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Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

ANGELA DAUST

Ward 2

Authorized by ANGELA DAUST

WARD 2, I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

THE AUROРАН

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WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2026



BACK-TO-SCHOOL PREP

MPP Michael Parsa was one of many dignitaries on hand at the Aurora Recreation Complex on Saturday for the Aurora Black Community's second-annual Back-To-School Sports Day where participating students got not only a chance to get active, but backpacks and supplies to help them start the school year off right. For more, see Page 15.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Debate, all-candidates meeting locked in for municipal election

BY BROCK WEIR

EDITOR

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The ballots are locked in, candidates are knocking on doors, and further opportunities to hear from those looking to earn Aurora's mayoral chains or a place at the Council table have been finalized ahead of the October 26 municipal election.

The first all-candidates meeting – a traditional-style debate and meet-and-greet is set for Thursday, October 1, organized by community ratepayers' groups at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #385, from 6.30 – 9.30 p.m.

“The event will provide Aurora residents with an opportunity to hear directly from the Mayoral candidates seeking election using a traditional debate format,” say organizers Aurora Ratepayers. “The event is open to Aurora residents, with online registration required in advance. Non-registered residents will be admitted if the capacity of the facility has not been reached.”

The evening will begin with a meet-

and-greet with all candidates from 6.30 – 7 p.m., with the Mayoral debate, moderated by Stephen Boyne, President of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion to ensure the event remains non-partisan, slated to take place between 7 – 8 p.m.

A half-hour Town Hall Question Period will follow, with the last hour switching back over to a meet-and-greet format.

The next opportunities are both hosted by the Aurora Public Library on Sunday, October 4.

Continued on page 19



SUMMER SIZZLE

Thousands descended on Machell Park over the weekend for Aurora's Ribfest, a three-day celebration of food, fun, and music – and among the “grillers” helping to keep Aurorans fed were Joelle and Jess of Camp 31. For more, see Page 16.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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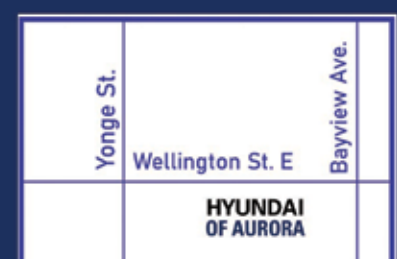
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Community has mixed feelings on cannabis retail, report finds

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A community survey commissioned by the Town of Aurora has found a majority of respondents take a dim view of cannabis retail.

The results of the survey were presented last week to Aurora’s Cannabis Retail Review Task Force Committee. The numbers show 64 per cent of respondents say they believe cannabis retail has had a “somewhat or very negative” impact on the community, while just 23 per cent had a favourable impression.

“Respondents expressed particular concern about the number and concentration of cannabis retail stores in Aurora,” said Carley Smith, Aurora’s Manager of Corporate Communications, in her report to Committee. “Approximately 71 per cent indicated that there are too many cannabis retail stores, while 20 per cent felt the current number is about right, and two per cent felt there are too few. Despite these concerns, views on whether cannabis retail should operate in Aurora were more divided, with 42 per cent supportive, 49 per cent opposed, and approximately 10 per cent neutral.

“When asked about specific community impacts, the most commonly-identified concern was youth exposure, reported by approximately 52 per cent of respondents. Other negative impacts cited included increased loitering and litter (27 per cent each), traffic or parking issues (19 per cent), and noise (8 per cent).

At the same time, respondents identified some positive impacts, including increased convenience for

consumers, employment opportunities, improved occupancy of commercial spaces, and increased business activity. Forty-four per cent indicated that they had observed no positive impacts, while 20 per cent reported observing no negative impacts.”

The survey was commissioned by Council in June at the suggestion of the Cannabis Committee, chaired by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. The survey was open to the community as a whole, rather than targeted to the areas of Aurora in which cannabis stores operate.

At the time of the survey, there were 13 retail locations in the community. “Responses regarding the operation

and appearance of individual stores were somewhat more balanced,” Smith continued. “Approximately 47 per cent agreed that cannabis stores are well-maintained and present a professional appearance, compared with approximately 32 per cent who disagreed. Views on whether stores operate responsibly were more negative regarding compatibility with surrounding businesses and impacts on neighbourhood character.

“Open-ended comments reinforced the quantitative findings. The most frequent themes related to the number and concentration of stores, proximity to schools and other sensitive locations, youth exposure, cannabis

odour, loitering, litter, signage, and the perceived effect on Aurora’s community character. Some respondents who generally supported legal cannabis retail also expressed concern that there are too many locations or that stores are located too close together. Conversely, other respondents emphasized that cannabis is a legal and regulated product, that stores provide consumer convenience and economic benefits, and that concerns such as litter and loitering are not necessarily unique to cannabis businesses.”

The results show, Smith concluded, that a primary concern is the number of retail stores rather than the existence of the shops.



REMEMBERING DOLLY PARTON – Aurora Town Square was illuminated in pink last week to celebrate the life and legacy of Dolly Parton, the beloved singer, actress, and philanthropist who died August 25, sparking an international outpouring of remembrance and commemoration.
Photo courtesy of Mayor Tom Mrakas

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What is a windrow?

A windrow is the snow left at the end of a driveway after a snowplow has cleared a road



aurora.ca/Windrow



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Region sends condolences after Nepal disaster

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, our thoughts are with those impacted by the devastating flash floods that have impacted communities along the Nepal-China border.

Natural disasters of this kind impact communities across the world, causing significant loss and hardships for thousands of people, especially those mourning the loss of loved ones and those anxiously waiting for news of family members who remain missing.

York Region is home to residents with family and friends with strong connections around the world. It is an incredibly worrying time with at least 30 Canadians remaining unaccounted for, and whose families continue to await news of their loved ones.

We recognize the resilience of Canadians impacted, and the people of Nepal and China, plus the dedication of emergency responders and volunteers working to support those in need.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO

OPINION BY DAVID SUZUKI

Indigenous rights mean justice for all

We have much to be proud of in this country we call Canada. Universal health care. Diversity and multiculturalism. A high standard of living. Good education. Free speech, freedom of assembly and progressive immigration policies.

But we can't take it for granted, and we still have far to go. We can't forget that European colonizers took the land from people who had lived here for millennia, moving them onto reservations, outlawing their traditional practices and forcing them into residential schools whose stated purpose was to "kill the Indian in the child."

This attempted annihilation of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures was based on a misguided theory of superiority — the idea that the might of weapons and the "science" and technology to exploit people, land and "resources" worldwide meant European culture was best.

They saw those who understood their environments and their place in nature as primitive savages. The planet and everything on it were theirs for the taking.

We're now seeing the consequences: climate disruption, pollution, species extinction, water shortages, overpopulation, deepening inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, rampant racism, conflict over increasingly scarce resources, global warfare, human misery...

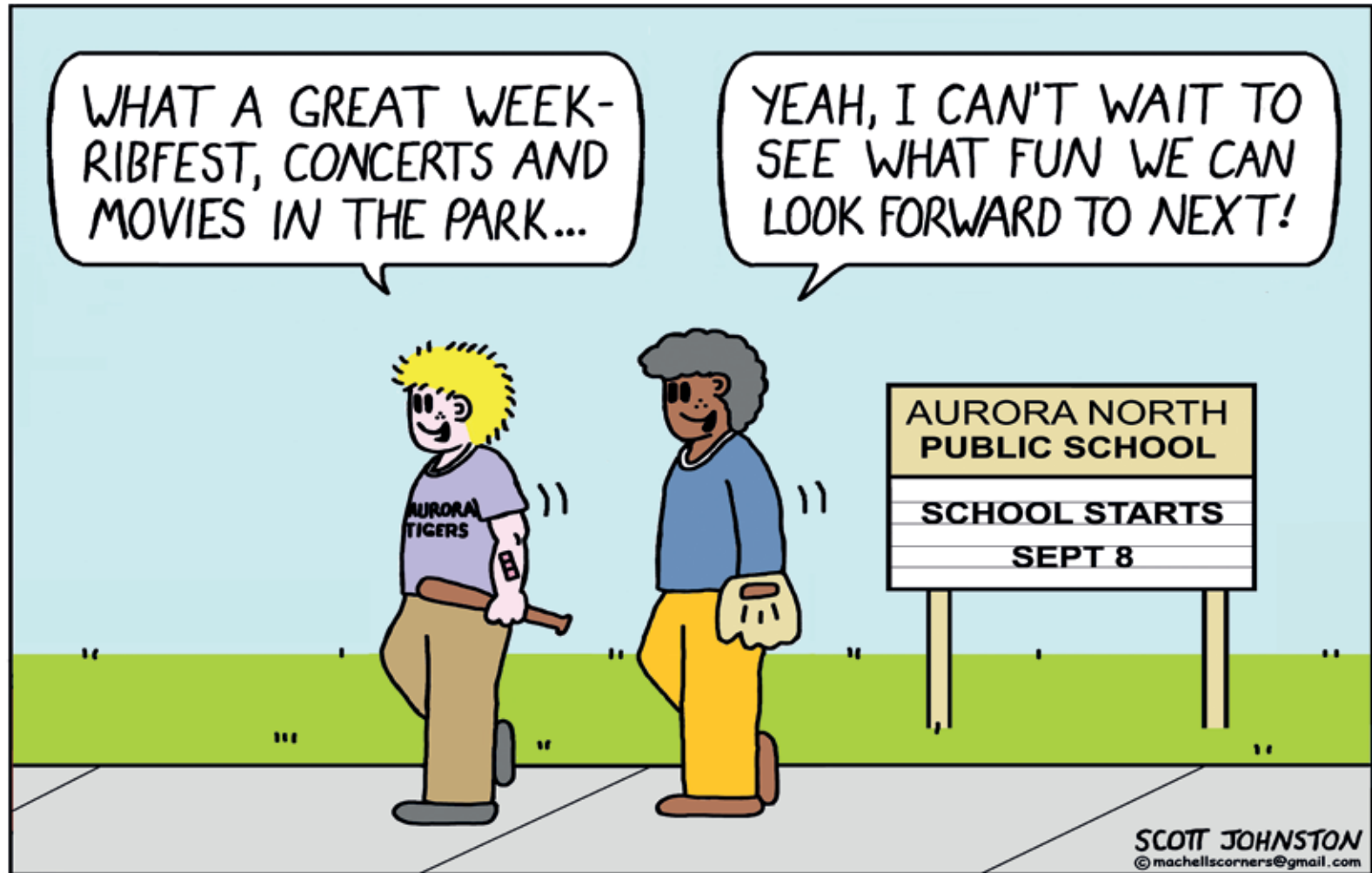
The recently concluded 57th session of the international Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, on Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Children and Unmarked Graves in Canada, shone a spotlight on this ongoing and intentional attempt to destroy Indigenous communities, through genocidal acts such as forcibly separating Indigenous children from their homes. Canada's last residential school, in Rankin Inlet, closed in 1997!

Convened by request from the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal, the tribunal's panel of five judges from seven countries detailed the "continuing impacts of genocide and crimes against humanity."

"The panel heard from several witnesses about the profound harms caused to children, parents and

Continued on page 17

Machell's Corners



Stepping forward with Dolly



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

of its foundation in Canada. "I can't tell you how much that meant to me because I created the Imagination Library as a tribute to my Daddy. He was the smartest man I have ever known but I know in my heart his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams.

"Inspiring kids to love to read became my mission. In the beginning, my hope was simply to inspire the children in my home country, but here we are today with a worldwide program that gives a book a month to well over three million children.

"Of course, I have not done this alone. The real heroes of our story are the thousands of local organizations who have embraced my dream and made it their own. They raise millions of dollars each year and wake up every day with a passion to make sure their kids have every opportunity to succeed.

"It's been quite a journey but we still have so much more left to do... Let's share this dream that all children should grow up in a home full of books. The first step is always the hardest, but you'll never know unless you try."

While the local organizations who are making all this possible are indeed heroes who are doing the heavy lifting, the message Parton shared through her Imagination Library is, I think we can all agree, a classic example of her trademark understatement — in everything but her classic look.

Since Parton's sudden passing on August 25 — and I say sudden as, despite how transparent she was about her illness in recent months, it seems almost unfathomable for such a bright, larger-than-life light to be extinguished — it is clear that just about everyone was touched or impacted by her in some way.

Countless people around the world were, of course, impacted by her beautiful voice and her storytelling songbook — to offer just one personal anecdote to illustrate this point, when I worked abroad in East Africa in 2007, the newsroom came to a halt every time a song from Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers

(or both!) came on the radio to allow for an office-wide singalong.

Others gravitated less towards Dolly the singer, and more towards her output on film — 9 To 5, Steel Magnolias, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, and more — and television, as well as streaming. The bonus being that that voice followed her in whatever she tried her hand.

A friend of mine shared in the days following her death how, as a young boy who had moved to North America from Italy when he was little over 10, overwhelmed with the culture shock of being in a new school, with new people, immersed in an unfamiliar language, he found something of a safe harbour in the flashy lady he saw on TV.

Another friend, a trans woman, found acceptance in the person of Dolly Parton when, in her world, there was precious little acceptance to go around.

Another reminiscence that struck me was from a parent whose child was distraught by the news — not necessarily being a fan of Parton the entertainer, but rather simply in her role as "the lady who sent me books."

Dolly Parton, despite her self-deprecation, proved the old adage that not all superheroes wore capes. Above and beyond her boundless talent and international work for literacy, she supported countless charities in ways large, small, and unheralded; invested much of the money she made to support communities and marginalized populations in need; and perhaps most importantly and effortlessly served as a living, tangible representation of what simply what it means to be a good person.

It might sound simple on the surface, but in today's present world where so many of those individuals who have amassed great wealth are more inclined to use it to amass power, profile, and pursue even more treasure for their coffers, it is a potent reminder the difference each of us can make if motivated to do so.

Few of us have the resources at our fingertips to make as profound a difference on the world around us as Dolly Parton did, but, as her story so powerfully illustrates, no matter how humble our beginnings, and, for that matter, no matter how humble our presents, all it really takes is a good heart and taking that first step.

We would all do well to remember her belief of "the first step is always the hardest, but you'll never know unless you try," or even the advice she gave to listeners as radio psychologist Shirlee Kenyon in the 1992 film Straight Talk: "Sometimes you've got to just honk your horn. If you don't, nobody's gonna know you're coming."

THE AURORAN

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Trim, not Grim!

Some tools, used since prehistory, have effectively disappeared from the everyday use they once enjoyed. One such implement was a hand-held inwardly curved blade, which found great use in accurately cutting crops at harvest time. While we may know the sickle from its fame in a certain flag, they were a staple of farm life for generations. These examples represent two styles of this tool – the smaller sickle (83.41) from the late 19th century, and the longer reaping hook (W32) from closer to the middle of the 1800s. The reaping hook is stamped with a long-forgotten manufacturer named “Sanford” – but we know that New Tongue refers to the length and strength of the tang – the portion of a bladed that sits inside the handle. Cast steel was a relatively new technology at the time, being more resilient and easy to form than the traditional smithed iron. With one of these, could you reap what you sowed?



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

Is everyone ready for September? I have spoken to many constituents at the door, and it is evident that families are getting ready for a new school year and the start of another busy fall season. I trust that you all had a wonderful summer with family, and friends, and managed to participate in one of the many festivals held in our community. My focus has been working on the priorities for our community – ensuring we have strong local services that YOU can rely upon.

One of those essential services is Southlake Health. Southlake is a cornerstone of health care for families across Newmarket-Aurora, northern York Region, and South Simcoe. As our community continues to grow, I remain committed to supporting Southlake’s Davis Drive site and ensuring it continues to provide high-quality care close to home for generations to come.

Our government has made significant investments in Southlake in recent years, most recently, I was proud to announce more than \$16.6 million in combined funding for 2026–27. This includes \$3.7 million through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund (HIRF) for critical infrastructure upgrades and repairs, as well as \$12.9 million in additional hospital operational funding.

Since 2021, through the HIRF, more than \$16 million has been invested which has allowed Southlake to prioritize projects such as upgrades to emergency power systems, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning infrastructure, and infection prevention and control measures that enhance safety for patients and staff and extend the life of the hospital’s current facilities.

These investments are about more than dollars. They help ensure Southlake has the infrastructure and resources needed to provide a safe, modern environment for patients, families, and health-care professionals, while continuing to meet the needs of our growing community.

At the end of July, the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security, alongside the Minister of Health, announced an investment of \$55.8 million to support the planning and operations of York University’s new school of medicine. As the first medical school in Ontario that is focused on training family doctors, the York School of Medicine is expected to open in 2028 and will bolster Ontario’s pipeline of highly skilled primary care providers. The investment will fund initial planning for the York School of Medicine such as accreditation, curriculum development, faculty recruitment, establishing a medical library, training costs and operating costs for its undergraduate and postgraduate programs. When the school opens, it will have 80 undergraduate seats and 102 postgraduate seats, growing to 240 undergraduate seats and 293 postgraduate seats at full capacity.

The Ontario government is leading the largest expansion of medical education in the province in over a decade. The expansion includes additional seats at all six medical schools across Ontario, as well as the establishment of two new medical schools, the Toronto Metropolitan University Medical School, which welcomed its inaugural cohort last fall, and of course, York. The investment noted above is on top of the initial \$9 million invested by the Ontario government to begin the design and planning for York’s Medical School in 2024.

What does this mean for Newmarket—Aurora? Southlake Health will be a partner to York University by becoming a residency hospital for these students. I am thrilled that our local hospital will be there to help train more physicians closer to home, to strengthen our local healthcare workforce.

INVITATION - please join me for my 5th Annual Community BBQ on Sunday, September 27, from 2–4 p.m. at Riverwalk Commons. It will be a great opportunity to enjoy some food, entertainment, conversation, and time with friends and neighbours. I look forward to seeing you there!



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Election Countdown

The countdown has begun, with about 50 or so days left until the municipal election on October 26.

All across Aurora, you can feel the excitement.

Or maybe not.

This isn’t surprising. In 2014, 35.7% of eligible Aurorans voted. This went down to 32.1% in 2018, and in our last trip to the polls in 2022, only 26.1%, or about 1 in 4 eligible voters, managed to cast a ballot.

At this rate, soon all it will take for a candidate to be elected is for them to vote for themselves.

Speaking of the candidates, with the nomination period now closed we can see how the races are lining up.

The race for mayor has four candidates, two of them Council veterans.

Once again, Ward 5 is the most popular choice among candidates with six people vying for the Councillor role. The other wards have from two to five candidates, which provides a bit more option than last time when half of the wards only had two candidates.

In 2022, all seven members of Council sought re-election.

But change is in the air this time around as Council will see at least four new faces, with four Councillors not seeking reelection in their wards.

How are people to choose amongst all these options? By how they feel on the

issues, of course, and there will be no end of them to discuss this time around.

Many of them are ones we’ve heard before, but are still equally important now.

For example, development is always near the top of the list. Too much or too little? The right or wrong type? In the correct or wrong spot? Does the expense justify the benefits to the Town?

Development also includes housing, which Council pledged to increase significantly, yet ended up getting a grade of “F” on a recent external review of the Town’s progress on this issue.

Can this be improved, or are we at the mercy of the economy and the whims of developers?

Some new discussion items this time around include infrastructure, with an alarming Town report recently saying

that standards are slipping, repairs are backlogging, and new projects are being deferred due to an ongoing lack of funding. How did we get to this state, and what’s the plan to address it?

The other new item bound to be discussed that encourages strong emotions from both camps is the use of Strong Mayor powers.

These are just a few of the issues, and don’t even touch on such things as historical preservation and restoration, Yonge Street businesses, Council transparency, Regional representation, the environment, and even that perennial Aurora favourite, windrows.

With so many new faces involved this time around it will be interesting to see what they all have to say on all this. Will creative new ideas and directions come forward, or is Aurora in better shape than we think? Do we stay the course with simply minor tweaks, or is something more substantive required?

But to me the biggest and most important question is after two months of being presented with information, facts and ideas that will directly affect their lives and pocketbooks for the next four years, will Aurorans actually digest all this information, form their own conclusions, and care enough to turn up at the polls?

Fingers crossed.

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



Senior Scape

By Christina Doyle

*It was the first operatic mountain
I climbed and the view from it was
astounding, exhilarating, stupefying.*

– Leontyne Price

went right and for heaven’s sake stop the guilt trip. Enough is enough!

Appreciate your efforts, you deserve a pat on the back for just trying your best. Maybe you didn’t receive an award, a trophy, a plaque of your hard work but all this time you gave of yourself, your time, your endless energy and your heart. You should consider yourself the “wow” factor, for a job well done. Yes, go ahead and congratulate yourself – you did the best you could, and not waiting or expecting anything back in return. The world cannot confer the recognition that will make you feel fulfilled. Only you can.

It’s time to give yourself credit as a senior, which means taking the time to celebrate your own unique story and life experiences. It is about honoring your resilience, recognizing all the wisdom you have gained, and appreciating the value you still bring to the world.

If you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts like, “I should have done better,” or “I’m not as useful as I used to be,” actively change that voice. Try replacing those thoughts with something positive and true, like, “I

did my best today, and that is enough.” Think about all the things you have lived through and overcome. That takes a lot of strength! Your life and mine are full of lessons, battles fought, and wisdom earned. Giving yourself credit means recognizing that your history makes you a valuable resource and a wonderful person.

If you find yourself in this article, may God bless you again for your kindness, your patience, your time and your love. You truly are a wonderful person and may we all recognize and appreciate those angels.

Remember to save these Dates!

Our Seniors’ Active Living Fair will happen on October 3. Also, our annual Open House will happen on October 7. Take a tour and meet some of our wonderful volunteers! There will be refreshments and draw prize. Don’t miss it!

Take Advantage of our Half Price Membership!

If you are on the fence about joining the Aurora Seniors’ Centre, good news! Membership will be ½ price for the remainder of 2026. This is the perfect time for you and your friends and neighbours to join for residents at only \$17.50 and non-residents at \$25.00.

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

Welcome to September, dear readers.

This month is not going to be about getting up and doing something new, or about moving forward and thinking about the future. No, this is going to be completely unique – it’s time to give yourself credit.

It is high time to bask in the glow of your accomplishments right now!

You may be a caregiver or have been looking after someone dear to you for a long time and the sad part is that you yourself may have downplayed your achievements.

Family members who are caring for aging loved ones often “lose themselves” in the process. Many experience caregiver guilt and endure a great deal of stress that radically changes their self-concept and world view. This unrealistic view can leave us feeling consistently defeated. Over the long term, this mindset damages one’s self-worth and leads to a spiral of negative thinking.

While there is no magical roadmap to help us navigate all the trials and tribulations of life, especially life as a caregiver, we CAN adjust our attitudes to help make things a little easier on ourselves.

Whatever you do, don’t compare yourself to others; believe me, no one is leading a perfect life. You are doing the best you can. We know that people make mistakes, but as family caregivers, we seem to expect a degree of perfection from ourselves that simply isn’t possible.

Have you thought about what you have accomplished in your life and congratulated yourself, not by the world’s standards but through your heart? It’s easy to wish you did more but try today to look at how far you have come. Focus on the good, think about all the wonderful things you did that



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AURORA VOTES 2026

Terrence Zhu focuses on safety and opportunity in Ward 5

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As a Council candidate in Ward 5 this fall, Terrence Zhu is running with four words at the heart of his campaign: Safe, Responsible, Care, and Opportunity.

The graphic design and digital marketing entrepreneur was one of the final candidates to put themselves forward in Ward 5, a community with a record-number of candidates

in this October’s election. He says as part of his marketing and printing businesses he was trying to support other candidates “doing good” in the community. One day, however, his partner encouraged him to get involved and put himself among those looking to make a difference on the ballot.

“After a few layers of consideration, I finally made up my mind at the end before candidate enrolment closed,” says Zhu with a laugh. “I’m not really

of a traditional political background, but I can identify the problem, developing a plan and working with people with different backgrounds, getting things done. The main reason I wanted to get involved is care for the next generation. I care about my community and I care about everyone around me.”

While this might be a first-time campaign for Zhu, he has been engaged in community issues.

A part of the online group Aurora United, the Chinese-language WeChat community group, which questioned the Region of York’s proposed men’s transitional housing facility in Aurora’s south end.



Terrence Zhu
Contributed photo

you will have more time to spend with your family, your kids can safely play on the street, and seniors with their support can have a better life,” he says.

Responsibility, he continues, means “everything needs to be managed, grow properly, and make sure infrastructure is kept up.

“Ward 5 is mainly our business and commercial area for the Town and we want to have an appropriate development plan and [have] the infrastructure follow up with the appropriate plan so everyone can enjoy the fast growth of the Town.”

Care emphasises children, seniors, persons with accessibility issues, and affordability, while Opportunity looks at issues through the lens of having “people stay here, live here, and work here.”

Looking ahead beyond his four campaign Keywords, other areas of focus include traffic safety and congestion in Ward 5, particularly at Bayview Avenue and Wellington Street East, prioritizing windrow clearing, and looking closely at how public facilities and areas are used to ensure tax dollars for infrastructure are best spent.

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Aurora’s heritage stories set to come to life at Doors Open 2026



Hillary House National Historic Site will be just one local venue welcoming guests this month as part of Doors Open Aurora. Last week, the Aurora Historical Society offered a Victorian Flower Arranging: Tussie-Mussie Workshop. There, participants – such as Jenn, Alice, Kat, Monica and Jannette, pictured – learned the fascinating “language of flowers” and created bouquets of their own to take home.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora’s historic secrets are set to come into the limelight this month as the Town once again hosts Doors Open.

Doors Open Aurora, a long-time fixture on the local calendar that is back for just the second consecutive year since the global pandemic, will take place throughout the community on Sunday, September 20, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

It’s a chance to get a peek inside historic buildings and locations not

normally open to the public, experience unique activities, and learn more about local built heritage.

Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum and Archives, who is taking a leading role in planning this year’s Doors Open event, said last year’s return to form saw just under 3,000 visitations across all participating sites.

“We were quite thrilled,” says Johnson of the turnout. “Obviously the decision was made last fall to continue on with Doors Open and we’re excited to welcome back the same number of sites, but what’s really interesting

about the sites participating is that it’s more than an open door where you walk in and look around. Almost every location has really creative activations happening at the same time.”

The Aurora Cultural Centre, for instance, will host a number of workshops out of the Shining Hill Studio within the Aurora Town Square complex, giving participants the chance to explore the visual arts space.

Nearby, Aurora’s Pine Tree Potters Guild will offer live demonstrations, making soup vessels for this fall’s annual Empty Bowls fundraiser, benefiting Aurora’s Welcoming Arms and Newmarket’s Inn from the Cold.

In the outdoor space at Aurora Town Square, Central York Fire Services will be on hand in their finery, offering a chance to get up close and personal with their 1926 Fire Truck, a regular feature in local parades, which is marking its Centenary this year. Come camera-ready for a unique photo opportunity.

Beyond Aurora Town Square, a drum circle will be offered in the Royal Rose Gallery, which calls the historic Caruso’s space on Yonge Street home, while the Micak Contemporary Art Gallery in St. Andrew’s Village, will host a live painting activity.

Helping residents discover some of the Town’s historic treasures will be historian David Heard, who will lead a new walking tour through the community entitled “Aurora Storyteller: Walking through the Past.”

Activations will also take place at the Aurora Cemetery, where the Royal Canadian Legion will host its annual drumhead service at 2 p.m.

“Doors Open goes as far south as the Aurora Cemetery and as far north as St. Anne’s School, which is also coming back to participate again – they were a

huge hit last year, it’s a beautiful place, and we’re thrilled to have them back for a second year,” says Johnson, adding other participating locations include Hillary House National Historic Site, Saltbox Café, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Trinity Anglican Church, and Rising Sun Masonic Lodge.

Asked what it means from a museum perspective to have the entire community as a canvas to program, she says it’s “the kind of thing you wish for.”

“As a museum, we will be doing an activation at Town Square in front of the historic Church Street School,” she says. “We’ll be out there answering people’s questions about the school and we’ll have the red doors open. For anyone who is feeling nostalgic and might want to venture through those original iconic doors, come visit us on the front lawn. We’re happy to answer questions. Right now, we’re doing a lot of community outreach for our strategic plan that is going from 2027 to 2031. We will have some community engagement activities set up on the lawn as well to get the temperature of the public and ask some questions. A big part of our vision and how we have been operating the museum is seeing opportunities beyond one building and looking for those points of connection throughout the whole community. Doors Open is a fabulous opportunity to really embody that and to [be able to] take that premise at the helm and encourage people to explore all of Aurora and learn a little bit about the history that’s there.”

For more information about Doors Open, visit auroratownsquare.ca/monthofculture. For a full roster of Doors Open Aurora locations and activities, visit doorsopenontario.on.ca/pages/events/aurora.



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Chamber looks to engage youth, harness community love of football this fall

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce will have a busy fall season ahead as they look to engage youth – and get



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local businesses into the Super Bowl spirit.

The Chamber outlined its plans for the autumn on August 27 at their Annual General Meeting and Member Barbecue held at the Stonehaven Events Centre.

The meeting was a chance to welcome new members to its executive, give thanks to outgoing members, and raise money for the York Region Food Network.

But it was also a chance to look back at a successful year as much as it was an opportunity to look ahead.

“Compared to the size of our Chamber, the resources available to us compared to other Chambers in Ontario, I’d say we’re punching way above our weight,” said Board Chair David Olesen. “Of the key success, the Aurora Chamber is always looking for new ways to serve different aspects and parts of our community. Over the last year, we’ve seen multiple new opportunities, new exciting initiatives come to our Chamber. First of all, there’s the Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Group, which has created a space for emerging leaders to connect.... We partnered with Central York Chamber of Commerce for the Top 40 under 40, celebrating 40



Mayor Tom Mrakas swore in members of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors at their annual Summer Barbecue and Annual General Meeting last week.
Photo courtesy of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce

exceptional individuals from Aurora, Newmarket, and East Gwillimbury who are making an incredible impact professionally and within their communities and their towns. We also launched our quarterly not-for-profit round table, which brings together local charities and non-profits that are able to talk and communicate about their challenges, their shared resources, and find opportunities to collaborate.”

Further initiatives will soon be underway.

The Chamber will launch a new Business Toolkit in October, which is designed as a resource for small business owners. The toolkit will include expert input on how to improve decision-making, use various tools to streamline operations, marketing and sales, bookkeeping and finance, and more.

“Looking ahead, we’re also launching the Youth Advisory Council,” Olesen continued. “This is part of our Business Engaging Youth Program. Working with several local high schools, we’re bringing together Grade 11 and Grade 12 students and giving them an opportunity to communicate to us – this is what they’re looking for, this is what they need to build leadership skills among that younger generation – and help them connect with our business community, grow out our talent, and hopefully keep them here.

“Supporting the development of our members, as well as our members managing, let’s say, a challenging economic environment these days, the Chamber will continue to offer webinars together with market and issue-of-the-day focused sessions and numerous professional development opportunities.... We as an organization, and myself personally, are really looking forward to another year of connecting with businesses, building those relationships and those partnerships, and supporting the people who make

Aurora’s business community honestly thrive like no other around us.”

But there’s also some room for fun.

This fall, local businesses will be invited to get into the spirit of football and produce their own Super Bowl-style commercials. A friendly competition with the entry fee benefiting a local non-profit, Chamber President & CEO Alison Mumford said the commercials will be shared widely with the community invited to “watch, share, and vote for their favourites.”

“We wanted this to be about more than just bragging rights – every vote will help to raise money for one of our local not-for-profits,” she said. “It all leads up to our Commercial Showcase in February where we will feature the best commercials, crown some winners, and, most importantly, turn a little friendly competition into something for a great cause.

“Start thinking about your commercials, the opportunities to make us laugh, get creative, go completely over the top, and show Aurora what your business is all about. We can’t wait to see what you come up with.”

This year’s AGM was attended by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, and Mayor Tom Mrakas, who swore in new members of the Board. Before doing so, however, he praised the Chamber on its recent successes.

“We are quite lucky to have such an incredible Chamber,” he said, adding he has never seen the Chamber stronger than it is today. “That is due to the fact of the staff as well as Board members, and all of you. We’re seeing businesses come in every day into the Town of Aurora and opening up shop, and it’s because of the great community that we have and one of the most desirable places to live in Ontario and to open a business.”



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Town now taking applications for Windrow Removal program

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Applications are now being accepted by the Town of Aurora for its 2026-2027 Windrow Removal Pilot.

This year’s edition of the pilot, which clears the bank of snow left at the ends of driveways of eligible households after municipal snow plows pass, will operate between December 1, 2026 and April 1, 2027, and will swing into action when snow accumulation reaches 8 cm or more.

Clearing roads will take priority, and windrow clearing will take place once road work is complete.

The pilot supports eligible seniors and residents living with disabilities who face challenges with snow removal.

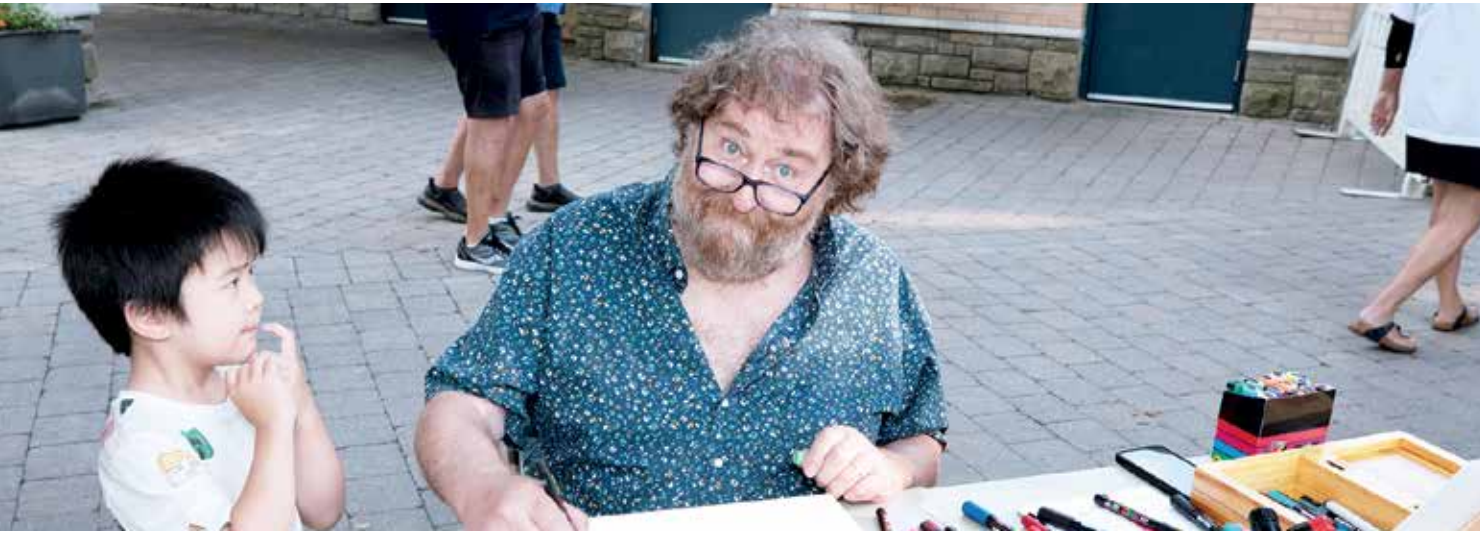
“We know that clearing the snow windrow at the end of a driveway can be one of the most difficult parts of winter maintenance for many seniors and residents living with disabilities,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “Council recognizes the value this service can provide in helping eligible residents remain safe and independent in their homes. As we continue this pilot program, we’re committed to ensuring we gather meaningful data and measure the results so Council can make informed decisions about the program’s future.

Eligible residents must be 65 years of age or older; or be under 65 and living with a documented disability; and have no one in the household over the age of 16 who is physically able to clear snow.

A \$200 non-refundable fee per household applies, but some residents may be eligible for a fee exemption.

For more, visit aurora.ca/windrow.

PENULTIMATE PERFORMANCE



The Town of Aurora’s popular Concerts in the Park Summer Series is set to wrap this Wednesday, September 2, with The 99s, but Town Park was packed for the penultimate performance on August 26 with the eleven-piece funk and pop band, Project Phoenix, pictured top and second row left. In addition to the music, artists were hard at work wowing the crowd, with paintings created live on site. Among the participating artists were (Second Row Left) Carmella and (Above) John.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Artist paints old family photographs into vivid portraits designed to spark memory



Artist Arnie Lipsey is pictured with Samantha Jones, Gallery Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre, at the opening reception for his new exhibition Thursday night. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

When animator Arnie Lipsey was looking for a new way to express himself, he looked back to his first love, paint, as a new creative path.

He found inspiration in a stack of old family photographs, but the black-and-white images lacked that certain pop. He challenged himself to reinterpret the monochrome photographs through paint on canvas, transforming them into vivid technicolour.

“I found that translating old photographs into colour was a challenging technical exercise,” he says, “but I wasn’t getting a way of really describing the people that I was portraying – not just as a straight, physical thing, but trying to inject more

meaning to make the images a little more potent.

“I didn’t set out with any great agenda to continue to do that, but as I went from painting one photograph to the next, which I just simply found myself doing because the first couple were so impactful, I just found a groove and kept following it until 40 canvasses later, it’s developed into a body of work.”

It’s a body of work which challenges the viewer to consider when memory mixes with imagination in “Arnie Lipsey: Past. Tense.,” a new exhibition which opened Thursday at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Running through October 31, the show “uses painting to trace a family history shaped by immigration, trauma, and silence,” says the Centre.

“The artist leans into the surreal to bridge the gap between what is remembered and what can only be imagined. “As a second-generation Jewish Canadian, Lipsey paints from a position of postmemory – a term that describes the ways in which the trauma of previous generations is internalized through stories, images, and cultural memory.

“His parents, European Jews who

immigrated to Montreal before World War II, escaped Nazi persecution but lost many relatives in the Holocaust. Drawing on his family archive, Lipsey reinterprets black-and-white photographs into fantastical compositions that bring into focus the cultural, historical, and personal circumstances that linger beyond the frame. Through complex symbolic

Continued on page 19

CULTURALLY
speaking
by Derek Andrews



Aurora Cultural Centre
PERFORMING ARTS
GALLERIES
EDUCATION



Silly Billy Family Show September 26 coming to Brevik Hall

Come dance with toddlers at Aurora Cultural Centre. ***Silly Billy*** is a story about a rare white buffalo, unhappy with his uniqueness, who goes on a quest to find the magical Unicorn in the hopes of meeting this mythical creature. Through adventures, obstacles, misunderstandings and mishaps, Billy discovers his own self-worth, embraces his difference, and takes his place alongside the Unicorn as the legendary great white buffalo of the plains.

October 3 - Measha Brueggergosman-Lee and Aaron Davis bring “***Zombie Blizzard***” with support from members of **Hannaford Silver Band**. Music composed by Aaron is featured adjacent to poems by **Margaret Atwood** drawn from her collection “***Dearly***”. The seven poems range in their character “...by turns moving, playful and wise, these poems are *about absences and endings, ageing and retrospection*, but also about gifts and renewals.”

Below are the words from Margaret Atwood’s work and the lead track from the book:

DEARLY

It’s an old word, fading now.
Dearly did I wish.
Dearly did I long for.
I loved him dearly.

I make my way along the sidewalk
mindfully, because of my wrecked
knees
about which I give less of a shit
than you may imagine
since there are other things, more
important—
wait for it, you’ll see—

bearing half a coffee
in a paper cup with—
dearly do I regret it—
a plastic lid—
trying to remember what words
once meant.

Dearly.
How was it used?
Dearly beloved.
Dearly beloved, we are gathered.
Dearly beloved, we are gathered
here
in this forgotten photo album
I came across recently.

Fading now,
the sepias, the black and whites,
the colour prints,
everyone so much younger.

The Polaroids.
What is a Polaroid? asks the
newborn.
Newborn a decade ago.

How to explain?
You took the picture and then it
came out the top.
The top of what?
It’s that baffled look I see a lot.
So hard to describe
the smallest details of how—
all these dearly gathered
together—
of how we used to live.
We wrapped up garbage
in newspaper tied with string.
What is newspaper?
You see what I mean.

String though, we still have string.
It links things together.
A string of pearls.
That’s what they would say.
How to keep track of the days?
Each one shining, each one alone,
each one then gone.
I’ve kept some of them in a
drawer on paper,
those days, fading now.
Beads can be used for counting.
As in rosaries.
But I don’t like stones around my
neck.

Along this street there are many
flowers,
fading now because it is August
and dusty, and heading into fall.
Soon the chrysanthemums will
bloom,
flowers of the dead, in France.
Don’t think this is morbid.
It’s just reality.

So hard to describe the
smallest details of flowers.
This is a stamen, nothing
to do with men.
This is a pistil, nothing
to do with guns.
It’s the smallest details
that foil translators
and myself too, trying to describe.
See what I mean.
You can wander away.
You can get lost.
Words can do that.

Dearly beloved, gathered
here together in this closed drawer,
fading now, I miss you.
I miss the missing, those
who left earlier.
I miss even those who
are still here.
I miss you all dearly.
Dearly do I sorrow for you.

Sorrow: that’s another word you don’t
hear much anymore.
I sorrow dearly.



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Aurora Sports Hall of Famer Mike Kitchen drops ceremonial puck at historic Wolves-Colts OHL game at Zancor Centre



“Kitch” presided over the centre ice ceremonial puck drop between the Sudbury Wolves and the Barrie Colts. It was the first OHL Major Junior Hockey game played in King. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

Sudbury Wolves defeat Barrie Colts 4-2 in first OHL Major Junior game in King Township

BY JIM STEWART

Aurora Sports Hall of Famer Mike Kitchen made history when he dropped the ceremonial puck at Monday night’s OHL preseason tilt between the Barrie Colts and Sudbury Wolves at the sold-out Zancor Centre in King City.

The two-time Stanley Cup-winning coach with the Chicago Blackhawks dropped the vulcanized rubber disc between Teague Vader of the Colts and Blake Clayton of the Wolves.

Clayton was voted First Star of the Game. His two-goal and one-assist performance led the Wolves to a 4-2 win over the Colts in the first OHL Major Junior game played in King Township.

Kitchen acknowledged both the historical significance of the sporting event and the quality of play on the ice.

“I feel quite honored to do the puck drop. It was nice of [Mayor] Steve [Pellegrini] and [Councillor] Dave [Boyd] to invite me to take part. It’s great to see the area growing so much to have OHL and OJHL hockey here. It’s great for the town of King City to watch this brand of hockey. To watch these players—they’re such great skaters. Their balance is already there and there are no awkward skaters on either side. This is just a preseason game, but it was spirited and fast-paced. It was a quick first period.”

The veteran NHL defenseman—who was also inducted into the King Township Sports Hall of Fame as part of its inaugural Class of 2026—expressed his appreciation at being enshrined in February and reflected on his formative Junior hockey years in King, Aurora, and Toronto.

“It was a very nice induction ceremony in the Spring and it’s a nice display here. Very honored to be in the first group of inductees. To be considered is very humbling. Very proud to be a part of it and of my hockey roots in King. I grew up here with a group of friends who were good hockey players and we moved up the ranks together. Frank and Jack Foran were terrific players—Frank could shoot equally hard from either side. My first

Junior hockey team was with the Tigers in Aurora. It was not finesse hockey—it was rugged. But I got drafted by the Marlies and we won the Memorial Cup in 1975 so they’re great memories for me as a Junior hockey player.”

King Councillor Boyd, Mayor Pellegrini, and Councillor Jordan Cescolini joined Kitchen at centre ice for the historical puck drop. The entertaining contest, taken in by the biggest crowd to grace the Zancor Centre in its three-year history, was hosted by the Junior A Rebellion to promote the club’s upcoming OJHL season.

Boyd promoted the local club by sporting his Rebellion Junior A jersey—numbered #24-- and the local sports advocate noted between periods that “It was great to see so many fans here at the Zancor Centre and to be able to watch tonight’s game with my family and good friends. My wife is here with my daughter Emma and son William who’s on the ice picking up pucks between periods. It’s a privilege to spend time with Mike Kitchen.”

Mayor Pellegrini wore his classic blue-bodied and white-sleeved Junior A Rebellion jacket to promote the squad and Kitchen similarly encouraged fans from across the Township to support King’s OJHL team.

“It’s great hockey—there have been players drafted into the NHL out of the league. It’s a great family outing, too – the tickets are reasonably priced, and you don’t have to travel too far from home. It’s entertaining hockey and it’s right in your own backyard. I think it’s really important to come out and support the local junior team.”

The hundreds of fans who did come out and support the Junior A Rebellion by attending the Colts-Wolves OHL tilt were treated to an entertaining game.

It was a hard-hitting affair as both clubs worked off the rust of the summer holidays. It was Sudbury’s first game of the preseason while the Colts were playing their third in four days after participating in an NCAA showcase in Barrie. Ceremonial puck drop centre Blake Clayton looked to be in mid-season form for Sudbury when he snapped the puck top right shelf past Barrie goaltender Hagan Bach to make

it 1-0 for the Wolves less than six minutes into the contest.

Between the first and second frame, the U8 Rebellion rep team treated the fans to a spirited split-squad game as King’s rich hockey history was promoted by its youngest travel team.

When the OHL teams returned to the ice for the middle frame, the Wolves added to their one-goal lead.

Second period goals by Brayden Bennett and Genc Ula built a 3-0 margin for Sudbury after 40 minutes of play.

Prior to the buzzer, tempers flared with 51 seconds left in the second frame as Colts forward Phillip Shargorodsky and Cole Wreggitt’s kneeling and slashing

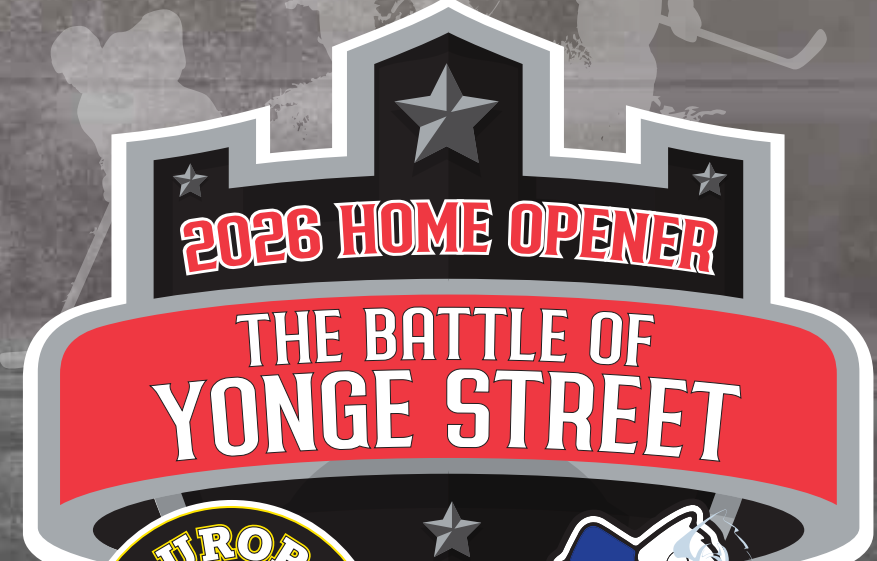
penalties morphed into fighting majors. A range of ensuing roughing skirmishes broke out between the ill-tempered teams with three seconds on the clock as Tate Collins of the Colts and Shayden Hinterberg and Finn Kearns of the Wolves found themselves in the sin bin.

The Colts whittled away the Wolves’ three-goal lead when Sebastian Mogull got Barrie on the board at 3:46 of the third period. Ethan Anusky cut Barrie’s deficit to 3-2 when he beat Wolves goaltender Owen Leonard at 14:14.

However, Barrie’s rally fell short when Clayton notched his second of the game into an empty net milliseconds before time expired to seal Sudbury’s historic two-goal victory at the Zancor Centre.

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The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame recently hosted their annual Summer BBQ at Slabtown Armoury. A highlight of the event was ASHOF President Javed Khan's presentation of a \$6,760 cheque to Eddie and Rebecca McNally to help with Eddie's emergency medical treatments. Khan reminded the 120 guests at the Armoury in a poignant and concise address: "We are more than trophies. We are family." The legendary Canadian National Team and professional soccer player was inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in 2014.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

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Sport Aurora BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS Spotlight: MASTER DUCKS SWIM



Lucinda Kam
joined the Aurora Master Ducks this season and swept gold in all 3 Breaststroke Events at Ontario Masters Provincials in the 30-34 Age Class.

Tristan Lehari
continues his dominance in the 200 m Breaststroke, taking gold at Provincials once again in the Men's 35-39 Age Category.

Dan Thompson set 4 World Records at Ontario Masters Provincial Championships for Men 70-74.

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Theatre Aurora opens season on cusp of musical “revolution”

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A musical “revolution” is set to break out on Henderson Drive this month as Theatre Aurora opens the season with a celebration of the greatest hits the 1960s and 70s have to offer.

Yesterday Once More, a musical revue conceived in-house by Theatre Aurora veterans Judi Cragg and Neill Kernohan, opens their 2026-2027 Season on September 28.

“Close your eyes and you’re back – the summer that song was everywhere, the record you wore out, the concert you’ll never forget,” says Theatre Aurora. “From Motown to folk, pop to rock, the show is pure joyful nostalgia – crafted with love for audiences who lived it, and those who wish they had.”

This is the second consecutive season Theatre Aurora has opened with a musical revue, the last celebrating the works of Rodgers & Hammerstein. This time around, and surveying their recent audiences, Theatre Aurora executives decided to take matters into their own hands and craft a show tailor-made to their audience – and theatre-goers throughout the Region.

Cragg and Kernohan were excited to give it a try, based on last year’s show.

Musical revues haven’t been Theatre Aurora’s traditional fare over the last 60-plus years, but bringing this style of show into the season allows them to flex new creative muscles, bring in new musicians, and get the season started in the final days of summer rather than in the middle of the autumn.

Once they conceived their idea, the tricky part was knowing where to start curating the music bringing Yesterday Once More to Life.

“It took a while to narrow things down. We had a lot of meetings to put the songs together in an order that makes some sense, and work the narration around them,” says Kernohan, adding with a

laugh, “I mistakenly thought it would be a great idea for me to arrange all 45 songs.”

He didn’t ultimately arrange all 45 songs, but one arrangement he’s particularly proud of is one for Simon and Garfunkel’s The Sound of Silence, which has been reinterpreted into a 12-part choir piece.

“Judi said the other day we’ve put so much of ourselves into it, but that also means we have a lot of ownership over it, which is also hard,” he says. “We put a lot of hours in – I was estimating an hour or two per song, then Judi has taken on the load of the direction and musical direction.”

It is a natural fit for Cragg, a Theatre Aurora veteran with a background as a musical theatre performer. That said, however, it has been a decidedly new experience.

“I wanted to take it on and it’s been a huge challenge, but I’ve really enjoyed it – it’s been fabulous and we have a fabulous cast,” she says. “My big thing that I’ve said all along is that I didn’t want this to be a spoof or a joke about 60s and 70s music because sometimes that happens. We want to respect it and show how important it was. The 60s and 70s were a huge revolution in popular music, and that’s what we are trying to show.”

It’s also about rekindling memories sparking new ones, she adds.

“They’re all songs everybody knows and it doesn’t matter what generation you’re part of, you know them. Some of them know it through their parents because they liked to listen to it, some of them know it just because that music is so iconic and you hear it in so many places. Music in general ties you to specific times or specific events or instances in your life and that’s really important.”

For more information on Yesterday Once More, including tickets and showtimes, visit theatreaurora.com or call the Box Office at 905-727-3669.

York Region Transit’s school routes return September 8

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

neighbourhood and St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School.

Additional school routes beyond Aurora include:

- Route 404 – Markville School Special: Revised due to redevelopment on Helen Avenue, service will begin from a new stop at Greenwater Gate/ Lane 8;
- Route 414 – St. Katharine Drexel School Special: Extended to serve the subdivision south of Hoover Park Drive, an additional morning trip will be added to support growing ridership;
- Routes 418 and 419 – Pierre Elliott Trudeau School Specials: Restructured into two separate routes: 418 via 16th Avenue and 419 via Major Mackenzie Drive;
- Route 445 – St. Robert School Special via Spadina: Additional afternoon trip added to address overcrowding;
- Routes 464 and 465 – St. Joan of Arc School Specials: Revised to better serve communities around Peter Rupert Avenue and Sweetriver Boulevard, with Route 465 renamed;
- St. Joan of Arc School Special via Peter Rupert;
- Route 468 – Emily Carr School Special via Kleinburg: Discontinued due to low ridership;
- Route 471 – Stephen Lewis School Special via Dufferin: Renamed and revised to operate along Ravineview Drive, Kirby Road and Dufferin Street.

York Region students return to school next week – and special bus routes designed to get them to school and back home again are hitting the roads.

York Region Transit (YRT) announced several transit changes on September 1 ahead of back-to-school season, some routes of which have been modified since June.

“Schedule and route adjustments will be made to various routes to better align transit service with customer demand and operate service more efficiently across the transit network,” says YRT.

Returning and modified school routes include:

- Route 426 – Dr. G.W. Williams School Special via Stone: Adjusted to operate along St. John’s Sideroad to increase service coverage;
- Route 432 – Aurora School Special via Mavrinac: Updated to operate along Mavrinac Boulevard and St. John’s Sideroad to provide increased service coverage.
- Route 437 – St. Maximilian Kolbe School Special via Mavrinac: Modified to operate along Mavrinac Boulevard and St. John’s Sideroad to increase service coverage.
- Route 438 – St. Maximilian Kolbe School Special via Orchard Heights: Introduced to serve students travelling between the Orchard Heights



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E-scooter safety, infrastructure support on Mayor’s list at AMO conference

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Mayor Tom Mrakas made the case for further regulations on e-scooter safety and more consistent, predictable infrastructure funding at August’s Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa.

Held between August 22 and August 27, the annual conference is an opportunity for municipal leaders to connect with each other, with representatives of the Provincial government, and more – sharing ideas and letting upper-tier politicians about issues at the local level.

“One of the things at the top of my list going in were definitely talking to the Minister of Transportation in regards to e-scooters, e-bikes and how do we provide a safe avenue for those that want to use this as a mode of transportation – because it’s a good thing, but it needs to be done in a safe manner,” says Mayor Mrakas. “We need to make sure that we protect pedestrians and people within our communities. Whether it’s on our trails and in our parks as well, it’s an ongoing issue.”

Additional issues at the municipal level Mayor Mrakas says are solutions disposing of used tires, an issue which he highlighted on social media recently, infrastructure funding, and emergency preparedness in the face of weather that is becoming increasingly unpredictable.

On infrastructure funding, Mayor Mrakas said he underscored the point to Ontario Premier Doug Ford and the topic overall was a hot-button issue at the conference.

“[The Province] has provided \$8.4 billion for municipalities to look at if they’re reducing development charges that they can receive for infrastructure, but that only helps certain municipalities that have the abilities to do that and some

just don’t have the ability to do that, so we’re continually pushing for that.

“As we always say, we collect \$0.09 to \$0.11 out of every tax dollar, but we’re responsible for well over 60 per cent of the infrastructure. It is an unsustainable model and we don’t want to continually put the burden on residents through property tax. We need that predictable, stable funding, so that, to me, is always a big, big issue that needs to be dealt with at AMO and I hope the Province has heard loud [that] loud and clear.”

On emergency preparedness, he adds that recent unpredictable weather is causing “chaos” in communities and it’s a question of what the Province can do to help municipalities that are struggling to adjust to these realities.

“We’re seeing more and more... storms that seem to cause chaos in

communities. We’re seeing it whether it is the fires up north or whether it’s right here in Aurora where we had that storm hit up the northwest quadrant of our Town [in July] and devastate a neighbourhood with fallen trees – essentially 30- and 40-year-old trees that were just being uprooted. How do we ensure that not only is the municipality prepared –and we do have our emergency preparedness routine and we go through exercises to make sure that we are prepared – but, at the same time, what’s the Province doing to make sure that they can help out municipalities? We’re seeing this more and more. We need to make sure that we’re all working together to make sure that our communities can get through such devastating storms.

“As far as the funding, predictable, sustainable funding long-term is a longer-

term discussion. It’s always ongoing. I don’t see anything immediate that’s going to come. It’s not the sense that I got out of it. Obviously, they’ve talked about the funding that they’re providing for infrastructure in combination with the federal government, the \$8.8 billion. But, as we can see, that’s only going to go so far. Toronto’s, I think, pulling \$1.7 billion out of that. I think Peel put in for \$2.5, billion, York Region has \$1.6 billion in there. So, \$8.8 billion is really not a lot to go around to a lot of municipalities when it comes to these infrastructure projects that we have. I think that’s something that will probably be discussed as they get back into the legislature and after the municipal elections on how they can really start to provide municipalities with that predictable, sustainable funding.”



BACK TO SCHOOL FUN – Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim joined members of the Aurora Black Community Association (ABC), York Regional Police, Central York Fire Services, municipal staff and more for the ABC's second annual Back to School Sports Day at the Aurora Recreation Complex. ABC Founder and CEO Phiona Durrant said “showing up for young people” is what the event is all about: “Last year was incredibly special. Seeing leaders and partners genuinely engage with the children, help them choose their backpacks, put backpacks on their little backs, play alongside them and simply enjoy the day with them was beautiful.”

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Summer Sizzle at Aurora's Ribfest 2026



Aurora's tastiest annual event returned to Machell Park over the weekend as Aurora's Ribfest tickled tastebuds of all in attendance. (Top Row) Among the "ribbers" at the grill were Gio, Leroy, and Ricky. (Second Row) Matt, Elaine, and Emile were among those who settled in for a tasty meal, as did Kyle, Mark and Matt. (Third Row) Headliners Big Wreck and Dwayne Gretzky helped pack in the crowds and additional performers to take the stage were From the Hip, Duvet, Sheer Heart Attack, Monkey Wrench, Vinyl Flux, Run 2 You, Gold Dust Woman - The Stevie Nicks Experience, and Aurora Teen Idol Scarlett Lau.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

Machell Park is “Blown Wide Open” by Ian Thornley’s performances of “That Song” and “So Far, So Good” from his career as front man for Big Wreck and Thornley

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Amid the aroma of barbecued ribs, Beaver Tails, popcorn and cotton candy, Canadian rock legend Ian Thornley took the stage on Saturday night and wowed over 2,000 fans at Machell Park.

Bathed in lilac and yellow lighting on the Magna-Desjardins Stage, Thornley led the appreciative assembly through a brisk 14-song set list that encapsulated his career as a front man for both hard-driving rock band Big Wreck and post-grunge alternative metal band Thornley.

Both groups’ biggest hits were delivered by the ageless front man Thornley and his talented trio of bandmates – much to the delight of the “rib and rollers” that gathered for Ribfest’s Day 2 crescendo.

As Big Wreck played the opening chords of 1997’s “The Oaf (My Luck is Wasted)”, the talented quartet peered out into a sea of fans that stretched all the way to Aurora Heights Drive—filling the baseball infields and soccer pitches at the North Aurora park in perfect late-summer conditions.

Thornley was in fine form as he impelled the FM-Radio favorite forward—his voice soaring with the lyrics “My luck is wasted / I’m on the run somewhere” – and he rolled in seamlessly to “Locomotive” with its throbbing, hard-edged, guitar work.

Four songs into the concert, Thornley sought refuge in one of his namesake band’s best pieces, “Come Again,” with its edgy, grunge sound and perfect synchronization of all three guitarists.

At the concert’s midway point, Big

Wreck performed Thornley’s biggest hit: “So Far, So Good.” The quartet’s super tight, efficient version was one of the highlights of the night. Thornley, the front man, delivered its ferocious chorus with clarity and flare: “When you’re right, you’re right / Everything else in my life just might be wrong / You’re wrong -- all the time.”

As Ian Thornley hurdled towards the brilliant song’s measured delivery of lyrics in its closing stanza—“So far, so good, ‘cause no one knows I’m faking/ I wish I could show you the toll it’s taking / Sometimes I feel as if there’s no tomorrow / So far so good”—the lead singer and talented guitarist moved back to the Big Wreck song catalogue and fell into the mournful guitar work that characterizes “Albatross.”

An appreciative audience recognized the distinctive introduction to one of Big Wreck’s most popular songs and Thornley’s booming vocals were backed by the pulsating drum work of Sekou Lumumba.

Prior to closing the concert with “That Song” – which still enjoys regular rotation on FM stations like Q-107 – Big Wreck injected a wee bit of whimsy into the show by breaking into a jaunty version of “Long Train Runnin’” by the Doobie Brothers. Newly-arrived lead guitarist Chris Caddell took over the vocals and covered Tom Johnston’s distinctive southern-fried rock voice while Thornley and long-time bassist Dave McMillan delivered the legendary riffs from the 50-year-old classic tune.

“Without love / Where would you be

now?”

A fair question on a Saturday night.

After the spot-on Doobies diversion, Big Wreck’s delivery of “That Song” was the most joyous segment of the concert with the engaged audience “Screaming [back] at the top of [their] lungs” much to Ian Thornley’s delight. Thousands chanted “So you crank that song / And it might sound doom / So just leave the room / While I stop and stare / Cause this is rare / I really love that tune / Man, I love that song / I really like that song / I love that song”

The audience’s sing-a-long was cut short by the cascading, dynamic guitar work of Caddell, Thornley, and McMillan in Big Wreck’s signature song. It was evident that 2,000 folks “really loved that song” and yelled for more after the climactic tune reached its triumphant ending.

Big Wreck obliged by pounding out “Blown Wide Open” as its encore and attendees exited Machell Park quite satiated with a bellyful of ribs and ears echoing with the distinctive sounds of Ian Thornley and his Big Wreck bandmates.

Five songs into the concert, Thornley had warmed up his Ribfest audience by asking “How many people ate the ribs?” A boisterous response filled the park and the front man confessed “We ate the ribs with a knife and fork to stay clean and neat for tonight.”

The front man’s fastidious habits during the pre-concert meal translated seamlessly on stage as Big Wreck delivered a clean and neat performance of great turn-of-the-century Canadian rock standards on Saturday night at Ribfest 2026.



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 aurora.ca/snf.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

The Town of Aurora will host its annual Multicultural Festival today from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at Aurora Town Park, and from 12.30 – 4 p.m. at Aurora Town Square. Aurora Town Park will include back -to- back vibrant cultural performances in the band shell. The park will include the Community Zone with fun activities provided for the whole family. The Aurora Farmers’ Market will be in full operation with fresh food and artisan vendors. Aurora Town Square’s festival’s vibrant back-to-back cultural performances continue in the Outdoor Square along with a Community Corn Roast. Inside the Aurora Town Square will include many flavours from around the world to sample food from, face painting, henna, balloon twisting and more! This festival will take you on a one-of -a-kind cultural tour as we celebrate our community’s roots, vibrant traditional clothing, and wonderful cultural dance performances from around the world. Experience how other cultures celebrate food, art and dance with a fully-packed entertainment line-up. For more, visit aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival.

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1. Manila hemp plant
6. Turkish river
10. Something to read
14. In a way, initiated
15. Popular Apple TV series
17. King Charles is part of it
19. Earlier
20. Foot (Latin)
21. Zodiac sign
22. A browning of the skin
23. Remain as is
24. Turfs
26. It’s used to slaughter animals
29. Volcanic crater
31. The mother of Jesus
32. One’s life story
34. One-time Liverpool coach Slot
35. Counterparts

CLUES DOWN

37. Jacob ___, American journalist
38. Digital audiotape
39. River in South Africa
40. Kimono sashes
41. Rooting somewhere
43. American spy Aldrich
45. A way to call for
46. Taxi
47. Pancakes made of buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Popular type of video game (abbr.)
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal from a union
58. Performs spoken improv
59. Greek war god
60. 2,000 lbs.
61. Helps to evade capture

31. One-thousandth of an inch
33. Former CIA
35. Most lemony
36. Engage in
37. Mass of fish eggs
39. Food supplies
42. Backbones
43. American real estate investment firm
44. Megabyte
46. “Three Coins in the Fountain” songwriter
47. Dutch colonist
48. Full-grown pike fish
49. Emergency prep expert Edwards
50. Flute
51. Dismissive sound
52. Slang term for marijuana
53. Young women’s association
54. Cosmopolitan city
55. Narrow isthmus in Thailand
56. Pointed end of a pen

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New show sparks memory

From page 10

language and unexpected juxtaposition, Lipsey’s work reveals the interpretive layers through which family narratives are continually reimagined.”

One such image, a favourite of the artist that does just that is entitled Gallery View.

It depicts a little boy which Lipsey describes as “looking a little bit intimidated, with a portrait on the wall behind him.”

“The little boy is my uncle,” he says, explaining he grew up with his mother and siblings after his father “had to leave in a hurry.”

It was between the wars, he says, and the elder man was involved in subversive political activity.

“The picture that is portrayed is of this young boy whose father, as far as he was concerned, abandoned him – that was when he was conscripted into the army. They were both very really striking images, both taken in professional photography studios, but I could see their relationship and they had to tell that story.”

Every painting starts with a photograph, and every photograph depicted is one to which Lipsey feels a strong, instinctive connection, while sparking an emotional pull.

This pull was also felt by Ashlyn Gregory, Gallery Manager at the Aurora Cultural Centre, who said curating the exhibition, learning about each painting, and the process that went into making each painting a reality has been a “rewarding experience.”

“I want people to come into this exhibition and learn more about Arnie’s story, but also look at the images and apply them to their own lives because I think, to some degree, we all have an ingrained narrative that we project onto the past,” she says. “I want people to

think about those layers of interpretation and the gaps between what we’ve been told, what we know, and what we’ve had to interpret and fill in ourselves.

“In the curation process, we intentionally tried to strike a balance between telling and showing. There’s some extended labels throughout to explore Arnie’s stories a little bit deeper to give people more context, but we purposely didn’t do that for all the works because we want people to draw their own conclusions and project themselves onto those canvases and think about how they reflect on their own family stories.” Lipsey nods in agreement.

“No one sat me down as a kid and drew out a schematic of how everybody was related to who and giving me names and dates. You don’t grow up like that, you have bits and pieces of throwaway lines and references and you have to gain a certain maturity before you even know what questions to ask,” he says. “As a child, you’re not equipped. You come away with bits and pieces of things that were probably historically-accurate, maybe not. You stitch things together and you come up with a timeline that seems to make sense and you’re left with your own version of family history.

“That resonance will, I hope, trigger some questioning of their own stories, because now we’re working on a kind of a more intimate and real level, and they can connect their own experience to what they’re seeing in front of them. Maybe their family history is also one of immigration, voluntary or not. I think this is an attempt in, to some extent, in provoking people to think about that stuff. I think every artist wants to transmit emotion. He wants people to look at their work and feel something. I think if you make sure that it’s personal and truthful, people will respond in kind.”

Debate, all-candidates meeting locked in for municipal election

From page 1

The first session is a one-hour informal meet-and-greet with all municipal candidates from 1 – 2 p.m., before the formal All-Candidates Meeting takes over the David De Simone Performance Hall at Aurora Town Square.

“For more than 40 years, Aurora Public Library has hosted all-candidates meetings as part of its commitment to civic engagement, public education, and access to information,” said the Aurora Public Library in a statement. “The Library’s role is to provide residents with neutral, accessible opportunities to learn about the candidates seeking office and to support informed participation in the democratic process. The Library does not endorse, support, or oppose any candidate, political party, platform, or position.”

The Aurora Public Library’s events, however, might be the only debate-like setting where residents will be able to hear from incumbent mayoral candidate Tom Mrakas.

Mrakas indicated in a social media statement on Friday that he would not be attending the ratepayer-organized event.

The Library’s event, he said, “is a cornerstone of a municipal election campaign for decades.

“Hosted by a respected community institution, it is a professionally organized, non-partisan forum that features thoughtful, challenging, and unbiased questions. It provides candidates with an opportunity to share their vision for Aurora, discuss their record, and outline the priorities and decisions that will shape our community’s future,” said Mrakas in his August 30 statement.

“With respect to other debates hosted by other community groups, these forums are typically ward-focused or issue-specific, often concentrating on neighbourhood concerns or areas of interest rather than providing a forum to discuss Town-wide priorities. They can provide a valuable opportunity for Ward Councillor candidates to discuss and debate the local issues most important to the residents they seek to represent.

“As in the last election cycle, I will be enthusiastically participating in the Aurora Public Library mayoral debate, which has long provided a trusted, community-

wide, and non-partisan forum for voter engagement. Beyond that debate, I will continue focusing on what has guided my approach for the past eight years: meeting residents where they are, knocking on doors, listening to their concerns, and having meaningful conversations about Aurora’s future.”

Event organizer Linda Durringer of the Town Park Area Ratepayers Association says she hopes Mrakas will change his mind and stresses the event is non-partisan and will cover issues relevant to the entire community.

Durringer says the Ratepayers Groups came together to host a formal debate-style evening after community organizations that had previously done so opted not to for this municipal election.

“I think everyone deserves to be able to ask a question and get answers,” she says. “We want to talk.”

While Durringer says the final list of questions is yet to be finalized, some of the areas the collective groups would like to explore include community safety, housing and urban development, Strong Mayor Powers, fiscal responsibility, economic development, infrastructure, operations, heritage, Council leadership, and Regional Representation.

“These are all ratepayers, they are taxpayers, and we would love him to be there,” says Durringer of Mrakas’ decision. “We want to hear what [all mayoral candidates’] responses are. I want everyone to be there. This is about the Town of Aurora, it’s not about ward issues.”

While there are, of course, Ward-specific issues, the areas they would like to talk about are broad and applicable across the community, says Durringer.

While they hope to get all candidates to the meeting, they also hope it will help drive more eligible voters to the polls.

“I would love for the whole community to come out – and not having just such a dismal showing at the polls,” she says. Everybody has to go out and vote and they have to understand what is happening. Get involved with the community, look at it, read about it. You don’t have to be on a committee to be able to have a say in the community; you just have to be a part of it.”

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