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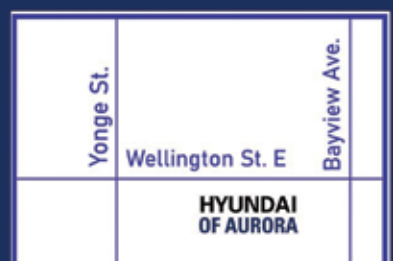
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Aurora’s Piramal Pharma receives \$1.7 million to further life sciences innovation



Photo courtesy of MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

One-hundred-and-ninety-five local jobs will be supported through a \$1.7 million Provincial investment in the Aurora-based Piramal Pharma Solutions.

The investment, made through the Government of Ontario’s Life Sciences Scale-Up Fund (LSSUF), was announced last week by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy at Piramal’s local base.

It is part of an overall investment of \$5.134million Piramal is making to upgrade on-site infrastructure locally, “strengthening Ontario’s pharmaceutical manufacturing and boosting domestic production of APIs (Active Pharmaceutical ingredients).

“This project will enhance R&D and clinical API production, boosting domestic manufacturing, ensuring the commercial availability of critical drug substances, and reducing reliance on foreign suppliers, to support a resilient, and globally competitive life sciences industry in Ontario,” said the Province. “The investment will create 12 new, good-paying jobs and protect 183 existing positions.”

The LSSUF program was launched by

the Ontario Government in 2024 with a \$24 million commitment.

The program, said MPP Gallagher Murphy, ensures that “Ontario businesses are positioned to develop, commercialize and deploy new technologies across the healthcare system.”

“With this investment, Piramal will be positioned to turn their latest ideas into market-ready solutions, all while creating good-paying jobs and reinforcing Ontario’s position as global biomanufacturing and life sciences hub,” she said.

Added Piramal Global Pharma CEO Peter DeYoung: “We are grateful to the Government of Ontario and MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy for their support of this important investment in our Aurora facility. This funding will help enable Piramal Pharma Solutions to upgrade our site infrastructure, strengthen our manufacturing capabilities, and enhance our ability to serve patients and customers around the world. In addition to supporting business growth, this investment will help advance projects focused on sustainability, operational efficiency, and the modernization of our site, reinforcing our commitment to responsible manufacturing and environmental stewardship.”

With the first round of funding now fully deployed, the LSSUF program has officially leveraged nearly \$75 million in investment, supporting over 1,000 good-paying jobs across 14 projects, according to the Province.

Ontario’s life sciences sector employs close to 76,000 people in good-paying jobs across over 2,000 companies, with annual exports exceeding \$14 billion, according to the Province.

“Ontario’s life sciences sector plays a critical role in supporting the discovery and development of innovative medicines and technologies, which is why our government is proud to support local companies as they take their Ontario-made products to the next level,” said Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, in a statement. “By investing

in Piramal through the Life Sciences Scale-Up Fund, we are scaling up our province’s domestic capacity while further positioning Ontario as a leading jurisdiction for life sciences investment for generations to come.”



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aurora.ca/FallConcert

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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

Just the facts, says Councillor Gaertner

This letter is in response to the facts in Scott Johnston’s column Budget Blues.

“Apparently Aurora is Falling apart.” His comment is based on a recent staff Report, on our alarming deficit for repairing and replacing our infrastructure - roads, flood controls, parks, Town owned buildings etc.

A few Budgets ago, we were short \$53,500,000! There was little concern when I raised this alarming fact at the Budget Meeting. Our deficit was considered small in relation to other municipalities. Not relevant!

What does this actually mean to you and I? We are already seeing the reduction of service levels. Most obvious is in road conditions. We used to have a service benchmark for roads. At a certain level of deterioration, roads were rehabilitated. Now residents must wait until these are in even worse shape.

How did we get to such an alarming deficit in the Repair and Replacement Reserve? This will affect the service standard Aurora has been so proud to provide.

In the 1990s, the Councils did not raise taxes for eight years, not even for the cost of living! Our Reserve Accounts became underfunded. In 2004 we sold Aurora Hydro. It was bringing in \$900,000 a year. Very shortsighted. I believe I was the only vote against this.

The next blow was agreeing to spend close to \$70,000,000 for the Town Square. As part of the funding source, we used our Gas Tax Reserve, intended primarily for road repair.

There are other reasons. The crucial question is what are we finally going to do to bring us back to financial health? The Budget is the Mayor’s responsibility, under Strong Mayor Powers. What is his strategy?

Is it adding the expensive revamp to Victoria Hall for a restaurant? Was it reducing this election year’s tax rate to 2.2%? After the 2022 election year’s levy of 2.4% we had to increase taxes to 3.5% for the next 3 years!

Councillor Wendy Gaertner
Ward 3, Aurora

Resident enjoys Slabtown Armoury

I am writing to offer a well-deserved bouquet to Slabtown Armoury on Mosley Street.

At a time when so many local gathering places are disappearing, it is refreshing to see a business that so clearly understands what a neighbourhood restaurant should be.

The team there has done a remarkable job — the food is excellent, the room itself has real character, and the live music and community events make it feel like the heart of the neighbourhood rather than just another place to eat.

Businesses like this are a tremendous addition to our Town. They give Aurora a sense of place, they draw people to our downtown, and they remind us that supporting local isn’t just a slogan — it is a choice we get to make every time we go out for dinner.

My family and I will be back often.

Congratulations to everyone at Slabtown Armoury — keep up the great work.

Niel Hiscox
Aurora

Machell's Corners



Steps in a new direction



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

going into that journey with an open mind.

I’m going to follow this same principle beyond footwear, too, as we collectively move into a future that is loaded with uncertainty.

At the local level, for instance, we’re in the heat of a municipal election where scores of residents have put themselves forward with their visions for the future, our neighbourhoods, and how they hope to execute that vision.

I hope you have taken the time to brush up on who each candidate is and what they have to offer, whether through our pages, candidate websites, or other communications – and whether you align with them or not.

There may not be a candidate who ticks all your boxes, but this is not an excuse to sit the election out. Each one of you has a distinct vision of how you would like to see the community shaped going forward. Like getting on a municipal bus, chances are the vehicle is not going to drop you directly at your destination’s front door, but you pick the bus that’s going in the same direction and will get you closest to where you want to be.

At the national level, we’re dealing with the latest round of tariffs in the ongoing trade war with the United States and a bus in the form of the European Union has pulled up.

We have, on the one hand, our biggest trading partner destroying this long-standing relationship at its very foundations and, on the other, a group of largely like-minded nations when it comes to democracy and the rule of law, opening up the door to something new.

Our former partner, however, is not too happy that we might even consider a pick-up line from another power, and said Canada becoming an Associate Member of the European Union as a potential “hostile” act. That should tell us all we need to know, really.

But the reality is there are a lot more

questions to ask, especially as there is no existing template on what being an Associate Member means. In the meantime, it’s not worth throwing the opportunity out wholesale either because it’s different or in the vain hope our ex-partner will come to their senses, fly into our waiting arms, and everything will be peachy keen again.

I’m glad that the majority of Canadians seem open to the possibility, at the very least.

A recent Leger study released last week looking at Canadians’ feelings about this country becoming an Associate Member of the European Union.

The poll found 70 per cent of Canadians support becoming an “Associate Member” of the European Union with just 13 per cent opposing the move, while 18 per cent remain unsure. The same numbers also indicate 63 per cent of Canadians are in favour of giving Canadian and EU-based businesses greater access to their respective markets, while 53 per cent said greater defence and security cooperation would increase their support of Associate Membership.

“Canadians are showing a clear openness to a closer relationship with Europe,” pollsters found. “Seven in 10 support Canada becoming an ‘Associate Member’ of the European Union, and support remains high even when a closer EU relationship is framed as coming at the expense of ties with the United States. But the survey also shows that Canadians are more enthusiastic about some forms of integration than others. Greater market access resonates far more strongly than regulatory alignment, suggesting that the type of closer relationship matters as much as the idea itself.

“Support for Canada becoming an Associate Member of the EU reaches 79% among Canadians aged 55 and older, compared with 62% among those aged 18 to 34. Younger adults are also more likely to be undecided: 25% say they do not know or are not sure, compared with 11% among those 55 and older. Canadians’ openness to Europe doesn’t really waver even when our survey introduces a potential trade-off with the United States. Nearly three-quarters (72%) say they would support Canada developing a closer relationship with the EU if it resulted in a less close relationship with the U.S.; 14% oppose the idea and 15% are unsure.”

More details as they get hashed out in Parliament will certainly influence these numbers in one way or another but, in the meantime, let’s lace up, take a stroll, and see if it’s a good fit. There’s not a lot of tread left on the sole of our current situation.



Sharp Minds



It takes a village or a college! For 100 years now, St. Andrew's College has been an iconic element of Aurora's history. In that time, thousands of boys have lived and learned here, playing sports on the fields, and marching through our streets, with the stirring unisons and harmonies of bagpipes echoing off of homes and businesses. At Aurora Town Square, we have collaborated with St. Andrew's College to celebrate their 100th anniversary in Aurora. A selection of compelling artifacts are on display now throughout the Aurora Town Square complex – come visit and learn how St. Andrew's College keeps its students strong and sharp, yet flexible enough to face the world of today!



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Survey Results

An air of expectation settled over the Aurora Council chamber as the final agenda item was reached. People watched as a staff member was recognized by the Mayor and stood up to speak.

“My office has compiled a report of the findings of the recent community survey of residents about the retail establishments in question.

“There were a large number of responses – more than we expected. And there were, of course, a mixture of comments and opinions, but overall, residents felt these businesses had a ‘somewhat or very negative’ impact on the community.”

Consulting his notes, he continued, “specifically, we had feedback noting concerns about parking congestion, littering, odours, loitering, the number of locations in Town, and most notably, youth exposure via proximity to schools, parks and other areas frequented by children.”

He sat down, and the Mayor indicated the document in front of him.

“Thank you for this most detailed report, which we have all read thoroughly. This is an issue of some concern, and residents’ feedback certainly raises some serious questions.” Looking at his Council colleagues, he asked, “Does anyone have any questions or comments?”

“Well, this definitely echoes the sort of feedback I’ve heard from people in my ward,” commented a Councillor near the end of the row. “Personally, there always seem to be people hanging around the one in my neighbourhood, and the smell, it can be very unpleasant sometimes.”

“I agree with the litter comments”, piped up another member. “Debris strewn everywhere. It’s unsightly and totally out of control. It really makes these areas and the Town look awful.”

“As for parking,” she continued, “I’ve seen one place in a strip mall that’s so busy, there’re never any spaces left for people to park who are visiting the neighbouring retail establishments.”

“I’m most worried about the kids,” added another Councillor. “Some of these locations are just a stone’s throw from schools. They’re just too enticing, and their products can easily lead to unhealthy habits and lifelong addiction.”

“How we ended up with so many of these places in Town is beyond me – there must be dozens”, someone else noted. “I don’t care if they are legal”, we should see what we can do to limit them.”

“I’m not sure there are ‘dozens’,” interjected the Mayor, “but there do seem to be a lot for a Town of our size.”

“Far too many,” came a voice to his left. “What we need is a task force to go through all this information, see what’s being done in other communities, and make recommendations to address our residents’ concerns.”

There were general murmurs of agreement, and a motion was raised.

“So,” the Mayor stated, “all in favour of the creation of a task force to provide Council with options to move forward on the issues that have been raised?”

Arms went up. Looking around the table the mayor confirmed, “It carries unanimously. We’ll have staff look into this, and report back to Council in two months. Meeting adjourned.”

As the staff member who introduced the report exited the Council chamber, he considered the popularity of the many pizza, donut, burger and similar junk food establishments in Aurora, and the associated complaints about parking, loitering, odours, litter, proximity to schools and the unhealthy addictive impact they had on children that had been identified in the survey.

Finding solutions to all these issues, he thought, the new “Aurora Fast Food Review Task Force” would certainly have its work cut out for it.

Whether connecting with residents at your door or at my Annual Community BBQ, I appreciate the heartfelt conversations.

Thank you to everyone who came out to my 5th Annual Community BBQ at Riverwalk Commons in Newmarket. It was wonderful to see so many residents come together on a beautiful afternoon to share a meal, enjoy some fun, and celebrate the community we are so fortunate to call home.

Aspecialthankyoutotheorganizations and local partners who helped make the afternoon so memorable, including the Ontario Provincial Police, Central York Fire Services, Southlake Health, Abuse Hurts, Sima, Hindu Sanatan, WSNYR, Wicked Eats, and York Pride. From burgers and corn on the cob to popcorn, activities, face painting, and balloon creations, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

I also want to thank all the volunteers who helped organize and bring the day together. Their time and dedication made this event possible, and I am incredibly grateful for everything they do to support our community.

Most importantly, the BBQ was about bringing neighbours together. Seeing families, friends, and residents enjoying the afternoon together was a wonderful reminder of what makes Newmarket–Aurora such a special place to live, work, and raise a family. I look forward to seeing everyone again next year for our 6th Annual Community BBQ!



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

Beyond my community events, we are continuing to support good jobs and strengthen our local economy. This past month, I was proud to highlight a \$5.3 million investment by Piramal Healthcare Canada at its Aurora facility, supported by \$1.7 million from the Ontario government through the Life Sciences Scale-Up Fund.

This investment will expand domestic production capacity and strengthen the production of critical active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) right here in Aurora. It will create 12 new good-paying jobs while protecting 183 existing positions, helping reduce our reliance on foreign suppliers and strengthening Ontario’s health-care supply chain.

At a time when global supply chains can face uncertainty, strengthening our ability to produce critical products

here at home is more important than ever. Investments like this are about more than creating jobs. They are about protecting Ontario’s economy, supporting our workers, and building a stronger and more resilient province.

We are also taking action to train the health-care workforce Ontario will need for years to come. Applications are now open for the Medical Education stream of the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant. Backed by a \$220 million investment, the program will cover educational costs for more than 2,000 future family doctors who commit to practicing in Ontario after graduation.

Since 2023, Ontario has invested more than \$182 million through the program to support the education of more than 13,300 future nurses, paramedics, and medical laboratory technologists who agree to work in communities that need them most. These investments are helping ensure we have the skilled health-care professionals needed to provide convenient, connected care close to home.

As we look ahead to the Thanksgiving long weekend, I hope you have an opportunity to slow down, enjoy some well-deserved time with family and friends, and reflect on all that we have to be grateful for. I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful Thanksgiving weekend. May God fill your home with peace, your heart with joy, and your table with His rich blessings.

OPINION ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE

The great Canadian trade pivot is underway. People, businesses and governments across Canada are finding ways to prioritize goods grown and produced here instead of imported from the United States. As we ditch US products and brands, there’s every reason to pivot from all the unnecessary single-use plastics that are the hallmark of American brands.

Coke, the Big Mac and California strawberries are as much about their packaging as they are about what’s inside. They represent a time when products travelled more seamlessly around the world on the wings of rich global marketing budgets, open borders and cheap oil (and the plastic made from it). Like it or not, these products are now symbols of all that is going frighteningly wrong in the world, including war, climate change and the plastic pollution crisis.

Berries and beverages produced and distributed in Canada can taste and look different. Better. Less wasteful. It is time for local products that meet the moment we’re in. And that moment must include less plastic.

It doesn’t mean we close our borders and close ourselves off to the world. In fact, this is the opportunity to co-operate with allies and reliable trade partners like Europe to ensure we are all doing what is needed to get rid of harmful plastic products and packaging.

The opportunity we have today is also about more. It’s about how our goods are

Let’s ditch plastic for local in Canada’s trade pivot

packed and shipped, how long they last, whether we can fix them when they’re broken and whether we can return packaging to be refilled instead of throwing it away after a single use. That means this is also a jobs pivot, we can turn what is trash today into local jobs tomorrow, and a much-needed fix so that neighbourhoods and towns stop drowning in all the waste generated by the system we’re leaving behind.

In Ontario right now, more than a quarter of the nearly 17 million tonnes of stuff we throw away every year crosses the border to landfills and incinerators in the US. More plastic-laced garbage, especially packaging, clothing and electronics, is shipped for dumping or burning in other countries, where it pollutes the air, water and soil in a practice known as waste colonialism.

The waste management industry is using the threat of a closed border to push ahead with more landfills and bigger incinerators in Ontario and the provincial government is helping them despite local opposition. And Ontario is not alone. A private company is looking to open a waste incinerator near Edmonton to burn garbage collected in that city. Charlottetown is expanding its waste incinerator.

This is the wrong approach. There are several things that we can do right now, even in the midst of a trade war, to stem the flow of garbage and prevent the need to expand waste dumps and incinerators:

Ontario must join almost every other province to implement a comprehensive deposit-return program for beverage containers, building on – and improving – the existing program for alcohol containers. Deposit-return programs are the best way to prevent beverage containers from becoming garbage or litter, enabling recycling or even refill;

The federal government must stop funding false solutions like “energy from waste” (a.k.a. waste burning) and introduce a fund to support the expansion of local reuse and refill programs for packaging across the country. Environmental groups are asking for a \$100 million fund in the upcoming federal budget;

Governments of all levels must work together on measures to eliminate unnecessary single-use plastics – including expanding the federal bans and adopting provincial and municipal reuse programs and targets. We can better align with Europe on these measures;

If you’re doing a personal pivot toward more local products, consider shopping at your local refillery store and farmer’s market with your own reusable containers;

These measures will help usher in a new economy based on durable local goods and packaging, decent and low-carbon work and less waste. Bring it on!

Karen Wirsig
Plastics Program Manager
Environmental Defence

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

Community Reflection Space now complete, but finished product raises Council questions

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Intended as a space for residents to meet and find fellowship in tragic and challenging times, the Town of Aurora’s new Community Reflection Space is now complete.

Finished as part of work to reconstruct the busy parking lot shared by Aurora Town Hall and the Aurora Seniors Centre, the Community Reflection Space was originally proposed by Aurora’s

Indigenous Relations Committee as a place for Truth & Reconciliation, and the vision expanded to be a peaceful place where community members can gather in times of tragedy and mourning.

The Reflection Space is built in the southern forecourt of Town Hall where a large – but subsequently failing – evergreen once served as the Town’s Christmas Tree.

But, as much as it was intended to bring the community together, Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo said the finished product does not fully reflect the designs



The Community Reflection Space at Town Hall is pictured September 25. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

originally presented to residents and subsequently approved by Council.

Remarking on the project at the end of last week’s Council meeting, Gallo said the accessibility ramp on the east slope of the reflection space, intended to create a greater link between the space and John West Way, was not finished, nor was the intended repositioning of existing flagpoles and the addition of a fourth.

“When we came to Council with the presentation, it was early days in the draft and the design report does speak to two options,” said Town Treasurer Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel, responding to the Councillor’s concerns. “Our goal ultimately was – first choice would be to have the ramp. It was also communicated in the Accessibility Advisory Committee that we will do our best to add the ramp. That obviously was a wish-list item. As such, to be sure we could manage the contract and manage the cost of the project, the ramp was put in as provisional, knowing that was an optional item that was presented.

“Similarly, the fourth flagpole was an option, simply because it was something that we could accommodate within the current structure. Accessibility wise, the access off of John West Way can be accommodated around the property. It’s coming around the actual sidewalk entrance off of John West Way is certainly an accessible route, and subsequently, when the cost did come in, those items were far higher than we anticipated and we needed to do some value engineering of the project. As such, being a provisional item, we had the ability to remove that component of the accessible ramp and the flagpole because knowing that we were still meeting the basic objectives of accessibility and certainly reaching community services through the ability to still raise flags to support the community needs...they were removed to try to mitigate costs within the budget of the project.”

Councillor Gallo said he was “extremely

disappointed” with the decision and said the potential of these removals from the project should have come to Council for approval.

“When I sit here and I vote for something, and I watched the Accessibility Advisory Committee video, and I didn’t hear a lot of complaints about the ramp. The report that I agreed to says the preferred option introduces an accessible ramp. An alternative option would be established a secondary entrance. Neither of those two exist today, and if they were over budget, and we as Council approved these things, why wouldn’t staff come back to us and say, ‘Hey, this is the additional cost. Do you really want these things?’” said Councillor Gallo.

“It doesn’t sit well with me. When we sit here, we read reports, we give authority to go ahead and things are removed without our consent to reach a budget. [There was] plenty of time to come back to us and say, ‘Hey, [the] flagpole’s got to go. This has got to go, or you got to increase the budget.’ That would have been the appropriate course of action. Not internally making a decision for me that’s contrary to what I decided based on what I had in front of me. Extremely disappointed. That is not how we operate here. If I’m rude, I’m sorry, but that’s not how we operate here. If Council’s decisions don’t mean anything, what are we doing here? It’s taxpayer’s money. We’re voted in to make decisions. We make decisions and significant pieces of a capital project are removed. That’s wrong.”

Disappointment was also shared by Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who said “a lot of time” was spent at the Accessibility Advisory Committee discussing the project and the Committee’s “understanding that that’s what we were voting for.”

“I’m sorry that accessibility had to take a fall because we didn’t have enough money. That’s just not right,” she said. “I think the people in that community will be very disappointed to hear this because we spend money on other things that they might consider less important.”

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Commitment to Truth & Reconciliation underscored at Citizenship Ceremony



Jodi Fox and Lauri Hoeg are pictured participating in September's Citizenship Ceremony at the Regional Municipality of York.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As September ends with National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, it began in York Region with a citizenship ceremony that underscored the importance of coming together for a better future.

The Regional Municipality of York helped welcome nearly 40 new Canadian Citizens at a ceremony held in Council Chambers September 14 to mark Global Welcoming Week.

Global Welcoming Week, also simply known as Welcome Week, was held September 10 – 19 to “celebrate newcomers and reaffirm York Region’s commitment to building welcoming and inclusive communities.” The Citizenship Ceremony was hosted in partnership with Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, with the participation of Jodi Fox, an advocate for Indigenous inclusion, and Lauri Hoeg, an Anishinaabe artist from Georgina Island First Nation.

“On behalf of the Indigenous Relations team at York Region, it is an honour to be here with you on a day that represents such an important moment for you and your families,” Fox said, addressing the new Canadians. “Today, you will become Canadian citizens. You will leave here with new rights, new opportunities, and new responsibilities. But I would invite you to reflect on another question as well. What does it mean to belong to a place? From

an Anishinaabe perspective, belonging is not simply about where we live or what documents we hold. It is about relationship: our relationship with one another, with the land and water, and with the generations who came before us, and those who will come after us. The lands we now call York Region have been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial, and continue to be places of gathering, relationship, responsibility, and ceremony. One teaching connected to these lands is the Dish with One Spoon wampum. This treaty was originally between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee, which dates back as far back as 1142 CE, pre-contact.

“The teaching reminds us that we all share one dish, the land, and that we each carry a responsibility for how we live within it. We take only what we need, we leave enough for others, and we keep the dish clean for those who will come after us. Most importantly, there is no knife at the table. To me, there is something especially meaningful about reflecting on that teaching at a citizenship ceremony, because today is not only about becoming part of Canada, it can also be an invitation to consider how you will be in relationship with this place. What will you learn about the land you now call home? Whose stories will you make space for? How will you care for what has been entrusted to all of us? And what will the generations who come after you inherit because of the choices

we make today? Anishinaabe teachings remind us that our decisions extend beyond ourselves.

“We are encouraged to think about the generations ahead, to understand that what we do today can shape a future we may never personally see. That means reconciliation is not something belonging only to governments, institutions, or Indigenous peoples. It is a relationship that all people living here are invited to understand and to participate in. As new Canadian citizens, you bring your own languages, cultures, teachings, histories, and experiences with you. You do not have to leave those behind in order to belong here. They add life to the communities we share. My hope is that, alongside those traditions, you will also make space to learn about the First Peoples of these lands – not only our histories, but our living cultures, our rights, our languages, our teachings, and our continued presence today. Perhaps that is one way we can think about citizenship differently. Not simply as, what does this country offer me? But also, what responsibilities do I now carry to this land, to the people around me, and to those who will come after me? Today marks the beginning of a new chapter in each of your stories. May you care for the land and water that will also sustain your children, and your grandchildren. And may we all continue learning how to live together in a good way, sharing that one dish.”

Following a land acknowledgement, the presiding Citizenship Judge, Albert

Wong, said it was very important to consider Reconciliation as “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.”

“In order for that to happen, there has to be an awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior,” he said. “As you join the rest of the country on this important path of Reconciliation, make it a way of your life to show mutual respect with Indigenous peoples, their community, and culture. And work hard every day, really hard, in getting to know one another, truly know one another. In that way, we tangibly support this very important Reconciliation work that’s ongoing in our country right now....

“There’s 38 of you, and you come from around the world to become a Canadian citizen in this ceremony today. If we make it a way of our life, right now, starting right here, starting right now, to show each other mutual respect, and when we work hard, really hard, in getting to know one another, this is how we can deal with issues such as Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian racism in our society through mutual respect and through hard work in getting to know one another. This is how we can build a society that’s more just, more inclusive – not only for ourselves, but more importantly, for our children, and our grandchildren.”



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“What stands out about Tom isn't what he promises, it's what he delivers. Over the past eight years, he has built a proven track record of getting things done and delivering results for Aurora.”



PROVEN LEADERSHIP. REAL RESULTS. A BETTER AURORA.

For eight years, Tom has focused on results, not rhetoric. He has brought people together, built consensus, and advanced practical solutions that make Aurora stronger. His leadership is rooted in action, accountability, and a commitment to getting things done.

On the issues that matter most, Tom delivers:

Protecting Taxpayers

Aurora has maintained the 8th-lowest tax rate in the GTHA for eight consecutive years and the lowest four-year tax rate among York Region's N6 municipalities, while building healthy reserves that keep taxes responsible, predictable, and sustainable.

Building Our Community

Secured more than 28 acres of new parkland, opened Aurora Town Square, a vibrant community hub that has welcomed tens of thousands of visitors and hosted more than 50 events, and expanded recreation opportunities through new sports fields, pickleball courts, turf fields, and the SARC gym expansion.

Managing Growth Responsibly

Approved more than 3,400 new housing units over the past two years, including 1,100+ purpose-built rentals, while keeping growth aligned with Aurora's Official Plan. Tom advanced the Community Planning Permit System, modernized zoning, removed barriers to housing, and supported the Addison Hall and Wellington East business parks, helping attract 400+ new businesses and create more than 3,000 new jobs.

Keeping Aurora Moving

Secured Regional support for major infrastructure projects, including the Wellington Street rail grade separation, the future Highway 404 interchange at St. John's Sideroad, and the widening of St. John's Sideroad. Tom also championed long-awaited improvements at Yonge and Wellington to improve traffic flow through one of Aurora's busiest intersections.

Advocating for Aurora

Ensured Aurora has a strong voice at regional and provincial decision-making tables while securing funding and support for the infrastructure needed to serve a growing community.

Residents know Tom has the experience to lead, the judgment to make tough decisions, and the proven record to deliver.

THE EXPERIENCE AURORA NEEDS. THE RESULTS AURORA DESERVES.

I proudly support Tom Mrakas for his strong and principled leadership as Mayor of Aurora.

Tom has consistently demonstrated the kind of leadership our community needs, decisive, transparent, and grounded in what's best for all residents. He doesn't shy away from making tough decisions, even when they're not the easiest path, because he understands that real leadership requires accountability and long-term vision.

His commitment to transparency ensures that residents are informed and engaged, building trust between the community and local government. Time and again, he has shown that his priority is the betterment of Aurora as a whole, not short-term gain, but sustainable progress.

Aurora is fortunate to have a mayor who leads with integrity, makes difficult decisions with confidence, and always keeps the best interests of its citizens at the forefront

- GINO SGOVIO, Aurora Resident

I am proud to offer my strong personal endorsement of Tom Mrakas.

Having known Tom for many years, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand his unwavering commitment to the Town of Aurora and the people he serves. His leadership is grounded in integrity, accessibility, and a genuine desire to deliver meaningful results for his community.

Throughout his tenure, Tom has consistently demonstrated an ability to balance thoughtful long-term planning with decisive action. He understands the importance of responsible growth, fiscal discipline, and community engagement—ensuring that Aurora continues to thrive while preserving the qualities that make it such a desirable place to live and raise a family.

What sets Tom apart is not just his track record of achievement, but his approachability and dedication to listening. He represents his constituents with authenticity and works tirelessly to ensure their voices are reflected in the decisions that shape the region.

I have full confidence in Tom's continued leadership and strongly support his ongoing efforts to serve Aurora with distinction.

- DAN KAGAN, Aurora Resident

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COMMUNITY FUN – Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy hosted a Community Barbeque at Newmarket's Riverwalk Commons on Sunday, bringing out hundreds of community members of all ages – and special appearances by Spiderman and Elsa.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

AURORA VOTES 2026

Mayoral candidates share views on Council compensation

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Salary and compensation for Aurora's Council representatives was a hot-button issue in the outgoing term of Council, with incumbent members taking different positions on recommendations before them.

As the current Council term winds down and residents vie to be a part of Aurora's 2026-2030 Council, candidates looking to lead Council for the next four years were asked: "Do you think Aurora's Councillors are fairly compensated? Why or why not? (If not, where would you like to see adjustments made?)"

Here's how they answered:

SHAWN DEANE – "Aurora's Councillors are not fairly compensated when measured against the responsibilities and ethical obligations defined in the Town's Code of Conduct and related bylaws. The current base salary of roughly \$42,220 reflects a legacy parttime model, yet Councillors are expected to uphold a 'higher standard' of conduct, maintain continuous constituent availability, comply with strict statutory rules, and provide informed oversight of increasingly complex municipal operations. These expectations resemble fulltime professional governance,

not parttime civic volunteering. Compensation also fails to keep pace with the scale of Aurora's municipal budget. As the Town's population and annual spending grows, the amount of taxpayer representation should grow in lockstep. A parttime Council cannot realistically provide the level of scrutiny, financial oversight, and policy engagement required to steward a budget of this size. The result is heavier reliance on Staff, reduced accountability, and weaker resident representation at the decisionmaking table. For these reasons, I would support transitioning Councillors to fulltime roles with compensation adjusted to reflect fulltime responsibilities. This modernized governance structure paired with increased availability, and enhanced oversight duties would strengthen fiscal discipline, improve transparency, and ensure elected officials remain the primary stewards of public funds, not Staff. This model will deliver the most effective and accountable municipal leadership."

JOHN GALLO – "I believe Aurora's Councillors are undercompensated relative to comparable municipalities. The Town's May 2026 staff review showed that reaching the median would require a 24.72% salary increase, while reaching the 60th percentile would require approximately 32%. After 14 years on Council, I understand

the preparation, workload, and responsibility this role carries. Fair compensation helps ensure that serving our community is possible for people from different financial circumstances. As Mayor, I would support my Council colleagues in having an honest, respectful discussion about compensation. They should be able to consider staff's findings and advocate for fair treatment without having their motives questioned publicly. Residents deserve a discussion grounded in evidence, with clear explanations of both the responsibilities involved and the cost to taxpayers. I would support a reasonable adjustment informed by the staff review, along with regular reviews to prevent large gaps from developing. Leadership means bringing people together through difficult conversations. Even when we disagree, I will treat my colleagues with respect, recognize their service, and help Council reach decisions that we can explain openly and responsibly to residents."

TOM MRAKAS – "Aurora residents expect their elected officials to manage taxpayer dollars responsibly, and that principle should apply to Council compensation as well. Over the 2022-2026 term, Council members received annual cost-of-living increases totaling about 11%, with further adjustments continuing each year to reflect inflation. Despite that, four members of Council voted to give themselves an additional 42.6% compensation increase, effective immediately. I do not believe elected officials should approve substantial increases to their own compensation and immediately benefit from them. Public trust demands a higher standard. That is why I opposed the 42.6% compensation increase and exercised the veto authority available to the Mayor under the Strong Mayor Powers (SMPs) framework to block it and uphold public trust. My position has always been clear: Council compensation should

reflect the responsibilities of the role and what Aurora taxpayers consider fair and reasonable. Public confidence should be the benchmark, not a race to match the highest compensation levels elsewhere. Fundamentally, this is about accountability, good governance, and respect for taxpayers. I stood firm on those principles when the matter came before Council, and I will continue to do so. For me, public office is about serving the community and putting the public interest, not personal interest, first."

YAFANG SHI – "I believe Councillors should be compensated fairly compared with those in comparable municipalities. At the same time, Councillors should work hard, attend meetings, participate, and demonstrate that they are earning their compensation. According to a staff report presented to Aurora Council in May 2026, Aurora Councillors currently earn \$42,165 annually, which is nearly 32 per cent below the 60th percentile among comparable municipalities. I believe the Council should have approved a fair compensation package for new Councillors elected in the upcoming election. The same report indicates that the Mayor's salary of \$114,647 is approximately 3.3 per cent below the same benchmark. If elected, I would support adjusting Councillors' compensation closer to the average level of comparable municipalities. However, I do not believe an adjustment to the Mayor's compensation is necessary. I also believe compensation should not be politicized. The Mayor vetoed the compensation adjustments while reportedly having the highest expenses among York Region Council members, totaling \$24,387. Councillors have a responsibility to fulfill their duties. For example, Councillor John Gallo was absent from four of 15 Aurora Cultural Centre board meetings. During his service on the Library Board, he resigned once without citing a reason or receiving Council approval."

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Town arborists encourage residents to request replacement trees for boulevards after microburst damage and ash tree removals

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Town of Aurora arborists Ian Bryant and Cameron Chisholm are looking forward to productive and restorative Fall projects after an especially troubling and challenging Summer.

Over 1,000 trees, including 107 on Town boulevards, were destroyed in northwest Aurora during an early-July microburst that delivered 160 km/h winds and fifteen minutes of climatic chaos.

Millions of dollars of property damage, caused by falling trees, was incurred by residents who live in the leafy Bathurst and St. John’s Sideroad neighbourhood that includes St. Andrew’s College. Equally disconcerting was the sheer volume of trees that were uprooted or severed, or had to be removed by crews due to dangerous hanging branches.

Bryant, the veteran Forestry Crew Leader whose team has spent the last 89 days cutting down damaged trees and clearing debris from boulevards, parks, and the Town’s revered trail system, provided a progress update.

“All trails have been opened, except for the section behind St. Andrew’s College,” he said, noting extensive damage in the area. “The opened trails still have debris at the sides. A significant concern is all the storm debris is limiting regeneration. We’ll be steadily removing the debris into next year. As well, we’ll be removing all unsalvageable trees off the boulevards, cutting down dangerous hangers, and grinding stumps. On private properties and on the trail systems and parks in the northwest quadrant including St. Andrew’s College, easily over 1,000 mature trees are down due to that storm on July 3. Stump grinding the storm-affected trees will happen in the Fall and planting will be done in the Spring. It gives us more variety of choices for planting a variety of trees.”

Chisholm, a registered botanist who has been working for the Town for almost two years, recommended a range of trees he’d prefer to see planted on the boulevards to ensure biodiversity: “I’d like to see a combination of trees. Sugar Maple is one of my favorite trees, although some varieties don’t do as well in urban environments. Another favorite is the Kentucky Coffee Tree. They remain small for two years, but take off in size and are exceptionally tough trees that deal well with road salt and drought. Catalpas are great additions with their beautiful white flowers, but they’re a bit messy, much like the Kentucky Coffee Tree. Both have lots of seed pods which require some cleanup, but I like the messy trees. I also like the hardness of the London Plane Tree which is part of the Sycamore family.”

Bryant augmented his colleague’s choices with trees that have a fast growth rate for residents looking to replenish their property’s green space quickly.

“Some options we can plant are Silver Maple—we have a seedless one available with a stronger central leader so there’s not as much sprawl. Freeman Maple, which is also seedless, and has Silver Maple and Sugar Maple genetics; a Tulip Tree, which is a maple-looking tree with tulip-shaped flowers; and an Accolade Elm, which is a hybrid tree—a combination of American and Asian

Elms—which is immune to Dutch Elm Disease. We have a list of 30 trees. We’ll entertain a range of tree choices as long they make sense. The most popular tree we’ve been planting based on requests has been the Freeman Maple. We rely on residents to water the tree in its first year so we’re happy to support homeowners’ choices since they feel more connected to the tree that they’ve chosen and will tend to take better care of it.”

When asked if the Town would plant a Red Oak on the boulevard to replace an Ash, Bryant acknowledged his team’s willingness to plant Red Oaks, but offered options due to recent botanical research.

“Regarding the Red Oak, we can plant that for you. However, in my experience in Town, especially on the boulevards, the Black Oak family, with its pointy lobes, doesn’t fare as well as the White Oak with its rounded lobes. The White Oak family is also a bit more resilient to an emerging pathogen called Oak Wilt, which has been moving up from The States and recently identified in Ontario. Options in the White Oak family include White, Bur, and Swamp Oak varieties. We’d be happy to plant the Red Oak for residents if that is the direction you would like to go. The biggest hurdle our trees face is being watered in the first season in the ground. All Oaks and Tulip Trees require Spring planting so our crews would not put these species in the ground until Spring 2027.”

Both Bryant and Chisholm are united in their call for residents to call the Town and request one of thirty varieties of trees to replace those lost on Town boulevards. They want to restore Aurora’s enviable urban canopy that covers over 29% of the town and add to it through various initiatives available to local residents.

Bryant offered insights into “Your Leaf”, a federal program that can be viewed at www.yourleaf.org, which defrays the cost of planting saplings or seedlings on private property.

“It’s a government-subsidized backyard planting program in York Region that many residents have utilized and found to be useful. The trees start small, but you get an arborist visit and the consulting fee comes off your planting cost. They only plant native trees, and sugar maple is definitely on their planting list, if that’s what you want to replace your lost trees with.”

In addition to this federal program to plant trees as an active response to the perils of climate change, Chisholm explained the scope of the damage to the Town’s canopy. He encouraged local residents to replace trees which have succumbed to disease, windstorms, or just old age: “There’s a lot of light in the forest. As we walked through the debris caused by the microburst, we noticed how much open sky is seen through the affected canopy.”

It’s evident that both arborists derive much satisfaction from their work and Bryant noted that “When I’m driving around Town, I see the trees I planted five to ten years ago. They’ll be here long after I’ve gone. We have a lot of unique moments as a crew, too—great moments in nature. The funniest thing about some of the people we meet is they want us to plant the biggest tree and they think that trees don’t die. The most successful tree that we plant starts as a small one.”

Chisholm’s insights into making a

difference to the Town’s urban canopy merged with Bryant’s.

“I share the same kind of satisfaction with Ian. Being able to get out and perform routine maintenance on the trees is like a playground for me. You can go back and see the positive effects on the tree. It’s gratifying to see your impact.”

Complementing the message of his colleague, Bryant encapsulated the selflessness of planting trees: “The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.”

With a message as poignant as Jean Giono’s *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1953) and as timely as the hard-edged conservation strategies in *Dave Foreman’s Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (1991), Bryant’s appeal to leave a leafy legacy is food for thought for residents who want to make a difference in a world in dire need of environmental stewardship.

For more information about getting new trees planted on town boulevards,



The Willow Farm Trail area was hit particularly hard by this summer’s microburst. **Contributed photo**

contact The Town of Aurora at 905-727-3123 and leave messages for Ian Bryant and Cameron Chisholm regarding your choices.

Tom Mrakas

Experience Matters

“The difference between vision and results is experience”

A vision for Aurora is important. But the real test of leadership is having the experience to turn that vision into action and action into results. And for the past eight years as your Mayor, Tom Mrakas has done exactly that.

With 73 Council-approved motions, Tom has built a proven record of getting things done for residents.

From revitalizing our downtown and securing new parkland to investing in community infrastructure, keeping taxes among the lowest in the GTHA, and protecting Aurora's quality of life, the results speak for themselves.

That's not a list of campaign promises. It's a proven record of delivering for Aurora.

Residents know effective leadership takes experience, and Tom has the record to prove it.

Mayor Tom Mrakas has consistently demonstrated thoughtful, steady leadership and a genuine commitment to the community. He is visible, approachable, and responsive to residents, taking the time to listen and address questions or concerns. Under his leadership, Aurora has experienced positive growth while preserving the strong sense of community that makes it such a desirable place to live. His focus on responsible decision-making, community well-being, and long-term planning has helped Aurora continue to thrive. I endorse our mayor and look forward to another four years.

- MICHELLE P. LEWIS, Aurora Resident

Aurora is our home. This is our community. This is our life. At a time when stability, experience, and trusted leadership matter more than ever, I believe we need representatives who have earned our confidence through their actions – leaders who put the people of Aurora ahead of personal interests, political agendas, and division. Our community should never become anyone's social or political experiment. The decisions made at Town Hall affect our families, our neighbourhoods, our businesses, and the future of the community we love. Taking unnecessary risks with that future is simply not an option for me. I believe in proven leadership. I believe in stability. And I believe in putting Aurora first. That is the foundation of my support for Tom Mrakas.

- KARL SARKADI, Aurora Resident

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CDS siblings and cousins demonstrate entrepreneurial spirit

BY KIM SILLCOX

Charlize, Wesley, Sebastian and Lucas were busy this past summer with 3D printers and jewelry-making for the launch of their business, Printed and Polished - Handmade Jewelry and 3D Creations. Their first appearance was at last Saturday's Aurora Farmers Market.

"The idea began when we visited a flea market in Florida and saw a table full of 3D prints and fidgets," explained Wesley. "I was with my younger cousins, Sebastian and Lucas in Grade 2 and SK in the Junior School, and we left the booth having spent all of our money and our pockets full of gadgets. We spent days playing with them and wanted more. The problem was that they were expensive and hard to come by. So we decided to save our money and buy our own 3D printer last spring!"

Eager to join in on the fun, Sebastian and Lucas pooled their birthday money to buy a 3D printer of their own, and spent the summer alongside Wesley and contributing to the business. Sebastian quickly became the team's trend-spotter, always finding the most popular prints online and mass producing them! They proceeded to spend their summer designing and printing what they would enjoy playing with themselves. Now in Grade 8, Wesley was too young to be employed and didn't want to go to camp, so their

mom suggested they start their own business.

"We never thought it would actually happen," said Wesley. "But we made lists of what we had to do: filling out applications and applying to different food and farmers markets, calling printing companies, creating a business name, making a logo, printing a banner, starting an Instagram page @printedandpolished, buying a tent for the food market, and even getting our own Square tap for people who wanted to use a card at the market."

Wesley took Navigating Technology in Grade 7 at The Country Day School, where he was introduced to different apps that he could 3D print from and learned the fundamentals. "I also used the Nav Tech printers in a project where we had to create our own monster for art class. It also helped me become more comfortable using Tinkercad, a free web app for 3D design, electronics, and coding. That class contributed greatly to my interests and skill sets, but I also taught myself how to print using other platforms by watching videos and online tutorials."

Their inaugural sales event last Saturday was a big success; they sold over half their inventory and are planning to restock and adapt based on their best-sellers. Their customers were not only intrigued by their 3D prints and jewelry designs, but eager to support two kids who had started their own business.



Photo courtesy of CDS

They had carefully priced their prints by size and popularity, between \$2 and \$20, with their line of gadgets including fidgets, dragons, mini animals, iPhone and AirPods cases, and puzzles. Charlize's jewelry sells for \$3 to \$25, based on the materials and complexity of the design.

"We actually try out all the toys on our youngest cousin, Lucas," said Wesley. "If he loves it, we know it will be a success!" Behind the scenes, their younger cousins Lucas and Sebastian have been a big part of the process, helping choose what to print, testing everything out, and deciding what makes the cut. "Some of our most popular items are the ones Lucas never wants us to sell because he wants to keep them for himself!" the siblings shared. "Working together this summer has been so much fun for us!"

While Wesley and his cousins share a passion for 3D printing, his older sister

Charlize has been making jewelry since Grade 2. "I have always loved being creative, whether it was making Rainbow Loom bracelets in the schoolyard, gimp bracelets at camp, weaving friendship bracelets during summer, or fixing a broken chain or charm."

Now in Grade 10 at CDS, Charlize has explored earring-making, learned how to add a clasp, close a jump ring, and reattach a chain. She uses odds and ends around their house to create her pieces, whether it is a giant pair of pliers from her dad's toolbox or a lighter in the kitchen to seal a knot. Thinking outside the box was what allowed her to keep learning.

"Similar to Wesley, I found my inspiration at a flea market in Florida," Charlize noted. "There was a stall full of seashells and complex designs and necklaces, and the girls running the

Continued on page 25

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Who Gets to Make Art?

Making art is a way of learning: learning about materials and techniques, but also about ideas, cultures, ourselves and one another. It gives us another way to observe, think about and understand the world around us.

We can take that knowledge and make it our own through visual, performing or literary arts. We practise, experiment, question, make mistakes, and discover, sometimes with a little "Eureka!" moment along the way.

But learning through art does not always need to lead to a larger goal. A one-day workshop or a longer course may simply give us the pleasure of spending a few hours making something with our hands or our bodies.

In this process, an arts educator can help us cross that threshold. Whether we are new to art or a professional artist deepening an existing practice, an educator can introduce us to a material or approach we have never used, place a technique within a cultural or artistic context, or help us understand what is happening when something does not turn out as we expected. The learning gives us a foundation; we engage with the process more deeply and make that knowledge our own.

These experiences matter at every age. A recent international study by the OECD* found that students who regularly participate in arts reported greater confidence in their own creativity and openness to ideas, with particularly strong results in visual expression. Research with adults has also connected participation in the arts with wellbeing, personal expression, belonging, and



social connection.

However, what we look for in arts education may change throughout our lives and the ways we can access it. We come to it with different experiences, abilities, interests and reasons for making art. At ACC, broadening access to art education means creating room for those different entry points. We want art learning spaces to feel safe enough to begin, but brave enough to leave room to experiment. The educator, materials, and environment offer structure, while still leaving room for people to interpret, explore and take their work somewhere unexpected.

As an educator and programmer, I also bring my own experience of learning and making art across more than one cultural context. It has made me conscious that there is never only one way of making, teaching, or understanding art. Different artistic traditions carry different materials, histories, and ways of experiencing the world. Part of my role is to create opportunities for those different ways of knowing and making to meet, while opening more ways for people to enter, participate in and shape their own art-making experience. We invite you to be part of it.

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AURORA VOTES 2026

Gallo touts plan to help Aurora seniors age in place

Seniors recreation spaces could be found in Town’s Mosley Street building, says candidate

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As Aurora’s Mayoral campaign continued last week, candidate John Gallo was at the Aurora Seniors’ Centre to tout his vision for helping local seniors

age in place.
Gallo’s “Live in Aurora, Stay in Aurora” plan was announced at the Seniors’ Centre on September 23. In his announcement, he said while Aurora is “a wonderful place to raise a family, build a career, and put down roots... we should also be able to continue enjoying the community we

call home.”
The plan, he said, focuses on “understanding and preparing for the needs of our growing population.”
“We’re standing here near the Aurora Seniors’ Centre, a facility that has become an important part of our community. Its popularity is a testament to the programs, volunteers, and people who make it such a welcoming place. But that success has also created challenges,” he said. “Our Seniors’ Centre is experiencing increasing demand, and we need to understand whether our facilities and programs have the capacity to meet both today’s needs and those of future generations.”

“That’s why I’m proposing a comprehensive Seniors’ Needs and Facilities Review. Aurora’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan already recognizes the need to expand older-adult programming into other community facilities. That’s a good starting point, but we need to understand whether we’re keeping pace with today’s demand and what additional capacity we’ll need in the years ahead.”
Gallo said he wants to “hear directly from seniors about what’s working, what’s not, and what’s missing.”
“We need to examine programming, overcrowding, accessibility, transportation, and opportunities for greater social connection. We also need to look at the assets we already own,” he continued. “The Town has buildings and properties that may offer opportunities for additional seniors’ programming, including our Mosley Street property. Before committing millions of dollars to new facilities, we should determine whether existing Town-owned spaces can help meet these growing needs. I’m not suggesting Mosley Street is necessarily the answer. I’m saying it deserves to be part of the conversation. We must recognize that supporting seniors goes beyond municipal buildings and recreation programs. By working more closely with York Region, the Province, and community organizations, we can



Contributed Photo

better coordinate services and identify gaps in transportation, accessibility, and other essential supports.
“I don’t want to tell seniors what they need. I want seniors to tell us. Their input, combined with a comprehensive review of our facilities and services, can help guide decisions for the next five, 10, and 20 years. Aurora’s seniors have spent decades contributing to this community, raising families, supporting local businesses, volunteering, and helping make our Town what it is today. And while some of us may be getting a little older, that doesn’t mean we’re ready to slow down. In fact, judging by how busy our Seniors’ Centre is, I think some of our seniors have a more active social calendar than I do! Our responsibility is to make sure Aurora continues to provide the programs, facilities, and services that allow residents to remain active, connected, and engaged at every stage of life, because growing older shouldn’t mean growing out of the community you love.”



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MARCO DI GIROLAMO

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WARD 2 COUNCILLOR



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Community Safety: Ensure the safety of our town and neighbourhoods is a top priority and Aurora remains a place where families, and future generations, can feel secure.

Managed Growth: Grow responsibly. Ensure new development is thoughtfully planned, comes with the necessary infrastructure, and is reflective of the neighbourhoods where it occurs.

Fiscal Responsibility: Tax dollars are your dollars. As a business owner, I understand the importance of setting and managing budgets. I will bring that same level of stewardship to council.

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AURORA VOTES 2026

Mayoral candidates outline visions for affordable housing, opportunities

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Affordability continues to be a top priority for voters at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government – and Aurora is no exception.

As work continues at the Regional level to address housing supply issues and resources available to the unhoused, this week, Aurora’s Mayoral candidates were asked: “Affordable housing is a perennial issue in York Region and across the country. If elected/re-elected, what opportunities would you like to pursue both at the local level, and in working with other levels of government, to bring in/foster more affordable units in the community.”

Here’s how they answered:

SHAWN DEANE – “Affordable housing in Aurora requires solutions that are financially responsible, deliverable within predictable timelines, and capable of reaching a broad share of residents. If elected, I would prioritize expanding non-market housing options—co-operative housing, York Region-owned and operated units, non-profit developments, and rent supplement programs—because they provide long-term affordability and align with both York Region’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and Aurora’s 2024 Affordable Housing Action Plan. Locally, I would focus on accelerating projects that increase supply, particularly co-ops and non-profits that can deliver units efficiently and within annual budget limits. Aurora’s commitment to streamlining approvals and modernizing e-permitting tools provides a practical pathway to move shovel-ready projects forward while supporting the Town’s housing targets. Strengthening rent supplements and transitional housing supports would ensure immediate reach across the population, helping residents stay housed while larger capital projects advance. These measures reinforce York Region’s prevention and diversion priorities and its goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. Partnerships are essential. I would work closely with York Region, co-ops, non-profits, and community agencies to leverage programs such as the Community Housing Supply Grant, HARP, and AHFP. These tools help providers navigate funding, redevelopment, and approvals critical for delivering complete communities along transit corridors and meeting the needs of seniors and families. Finally, I would advocate to senior governments for stable multi-year funding to ensure sustained progress across the housing continuum.”

JOHN GALLO – “After 14 years on Council, I know that housing affordability requires more than approving additional units. Aurora needs housing that young adults, families, and seniors can afford, so they can build their lives here and remain in our community. Locally, I would pursue well-planned development near transit and services, more purpose-built rental housing, and a wider range of smaller homes and additional residential units. I would also support non-profit housing providers and the use of suitable lands to create housing that remains affordable over time. We

need clear, efficient approval processes, sound planning, and meaningful resident input. Growth must also be supported by appropriate infrastructure. Working with York Region and the provincial and federal governments, I would advocate for housing funding and infrastructure investment tied to measurable results. Where public land, money, or incentives are involved, we must establish who the housing will serve, what residents will pay, and how long affordability will be protected. My priority is responsible development that meets community needs while respecting taxpayers.”

TOM MRAKAS – “Affordable housing starts with defining affordability. Too often, governments measure it against market prices rather than what local residents can realistically afford. True affordability means housing that is within reach for seniors, young families, and essential workers, not just on paper, but in practice. Making that happen requires all three levels of government working together. I’ll continue fighting for a one-third municipal, one-third provincial, and one-third federal partnership to get more homes built. In Aurora, we’ve proven that we can deliver housing while maintaining responsible growth. We’ve approved thousands of new homes, including purpose-built rentals, while expanding housing options and protecting the neighbourhoods, green spaces, and character that make Aurora unique. Housing York already has the plans and capacity to build thousands of affordable housing units. What’s missing is the funding to get shovels in the ground. With stronger provincial and federal partnerships, we can move projects forward faster and deliver more homes. As your Mayor and representative on Regional Council, I will continue to advocate for long-term housing funding, more purpose-built rentals, and responsible growth. We know what needs to be built. Now it’s up to every level of government to work together and get it done.”

YAFANG SHI – “Aurora’s population has diverse housing needs. Families, young people looking to enter the housing market, seniors seeking to downsize, people who work in Aurora, and unhoused people all need access to affordable housing. According to the Aurora Affordable Housing Action Plan, the Town requires 25% of all new residential development to be affordable, and 35% of all new residential development within the Major Transit Station Area to be affordable. Therefore, Council should carefully examine the affordability component of each development application. At the Regional level, York Region has a 2026–2035 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. At the same time, a recent study, ‘Provincial Funding for Social Services in York Region,’ finds that ‘York Region has received less provincial funding for community services than other large Ontario municipalities for many years.’ If elected, I will be committed to advancing affordable housing objectives at both the municipal and regional levels, championing housing affordability, and advocating for fair provincial funding.”



MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

On Saturday afternoon, the Aurora Public Library hosted the Harvest Moon Mid-Autumn Festival. The afternoon, hosted in partnership with the Huayun Aurora Multi-Cultural Association, featured music and dance, inviting all ages to “come together in appreciation of culture, heritage, and the shared meaning of gathering during this festive time of year.”

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Tom Mrakas

Leadership that puts Aurora First

“A thriving community requires more than plans and promises. It requires a Mayor who is visible, accessible, and deeply connected to the people he serves.”



For the past eight years as your Mayor, Tom has been at the heart of community life in Aurora.

From community events, neighbourhood gatherings, and cultural celebrations to sports tournaments, charity fundraisers, and local business openings, Tom has made it a priority to be where residents are.

By staying active and engaged in the community every day, he has built strong connections, supported local organizations and businesses, and remained closely connected to the people he serves. Because for Tom, putting Aurora first isn't a slogan, it's how he leads, how he serves, and how he gets things done.

Residents know Tom has the experience to lead, the record to deliver, and a proven commitment to Aurora.

As a family, we value leaders who are approachable, accessible, and genuinely invested in their community. We have consistently found Tom to be open to conversation, willing to listen, and deeply focused on putting the town of Aurora first in every decision. His engagement, participation, and visible involvement in town events are truly first-class. We support Tom Mrakas for Re Election.

- THE LOUNDS FAMILY, Aurora Residents

I am pleased to endorse Mayor Tom Mrakas.

I have known Tom for well over a decade and, throughout that time, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand his unwavering commitment to public safety and to building a community where everyone feels welcome, valued, and included.

Tom genuinely cares about Aurora and the people who call it home. He has invested the time to build meaningful relationships across our community, allowing him to understand directly what Aurorans expect from their municipal leaders. His leadership is grounded in transparency, accessibility, and authenticity. He leads by example, listens with intention, and consistently puts the interests of our community first.

Aurora is stronger because of leaders who are committed to service, and Mayor Mrakas has demonstrated that commitment throughout his time in office.

- ALVARO ALMEIDA, Aurora Resident, Retired Deputy Chief of Police

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BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As the current Council term winds down and residents vie to be a part of Aurora's 2026-2030 Council, candidates this week were asked: "Do you think Aurora's Councillors are fairly compensated? Why or why not? (If not, where would you like to see adjustments made?)"

Here's how they answered:

WARD 1
LAUREN HANNA – “Council compensation has been particularly contentious in recent years because of the size and timing of the increases proposed by members of Council in

2023, especially against the backdrop of affordability pressures facing many residents. I did not support the substantial increase proposed for salary and benefits, particularly because it would have taken effect during the same term. That proposal eroded public trust. While we can all agree that compensation should be fair and reasonable, if elected, I would ensure that any future discussion of Council compensation is conducted independently, guided by transparency and fiscal responsibility, and focused solely on a future Council term rather than the one making the decision. I worked at the Auditor General's Office for four years so ensuring accountability and transparency in our local government is a guiding priority for me."

ROCCO MORSILLO – “There are many factors to consider when discussing Councillor compensation in Aurora, including comparisons with other municipalities, population, available resources, and ward sizes. Over the past four years, Councillor salaries have seen relative increases when compared with the normal annual increases received by full-time, non-unionized salaried Town employees, which have averaged approximately 5–6% per year. I recognize that Aurora Councillors are compensated less than Councillors in some surrounding municipalities. However, I believe the primary responsibility of an elected Councillor is to serve the community and put residents first. Compensation should be fair, reasonable, and reflective of the responsibilities of the position, while also respecting taxpayers and the financial realities facing our community. As Councillors, we have a responsibility to lead by example when it comes to responsible spending and fiscal management.”

WARD 2
ANGELA DAUST – “Recently, a consultant hired by the Town of Aurora verified that, compared to York Region’s other municipalities, Aurora Councillors are grossly underpaid. In an article in Newmarket Today, salaries of Councillors and Mayors across the Region were compared. Aurora was at the bottom of

the list for Councillors pay, regardless of the size of the municipality. As for the Mayor's pay, Aurora was the third highest salary. When looking at Councillor to Mayor pay ratio, Aurora's Mayor made 2.71 times councillors pay, Stouffville's ratio was 2.03 and Newmarket's ratio was 2.17. As a matter of fact, Aurora's ratio, the difference between Mayor and Councillor pay, was the highest in the region. Aurora's mayor was given a 38% increase in pay in 2018. Councillors have not had an increase in over ten years. As such, as noted by the consultants' report, Councillors salaries should be increased to be in line with other municipalities of comparable size in the Region."

MARCO DI GIROLAMO “My position has been crystal clear: I believe Councillors are fairly compensated for the responsibilities of the role, and they already receive an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to address inflationary pressure. I do not believe additional increases are necessary. This is not a new position for me. In 2023, I appeared before Council and raised concerns about the process used to justify an increase in Council compensation. I questioned whether the comparators being relied upon provided a complete and appropriate basis for the increase. In particular, Newmarket was repeatedly referenced as a benchmark because its Councillors were receiving approximately \$52,000. I also pointed out that Newmarket had commissioned an external Council compensation review that provided a different perspective on what appropriate market compensation should be. My concern was that simply being paid less than another municipality does not automatically mean you are underpaid. Compensation comparisons need to consider the methodology, the municipalities selected and whether those compensation levels are themselves appropriate benchmarks. More importantly, I believe we need to remember what public office is about. Councillors are public servants. We are elected to serve our community, represent our residents and make decisions in the best interests of the people who live here. We should not be looking at public office as

an opportunity for financial gain. Council should lead by example when it comes to fiscal responsibility. The focus should be on delivering value for taxpayers, providing quality services and earning the trust that comes with being elected to serve the community.”

BRYNN LANSDOWN – “I haven’t held the role, so I can’t say from experience whether Aurora’s Councillors are fairly compensated. What I can say is there is evidence compensation has not kept pace with comparable municipalities. In 2023, Council endorsed adjusting Councillor compensation to the 60th percentile of its municipal comparator group. An external review was also directed to inform compensation for the 2026-2030 term. Coming from the private sector, I believe compensation should be based on the role. That means considering workload, responsibilities, complexity, cost of living, demographics, and comparable roles. I support fair compensation, but I would not simply vote myself a raise. I would want an independent, transparent process that explains the full compensation package and how it was determined, with that information available to residents through Town resources. If the evidence supports an adjustment, I would be comfortable supporting it.”

WARD 3
NIKKI ALBER – “I believe Councillors should be fairly compensated based on what Councillors are paid in comparable municipalities. This issue has been reviewed more than once with thorough reports produced by town staff. In 2023, Aurora Councillors were earning approximately \$40,000, while the compensation review identified approximately \$52,000 as an appropriate comparator. In 2026, Town staff again found Aurora Councillors were well below market: approximately \$42,000 compared with a market midpoint of approximately \$52,600. In both cases, Town staff recommended raising the Councillor salary to compete with the market average. When you hear that closing that gap could mean a 40% increase, that percentage can sound

Continued on page 15

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excessive. But the actual difference is only about \$10,000 per year. For comparison, according to Ontario’s Sunshine List, Aurora’s CAO’s reported salary increased by approximately \$18,500 from 2024 to 2025 alone, while the Director of Planning and Development Services’ reported salary increased by approximately \$66,000 over the same period. Just as our staff receive raises to remain on par with the market, so should our councillors. I don’t believe Aurora Councillors need to be the highest paid. I would support bringing them approximately in line with the average of comparable municipalities, as identified through an objective staff review.”

ALEXANDRA BONHAM – “Being a Councillor is a part-time job. For 2026, it was nearly \$41,000 but let us remember this includes yearly COLA, a vehicle allowance, benefits, and expenses. When I first ran, I thought it was a volunteer position and still believe(d) a Councillor should be available to residents within a reasonable timeframe. In the service industry, especially where lives are in danger, the rule of thumb is immediate - 24-hours - a couple of business days. If the salary isn’t enough, nobody is forcing anyone to run. Or you can run, prove you (and your fellow Council) are worth more, support COLA for the first four years and then put your name forward in 2030. Residents are the employers; this is public service. Let the residents decide. Do not force a raise upon them. In almost every other industry, you know what your salary is before you sign on. It isn’t forced. It is the responsibility of the employee to prove they are worth more.”

ROBERT JAMES FRASER – “There has been a lot of controversy since 2023 when Town staff were tasked with looking at the annual compensation of Aurora Town Council compared to other municipalities in York Region. The conclusion of those findings was that the compensation of Council members for Aurora were at the low end compared to other York Region municipalities and should be brought up. There was a vote at Council that Mayor Tom Mrakas used his strong Mayor powers to veto, so there has been no change to

compensation at this point. Compensation for Council members should be in line with other jurisdictions in York Region. Putting an increase to \$52,000 from \$38,000 for Council members is \$14,000 times six, or \$84,000 in total. To put that \$84,000 in perspective, the Town’s Operating Budget for 2026 is \$131.7 million dollars.”

HAROLD MacDONALD – “As Councillor, I would recommend the topic of fair compensation taken out of the political arena and have an independent third party assess and evaluate. This would take the discussion out of the hands of the Councillors so that the focus and use of their time can be spent on keeping Aurora moving forward.”

WARD 5 CHARITY DELA CRUZ-TOUPIN – “I believe Councillors should be fairly compensated for the work they do, but compensation must also reflect the taxpayers who fund it. The role involves much more than attending Council meetings—there are committees, resident concerns, community events, preparation, and work outside the Council chamber. I would support an independent, transparent review of Councillor compensation, rather than Council simply deciding its own increases. Any adjustment should be reasonable, reflect the workload and responsibilities, and provide good value to Aurora taxpayers.”

JESSIE FRASER – “Formal independent reviews and informal online comparisons show that Aurora’s Councillors are NOT fairly compensated in line with market value and neighbouring/comparable municipalities, which is why the proposal to raise Councillor pay was brought forward this past term. A pay raise is obviously appropriate. However, there is no context in which voting oneself a large pay increase can be considered ethical. What Council should have done this past term was to vote in a raise for the next term (2026) – not for themselves in their current term. Should the issue come up again while I am serving as Councillor, I would call for an updated independent salary review

and recommendation, and I would vote to follow those recommendations for the subsequent term of Council (2030). While an increase in compensation is likely warranted, no sitting Councillor should ethically be able to vote themselves that increase.”

MILTON HART – “I believe compensation for elected officials should reflect both the responsibilities of the role and the expectations of taxpayers. Council service requires significant time, preparation, community engagement, committee work, and decision-making that affects the lives of Aurora residents. At the same time, any compensation review must be conducted transparently and independently, not by politicians setting their own pay. My focus is not on increasing compensation for Councillors. My focus is on ensuring taxpayers receive value for their investment in local government. Before considering any increase, Council should demonstrate strong fiscal discipline, efficient service delivery, and responsible management of public funds. If compensation adjustments are considered, they should be based on an independent review comparing Aurora with similar municipalities. Residents expect accountability from Council, and I believe elected officials should hold themselves to the same standards they expect from every department in Town Hall.”

TERRENCE ZHU – “I think the current compensation is reasonable, and I would not support increasing Councillor salaries during the next term simply because a new Council has been elected. Being a Councillor carries significant responsibility and requires a real commitment of time, but compensation should also be fair to taxpayers. If adjustments are considered in the future, I would want them based on an objective and transparent review, including the responsibilities of the role and comparisons with similar municipalities. The focus for Councillor should be on serving residents and demonstrating that taxpayers are getting value from their Council.”

WARD 6 NICHOLAS KASHEF – “While Councillor pay in Aurora is amongst the lowest in York Region, and interestingly, Mayoral pay among the highest, any politicians deciding their own pay is an inherent conflict of interest. Since being Mayor is a full-time job and Councillor is only part time, I believe the Mayor’s salary should simply be set anywhere between three quarters to one and a quarter the median salary of an Aurora municipal worker, and Councillors should be half of that. Any arguments over the need for cost-of-living adjustments for Councillors applies equally to municipal staff. This simple solution doesn’t privilege politicians over any other public servants and will give residents confidence that mayor and council aren’t taking advantage of their position during hard times.”

ZIVKA KICIC – “While Aurora’s Councillors are among the lowest-paid Councillors compared with their peers across York Region, for me personally, this election is not about compensation. I have a successful business and am fortunate to earn more through my work than I would as a Councillor or even as Mayor. I am not running for the salary. I am running because I care about Aurora and want to contribute to our community. I believe elected officials should be fairly compensated for the time, responsibility and commitment the job requires, but compensation would never be a reason for me to seek office. In fact, if elected, I am seriously considering donating the majority of my after-tax Councillor compensation to a local shelter or another community organization where the funds can directly help Aurora residents. For me, public service is about giving back, being accountable to residents and doing the job because you want to make a difference, not because of the paycheck.”

(Responses from the following candidates were not received by this week’s press deadline – Phiona Durrant (Ward 2), Shaheen Moledina (Ward 4), Michael Thompson (Ward 4), George Tremtsidis (Ward 5), Binda Thandi (Ward 5), Jibraan Khan (Ward 6) and Harold Kim (Ward 6))

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LIGHTS ON! illuminates Downtown Aurora in day of music & art



On Saturday, September 26, Porchlight Arts hosted LIGHTS ON! a neighbourhood-wide festival celebrating music, art, and community connection in Old Aurora. Beginning at 1 p.m., porches throughout Aurora's historic core were activated with displays of visual art and music, before celebrations centred on Town Park for an art festival and a headlining performance from The Sadies. (First Row) Musicians, including James Brown, performed at Cousins Drive. (Second Row) Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese displayed art by Helen Weese on Larmont Street. Artist Hoda Nicholas is pictured on Wells Street with Porchlight co-founder Lauren Hanna. (Third Row) Krista Curry performs on Kennedy Street. The Sadies perform at the Town Park band shell.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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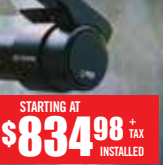
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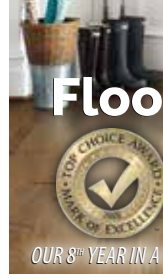


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King City resident Noah Landry qualifies for World Kart Racing championship in Portugal

Grade 11 Villanova College Honor Roll Student preparing for “biggest race of my life so far”



Contributed Photo

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

King City kart racer Noah Landry has qualified for the Rotax Max Grand Finals which will run in Portamao, Portugal from November 7 to November 14.

Landry delineated the stages through which he’s raced in 2026 to qualify for the world championship—describing the thrill of victory and agony of defeat in a roller coaster season on the track.

“The season started with a second-place finish in Goodwood; then, it was on to 15 races this season including a fun training day in Emsburen, Germany. The lowest point was a double mechanical ‘Did not Starts’ in qualification at the RMC Ontario Finals. I’d had a great season up to that point, but this destroyed any chances of getting a qualifying result in RMC Ontario and getting a ticket to the world championships. The high point came when I qualified for the Grand Finals near the end of the season in Hamilton at the Canadian Nationals and RMC Quebec race. The last race was broadcast on TSN.”

The energetic and committed 15-year-old described the racing title he is vying for in Portugal: “[It’s an] FIA-sanctioned world championship run annually in a different city. Last year, it was in Bahrain; this year, it’s in Portimão which is also getting a Formula 1 race next year. FIA-member countries nominate drivers in each of the categories. In Rotax Senior, there are 72 entries from throughout the world. Drivers represent their country in Olympic style—complete with Team Canada suits and gear. The class that I’ll compete in is Rotax Senior where the minimum age is 15 and drivers compete regularly into their 30s.”

One of the significant developments for Landry during the 2026 racing season has been “having Ryan Maxwell, 2025 Champion, as a teammate.”

“He is a few years older than me and won the Championship last year. Having such a fast and helpful teammate had made me a lot faster.”

Landry’s increase in speed was within the parameters of a strictly-regulated branch of motor sport:

“The max speed I hit this year was 143 km/h on the main straight at Cayuga. The karts, motors, wheels—everything is homologated and regulated. There are very tight inspections after every race to check that everyone is conforming to the technical regulations. The karts weigh 360 pounds with the driver and everyone strives to be as close to the limit as possible. Ten pounds over the limit can be 0.10 seconds a lap, which is meaningful, and can be the difference between 1st and 10th in some races this year.”

Landry’s racing team’s meticulous attention to detail is in compliance with the governing body’s strict application of its rules which will be in effect in Portimão.

“Rotax and the FIA work to make the competition truly driver versus driver as it is a recruiting tool for top race teams. For example, to keep everything fair, everyone is given their equipment for the race series and it is inspected and returned every night to prevent modifying and cheating. Each chassis manufacturer provides karts for each driver in each class. This year, everyone in my class is going to use Formula K karting chassis. The organization also provides engines and tires for each competitor at no cost and there are strict regulations as to what you can do to the engine beforehand to ensure fair racing. No one is allowed to practice at the track anymore [prior to the event] so there is less ‘hometown advantage’ or advantage for drivers who can travel ahead to practice.”

Despite the stringent rules in place by Rotax and FIA, kart racing is filled with complexity and nuances. Landry’s team is vital to his success on the track as his father, John Landry, explained.

“Noah will have his mechanic, Frankie Savaglio, with us for the trip to Portugal, along with Senior Team Manager Nick and Team Owner Trevor Wickens. They serve as support for Noah and his Team Canada teammates with data and video analysis, coaching, training, and mechanical preparation.”

After joining Wickens’s Prime Powerteam based out of Hamilton, John Landry’s son competed in a range of races in 2026 including Rotax Max Canada Ontario, RMC Quebec, Kartstars, the Canadian National Championships, the HRKC and MIKA series races which included competitions in Florida and Texas. Through all the complex competition and travel across North America, Noah Landry has maintained his stellar academic standing at Villanova College in King City. The aspiring engineer earned a place on Villanova’s Grade 10 Honor Roll by accruing a 94% average while serving as a Peer Mentor,

learning in the highly-competitive STEM program, and participating in co-curricular life most notably in the EV Car Club.

The Grade 11 student acknowledges that he’s “taking AP classes again this year and several Grade 12 classes. My favourite course is Computer Science because it has engineering aspects to it. I’d like to study engineering at Ontario universities like Waterloo or Queen’s and I’m taking AP courses so I could attend engineering schools in the US.”

Landry is settling in to both a new school year at Villanova and he’s continuing his German Heritage Language program at St. Theresa of Lisieux CHS in Richmond Hill on Saturday mornings.

Amid these academic commitments in two towns, Landry has his eyes on the prize in November. He’s preparing for his racing date with destiny in Portugal with a trip to the West Coast in October. Landry recognizes that he is in elite kart racing company – having captured one of only 72 “tickets” distributed by Rotax for the world championships in Portimão in less than two months.

“Next weekend, I have a test in a Radical car at Area 47 in BC, and I have three more races before the Grand Final in Portugal. I’ve never raced outside of North America so it’s important to stay ‘kart sharp’ ahead of the Championship. It’s the biggest race of my life so far.”

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AMHA's Early Bird Tournament attracts 81 eager hockey teams from across Ontario



(Left) Eager players wait to take the ice. (Right) East Enders Ticat Logan Atkins and Aurora Tiger David Toombs face off at the Aurora Early Bird Tournament Opening Ceremony presided by Tigers U12 Team Manager and Emcee Peter Kotsopoulos, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and AMHA President Corby Saltzman on Saturday night at the Aurora Community Centre.

Auroran photos by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER



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Mayor Tom Mrakas and AMHA President Corby Saltzman presided over Opening Ceremonies of the 81-team, 13-division Aurora Early Bird Tournament at the ACC on Saturday night.

The regional tourney attracted hockey teams from as far away as Prince Edward County and London. Games were played at all five ice pads in Aurora – ACC1, ACC2, ARC West, ARC East, and AFLC – as well as rinks in East Gwillimbury, Bradford, and Stouffville.

Mayor Mrakas and President Saltzman strode out along the red carpet to join Emcee and U12 Team Manager Peter Kotsopoulos at centre ice. All three officiated the ceremonial puck drop between Aurora Tiger David Toombs and East Enders Ticat Logan Akins.

The prowling Tigers won the Showcase Game 3-1 over the Ticats from The Beaches to complete an undefeated 2-0-2 round robin record and advanced to the U12AA division semifinal on Sunday morning.

Aurora’s U12 rep squad got to the Final Four by rolling through the opening round of the Early Bird. The Tigers tied the North York Knights 3-3 on Friday morning in Game 1, defeated the Oshawa Generals 6-4 on Friday

afternoon in Game 2, tied the Kingston Canadians 3-3 on Saturday morning, and kept their record unblemished by defeat with a two-goal triumph over the East Enders on Saturday night.

Alas, the Tigers were defeated 4-2 by the North York Knights in the semifinal showdown and the Knights went on to win the U12 division championship on Sunday afternoon.

Despite the defeat in Game 5 of the tourney, the Tigers’ balanced scoring was on display in their 5-game, 17-goal Early Bird performance. Eight players bulged the twine at least once versus their opponents on the weekend: Luka Kotsopoulos, David Toombs, Harrison Dawn, Brody Glover, Matthew Campoli, Ben Priest, and Spencer Barton.

AMHA President Corby Saltzman was pleased with the U12 Tigers’ five-game early season effort, praised the early season culture established by Head Coach Alex Priest and Team Manager Peter Kotsopoulos, and highlighted some special treatment the team received from Aurora’s OJHL club.

“The kids got to use the Junior A Tigers’ dressing room at the ACC—the Junior Tigers put out a post-game spread of fruits and vegetables as well as water and Gatorade for the U12 Tigers

to enjoy. Thanks to Tigers owner Jim Thomson for his hospitality in hosting our rep Tigers team. It’s another example of the great relationship between the Junior Tigers and the AMHA. I know the kids were really happy to use the big club’s dressing room. It was a special experience for them.”

Saltzman noted that it was too early to predict how the Tigers rep teams will fare in 2026-27, but he had “high hopes for many of the teams” representing the Town.

He pointed out that the AMHA rep teams are “maxed out at 400 players” and added that “we have 270 registered players in House League for the upcoming season.”

The AMHA’s President is hoping that the rep Tigers teams will catch fire as the U13BB Tigers did in 2025-26.

“Our U13 team made it to the OMHA Finals which is a feat in itself. Head Coach Brian Pusker, who was a non-parent coach, did a great job over a long, successful season and his team lost a tough one in the championship game. It was played in front of a packed arena and they came up just a bit short. They played great hockey through their 26-game regular season, and competed in almost 50 games.”



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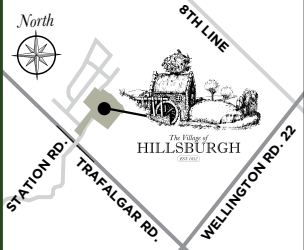


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Council candidates evaluate windrow program,

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

There are few things more frustrating than shovelling out your driveway after a snowfall, only for a snow plow to come down the street and leave a heavy ridge of the stuff at the end of each driveway.

For many, it’s a challenge they can muscle through; for others, particularly seniors and those living with physical challenges, it’s an accessibility concern.

The Town of Aurora has spearheaded a four-year pilot program offering windrow removal service to eligible residents with varying degrees of success.

This week, Council candidates were asked: “Would you like to see the Town’s windrow removal pilot continue on a permanent basis? If so, why? If not, or not in its current form, why?”

Here’s how they answered:

WARD 1
LAUREN HANNA – “I support windrow removal for seniors and residents with disabilities who cannot safely clear heavy snow themselves. However, after several years of piloting, I would not make the current Town-operated model permanent. Staff have repeatedly identified challenges with the Town’s equipment, snow-storage capacity, service consistency and operating capacity, particularly

during winters with heavier snowfalls. Significantly upgrading the Town’s equipment would require substantial capital investment and four years is long enough for a pilot. Council should use the evidence collected to make a clear decision and establish a permanent, reliable way to meet accessibility needs. That could include contracted service or targeted financial assistance for eligible residents, which are approaches staff identified as potentially more cost-effective than the current model. The objective should be to ensure people who genuinely need help receive it, while choosing a model that delivers the service reliably and uses taxpayer dollars responsibly.”

ROCCO MORSILLO – “I would like the Town of Aurora to explore another option for improving the windrow removal program. The program’s usage has declined significantly, from 1,048 users in 2023 to just 276 in 2025. To me, this suggests the current pilot program needs to be reviewed and improved. Residents have raised concerns about long wait times and the limited portion of the windrow that is cleared. One option I would like the Town to explore is purchasing dedicated attachments for existing Town equipment. These attachments could allow machinery the Town already owns to clear windrows more efficiently, effectively and quickly, while potentially reducing the need for additional specialized equipment.

Our residents deserve a winter service that is practical, responsive and makes good use of taxpayer-funded resources. I believe it is worth exploring new solutions before continuing with a program that is seeing declining participation.”

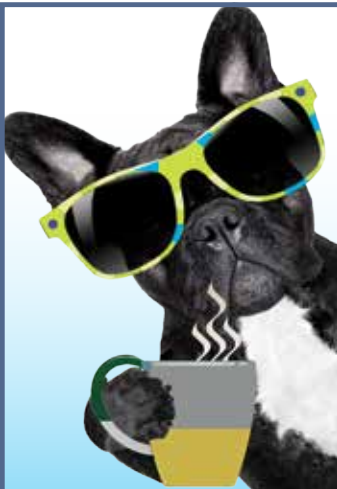
WARD 2
ANGELA DAUST – “Yes, I believe the project is necessary, considering that many residents in the Town may not be capable of clearing heavy ice and snow, left by snow plows, at the end of their driveways. However, I question the cost to residents. The City of Toronto provides free windrow clearing to approximately 262,000 households, Richmond Hill free to 50,000 residents, free to all in Vaughan and free to seniors in Markham. Why is Aurora charging? The cost may be prohibitive to seniors or others on fixed incomes. If the other municipalities can provide a free service, the Town of Aurora should as well.”

MARCO DI GIROLAMO – “Yes. I support making the Town of Aurora’s windrow removal program permanent and believe it should ultimately be expanded to make the service available to all residents who need it. Snow removal is a challenge for many people, including seniors, residents with mobility limitations, families with young children, and anyone who may be unable to safely clear the windrow themselves. The current pilot provides an important service to seniors and residents with mobility issues who may have difficulty clearing the snow left at the end of their driveway after municipal plowing. At a minimum, seniors and residents with mobility issues, should continue to receive this service without an additional fee. A permanent and accessible program would provide greater safety, convenience, and peace of mind for residents throughout Aurora. The Town should evaluate the pilot and work toward establishing a sustainable program that serves the broader community fairly and effectively.”

BRYNN LANSDOWN – “While door knocking, windrow removal has repeatedly come up as a priority. It is not just an issue for older residents. I have heard from many households who find clearing the windrow difficult, including parents managing young children. I see that challenge myself. Being physically able to shovel does not always mean someone can safely manage a windrow. I would want transparency around the \$200 fee, what it covers, program costs, participation, and ongoing resident feedback. I would also explore partnerships, sponsorships, and promoting private services to help reduce costs for residents and the Town. Longer term, as the Town replaces snowplows through normal fleet renewal, I would want staff to investigate whether new equipment could include windrow-clearing capability. If residents continue to see value in the service, I would support improving it and expanding access where the evidence supports it.”

WARD 3
NIKKI ALBER – “I would support exploring Town-wide windrow snow clearing, provided it can be delivered at a reasonable cost and with an appropriate level of service. One of my priorities is ensuring that taxpayer dollars are directed toward services that provide clear, practical benefits to the majority residents. Windrows affect a large number of households every winter, including families, seniors and residents with mobility challenges. Aurora already has experience with a more limited windrow removal pilot, so I would want staff to use what we have learned from that program to determine the cost and operational requirements of expanding the service Town-wide. Ultimately, I believe this is the type of practical municipal service worth considering because residents would see and experience the benefit directly.”

ALEXANDRA BONHAM – “I support the current windrow clearing pilot program, but I want to note that I also believe services like this should



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many say it’s a concern at the door

be adaptable to the needs of Aurora residents. The need is undeniable, but the current demand is low. In order to offer a Town-wide program, you have a few options: increase staff and your fleet ensuring the same 24-hour service window (to follow behind a plow, or to add additional plows with attachments). Or contract the windrow clearing out. If we increase staff to operate the fleet, they must be on call regardless of whether we see two snow events or 15. If we contract the service out, we are paying for their fleet, for the staff to be on call, and to guarantee the same 24-hour service window. I do not believe the need for Town-wide service has been met yet and therefore support the current program.”

ROBERT JAMES FRASER – “We want to see Aurora residents stay in their homes for as long as possible. What gets to be challenging for Seniors on a fixed income is covering all the costs to keep their home in line with neighbourhood expectations, acknowledging that they can’t do themselves what they used to do, nor can they afford to pay for someone else to look after things. The Windrow pilot has doubled in cost to \$200 and in my opinion should be free to Aurora seniors with limited income. We don’t want to see our Senior population have a heart attack or stroke attempting to clear a windrow. There is no reason why plowing equipment can’t be retrofitted with a hydraulic arm that prevents snow from being pushed against the end of driveways.”

HAROLD MacDONALD – “This topic has come up frequently while visiting door-to-door. The Town started with a Pilot Project for the 2023-24 winter season where seniors and residents with disabilities were invited to apply. Those that qualified had the snow cleared from their driveway left by the snowplows. It was a mild winter. The following winter saw more than double the amount of snow and user fees were implemented (with some low-income exemptions). The fee has increased again for this coming winter. The program should go ahead with no cost to the residents that qualify. The Town of Newmarket and King Township do not charge for similar programs. I have a personal experience when my Mother went to clear the windrow at her home on Mary St., prior to the programs existence, and was severely injured. I would fully support continuing the program and exploring the possibly of expanding it in the future.”

WARD 5

CHARITY DELA CRUZ-TOUPIN – “I would support continuing the windrow removal program, particularly for seniors and residents with disabilities or mobility challenges. I also think we need to do a much better job of making residents aware that this service exists. If the people who need it most don’t know about it, they can’t benefit from it. The Town should promote the program through seniors’ groups, community centres, multilingual communications, and direct outreach. The application process should also be made as simple and accessible as possible. At the same time, we should review participation and costs to ensure it provides good value for taxpayers. A program is only successful if the people who need it can actually access it.”

JESSIE FRASER – “I do think Aurora’s windrow removal program should continue in its existing form.

The program helps vulnerable Aurorans – seniors and residents – with disabilities who cannot perform the clearing work themselves and might not be able to access alternative options. Though the program has high fiscal, staffing, and operational costs, I believe those costs are necessary to take care of our most vulnerable communities’ safety and security. I do not believe the windrow program should be expanded to the broader community, as some have suggested, given its operational costs. This program should be targeted exclusively toward vulnerable communities. I would advocate for making the program more accessible to those communities it’s targeted toward; perhaps targeted community communication in addition to the public signage and social media campaign.”

MILTON HART – “Yes, I am open to supporting a permanent windrow removal program, provided that the pilot demonstrates clear value for taxpayers and prioritizes the residents who benefit most from the service. For many seniors, residents with mobility challenges, and those who are physically unable to clear the heavy snow left at the end of driveways after plowing, windrow removal can make a significant difference in safety and quality of life. However, before making the program permanent, Council must carefully review the costs, operational effectiveness, and resident feedback. As someone who believes in fiscal accountability, I would want to ensure that any permanent program is financially sustainable and delivers measurable benefits. If the costs outweigh the benefits, we should explore targeted options that focus on seniors and vulnerable residents rather than expanding an expensive service to everyone. Good government means balancing compassion with responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.”

TERRENCE ZHU – “I support continuing the windrow removal program, particularly because it helps seniors and residents with disabilities who may have difficulty clearing the heavy snow left at the end of their driveways. Before making the program permanent, though, I think we should look at what we learn from the pilot — how many residents use it, how well the service is working, what it costs and whether the current eligibility and fee structure are reasonable. For me, this is a good example of balancing care with responsible spending. If the results show that the program is helping residents remain safe and independent at home and can be delivered responsibly, I would support making it permanent.”

WARD 6

NICHOLAS KASHEF – “I would absolutely like to see the windrow removal be made permanent. There’s a special kind of frustration found in spending 30 minutes to an hour shoveling, only for snowploughs to come along and dump snow from the street back on to your driveway. While the program is only targeted at seniors and people with disabilities for now, and its user fees don’t currently cover the cost of the program, an option for more residents to opt-in at a higher rate may help offset the cost, while giving the program a chance to grow overtime as Town Council finds a more permanent solution to funding the program. I think an eventual target of revenue neutral, universal windrow

removal is a worthwhile long-term goal for the Town.”

ZIVKA KICIC – “I do believe windrow snow removal should be offered to all Aurora residents, similar to the approach in Richmond Hill, at no additional cost. I understand, however, that providing this service to everyone may not be financially sustainable. At a minimum, the program should prioritize seniors and residents with disabilities. I do not believe seniors should have to pay a \$200 application fee for a service they may genuinely depend on. During my campaign, several residents have raised this concern with me. If elected, I would like to see the \$200 fee waived for seniors and the eligibility age

lowered to 60, similar to the approach used in Markham. Residents between 12 and 60 with a valid doctor’s certificate confirming a physical disability should also qualify for free windrow removal. I would also like the Town to review the time it takes to complete the service. If residents are paying for or relying on this program, they should be able to count on timely and dependable snow removal.”

(Responses from the following candidates were not received by this week’s press deadline – Phiona Durrant (Ward 2), Shaheen Moledina (Ward 4), Michael Thompson (Ward 4), George Tremtsidis (Ward 5), Binda Thandi (Ward 5), Jibraan Khan (Ward 6) and Harold Kim (Ward 6))



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Mark died peacefully in his Gormley auto shop/ garage, his favourite place and, in many ways, the heart of his life. It was at times a peaceful place and at other times a hive of activity focused on trucks, race cars, and lawn mowers. Mark’s sons and wife were at his side, as they and his brother Jeff were through much of his long battle with cancer.

Mark’s sons were the most loved and important people in his life. He is survived by his sons, Kyle and Matthew; his wife, Jodi Gohn; his mother, Jill Gordon; stepmother, Mary Miller Gordon; sister, Wendy Gordon (Robert Sauder); brothers, Jim Gordon, Jeff Gordon (Angi Rowe), and Andrew Gordon (Andrea Gordon); his nieces and nephews; as well as his honorary brother, Big Mike Pariseau. Mark was predeceased by his father, James A. L. Gordon.

Mark grew up in Aurora and stayed in the area all his life. Mark believed in the power of family, friendship, and hard work. Mark’s passions included car racing, hockey, and looking after his clients through groundskeeping. He was smart, fiercely loyal, and a gifted athlete.

As a young teen, Mark captained Tyndale’s Pony Club team, representing Canada internationally at Prince Philip Games competitions. Mark attended Trinity College School from 1982 to 1985, playing basketball and football. He went to the University of Guelph. In later years, Mark took up hockey and car racing, dominating the Peterborough Speedway track and encouraging many through his love of both sports.

Mark was an authentic individual who made an indelible impact on many people; his circle was wide and strong. He will be greatly missed.

A Celebration of Life will be held at King’s Riding Golf Club, 14700 Bathurst St., King City, on Saturday, October 17, 2026, from 2 to 5 p.m.



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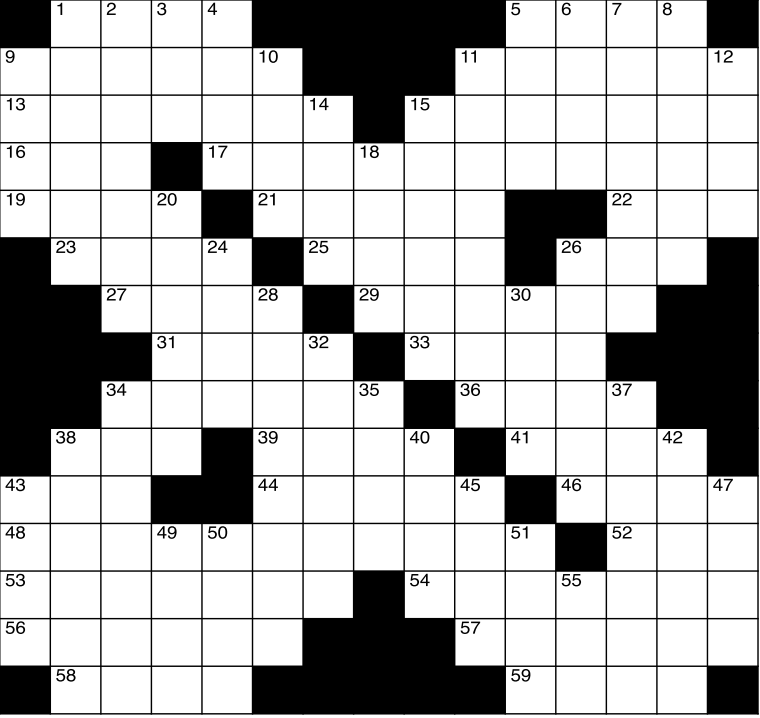
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Puzzle No.TAOCT126 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

1. Difficult

5. Coarsely ground corn

9. A group of similar things ordered one after another

11. Loved Romeo

13. Something to solve

15. Pelvic areas

16. Informal debt instrument

17. Ineffective

19. A device attached to a workbench

21. Related on the mother’s side

22. “Fresh Prince of ___ Air”

23. Astronomer Sagan

25. C. Utah city

26. Turkey

27. Informal terms for money

29. Awakens

31. Those who favored Prohibition

33. Blabbed

34. Looked through

36. Rhode Island rebellion

38. A type of “cast”

39. One’s duty

41. Where golfers begin

43. Make a mistake

44. Semitic Sun god

46. Ancient Greek City

48. Removed someone’s head

52. A place to stay

53. Unwise

54. Most unnatural

56. “Dennis” is a notable one

57. Ointments

58. Examination

59. Leaked fluid

CLUES DOWN

1. Brave

2. A state of excitement

3. Jest at

4. Sandwich store

5. Chapter of the Koran

6. Dismounted from a horse

7. Small vehicle

8. Irrked

9. A disreputable man

10. Monetary unit of Samoa

11. A list of woes

12. Weight unit

14. Alone, single

15. Broadway legend Bernadette

18. Monetary unit of Serbia

20. Worn by exposure to the weather

24. A body of traditions

26. Students seek one

28. Hydrophilic amino acid

30. Nasal mucus

32. Branch of U.S. Congress

34. Swinish

35. Russian assembly

37. Grant an exemption to

38. Set up in advance

40. Satisfy

42. Felt

43. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls

45. Witnesses

47. Strong insects

49. Gasteyer and de Armas are two

50. One of an ancient people inhabiting Scotland

51. Cheerless

55. Unhealthy

THINGS... you ought to know

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3
The Aurora Farmers' Market continues at Aurora Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8
Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and the Town of Aurora will once again host the Colours of Fall concert at Aurora Town Park this evening from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m. As the colourful leaves fall off the trees, come enjoy one last concert in Aurora's Town Park. Celebrate the Colours of Fall with live music, pumpkin carving and corn roast. Free community corn roast, pumpkins and carving tools will be provided for families to showcase their carving skills (while supplies last). Enjoy an evening of fantastic music with The Mud Men. This Canadian Celtic rock band comes with a blast of Celtic energy. Performing over 3000 shows, their incredible journey includes opening for ZZ Top and The Guess Who, performing at the Oilers and Flames home-opener, seven Grey Cups and more. Get ready for a lively show that will be a blast for all ages.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
The Aurora Farmers' Market continues at Aurora Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18
The Aurora Farmers' Market continues at Aurora Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

York Symphony Orchestra Presents: Tchaikovsky and Friends this afternoon at 3 p.m. at Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria St, Aurora. YSO's first concert of the new season features the rousing music of Russian composers, including Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Borodin and Khachaturian. Featured pieces are the Violin Concerto of Tchaikovsky with rising Canadian star Christie Cheung, and the tuneful Symphony No. 2 by Alexander Borodin. Tickets at Eventbrite.ca or at the door

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
Aurora's Haunted Forest returns to Sheppard's Bush this evening from 6 - 9 p.m., with additional activities set for the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. Wristbands for the event, which has been acclaimed as one of the Top 100 Festivals and Events in Ontario, will be on sale October 1 at: the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (135 Industrial Parkway North); Aurora Recreation Complex (1400 Wellington Street East); Aurora Town Hall (100 John West Way); Aurora Town Square (50

Victoria Street); and Joint Operations Centre (229 Industrial Parkway North). For more information, visit aurora.ca/hauntedforest.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31
The Aurora Farmers' Market concludes today at Aurora Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. with a variety of Halloween activities, including crafts and costume parades.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28
Fireside Holiday Market, second-annual event in support of mental health programs – today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Northridge Community Church, 15338 Leslie St, Aurora, ON. Shop local for gifts, crafts, jewelry & baked goods. Free admission, FREE parking & festive family fun. FREE photos with Santa! @sisterz_co_

ONGOING
Partagez le Francais: Ce groupe accueille les Adultes / 18+ (des francophones aux débutants capables de converser) - qui cherchent à mettre en pratique leurs compétences Conversationnelle en français. Over Zoom with a nominal fee of \$2.50. RSVP by visiting [meetup.com/Partagez-le-francais](https://www.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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Station rededication salutes a century-long legacy of fire service

From page 1

Lake, both of which became well-known establishments.

“Stew’s dedication to public service extended beyond the fire department. During the 1960s, he served on Aurora Town Council, first as Deputy Reeve and later as Reeve of the Town of Aurora. His commitment to civic leadership also led him to serve on York County Council, where he represented the interests of Aurora and its residents.”

CYFS said Patrick left a “legacy of leadership, service, and community dedication” that continues to be “remembered and celebrated.”

Present CYFS leader Chief Rocco Volpe underscored this point, noting Patrick’s influence extends far beyond his years of service.

“His unwavering dedication to public safety, commitment to his community, and passion for protecting others have left a lasting impact on those who had the privilege of working alongside him,” said Volpe. “His leadership, professionalism, and service set a standard of excellence that continues to guide and advance new generations of firefighters.”

This enduring legacy was also

touched upon by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Mayor Tom Mrakas, who were joined in the ceremony by Newmarket Councillor Kelly Broome, former Aurora mayor Tim Jones, and more.

MPP Gallagher Murphy said his dedication to both fire service and civic leadership speaks volumes about what it means to be a firefighter.

“It is not simply about responding to a call. It is about giving your time, your energy, and often making personal sacrifices to be there for your community. It is a commitment that can last a lifetime,” she said. “And behind every firefighter is a family making sacrifices, too. Families share their loved ones with us — they share the evenings, the weekends, the holidays, and sometimes the worry that comes with the job. Their support is an important part of every firefighter’s ability to serve.

“That is why a moment like today is so meaningful. Naming this station in Stew Patrick’s honour recognizes the individual, but it also recognizes the family behind him and the legacy of service that he helped build. His name will now remain here, alongside the

firefighters who continue that tradition of putting our community first.”

These sentiments were shared by Mayor Mrakas, who said Patrick “represented the very best of public service and community building.”

“I know how much this building, and the fire service itself, means to the Patrick family, with three generations of Patricks having served from this station,” he said. “I truly hope that seeing Stewart’s name proudly displayed here serves as a lasting reminder of the significant and lasting contributions all of you have made to this community.

“As we dedicate this building, I think we are also honouring every single member of Central York Fire Services who continues that tradition of service today. You are all carrying Stewart and the Patrick family’s legacy in the work you do – through your professionalism, courage and commitment, and in your willingness to be there for our residents on what can often be the most difficult days of their lives. Today, we are connecting an incredible chapter of Aurora’s history with the men and women who continue that work today – and with those who will answer the call in the years ahead.”

CDS students sell at Market

From page 10

stand were making the jewelry right there. They had a welding machine and offered custom-fitted jewelry. Seeing those girls run such a popular booth inspired me to take my hobby seriously. I am now working toward purchasing a welder to make my own permanent jewelry.”

“This business began as a step outside of our comfort zones, putting our passions together to make something new,” the siblings shared. “Our goal was to get a taste of the business world, to learn to interact with customers, and to get a little extra cash for something we already love to do. We wanted to learn what worked and what didn’t – what to sell and how to connect with people. We hope to grow and get into the Newmarket Main Street Farmers Market next summer. Holiday fairs are around the corner, and it would be a great opportunity to find a local one to participate in.”

In the meantime, they’ll be back at the Aurora Farmers Market on Saturday, October 3 and 17. Be sure to stop by and check out their designs!

AURORAN CLASSIFIEDS

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VOTE FOR

JOHN GALLO FOR MAYOR OF AURORA

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Aurora has been my home for many years. As a long-time resident and member of Council, I've had the opportunity to listen to residents, understand the challenges facing our community and work on the decisions that shape our future. As I run to be your mayor, these are some of the priorities I believe deserve our attention.



ACCOUNTABLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NO MORE STRONG MAYOR POWERS

I do not support the use of Strong Mayor powers. While the Mayor should provide leadership, Council members are also elected by residents to represent their communities and participate fully in the decisions that affect our Town.

I believe Aurora's most important decisions should be made openly and collaboratively.



HOUSING THAT KEEPS PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Housing affordability affects people at every stage of life.

I want seniors who have spent decades building their lives in Aurora to have realistic options to remain here as their housing needs change.

I also want young people and families who grew up in Aurora to have the opportunity to stay, raise their own families here and continue contributing to the community they already call home.

That means looking at a broader range of housing choices, including attainable, rental and non-market housing.



GET AURORA MOVING. A TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR A GROWING COMMUNITY

Traffic congestion affects how much time we spend commuting, getting our children where they need to go and simply moving around our own community.

My recently released Get Aurora Moving plan identifies some of the larger infrastructure projects Aurora needs to keep pushing forward.

■ A Full 404 Interchange at St. John's Sideroad

I believe a full interchange at Highway 404 and St. John's Sideroad should be a priority. It would provide another important connection for Aurora's east side and employment lands while helping reduce pressure on the Wellington Street interchange.

Aurora cannot build the interchange on its own, but we can make sure our case is strong and that we work collaboratively with York Region and the Province to move the project toward funding and construction.

■ Preparing for More GO Train Service

Expanded GO train service is good for Aurora, but more trains will also mean more frequent interruptions where our roads cross the rail corridor.

My transportation plan calls for continued work toward grade separations at Wellington Street East and St. John's Sideroad.



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JohnGallo.ca

AUTHORIZED BY JOHN GALLO



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