back into the community after they may have been away over the summer, but also during Doors Open, the Multicultural Festival, and the Canadian Art Hop.

“These are activities that bring people into the centre of Aurora and help us celebrate arts and culture. Us being able to be a part of that has been really powerful.”

Powerful is a way the incoming textile pieces can be described as well.

Medhat, for instance, will be installing a 16-foot textile sculpture in the shape of a minaret in the Square. The sculpture itself is covered with a carpet of his own design based on Kurdish textile traditions and rugs.

Continued on page 19

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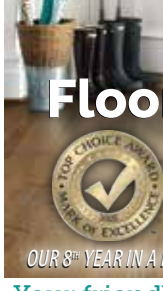
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Wolffe outduels Booth-Housego in King Rebellion’s 3-2 OT win over Aurora Jr. Tigers



Aurora forward Nic Ferrante battles for position versus a King Rebellion defender on Friday night in OJHL preseason action at the ACC. The Junior Tigers were edged 3 – 2 by the Rebellion in OT.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

It was “The Tale of Two Goalies” on Friday night at the Aurora Community Centre as the Junior Tigers hosted the King Rebellion in what turned out to be a spirited and entertaining OJHL preseason tilt.

Both Rebellion netminder Gunner Wolffe and Tigers’ keeper Colby Booth-Housego appeared to be in mid-season form.

Wolffe blocked 28 of the 30 shots that the Tigers fired his way and Booth-Housego stopped 28 of 31—including 12 of 13 in the wide-open first frame which the Rebellion dominated.

Due to the athleticism and acrobatics of the tenders, the regional rivals were deadlocked at 2-2 after regulation and required overtime—much to the delight of over 150 fans who were treated to a fast-moving, clean hockey game which was penalty-free until 9:51 was remaining in the middle frame.

Wolffe picked up the OTW when King Captain Jared McNeil, who created opportunities all game for wingers Adam Smeeton and Michael Cunha, took advantage of the extra space playing 3-on-3 and ripped a wrist shot below the bar and just above Booth-Housego’s left shoulder with 22 seconds left in the first OT.

McNeil, who led the Rebellion in scoring last season, explained his shot selection against the Tigers’ tender.

“I thought I was running out of time—didn’t know there were over 20 seconds left—so I just turned and fired one over his shoulder. I saw Sun’s goal in the first period and took note of where he shot the puck on the smaller goaltender. I had so many chances tonight—I was glad when one finally went in.”

On a shot remarkably similar to McNeil’s game winner, the Rebellion took a 1-0 lead when Mars Sun sniped one from below the goal line over Booth-Housego’s left shoulder and under the crossbar less than five minutes into the first period.

With four minutes left in the opening frame, Sun’s marksmanship was matched by Tigers veteran forward Nic Ferrante

who pulled the black-jerseyed home side even.

On a nice left wing pass from Paul Mahkuka, Ferrante’s filthy toe drag deked Wolffe and the Aurora resident deftly slid the puck in the net.

Ferrante, who played for the Haliburton Huskies and Markham Royals last season, described the equalizer and the thrill of being back at the ACC playing for the Tigers.

“When we were skating on the two-on-one, I wanted to give Mahkuka a target for a pass so I drove to the net, I got a great feed, and the goalie bit on my deke. It felt great to score and it’s nice to be back where it all began. So many of my best hockey memories took place at the ACC. I won championships here. I was thinking of those big games when I was rinsing my face before the game and looking at the jersey in the mirror.”

The OJHL veteran complimented Booth-Housego’s performance between the pipes, especially in the first period.

“We came out flat-footed—for most of us, it was our first pre-season game so we were just expecting the game to come to us. Colby was the reason that I was able to tie the game—we should have been down by three in the first—and he was the reason we got to OT and got a point tonight.”

Midway through the second period, the first penalty of the game was drawn by Tigers’ defenseman Jonathan Varela for high sticking at 10:09. Thirty-nine seconds later, the King power play capitalized when McNeil fed long-time linemate Smeeton who rifled a shot from above the left circle—bulging the twine above Booth-Housego’s white glove.

Trailing 2-1, diligent forechecking by the opportunistic Tigers paid off at 14:12.

Davis Castle forced a turnover in the slot and Connor Adams snapped the puck over the blocker of Wolffe—finding the top right corner to pull the home side even heading into the third period.

Wolffe and Booth-Housego held the fort for their respective squads in the final frame to send the game into OT.

After the contest, McNeil complimented Wolffe’s play in the second and third period when the Tigers outshot his Rebellion

squad 14-8 and 7-3, respectively.

“I think it helped that Gunner was with us last year as a practice goalie. Sometimes a first start in the OJHL can make goalies nervous, but he was very comfortable. I noticed his confidence. It helps that we had a confident goalie out there tonight. We were running around a bit too much tonight, but our compete level in front of Gunner was very good.”

In our post-game chat on the Tigers’ bench, Ferrante echoed McNeil’s remarks about his own team’s scrumbly play at times, but thought his new squad played well.

“We’re still growing as a group and as a family on and off the ice. We’re getting to understand our systems and I thought we played a good game, given that for most of us, this was the first one of the season.”

Regular Season OJHL Openers

The Tigers will resume their rivalry with the Newmarket Hurricanes on Friday, September 4 at the ACC. Puck drop for “The Battle of Yonge Street” is 7 p.m. and the first 300 fans in attendance will receive a free Tigers t-shirt.

The Tigers will unveil their new jerseys at a reception at Wicked Eats in Aurora at 11 a.m. on Thursday, September 3.

The Rebellion, after hosting an OHL game between the Barrie Colts and the Sudbury Wolves on Monday, August 31 at 6:30 p.m. at the Zancor Centre, will welcome the Buffalo Junior Sabres to kick off their OJHL season and home schedule.

Opening faceoff for the Sabres-Rebellion tilt at the Zancor Centre in King City will be 7:30 p.m.

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McKinley lands three medals for Team Canada at Junior Pan-Am

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Over the last year, Aurora’s Ella McKinley has made significant strides on the water as a decorated rower at Syracuse University and, more recently, as a member of Team Canada.

Since being identified three years ago as a potential Olympic athlete at RBC’s Training Ground program, McKinley delivered strong performances on the water at the Ontario NextGen Centre in Welland and was recruited by Syracuse University after completing her first year at the University of Guelph where she rowed for the Gryphons.

After helping the Orange set historical marks in Women’s rowing, McKinley carried her meteoric momentum from D1 national competitions to the international stage with Team Canada.

Despite having only three years of rowing experience, the Aurora resident

rose to the status of international medalist this Summer as a member of Team Canada at the Junior Pan-Am Games in Asuncion, Paraguay. She competed in three events—Women’s Pair with Ottawa’s Riley Richardson, Women’s Four, and Women’s Eight—and visited the podium all three times with a bronze, bronze, and silver, respectively.

McKinley described her in-boat partnership with fellow bronze medalist Richardson: “Riley and I met last Spring in 2025. We had spent the last year competing against one another in NCAA events as rivals. She was at the University of Virginia. We became best friends instantly—sharing good laughs on the docks. We lived together, too, and have been rowing together full-time in meets in Belgium and Germany. We were selected for the Pan-Ams at Selection Camp on Vancouver Island in June 2025. Team C paired us because we had chemistry off the water, too. During practice, we’d finish

each other’s sentences. She’s graduated from UofV and we were seated next to one another in the shell in the 4’s and 8’s.”

It was evident that her experience in Paraguay with Team Canada is a watershed event in McKinley’s athletic career and described the best part of her time in Asuncion.

“Riley and I had a Canadian flag above our heads in our hotel room. It was a huge competition—every event in the Olympics was at the Pan-Ams. Rowing was one of the first events in the Games. We were the first team to contribute to the Team C medal count—there was a board up in the hotel lobby with Team Canada’s medal count. It was only Team Canada members staying there. Another satisfying part of our performance was that we had trained under Olympic silver medalist Dave Calder in Vancouver in preparation for the Games. It was really rewarding and exciting to see all of Dave’s coaching being recognized when we medalled in Paraguay. Even though he was coaching Canadian teams in Lithuania when we were in Paraguay, he was messaging us and keeping in contact with us. His coaching gave our team confidence for the Pan-Ams.”

The day before she returned to Syracuse for her final year, McKinley reflected at her dining room table and explained her rapid rise in rowing prominence on national and international stages.

“Sports have always been a big part of my life. I’ve always had some sport going on. My dad was always on a bike ride—when I was four, he was in a 100-mile race in Haliburton and our entire family went to see him compete. Watching him compete in sport has been a big part of my identity.”

With Colum McKinley as an athletic role model, McKinley made her own significant strides as a USports athlete as a Freshman at the University of Guelph where she earned Rookie of the Year honors with the Women’s Rowing Team.

Despite her first-year success with the Gryphons, McKinley explained why she committed to Syracuse University and

acknowledged she “wanted an even bigger challenge.”

“I was invited to make an official visit to Syracuse and I got a chance to talk with so many NCAA athletes. I interacted with all fifty of the rowing team members that was set up by my Tour Host. I went to dinner and classes with the team. It was an all-encompassing culture that I liked. Coach McGee was really good—he saw my potential as a rower and took a chance on me. Results-wise, I was very new so my recruiting process was a little different than others who had more rowing experience.”

The Honour Roll graduate of Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Newmarket delineated her goals as a student-athlete in her last year at Syracuse: “Academically, I want to focus my studies on Biology—especially learning in genetics and molecular labs. I want to work more on anatomy and physiology during next semester and apply to Graduate schools. I’m leaning strongly towards doing my Master’s Degree in Biology—potentially in the USA or Canada. Athletically, I missed some of the Spring season with injuries so I am very excited to get back to the team. I want to convert what I learned at the Pan-Am Games this summer and apply it to my rowing season at Syracuse this Fall. We have a team goal to improve on our NCAA ranking—last year, we rowed to Syracuse’s best record ever and finished ranked 9th in the nation. It’s a cool circle to go from the Pan-Am Games back to the NCAA.”

As an NCAA student-athlete, McKinley described what’s been the best part of living in Syracuse, New York.

“I hadn’t seen boathouses that big until I got to Syracuse—all the boats are named after alumni and it’s an honor to be rowing in those shells with all the rich history in them. My favorite spot to go to in Syracuse is Beacon Skiff—it’s a giant apple orchard and, as a team, we enjoy drinking apple cider there on a Fall afternoon. It’s a fun place for the team to go and serves as an outlet for us. It’s important for us to enjoy the Fall. Syracuse has tough winters—some of the harshest in the USA, but the Falls are spectacular.”

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Rose Arjomand

We are incredibly proud to celebrate Rose Arjomand on her outstanding achievement of winning the Gold Medal at the Ontario Open International Tournament, one of the most prestigious and challenging Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tournaments in Ontario. Rose competed in a highly competitive division with eight athletes in her weight category, facing talented opponents from across Canada, the United States, and several other countries. Her determination, skill, and perseverance led her to the top of the podium, earning her the championship title. This incredible accomplishment is a testament to Rose's hard work, discipline, and dedication to the sport. We couldn't be prouder of everything she has achieved and look forward to watching her continue to grow and succeed.



Ario Naghipour

A huge congratulations to Ario on his impressive victory at the Provincial Wushu Sanda Tournament. Ario stepped into the ring with confidence, determination, and excellent preparation, delivering a strong performance to earn the win. His dedication, discipline, and countless hours of training were evident throughout the fight, and this victory is a well-deserved reward for his hard work. We are incredibly proud of Ario's achievement and excited to see what the future holds as he continues to grow as an athlete. Congratulations on an outstanding performance—we can't wait to see you back in the ring!

Best of community set for spotlight in Aurora's "Month of Culture"

From page 3

from specific cultures."

To illustrate just how international the roots of Aurora residents are, event participants will be invited to leave their mark on three large maps, one to mark where your grandparents came from, one to show where you have travelled to, and the other, places around the world that are still on your bucket list to visit.

Community will continue to be in focus on September 20 when the Town hosts Doors Open Aurora 2026, including an activation by the Aurora Public Library, entitled "From Pages to Performance: Celebrating Culture Through Music, Dance & Spoken Word."

Try to avoid a culture clash on September 26 with, perhaps, the busiest day of the Month of Culture.

Activities begin at 9 a.m. with Crit Club, followed at 10 a.m. with Silly Billy, and a fall artist-poet gathering, all hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre. At 2 p.m., the Aurora Public Library will host its Harvest Moon: Mid-Autumn Festival from 2 – 4 p.m., and, at 7.30 p.m., the Town will host the Yacht Rock Show at Aurora Town Square.

Gallery Yoga and Sound Bath will be a great way to start the day on September 27 from 10 – 11 a.m. at the Aurora Cultural Centre, followed from 2 – 4 p.m. by Arab Voices in Canada: The Soul of the East, at the Aurora Public Library, and on September 28 from 7 – 8 p.m., when the Library hosts a visit with author Monique Gray.

Also on September 28, from 6.30 – 8 p.m., the Aurora Museum & Archives will host a special Museum Monday session.

"These programs are so fun to run," says Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum & Archives. "Museum Mondays is fantastic because we get all different ages coming through and some really interesting discussions as we meander through the galleries and connection space for hours. It's a bit of a slower pace and we get a lot of time to really get to know participants and what they are interested in and what brought them to the museum. Each person gets a chance to have

a really thorough discussion with us, which is lovely, and we learn a lot, too."

Additional Museum activities include a Photo Digitization workshop, which helps families preserve their memories – everything from "slides, to scrapbooks, to tin-type photos," says Johnson – and share their stories."

Closing out a Month of Culture will be a series of events designed to mark National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. Events include two film-screenings hosted by the Aurora Public Library – Nechako and Siksikakowan: The Blackfoot Man – while the Town of Aurora hosts its annual gathering at Aurora Town Square's outdoor space.

The program will begin at 5 p.m. with hands-on learning focused on the Seven Sacred Teachings: Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth, with a ceremony and community gathering beginning at 6 p.m.

"This ceremony and community gathering focuses on remembering the children who did not come home, honouring Residential School Survivors and their families, and acknowledging the lasting impacts of residential schools on Indigenous communities," say organizers. "It is an opportunity to come together in reflection, learning, and understanding as we recognize the truths of our shared history and the importance of meaningful reconciliation."

"The ceremony will be led by Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley, Elder Pat Floody, and Ancestral Knowledge Keeper Raiden Levesque, who will share teachings, reflections, and guidance throughout the gathering. Community members are invited to participate in this respectful and welcoming space that encourages learning, connection, and a commitment to reconciliation. Together, we honour the past, reflect on the present, and work toward a future built on respect, understanding, and meaningful relationships."

For a full roster of events related to Aurora's Month of Culture, visit www.auroratownsquare.ca/monthofculture.



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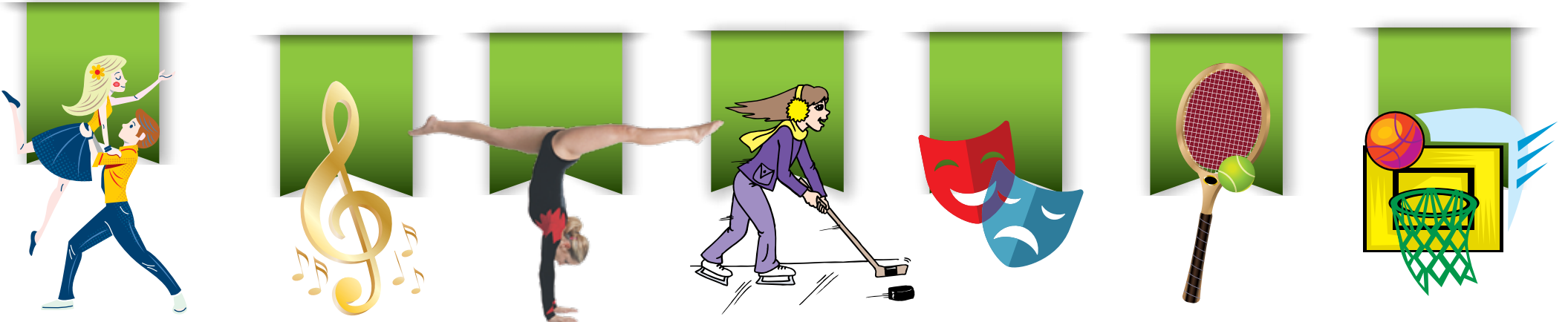


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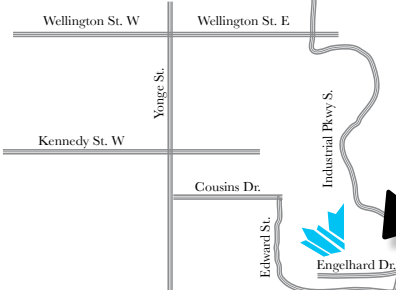


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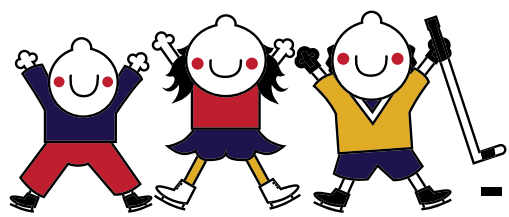
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Movies return to Town Park as summer winds down



As summer starts to draw to a close, the Town of Aurora is helping families make some late-season memories as Movies in the Park returns to Town Park. The popular summer series which is offering double features for the first time this year, opened Thursday, August 20, with "Moana" and "Legally Blonde." Clockwise from Top Right: Families gathered around the LED screen for showtime. Volunteer Elsie helped keep the audience festive with materials to make your own leis. Among those enjoying the show were Brandon, Nelly, and Jess; the Ma family, and Amanda and Cayson.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Salvation Army deepens food partnerships, redirecting funds to broader programs



Angela Covert is pictured at the Salvation Army's Northridge Community Church last week.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Salvation Army's Northridge Community Church has strengthened partnerships with local food banks in order to ensure their own funding can further support essential programs coming out of their doors.

Angela Covert, Manager of Community Services for Salvation Army Northridge, says the decision to wind-down their in-house food bank services came through consultation with the clients using these services, as well as with partners the York Region Food Network and Aurora Food Pantry, to assess demand and offerings.

"I had to do quite a bit of assessment on what we were offering for food," says Covert. "We had a weekly food bank on Thursday mornings where we were seeing on average 18 to 20 families and they were able to come in at least once a month, sometimes it was stretched into six weeks depending on the demand. In the time that I have been doing this over the last two years I have really been able to sit down with the clients and get a better sense of the overall picture. I was estimating about 60 per cent of my time was roughly taken up with providing this once-a-week food bank and, as I got to know the needs more, I was also more aware of the community resources out there."

Covert says she found the majority of families visiting the Salvation Army for these food services were also visiting food banks and pantries in Aurora, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, and other communities which Northridge serves.

It was a matter of working with these organizations "to see how we could better help people moving forward so

that they get to the point where maybe they're not relying on food banks, although we all understand the reality that food is expensive for all of us."

By supporting these outside food resources, such as offering their space as a distribution point for the York Region Food Network's Affordable Fresh Food Market, Northridge has invested money, time and energy into programs that help clients move the needle further towards food and income security, such as their Pathway of Hope program, a one-on-one mentorship program helping clients make concrete changes in their lives.

"We can sit down with someone who is eager and wanting to make changes in their lives, to look at their goals, look at the resources, to assist them with those goals," says Covert, adding it's usually six-to-eight-month relationship with clients in this program.

The Empowered Moms group is another area that is going to benefit from these redirected resources.

Based on a program in Calgary, AB, the Empowered Moms group provides a wide-range of resources for women raising families on their own, including parenting, budgeting, self-care, and confidence.

Pathway of Hope, she says, and helps get people back on their feet, no matter their circumstances.

One trend the team is seeing, she says, is a rise in individuals who are struggling due to online gambling addictions, which brings in Northridge's Mental Health services.

Additional trends include a rise in seniors who need services, whether they are struggling financially or with social isolation, which can be crippling in its own way.

Children and youth will also benefit

from the shift as more resources are now available for summer camp and mentorship programs.

This summer, Northridge saw 58 youth participate in their adventure camp program, with many of the spaces sponsored. A camp enrollment is valued at \$400 per child, says Covert, but they can offer subsidies where registration can be as low as \$50. Their Brave event, a one-afternoon session for girls between the ages of 12 and 16 that helps participants "understand their self-worth and develop self-confidence, providing them with the tools to reduce their risk of human trafficking" will be strengthened as well.

With these changes, however, Northridge has not lost sight of the fellowship that food can provide.

"We stopped doing our food bank, but we still have our community garden and just recently we started a community breakfast [with the York Region Food Network] on Friday

mornings, and we're now going to combine those two on a Friday morning twice a month – offering the Affordable Fresh Food Market and Coffee Time Breakfast mornings on the first and third Friday of each month," says Covert.

"September is when we're starting that combination, and that is really exciting to me because not only will we be doing it twice a month, but it's going to bring in two different groups of people who will shop, eat together, and just develop that community.

"The upside of partnering with the York Region Food Network is, number one, this is their specialty. They bring the food, they have the Market, we have our volunteers, we have the space. I'm also then able, because we're not putting some of our budget money into the food bank, to assist people who want to purchase some of their fresh vegetables. I can kind of offset those costs and it's a win-win-win-win-win."



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THINGS... you ought to know

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26
Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues at Town Park this evening from 7 – 9 p.m. with Project Phoenix. "Get ready to groove with Project Phoenix – a sensational eleven-piece Funk and R&B band. They will get you moving with music from classic groups such as Earth Wind & Fire, Stevie Wonder, Commodores and Kool & The Gang. Feel the beat and catch the vibe!" Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring portable lawn chairs.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27
Aurora's Movies in the Park Summer Series continues tonight at Aurora Town Park with the theme Game Night – Game Changers. Showtime begins at 7 p.m. with Kicking & Screaming, followed at 9 p.m. by Happy Gilmore. 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.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28
Aurora's tastiest annual event, Ribfest, returns to Machell Park today from 4 – 11 p.m. In addition to the food, special activities today include a beer garden hosted by the Rotary Club from 5 – 10 p.m., Bullseye Axe Throwing from 5 – 8:30 p.m., and performances from Desire: A Tribute to U2 at 5:30 and headliner Dwayne Gretzky at 9 p.m. For a full lineup of events and activities, visit auroraca.ca/ribfest.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29
The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Aurora's tastiest annual event, Ribfest, continues at Machell Park today from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. In addition to the food, special activities today include a beer garden hosted by the Rotary Club from 12 noon to 10 p.m., Bullseye Axe Throwing from 3 – 8:30 p.m., a kids zone from 2 – 5 p.m., and performances from From The Hip: A Tribute to the Tragically Hip, at 11 a.m.; Duvet at 115 p.m.; Sheer Heart Attack: A Tribute to Queen at 3:30 p.m.; Monkey Wrench at 5:45 p.m.; and headliner Big Wreck at 9 p.m. For a full lineup of events and activities, visit auroraca.ca/ribfest.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30
Aurora's tastiest annual event, Ribfest, concludes Machell Park today from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. In addition to the food, special activities today include a beer garden hosted by the Rotary Club from 12 noon to 8 p.m., a kids zone from 2 – 5 p.m., and performances from Vinyl Flux at 11 a.m.; Run 2 You: A Tribute to Bryan Adams at 1 p.m.; Gold Dust Woman at 3:30 p.m.; professional rib judging at 5:30 p.m.; and a performance from Aurora's 2026 Teen Idol at 6:45 p.m. For a full lineup of events and activities, visit auroraca.ca/ribfest.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2
Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series concludes at Town Park this evening from 7 – 9 p.m. with The 99s. "Close the summer with a non-stop dance party! The 99s light up the stage with pop, rock, and R&B hits from the '70s to the 2000s. Let the timeless grooves move you from the first chord to the last encore." Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged. For your seating comfort, bring

portable lawn chairs.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3
Aurora's Movies in the Park Summer Series concludes tonight at Aurora Town Park with the theme Ocean Adventures – Beyond the Reef, Waves of Hope. Showtime begins at 7 p.m. with Finding Nemo, followed at 9 p.m. by Big Miracle. Movies are free to attend – and there will be free popcorn while supplies last. For your seating comfort, please bring your own portable lawn chairs. Food donations for the Aurora Food Pantry will be gratefully accepted.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12
Saturday Fever is back with a taste of Nashville. Join us as we take over Yonge Street in downtown Aurora for a night of dancing and great live music - all while enjoying the shops, vendors and on-site activities. Enjoy delicious food from local restaurants and vendors. A nominal fee applies for food. Hosted by the Town of Aurora, this year's event will run on Yonge Street, between Mosley Street and Wellington Street, from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. For a full entertainment lineup, visit auroraca.ca/snf.

ONGOING
Partagez le Français: 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.

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Outlaw State of Mind comes to Aurora



Aurora's Concerts in the Park summer series continued Wednesday, August 19, with Outlaw State of Mind & Beautifully Crazy – Tributes to Chris Stapleton and Luke Combs. (1, 2) The band had perfect weather for their sets. (3, 4, 5) Enjoying the evening were Rosie and Brooklyn; The Ieraci and Joseph families; and Susan.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

Aurora Public Art Festival will showcase common threads, celebrate anniversary

From page 3

“It’s a really fabulous piece about how these towers act as a place for people together,” says Gallery Manager Ashlyn Gregory. “The rug goes out eight feet in all four directions and people are invited to come up close to it and really experience the pattern.”

Next up is Aziz, an artist currently in residence at Toronto’s Harbourfront Centre. She focuses on South Asian embroidery traditions and “how you can disrupt those traditions by adding in technology,” says Gregory.

“She has five tapestries using a traditional South Asian mirror embroidery as a practice and they are going to be located on the garden path from the Plateia up to Church Street. They’re very reminiscent of South Asian traditional fashions, so it is going to be really beautiful and colourful in that space.

Ding and Li have created a site-specific installation called Wind Blessing in Red. As part of this installation, the Centre will host an activation on Yonge Street during the Town’s Saturday Night Fever event on September 12 where people can write a wish in their preferred language on red textile strips that will then form the core of the piece.

“My intention behind bringing

these artists together is to show people what public art can actually be,” says Gregory. “It’s not always just murals, metal statues, and things like that. It can also be temporary, it can also be ephemeral, textile, and there’s many different ways these artists can approach textiles, but they all say something about cultural heritage, identity, and how textiles are a way to explore that cultural heritage. All three exhibitions really encourage audiences to reflect on their own understanding of textiles in their lives and textiles as symbols of visibility and belonging.”

As part of the Town’s Multicultural Festival on September 19, artist Medhat will host a small loom weaving workshop the Centre says will be very kid-friendly, and they will also co-host with the Town of Aurora a panel discussion on public art the following day.

The installations will also be a destination on the Canadian Art Hop, a cross-country movement organized by the Canadian Art Dealers Association, connecting arts-minded organizations across Canada, all open on the same day, allowing participants to “hop” from gallery to gallery.

For more about Common Threads, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/common-threads.

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August 30th is

National Grief Awareness Day

A day encouraging people to offer support, listen, and connect with those who are grieving.



In honour of this day, we want to remind you of the wide range of free services for children, youth, adults and seniors at Doane House Hospice in Newmarket.

Services include individual counselling, support groups, home visits, art therapy and a wide variety of activities that help people feel they are not alone in their grief.

Grief Programs		
Weekly Walk & Talk at Fairy Lake in Newmarket	Thursdays September 17th – November 15th	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
6-Week Adult Afternoon Grief Group	September 30th – November 4th	4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Mindful Moments: A Grief Group for Adults	October 13th	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Coffee & Conversation: Coping with Grief During the Holidays	December 9th	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
To register, please contact Mara Dacey, Grief and Bereavement Coordinator, at mdacey@myhospice.ca		



Elementary and secondary students in York Region experiencing grief are invited to join the Mariposa Art Club for Grieving Children.

The club provides free art-making activities designed to help children safely express their feelings, learn healthy ways to cope, and support each other.

PA Days – 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
Monday, October 26th, 2026
Friday, November 20th, 2026
Friday, January 15th, 2027
Tuesday, February 2nd, 2027
Monday, May 3rd, 2027
Friday, June 4th, 2027
To register, please contact Cynthia Gardner, Art Therapist , at cgardner@myhospice.ca



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