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NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION – Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis and MPP Michael Parsa joined Mayor Tom Mrakas, Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Ward 4 Councillor and candidate Michael Thompson, Ward 5 Councillor and mayoral candidate John Gallo, as well as Council candidates Lauren Hanna, Rocco Morsillo and Marco Di Girolamo, and municipal staff to raise the Every Child Matters flag at the Town's new Community Reflection Space outside Town Hall on the morning of September 30. That evening, the community convened at Aurora Town Square for a commemorative gathering led by (Inset) Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley. For more on the day's events, see Page 15.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger and Brock Weir

Future in focus as Mayoral candidates share ideas at Library event

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The future of Aurora was in focus on Sunday afternoon as all four of the Town's mayoral contenders participated in an all-candidates meeting hosted by the Aurora Public Library. The event, which was held in the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall and moderated by Deanne Kukulewich, Executive Director of Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers, was preceded by an opportunity for residents to meet with each Council and Trustee candidate

at stations set up throughout Aurora Town Square. Back in the Performance Hall, each Mayoral candidate was allocated a four-minute opening statement, each Council candidate a two-minute introduction, and each Education Trustee one minute to introduce themselves. After opening remarks, the question-and-answer round for Mayoral candidates followed, with eight questions randomly selected from submissions made by Library patrons and the community at large. The first question, posed by Tiffany Y, questioned whether the Town should install a

signalized intersection on St. John's Sideroad and Old Yonge Street, an area they said "can be inconvenient and dangerous at times" for area residents. First to answer was Yafang Shi, who said it's a concern the incoming Council will need to look at with Regional input. "I met with the ratepayers' association there. They raised this question and I think we should look into the details and try to find solutions to address the residents' concerns," she said. Incumbent Tom Mrakas said the simple answer to the question was "yes," adding that

Continued on page 9



EXCHANGE OF IDEAS – On Sunday, Mayoral candidates Yafang Shi, Tom Mrakas, John Gallo, and Shawn Deane shared their views on the community's future at an All-Candidates Meeting. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

October 8, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Thursday, October 8	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Week of October 12	No meetings		
Wednesday, October 21	7 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board
Wednesday, October 21	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board
Week of October 26	No meetings		
Week of November 2	No meetings		
Tuesday, November 10	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Thursday, November 12	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Tuesday, November 17	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council Inaugural
Wednesday, November 18	7 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board
Wednesday, November 18	7 p.m.	Aurora Public Library	Aurora Public Library Board

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

What's Happening

AURORA'S 2026

Colours of Fall CONCERT

Thursday, October 8

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Aurora Town Park, 49 Wells Street

Mudmen
Enjoy an evening of distinctive sounds celebrating this Canadian Celtic rock band with this blast of Celtic energy. Bag pipes, dancing, storytelling and more!

Community corn roast, pumpkins and carving supplies will be provided.
(while quantities last)

Food donations for the Aurora Food Pantry are greatly appreciated.

aurora.ca/FallConcert

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: Marina Beniaminov - Unrefined

Unrefined is Marina Beniaminov's first solo show and features textured paintings inspired by landscapes and florals. Mostly made with palette knives, the work shapes paint into layered, white surfaces with occasional hints of metallic or iridescent color. Light moves across the texture, revealing gesture, process, and the beauty of natural imperfection. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.

HOW TO VOTE

IN AURORA'S 2026 Municipal Election

Internet Voting:
October 16 to 25

Advance In-Person Voting:
October 17 to 21

Election Day In-Person Voting:
October 26

*There is no internet voting on Election Day.



aurora.ca/Vote2026

Youth Volunteer Fair

Join us on October 14 for our annual Youth Volunteer Fair. This is a great opportunity for youth to speak with community organizations about volunteer opportunities. Please visit us online for full event details at aurora.ca/YouthEvents.

2027 Aquatic Leadership Courses

Aquatic Leadership registration is now open for all seasons of our 2027 Aquatic Leadership courses. Full details at aurora.ca/AquaticLeadership. Register online or pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., A.R.C. or A.T.S.

Thanksgiving Day Weekend Holiday Schedule – Programs & Activities

Have fun over the holidays! We have programs and activities for everyone to enjoy. Visit our Holiday Schedules webpage for full details at aurora.ca/HolidaySchedules.

SAFE SPORT DAY IN AURORA

WITH ALLISON FORSYTH & RICK WESTHEAD

Saturday, October 17, 2026
Session 1 - 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Session 2 - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Aurora Town Square • 50 Victoria Street

TICKETED EVENT • REGISTRATION REQUIRED

aurora.ca/SportWorkshops



WINDROW REMOVAL PILOT PROGRAM

For seniors and people with disabilities

Apply by October 15, 2026



aurora.ca/Windrow



BOLLYWOOD 101

October 18 – November 22
4 to 5 p.m.

Explore authentic Bollywood dance in a fun, inclusive space. Perfect for beginners! Join our new 6-week series.

AGES 14+ • REGISTER:
[AURORA.CA/WHATSON](https://aurora.ca/WHATSON)



BELLY DANCE FOUNDATIONS: BEGINNER

October 19 to November 16
from 7:15 to 8:15 p.m.

BELLY DANCE FOUNDATIONS: INTERMEDIATE

October 19 to November 16
from 6 to 7 p.m.



Register:
aurora.ca/WhatsOn



AURORA'S 2026 HAUNTED FOREST

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sheppard's Bush (corner of Mary St. and Industry St.)

Trails for little goblins and a spooky one for the brave!

Crafts, activities and shuttle bus at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex

Wristbands **MUST** be purchased in advance at:

Aurora Family Leisure Complex,
Aurora Joint Operations Centre,
Aurora Town Hall, Aurora Recreation Complex
or Aurora Town Square

\$5 per person family trails and \$6 for full access (includes Haunted Cabins)

Charitable BBQ available on-site (nominal fee applies)

aurora.ca/HauntedForest

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AURORA VOTES 2026

Mayoral candidates share gratitude ahead of Thanksgiving holiday

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving this weekend, a holiday that is, for many, shared with friends, family, and often a meal that brings everyone together.

This week, as the observance approached, Aurora’s Mayoral candidates were asked to identify the one thing they are most thankful for about Aurora.

Here’s how they answered:

SHAWN DEANE – “As we enter Thanksgiving weekend with appreciation for the fall harvest, I am also grateful for the democracy we have enjoyed since Confederation. Today, that democracy is at risk. I, along with three other candidates, are campaigning to alert our community that we are on the verge of losing meaningful control over local decision-making. Voters must awaken to the reality that Strong Mayor Powers have failed to build new homes but have succeeded in dividing our community. I’m running for Mayor to ensure democracy remains intact in our Town and across York Region, believing the Court will soon rule these powers unconstitutional. Aurora must send a clear message to the province, in this election, about the governance we expect and deserve. Canada was built by immigrants seeking freedom, and generations of Canadians—from Vimy Ridge onward—have defended it. On October 26, choosing new leadership is the only way to protect our democratic voice and change course.”

JOHN GALLO – “The one thing I’m most thankful for about Aurora is that, after more than 30 years, it still feels like home. My wife and I raised our family here, made lifelong friends here, and have accumulated more Aurora memories than I could possibly count. Our kids grew up here, and even our dog Gucci seems to think she has some ownership over the neighbourhood. What I love most is that Aurora has grown, but you can still run into someone you know at the grocery store, on a walk, at a community event, or grabbing a coffee. Sometimes that turns a five-minute errand into a 45-minute conversation, but that’s part of living in a community where people know and care about each other. I’m thankful for our parks and trails, our local

businesses, our community traditions, and especially the people who make Aurora feel like more than just a place on a map. After three decades, there are a lot of places I enjoy visiting, but there’s only one place I’m always happy to come home to. And this Thanksgiving, I’m also thankful that calories consumed with family apparently don’t count. At least that’s the rule at our house. Happy Thanksgiving!”

TOM MRAKAS – “What I’m most thankful for about Aurora is our people and the incredible sense of community we share. Whether it’s neighbours helping neighbours, volunteers giving their time, local businesses supporting our community, or families coming together at events across Town, Aurorans consistently show what it means to care about where we live and about one another. As Mayor, I have the privilege of seeing that community spirit every single day. It’s what makes Aurora more than just a great place to live — it makes Aurora home. This Thanksgiving, that’s what I’m most grateful for. Happy Thanksgiving, Aurora!”

YAFANG SHI – “I moved from Markham to Aurora 10 years ago. What I am most thankful for in Aurora is the friendship and support network I have been blessed with over the past decade. These beautiful relationships have flourished through community kitchens, art exhibitions, advocacy, and gardening. Many women and men, most of whom are women, have supported my advocacy over the past three years and seven months, following the censorship of my exhibition, ‘Fire II,’ by the Library in March 2023. At the meet-and-greet portion of the All Candidates Meeting at the Library last weekend, a Peruvian Canadian friend who used to live in Aurora and now lives in Barrie drove all the way from Barrie to provide her help. A Cambodian Chinese Canadian mother also came to help with her three teenagers. I met her last summer while displaying public art about freedom of expression and human rights in Aurora. After viewing the art and hearing its context, she asked me, ‘How can I support you?’ I was deeply touched by her immediate understanding and heartfelt support. The involvement of the younger generation gives me hope and optimism for realizing my vision for Aurora: an inclusive, sustainable, vibrant, and thriving community.”

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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Tom Mrakas
MAYOR



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AURORA'S
Municipal Election
is on October 26, 2026

Learn more about candidates, voting options, and key election resources at aurora.ca/Vote2026

Voting is easy, secure and convenient. Follow these steps to ensure you are informed and ready to cast your vote.

✓ Check if you are on the Voters' List

Visit aurora.ca/Voters by **October 1** to check, add, or update your elector information.

✓ Know who's running for office

Learn who is running for Mayor, Ward Councillor and School Board Trustee. View the full list of candidates at aurora.ca/Candidates.

✓ Get your Voter Information Letter

Voter Information Letters will be sent to all electors on the Voters' List in October. This Letter will have information you need to cast your vote.

✓ Get out and vote!

There are three easy ways to vote in Aurora's Municipal Election:

• Vote online from **October 16 to 25**

• Vote in the advance in-person polls from **October 17 to 21** at the Aurora Seniors' Centre, 90 John West Way.

• Vote in-person on Election Day - **October 26** at your Assigned Voting Location.



✓

AURORA
VOTES
2026

aurora.ca/Vote2026

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Council Compensation:
A Missed Opportunity
for Collaboration

The coach’s job isn’t just to put players on the field—it’s to bring them together as a team. When there is no cohesion, the issue isn’t always the players; sometimes, the team needs a different coach. The same is true of leadership: it requires not only capable individuals—it’s about bringing people together around a common goal and moving forward.

I was part of the Governance Committee that reviewed Council compensation in 2017, ahead of the 2018 municipal election. Following that review, Council and mayoral salaries were adjusted for a Council of eight members elected at large. The recommendation was passed unanimously.

Mr. Mrakas, then a Councillor, had no objection to the process and did not criticize the Mayor for voting on his own salary adjustment—a substantial increase that Mr. Mrakas subsequently inherited when he became Mayor in 2018.

Also, in 2017, Council decided to reduce the number of Councillors from eight to six for the 2018–2022 term. Since then, Aurora’s population has continued to grow, while the move to a ward system for the 2022–2026 term has brought additional demands and responsibilities for Councillors. I therefore question why these changes during Mayor Mrakas’ first term did not lead to another Governance Committee review of Council compensation for the 2022–2026 term. Taken together, these changes in Council’s structure, responsibilities, and Aurora’s population warranted a further review of Council compensation.

When Council subsequently considered a compensation review during this term, there was an opportunity for collaboration and a fair process to determine appropriate compensation. I believe the public would have understood and supported a thoughtful, transparent approach that led to a reasonable outcome, as they did in 2017. Instead, the issue became unnecessarily divisive and created tension within our community.

In May, we had an opportunity to put all of this behind us when Town staff provided a report requiring Council direction. As head of Council, the Mayor could have provided clear direction to Town staff and resolved the matter. Instead, there was no discussion, no direction, and no action, leaving the next Council to deal with a difficult situation in the future.

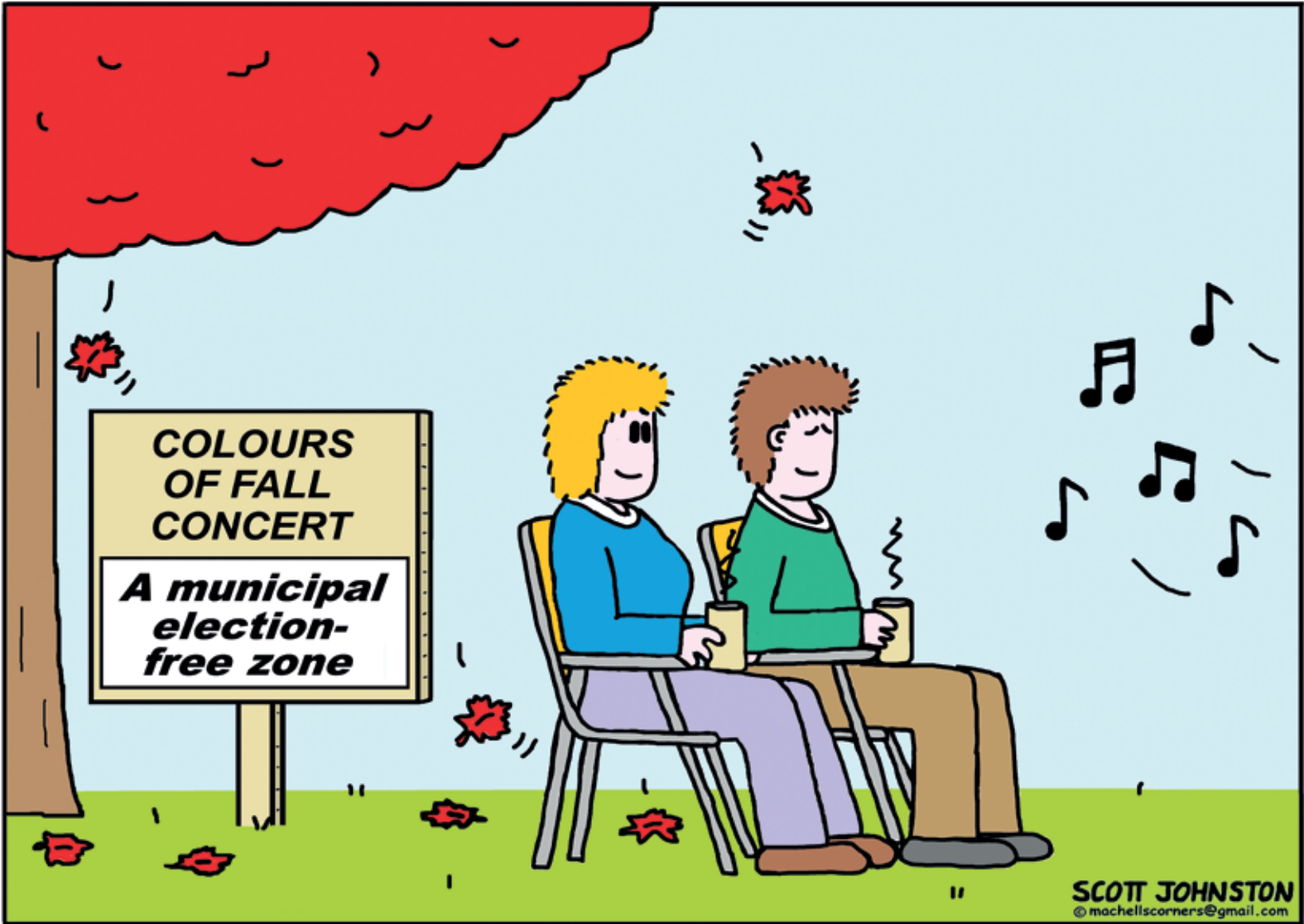
That missed opportunity reflects a larger leadership issue. This was not a dysfunctional Council—it was a failure to bring Council together. When a team lacks cohesion, the answer isn’t always new players; sometimes, what it needs is a new coach—one who can unite the team, provide direction, and move it forward.

That is ultimately the choice before the voters: whether to keep the current coach or choose a new one. I believe it’s time for a change.

Anna Lozyk Romeo
Aurora

(Editor’s Note: The most recent municipal staff report on Council compensation that appeared on the Council agenda in May was not pulled by any elected member for further discussion)

Machell’s Corners



Autumn rythms



BROCK’S
BANTER

Brock Weir

only closed 30 years ago....

“Our government continues to support community-led healing and commemoration through programs like the Indian Residential School Community Engagement Fund. By listening to and learning from Survivors, we can build a path forward rooted in mutual respect, awareness, and action... On this year’s National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, let us take time to learn, reflect and work together to build a better future for everyone.”

While the Province promised continued efforts, the Federal government addressed the 94 Calls to Action that came out of Canada’s Truth & Reconciliation Commission and underscored the role of each Call to Action as forming a roadmap for the future.

“For more than a century, over 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were separated from their parents, families, and communities and sent to residential schools,” said Prime Minister Mark Carney in his statement. “The system was built on assimilation policies designed to sever children from their languages, cultures, identities, and ways of life. The federal government established and sustained this system, and Canada bears responsibility for the profound and enduring harm it caused.

“More than 6,600 Survivors and witnesses came forward before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to share painful realities Canada had too long ignored. Their courage ensured that Canada listened, remembered, and reflected. We owe Survivors more than remembrance. We owe them action. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action remain a roadmap for that work. In partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, our government is working to close longstanding gaps in health care and education, protect Indigenous languages and cultures, and advance safe drinking water and infrastructure in First Nations communities.

“We are advancing the Calls for Justice

for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people, and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Today, Canadians will wear orange and participate in ceremonies to remember the children who never came home – and to honour the Survivors who told the truth so that all Canadians may take up the work of reconciliation.”

It will be interesting – and, again, telling – to see how this roadmap is followed because another rhythm of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation has been the common refrain that so few of the 94 Calls to Action have been addressed by governments and citizens alike.

Aurora’s gathering on September 30, for instance, was led by Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley, a prominent advocate across the Greater Toronto Area, as well as Elder Pat Floody. In her remarks, Wheatley touched upon the Calls to Action and how leaders have, more often than not, picked some of the easier actions rather than the more substantive ones.

“In 11 years, this country has maybe done 13 of the 94 Calls to Action. That’s being generous, by the way. If you put that into a percentage point, 15 per cent of the 94 Calls to Action in 11 years have been addressed,” she said. “In school, if you get 15 per cent on a test, you fail. Guess what, Canada – you fail, and they took all the low-hanging fruit. They didn’t do the big, hard things like give us water. They did some of the easy stuff [like] declaring a date.... All Canadians should step forward and show us that they do care. All Canadians have a responsibility to ignite that flame of hope....

“I hope that what you heard here today gives you the courage, the momentum, and the belief to move forward, to step into the truth, whole and complete, to continue to learn and educate yourself. When you leave here today, I want you to leave better than when you came, but I want you to share with somebody who wasn’t here. Find somebody. Talk to somebody about this. Stretch the message. Let it ripple out with your passion, your belief, your courage, and your truth.”

While the rhythms of this time of year are always welcome, some – such as once again being reminded on the lack of progress in this area – can cause discomfort and that is welcome in its own way as discomfort can often serve as a catalyst for action.

One can only hope that when our communities once again convene on September 30, 2027, that we can point to examples of real, concrete action – and this kind of year-over-year progress becomes as ubiquitous and reliable at this time of year as the arrival of the crisp air and nature’s colourful cavalcade.

THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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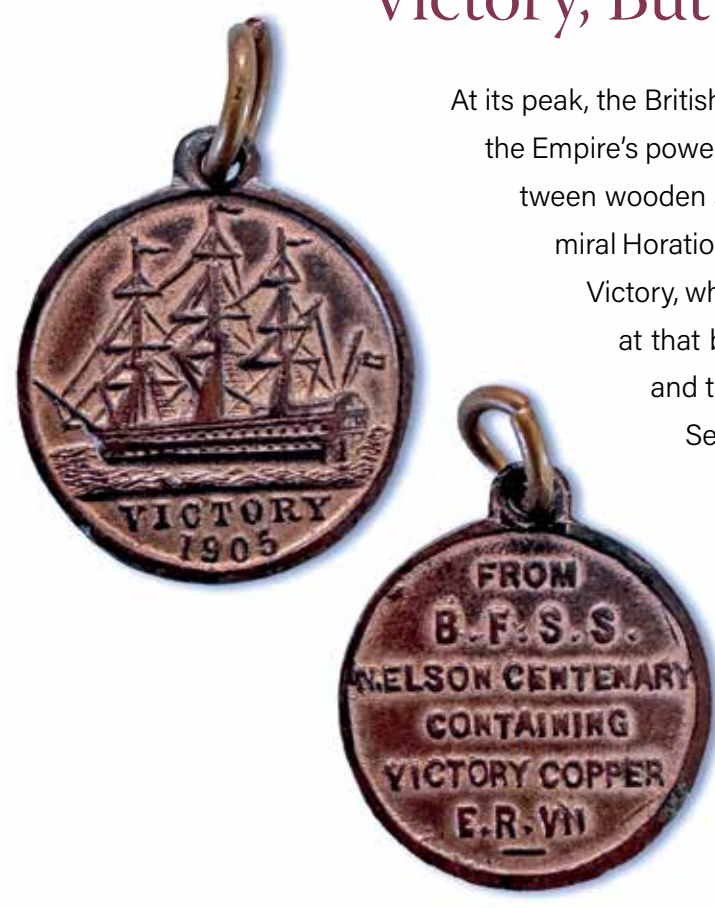
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Victory, But at What Cost?



At its peak, the British Navy had over a hundred ships at its disposal, able to project the Empire’s power around the world. Many conflicts were decided in clashes between wooden sailing vessels bristling with cannons. Famous British vice-admiral Horatio Nelson’s flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805) was the H.M.S. Victory, which boasted “104 guns” (cannons). While it indeed saw success at that battle, Nelson was killed in the fight, cementing both the ship and the man into legend. A century later, the British Foreign Sailor’s Service was authorized to fundraise for the preservation of the Victory, using copper taken from its fittings and producing a variety of medals and other trinkets. This 17mm “medalet” (79.1.1) is one example, bearing King Edward VII’s initials as a sign of his approval for the project. Surviving to-day as a heritage attraction in Portsmouth, the H.M.S. Victory has shown how wood and metal, wrought by human hands, can outlast the authority and power it once stood (or rather floated) for.

National Newspaper Week: How local news powers local business

Spend a few minutes with a local newspaper and you get a pretty good sense of what’s happening in the community.

Local newspapers don’t just report on communities. They are part of them.

Every healthy community relies on trusted communication to know what’s happening around them. That includes the decisions being made at town hall, the events happening this weekend and the businesses opening, growing and investing locally.

While national and international stories often dominate social media feeds, local news stays closer to home. It focuses on the people, businesses and issues that shape the community around us.

That local focus also makes newspapers an important way for businesses to connect with the people they want to reach.

Independent research shows Canadians trust newspaper advertising more than social media advertising. News Media Canada research found that 57% of Canadians trust advertising in newspapers (in traditional or online formats), compared with 22% who say the same about advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

For a local business, that trusted environment can make a difference.

Local newspapers also reflect everyday life within their communities. Grand openings, milestone anniversaries, new developments and local business achievements may not make national headlines, but they matter to the people who live there.

Pick up a local newspaper and there’s a good chance you’ll recognize some of the names, places and businesses in its pages. That familiarity is part of what makes local news different. It reflects the community back to the people who live there.

And the relationship works both ways. Local businesses use newspapers to reach local customers, while their advertising helps support the journalism that keeps the community informed.

The next time you pick up a newspaper, look at the local advertisers. Chances are that you have a connection to them.

This National Newspaper Week, October 4–10, celebrate the newspapers, journalists and businesses that help keep communities connected.

Learn more at www.nationalnewspaperweek.ca.

Why We Celebrate National Newspaper Week

National Newspaper Week is an annual opportunity to recognize the critical role newspapers play in an active and healthy democracy, and it is celebrated in North America during the first week of October. Local newspapers deliver vital information to Canadians every day, connecting local communities across the country and keeping citizens informed, engaged, and connected.

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



PARSA’S PERSPECTIVE

Michael Parsa, MPP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

a tremendous difference.

To the frontline workers who are always there when the community needs them, thank you for everything you do. From healthcare workers and emergency responders to essential workers and those providing important

public services, your dedication and compassion do not go unnoticed.

I also want to express my gratitude to the police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and members of the Canadian Armed Forces for their service to the community. For those who will be away from their families this Thanksgiving, please know that your dedication and sacrifice do not go unnoticed. Thank you for the work you do to keep others safe, support communities, and serve the province and country.

From my family to yours, I wish you a safe and joyful Thanksgiving.



Senior Scape

By Christina Doyle

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.”

– Audrey Hepburn

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”

– Muhammad Ali

Liz: “I retired and have time now. I volunteer at Reception and BBQ events. It’s a way to give back to the community.”

Don: “Keeps me busy. I like working with people and teaching/sharing a skill. I volunteer in the woodshop.”

Thanksgiving is the only national holiday that explicitly calls us to recognize and individually express an internal, personal attribute, namely gratitude. While other holidays call us to remember the heroic or sacrificial contribution of others, only Thanksgiving draws from within us a perspective beyond our own circumstances and calls us at least to consider an unselfish gratefulness for the numerous blessings that uniquely mark each of our lives.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of many non-profit organizations and social causes. Here at the ASC our volunteers donate their time, skills and passion to make a difference in the world, your world. However, volunteering can also be challenging,

As October arrives and we settle into the fall season, Thanksgiving is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with family and friends and recognize the many people who contribute to making the community such a welcoming place to call home.

One of the things I am most grateful for is the sense of community we share. Every day, I see neighbours helping one another, volunteers giving their time, local organizations bringing people together, and families supporting one another. These simple acts of kindness may seem small, but together, they make

In this month of October and Thanksgiving, a time when we can reflect on gratitude, let’s take a moment today and thank the wonderful volunteers at ASC.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Truer words were never spoken by Gandhi. Taking time out of your life and doing something for someone else is a journey into self-discovery and positive well-being. Having an inspiring conversation or playing a game with another gives you an incredible feeling that will guarantee a smile on your face.

Volunteering can be refreshing and energizing. Your time is precious, so why not give a little of yourself today, you will discover how rich your life will become. Volunteering connects us to purpose, community, and the deep satisfaction of contributing to something larger than ourselves. It is a practice that gives as much as it receives.

If you don’t believe me, here are some of our volunteers’ responses as to why they give their time here at the ASC.

Susan: “I have free time and wanted to give back to my community. I enjoy meeting and connecting with like-minded people.”

Carol: “Volunteering fulfills a need in me. I have volunteered at the centre for 18 years.”

Glen: “I enjoy contributing and working with others.” (Glen is the President of the Board for 2026-2027 for the ASC)

Bill: “I enjoy meeting people.”

Lynette: “I love welcoming and meeting new people as well as helping them.”



Wishing you a very happy Thanksgiving!

May you be blessed with a day full of Love, Laughter, and Peace.



DAWN GALLAGHER MURPHY

MPP for Newmarket–Aurora

Building Our Community Together

905-853-9889

Dawn.GallagherMurphy@pc.ola.org

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Teacher recognized for “Advancing Democracy” for the leaders of tomorrow

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As municipal candidates go door to door to engage today’s voters in the importance of casting their ballot, an area teacher has been recognized for his work in engaging the voters of tomorrow.

Alex Au Yong, an educator at Newmarket-based independent school Pickering College, is one of two inaugural recipients of the Elizabeth Dowdeswell Award for Advancing Democracy Through Education, a program established by the Province in honour of Dowdeswell, who served as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 2014 to 2023.

The award recognizes Ontario educators who demonstrate innovative approaches to teaching and make significant contributions to democratic principles and civic engagement. Each recipient receives an award to support continuing education and/or further educational contributions.

“For more than 30 years, Au Yong has used experiential learning to help students understand that democracy is not simply a system they learn about, but something

they can actively participate in,” said Pickering College in a statement.

During his 15 years at Pickering College, where he currently teaches Grade 5, he has created opportunities for students to engage directly with elected officials, community leaders, democratic institutions and issues affecting their communities.

“Alex understands something fundamentally important about young people: students develop a commitment to democracy when they feel their voices genuinely matter,” said Dr. Cinde Lock, Head of School at Pickering College. “He moves civic education beyond theory and into lived experience. His students leave his classroom believing they can contribute meaningfully to the world around them.”

This is especially relevant in an election year, particularly at the municipal level where Au Yong has invited local politicians – as well as area MPs and MPPs – into the classroom to engage with students face to face.

“If you just look at the curriculum itself and you are trying to explain something that is pretty abstract to a 10-year-old or 11-year-old, it can’t be fun, it can’t be too interesting, and even in the Senior School



Photo courtesy of Pickering College

curriculum for civics, where it is taught importantly, it’s still an abstraction,” he tells The Auroran. “I think it’s important that they see that they’re real people in these positions, and they’re not that far removed from caring about what we care about in our lives. For young students, it’s another opportunity for them to find something that they care about and want to pursue. It doesn’t mean that they have to be political or get into politics, but there are so many spheres of engagement for them that this is an excellent example of leadership through action of people who I think selflessly want to get involved.

“We’re very critical of our politicians and the kids and their families will hear a lot about the news from here and elsewhere, but to know that there are people who put themselves forward and want to do good things for the community is a really good example of how they might see themselves as future leaders, too.”

Looking back at receiving the award at the Art Gallery of Ontario last month, Au Yong says he was “quite honoured” and “grateful” for the opportunities he has had over the years “to be able to extend learning beyond the curriculum in social studies.” He also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to teach in an environment like Pickering College which encourages teachers to foster opportunities like these in-class encounters with leaders.

“I take great delight in seeing students engage purposefully with elected leaders and officials at all levels of government to deepen their learning and contribute meaningfully to our communities and beyond the classroom,” he says.

As the October 26 Municipal Election approaches, this has been a focus within the classroom as well.

As Federal and Provincial politics often capture the most headlines, when asked how politicians, parents and educators alike can spark student interest in the local level, Au Yong says this type of engagement shouldn’t wait until people reach voting age.

“I think beyond the schools it’s a civic duty – it’s a precious responsibility to be in a democracy like Canada. It shouldn’t wait until voting age [for them] to know about it, and learning about it is important at this time...beyond saying it is your responsibility and right, I think it is something that might help some students find that additional spark or engagement and carry that conversation home,” he says.

“My dinner table question for them this week was ask your parents the question: ‘Do you think we pay our fair share of taxes?’ because we’re on the topic of taxation and what kind of taxation that we each are responsible for, and just closely watch their facial reaction beyond what they say. It’s kind of funny to hear what the 10-year-olds and 11-year-olds come back and say, ‘Oh, my mom got angry when I asked that question,’ or, ‘My mom went red in the face, or, ‘My dad said, don’t talk to me about taxes.’ Well, let’s talk about why they said that. I explained to the parents in a communication, they’re going to come home and ask you that, and it can be quite interesting what the students bring back. I think it’s part of being civically engaged for anyone, no matter their age.”

Rocco MORSILLO

for Ward 1 Councillor

- ✓ Control the budget & cut unnecessary spending
- ✓ Focus on crime prevention in our community
- ✓ Controlled development, environmental protection & heritage preservation
- ✓ Downtown revitalization
- ✓ Improve traffic & increase collaboration with Metrolinx (Go Train)





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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Ratepayers' debate stirs discussion on finance, infrastructure with Mayoral candidates

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

More than 120 residents filled the banquet hall of the Royal Canadian Legion's Branch 385 on Wednesday night to hear from Mayoral candidates at a debate hosted by six local ratepayers' organizations.

The evening was attended by all but four Council candidates who met with residents prior to the Mayoral debate, which was attended by Shawn Deane, John Gallo, and Yafang Shi. As previously announced, incumbent Mayoral candidate Tom Mrakas did not attend.

The wide-ranging discussion, which was moderated by Stephen Boyne, President of the Aurora Legion touched upon many issues – from Council cohesion, to affordability, heritage preservation, and road safety – but many looped back to common themes of municipal finances and sustainability.

Asked how each would “balance the Town's Capital and Operating Budgets” given new rules limiting how communities like Aurora can collect Development Charges to help address costs related to growth, the three candidates agreed this uncertainty is a concern.

Deane led this discussion, slating the decision made to take \$400,000 from the Town's Tax Rate Stabilization

Reserve to smooth over any financial bumps in the road.

“We're literally subsidizing development. This has to stop,” he said, pointing to the Town's “extremely complicated” Development Charge study.

“The Province has downloaded and pushed out their expenses to municipalities and it is extremely complicated,” he continued. “There's been a whole movement to have the Province share 1 per cent of property or sales tax to fund the shortfall. The Province has been denying that.... so I want to create noise about this within the community and York Region.”

Gallo said he shared “a lot” of Deane's concerns, stating the Province's moves on Development Charges have created significant uncertainty and continues to be a “moving target” for municipal staff.

“We have to strategize ways to figure out how to deal with those shortfalls,” said Gallo. “In terms of capital plan spending, I have some serious concerns, and you may remember a few projects that we've completed – Victoria Hall, Town Square, and in the past, the Joint Operations Centre. [The] Joint Operations Centre started at \$16 million, ended up at \$35 million. The Town Square started somewhere around \$30 million, ended up at \$60 million with a \$6 million overflow. We all know



Mayoral candidates John Gallo, Yafang Shi, and Shawn Deane attended an October 1 all-candidates meeting and mayoral debate hosted at the Royal Canadian Legion by six local ratepayer groups.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Victoria Hall, \$500,000 to \$2.2 million. Those types of things have to stop.

“In terms of the Town Square, I was not supportive of it, simply because normally those big projects are funded one-third from the federal government, one-third from the province, and one-third from us, and that didn't happen. Once that funding model went away, I couldn't support that project.”

Funding shortfalls were also cited by Shi, who said this issue needs to be addressed by the next Council “carefully and responsibly.”

“According to the long-term asset management funding strategy report from June 2026, staff has recommended phasing in the required levy increase for asset management over the next Council term before making decisions that will affect residents and taxpayers. I believe the new Council needs to take a close look at the details behind this funding shortfall,” said Shi. “We need to understand exactly where the gap is coming from, why it has developed, and what assumptions are being used to determine the Council's future funding requirements. My goal is to maintain quality, accessible services and programs that contribute to a healthy, vibrant community while managing the finance responsibly.

Focus was maintained on finances in the next area of discussion, which zeroed in on how each candidate would prioritize infrastructure spending to make sure it keeps pace with growth.

Gallo was the first to answer this question, stating it was a “complicated question” and said it was the role of the next Council to “take the lead from our very capable staff, our Director of Finance, to figure out solutions, to come to Council with suggestions, analyze those suggestions, and make informed decisions on how to address them.”

“In terms of budgeting and finance, there are two immediate things I would do: first off, we're going to make sure that one person does not approve a \$200 million budget,” said Gallo, referencing Strong Mayor Powers handed to communities like Aurora by the Province of Ontario which, among other factors, has made municipal budgeting the Head of Council's purview. “Second, we're going to go back a little bit in time, particularly that we know there will be...at least four brand new Councillors on Council. We're going to take it step by step, the budget process. I remember

a time many hours on many Saturdays that we were in the Council Chambers, going line by line by line. I think that's an appropriate step to take with brand new faces at the Council table, including for myself. Let's re-assess and let's have a really good understanding of our budget process and take whatever time it needs.”

Deane said keeping pace with growth in the face of aging infrastructure is “core” to his platform. Without a “solid grasp of your finances” you can manage neither assets nor growth, he said.

“Growth does not pay for growth. Council knows this, and instead of trying to correct it, they've accepted it. This is unacceptable. So, how do we fix this? We have predictable funding from the provincial and federal government every year, and we also have predictable funding from tax relief and grants,” he said. “We need to budget better, is simply what needs to happen. We're spending more money than we bring in. Who does that at home? Who do you hold responsible when someone's overspending? We're spending way too much on growth and new, and then trying to understand why we can't keep pace with growth and services this year have suffered.”

Infrastructure for new development projects, added Shi, should continue to be paid through Development Charges, but the present situation presents possible opportunities for change.

“The intensification will occur along the Aurora Promenade, the Aurora GO Station Major Transit Station Area, and the Regional corridors and local corridors,” said Shi. “This approach to growth provides an important opportunity to strengthen our public transportation network and reduce our reliance on cars. We should continue to strengthen connections to GO transit, improve local bus services, and make Aurora more accessible for people who choose to walk or cycle. If elected, I would advocate for better GO transit services.

“This is about more than reducing traffic. Better public transportation can improve accessibility, support our environment, and make our community more connected and livable.”

In a further question touching on the topic of sustainability, candidates were asked in the face of “three pillars of sustainable development [being]

Continued on page 23

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MY PRIORITIES

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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Future in focus as Mayoral candidates share ideas at Library event

From page 1

it's an option that has been explored by the Region and Municipality for "quite a bit of time."

"[The Region] put forward the pilot – that is what's in place at this moment of time. Once we're done, which is supposed to be coming up in six months, we're going to go through the data that allows us to look at whether we're going to continue with the pilot, or make some modifications, which also include looking at signalized intersections," he said. "I hope that we do move forward in that direction."

John Gallo agreed that safety was a concern at the intersection, but expressed some reservations that signalization was the right path forward given its proximity to the already-signalized intersection at Yonge.

"Whether it's putting lights there or not, it's a Regional road, it's very close to Yonge Street. I think we have to explore the best option for that intersection," he said. "I'm not convinced that lights are the best option for that, considering how close it is to Yonge Street, but I would be open to looking at all options."

The intersection has been "problematic for a while," agreed Shawn Deane, who added that incoming developments in the area will "exacerbate" the issue.

"Part of proper planning would have had these studies done in advance to know before approving a development whether or a traffic light should be there or what the other solutions are," he said. "Staff and all the consultants that we invest in are best suited for this, and there just needs to be some better planning in advance to avoid this problem when developers are already approved to begin."

The environment was a top concern for resident Shirley J., who asked each candidate to outline "concrete steps" they would take to restore the environment, combat invasive species and safeguard water quality given Aurora's proximity to the Greenbelt.

Mrakas responded that "protecting our environment has always been top of mind" for himself and Council and that is reflected in policies embedded into the Town's Official Plan to "make sure that any development occurs with making sure we protect the sensitivities of the environment surrounding us."

"Anything in the Greenbelt is a no-go, anything in our Oak Ridges Moraine Countryside is a no-go. It's been like that for a long time [and] will continue to be like that, and I'll make sure that we continue to uphold all our environmental standards within our community any time and all time," he said.

Gallo responded that the environment is a "huge part of my belief system," and reflected in his work on Aurora's Environmental Advisory Committee and on the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve.

"I'm a huge proponent of maintaining our tree canopy at 40 per cent and we just have to continue to do the great things that we've already done in Aurora," he added.

Next to answer was Deane, who said that while the environment "is worth fighting for," Aurora is not the only decision-maker.

"Provincial mandates can declare an economic zone at any given moment and override where development happens," he said. "The other environmental concern is with the 8,000 houses, a 40% increase in our population coming to Aurora, that does not protect the environment. So, what we need to do is make sure this is responsible growth that everyone talks about, and right now, 8,000 home mandates where we haven't built 1% of our targets is a concern."

Shi was last to answer this question, stating her vision for Aurora "is to build an inclusive, sustainable, vibrant and thriving community."

"I think Aurora is growing fast and...we have to plan thoughtfully and we have to consider all the factors – housing needs and residents' concerns, infrastructure readiness, and environmental protection and heritage preservation," she said.

Population is not the only thing set to grow in Aurora. Metrolinx' plans to significantly increase rail service on the Barrie GO line in the coming years, a corridor that bisects the community, was also a concern, with Holly A. asking each candidate to weigh in on future GO service and its impact on Aurora.

"We're going to be having a serious problem when all the trains are active," said Gallo. "They proposed 15 minutes every day there to Union. I think they've cut that down since then. Notwithstanding that, the main east-west corridor of Wellington is going to be an absolute disaster if Metrolinx and the province does not fund an underpass at that location, and I will be advocating [to] Metrolinx and the Province and anyone I can get in front of to make sure that's back on the docket and it's done."

Traffic in the GO Station area has been an issue for "a long time," said Deane, and once again said population growth was going to exacerbate the issue.

"There's an opportunity that's been missed here with negotiating with the province with that pledge of 8,000 homes. If we're going to be mandated to pledge or build homes, that would exacerbate the traffic problem, and it's really incumbent upon the province to resolve that issue," he said. "Additionally, the ticket sales and the property tax revenue from the GO station, we don't receive that. That's what should be funding this, not local taxpayers."

A similar view was offered by Shi, who cited approved condo builds for the Major Transit Station Area, adding: "I think we can think more proactively. Maybe this creates opportunities for us to strengthen public transportation."

Mrakas responded by saying "dealing with Metrolinx is like pulling teeth" but talks have been had at upper levels of government.

"We know that York Region has to put in their fair share when it comes to the grade separation at Wellington. That's why I've pushed my colleagues at York Regional Council to approve funding to come through our development charge by-law to see developers pay for that grade separation, not the taxpayers, so that's coming," he said. "Once the traffic study is done by Metrolinx, we can begin to move forward with funding from the province, as well as from York Region and the developers."

Transit concerns made way for financial concerns, with another question from Shirley J., who asked each candidate to identify their "top three factors contributing to budget overspend on capital projects," and what each would do to address the issue.

"Setting budget limits is what's missing," responded Deane. "At the start of this year, our budget and the capital budget for all these projects did not have a limit. We were only supposed to spend \$25 million. We spent \$65 million, and we rolled into February with staff asking for an extra 350% increase on the Victoria Hall project because they failed to complete it. They did the same the following month with a 50% increase on the multi-use path. So, setting budget limits, holding, bringing that information into [Council Chambers] when we're having project budget meetings, holding staff accountable for communicating the information where they're at with respect to the budget limit, and what we're going to cut from the budget if they're intending to go over budget. This is what's missing"

Shi said it's an issue of "how to choose the projects," paying particular focus on renovations to Victoria Hall approved by Council earlier this year as one example.

"Is this money well spent? I think those heritage buildings should be reserved for community purpose, and we should not spend money on renovations for commercial use like a restaurant inside our heritage buildings," she said.

In answering the question, Mrakas drew the attention of audience members to their surroundings at Aurora Town Square.

"We always hear about increased costs. We have to remind ourselves that we approved this during COVID," he said of the Town Square build. "If we didn't approve it during those COVID years, the estimate on this project would have been well over \$90 million in another municipality. So, it was the right decision at the right time. But we continue to put project management in front of all of our capital projects that we move forward to make sure that we really look at efficiencies and where we can make sure... that we're not running over-budget and make

sure that we come in on time. These are important factors that we'll continue to do to strengthen our relationships with the project management team and continue to provide fiscal accountability to every single project in our Town moving forward."

Gallo, however, offered a different viewpoint, stating he would put the municipal budget back into the hands of Council as a whole, rather than with the Mayor's Office, which is now the case under Strong Mayor Powers.

"We have to spend a lot more time on how we budget, even if it's a line by line, particularly our capital budgets," he said. "You know, we cannot continue to have these capital projects skyrocket in price for no apparent reason and not be transparent when we do it and then have a majority of Council pull them through. Victoria Hall comes to mind immediately. A total change in how we conduct our business with regards to budget."

NEXT WEEK: Mayoral candidates address wedge issues, data centres, ensuring Aurora's east side is well-served, and where municipal responsibilities stand compared to upper levels of government.

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

RE-ELECT

Tom Mrakas MAYOR

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Happy Thanksgiving!





MICHAEL PARSA, MPP

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Start Thanksgiving in style with outdoor music and “Fall Faves” this week

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Thanksgiving Long Weekend is here, and there are plenty of ways to get a head-start on seasonal fun in Aurora.

The party is set to begin on Thursday, October 8, from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m. with the Town of Aurora’s annual Colours of Fall Concert under the vivid tree canopy of Town Park.

The Colours of Fall Concert, the final music event to take place at Town Park this year, will feature a festive corn roast and a chance to carve some pumpkins while the ever-popular Mudmen perform their blend of Celtic energy, bag pipes, storytelling, and more from the Bandshell.

“I think we have the perfect recipe for how everyone should start their Thanksgiving Long Weekend,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Supervisor for the Town of Aurora. “It’s our final concert of the year and we’re going to have bonfires set up in the park, we’ll provide carving tools as well as pumpkins for people to carve their own pumpkins to take home, and with the Mudmen, there’s nothing like pumpkins, corn, bonfires and bagpipes!

“If this is [someone’s] first-time experience at Colours of Fall, there’s no better time than with the Mudmen. You

will definitely get your fill of bagpipes as well as your fill of classic music we can all identify. It’s going to be a very, very pleasant Thursday night because literally the next day is the start of the long weekend.”

The fun continues on Saturday morning from 10 a.m. to 12 noon as the Town hosts the third annual Fall Faves event outside at Aurora Town Square.

Fall Faves was first hosted by the Town as part of Aurora Town Square’s opening weekend and has only grown in popularity.

Activities include pumpkin carving, set to begin at 10 a.m., followed by the Aurora Public Library Story Time at 10.30 a.m., with Line Dancing with New Age Country rounding out the program from 11.30 a.m. to 12 noon.

“The whole time there’ll be lots of outdoor activities [and] outdoor games for families to bring their kiddos through to do,” says Nichole Campsall, the Town of Aurora’s Cultural Development Coordinator, encouraging families to stroll over to Town Square after visiting the Aurora Farmers’ Market in the morning. “We also will have pumpkins while supplies last, so if you missed out on Thursday night, you can come and see us and you’ll have a pumpkin and you’ll be able to carve it up. We have



The Aurora Public Library’s story time is a firm “fave” at the Town’s annual “Fall Faves” event at Aurora Town Square.
Photo courtesy of the Town of Aurora

people who sit and carve together in the Square, and we have some who just take it home for later. It’s a nice little start to that spooky season as well, getting ready for Halloween. We’ll also be handing out 75 coupons for a free cider from My Indie Coffee (the café within Aurora Town Square). Once the coupons are gone, they’re gone – and we definitely ran out quickly last year, but cider is a perfect fall favourite.

“At 10.30 a.m., we’ll have the Aurora Public Library Story Time, probably

one of the favourite parts of the event since the beginning. We love to have the Library there to celebrate with us. Then, at 11.30, we have New Age Country coming to do line dancing. We brought them in last year and it was so cool to see everybody in the Square line dancing and having so much fun.”

For more information on the 2026 Colours of Fall concert, visit aurora.ca/fallconcerts. For further information on Fall Faves, visit aurora.ca/whatson.



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CULTURALLY speaking





Image courtesy of the Aurora Cultural Centre. Photograph by Adora Lau

Find something new-to-you at the Art Supply Swap

enough yarn, paper, glue sticks, and googly eyes to open your own hobby shop. Inevitably, you’ll accumulate supplies that you just don’t know what to do with. Wouldn’t it be great if you could swap out those supplies for something you’ll actually use?

That’s the beauty of an Art Supply Swap – you bring in items in new or gently used condition and trade them for something new-to-you! This FREE event takes place in the Homeroom Galleries at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday, October 17 from 12:00 – 3:00 PM.

Participants are encouraged to bring new or gently used items, including but not limited to: painting and drawing supplies; printmaking materials; blank canvases and sketchbooks; yarn, fabric and textile art supplies; and craft materials. A full list is available on the Aurora Cultural Centre website.

As for what not to bring, please avoid aerosols, varnishes, solvents or other hazardous materials; damaged or highly used items; expired or dried-up items; and completed works. No large donations will be accepted. All leftover art supplies will be recycled or donated to the Aurora Cultural Centre Education Studio for use in programming and camps.

BY ASHLYN GREGORY

Art Supply Swap – Saturday, October 17 from 12:00 – 3:00 PM, Homeroom Galleries, Aurora Cultural Centre

What do all artists have in common? From photographers to printmakers to painters, one thing unites us all: we collect art supplies.

It starts innocently enough. You decide to pick up watercolours as a hobby, so you go to the art supply store and buy the essentials: paint, paper, brushes. Then, maybe you branch out to oil paints. Now, you’re buying linseed oil, mineral spirits, maybe an easel as well. As time goes on, you’re looking for a new challenge. It’s time to upgrade. Now you’re stretching your own canvas and mixing your own pigments.

Or maybe you’re more of a crafter, and over the years you’ve collected

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3. PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE

Pelvic organ prolapse is a condition in which one or more of the pelvic organs drop from their normal position and protrude into the vaginal canal. This can lead to physical discomfort, frustration, and embarrassment.



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AURORA VOTES 2026

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora is a community known for its environmental stewardship but, in recent years, development, climate change, and many other factors have placed pressure on the community – and, of course, well beyond.

This week, Council candidates were asked: “What is your top environmental concern in your ward and, if elected/re-elected, what would you do to address it?”

Here's how they answered:

WARD 1

LAUREN HANNA – “My top environmental concern in Ward 1 is protecting and restoring our green spaces and tree canopy. This is especially important after this summer’s storm, which hit northwest Aurora hard, and as residents see significant tree loss associated with development along St. John’s Sideroad. Our trees and natural areas are important natural infrastructure: providing shade and wildlife habitat, storing carbon, helping manage stormwater and reduce runoff and erosion, and making our community more resilient to extreme weather. I would advocate for restoration of trees and trails damaged by storms and invasive species, and regular public reporting on progress toward the 40% canopy target established through Aurora’s 2024 Urban Forest Study. I would also support improving local preparedness and communication for future extreme-weather events. As Aurora grows, development should respect our Official Plan, minimize environmental impacts, protect mature trees and natural features, and ensure responsible growth and environmental protection are considered together.”

ROCCO MORSILLO – “Ward 1 is facing growing environmental pressures that deserve careful attention. Development is increasingly encroaching on natural heritage tree canopies and environmentally protected lands, putting important natural areas at risk. The potential growth of AI centres also raises environmental

concerns, particularly around land use, energy consumption, water demands, and the infrastructure required to support these facilities. Stronger policies should be established before proposals for AI centres are introduced, rather than reacting after applications are already underway. We should also be clear that environmentally protected lands must remain protected. Development proposals that encroach on these areas should be rejected, with environmental protection taking precedence over development pressures. Ward 1 needs a proactive approach that safeguards its natural heritage, protects environmentally sensitive lands, and ensures that new development is responsible, sustainable, and aligned with the long-term interests of our community.”

WARD 2

ANGELA DAUST – “My top environmental concern in the Town of Aurora is climate change resilience. Storms are becoming more intense and 100-year storm events are occurring more frequently, and with them, the risk of more frequent flooding due to storm drains and streams becoming overwhelmed. Aurora needs to ensure that our infrastructure can handle this new reality. The Town needs to upgrade and repair storm drains and storm management ponds. We also need to have a holistic approach to stream management, instead of a disjoint between public and private ownership of streams and their maintenance. A brand-new culvert, or stream revitalization, on public property becomes ineffective if downstream there is a small culvert on private land creating a choke point for water to go through. Revitalization of streams should be done regardless of who owns the land the stream runs through.”

MARCO DI GIROLAMO – “My top environmental concern in Ward 2 is protecting our tree canopy, green spaces and natural environment while Aurora continues to grow. Aurora is a great place to live in part because of its parks, trails and mature trees. As development continues, we need to make sure we are not losing the

character and natural environment that make our community special. If elected, I will advocate for responsible development that protects existing trees and natural areas wherever possible, and ensure when trees are lost, they are replaced with healthy, appropriate trees. I will also support continued investment in our parks, trails and storm water infrastructure so we are better prepared for extreme weather and flooding. For me, environmental responsibility is about looking after what we have, planning responsibly for growth, and leaving Aurora in good shape for the next generation.”

PHIONA DURRANT – “Our environment is our shared home, and protecting it requires engaging every single generation. While knocking on doors and discussing property standards, I met an inspiring 88-year-old resident who walks her dog daily and voluntarily picks up litter on our streets. Her dedication shows that our community cares. The Town of Aurora already has an active Environment Advisory Committee, but we must bridge the gap between our Town’s policies and civic action. I propose leveraging this existing framework to launch an environmental mentorship program. We will pair the deep wisdom and expertise of our passionate seniors in retirement communities with eager elementary and high school students. Furthermore, we can collaborate with university students right in our backyard, including those at Seneca, to conduct local environmental research. By mobilizing the community, we foster shared responsibility for Aurora’s green future.”

BRYNN LANSDOWN – “My top environmental concern in Ward 2 is protecting and proactively maintaining the green spaces we already have. Our trees, trails and natural areas are valuable environmental assets, particularly in a ward where green space is limited. I want to see the Town take a more proactive approach to maintaining them, rather than waiting until something becomes a safety concern or deteriorates beyond a reasonable point. Trees are a good example. On Kitimat, residents raised concerns about an insect-infested tree for years. Even after it was

marked for removal, it remained for months, while a dead branch on another tree on the same street went unaddressed. I would support regular assessments of our trees, trails and other green spaces, clear timelines for addressing identified concerns, and better follow-through when residents report issues. Where trees need replacing, we should choose diverse, hardy species appropriate to their location and resilient to invasive pests. Protecting what we have today is part of leaving Aurora better for tomorrow.”

WARD 3

NIKKI ALBER – “My top environmental concern in Ward 3 is protecting our existing green space as Aurora continues to grow. Development is inevitable, but it should not come at the expense of the trails, mature trees, parks and natural areas that make our neighbourhoods such desirable places to live. If elected, I would also push for developers to be held accountable for protecting and restoring green space rather than leaving existing residents to bear the environmental and financial costs of growth.”

ALEXANDRA BONHAM – “I would say my top concern involves the tree canopy in Aurora and how it interacts with the increase in extreme weather events we have been experiencing. Aurora has a target of 40% tree cover which is a good goal to have but even more specifically the maintenance of trees has to be prioritized. Improper maintenance compounds the effect extreme weather has on trees which can result in damage like the recent storm did in many parts of Ward 1 earlier this year. A tree that has been trimmed to a healthy extent allows wind to pass through better than one that hasn't. I would look at re-evaluating the process by which the Town looks after trees on Town property, especially those near residences. In addition, I would like there to be a clear set of guidelines for residents to follow regarding trees on their own properties.”

ROBERT JAMES FRASER – “The top environmental issue in Ward 3 is the preservation of the land known as the Anne

ELECT

COMMUNITY DRIVEN

ALEXANDRA BONHAM

Alexandra.jade.bonham@gmail.com

For WARD 3



Authenticity, A Focus on Ward 3, Thoughtful Development

Authenticity: For me, this is about having authentic conversations with residents, building real connections, listening, and working together to make our community even stronger. I believe that same commitment should be brought to council chambers. There are many priorities out there and we should be working together to achieve each one where possible, and in a way that supports all Aurora residents all while considering our future needs.

A Focus on Ward 3: A consistent concern in both elections by Ward 3 residents was a feeling of neglect in the south end of Aurora. I believe south Aurora could benefit from a new recreational facility, tennis courts, and a splash pad or more, all of which are lacking completely. I would love to see the town partner with YRDSB and the former Dr. G.W. Williams property to achieve some of these missing things and more. I strongly believe we also need to

work with Metrolinx and YRT to ensure that there are plenty of public transit routes and options available for residents as our population density increases.

Thoughtful Development: Aurora is mandated to add 8000 new housing units before the end of 2031. While that may seem daunting, I believe we will benefit from this growth especially along our major corridors. Residents can trust I will work with everyone to ensure thoughtful development that considers residents needs and concerns. Thoughtful



development improves foot traffic to local business, creates demand for recreational facilities and ensures we protect our neighbourhoods from infill.



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environmental issues in their Wards

Bartley Smith Estate at the south-west end of the Ward. This 96-acre parcel of land sits on the Oak Ridges Moraine and helps serve an important function as the headwaters for more than 30 streams flowing into Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe. It contains several patches of mature hardwoods and a grove of large, mature red oak. It is also home to endangered Butternut trees. It's an urban oasis supporting biodiversity that Aurora residents can enjoy and experience nature. It was gifted to the Ontario Heritage Foundation (now Trust) in 1992. They tried to sell it to developers in the mid 1990s—we need to ensure it stays in its natural state for future generations.”

HAROLD MacDONALD – “In Ward 3, my top environmental concern would be protecting and preserving the Anne Bartley Smith property. In 1992, the property was donated to the Ontario Heritage Trust. This property is located at the south end of the Ward and is 90 acres in size. I would propose the Town acquire the land and designate it as a park. This would prevent future government officials from developing the land. This property could be a jewel – it has steep elevation changes and a variety of trees and vegetation/fungi, there are at least two oak trees with a circumference that exceeds 8’. I envision walking trails, community gardens, the preservation of heritage homes (off of Bathurst St.) all with the focus on retaining the natural environment.”

WARD 4

SHAHEEN MOLEDINA – “My top environmental concern for Ward 4 is protecting our vital aquifer and the Oak Ridges Moraine from the pressures of reckless development. Certain areas of Aurora require uncompromising attention because our water security and natural ecosystems sit directly on these sensitive geographical features. The ORM is also home to many endangered species. If elected, I will advocate for strict adherence to Aurora’s Green Development Standards to ensure new projects feature tasteful, sustainable infrastructure. Growth must never come at the expense of our

environmental safety. I will push for clear, upfront evaluations of stormwater management, tree canopy preservation, and aquifer protection before any shovels hit the ground. We need to look at applications in detail and make sure they benefit Aurora not developers.”

WARD 5

CHARITY DELA CRUZ-TOUPIN – “I believe protecting our environment is also protecting our homes and our quality of life. We need clean air, clean water, trees and healthy natural spaces to live and thrive. My biggest concern is protecting Aurora’s green spaces, trees and natural areas as our community grows. Trees do more than make our neighbourhoods beautiful—they provide oxygen, help manage stormwater, provide shade and help reduce the effects of extreme heat. Growth is necessary, but it should not come at the expense of the environment that makes Aurora livable. I would support responsible development, protection of natural areas, tree planting and preservation, green infrastructure, and better pedestrian and cycling connections. I would also encourage Council to look beyond individual developments and consider the cumulative environmental impact of growth across Aurora. We need to ask not only, ‘Can we build here?’ but also, ‘What are we losing, and how do we protect what makes Aurora home?’”

JESSIE FRASER – “There are many environmental concerns Town-wide in Aurora: managing energy use, reducing emissions, mitigating climate risk and resilience. Much of our emissions are linked to building and transportation. In Ward 5 specifically, building is the top environmental concern; the Wellington corridor – as the primary access to Highway 404 and the GO Station – is seeing and will continue to see significant development with higher density housing as part of the Town’s existing Official Plan to meet projected population growth, which has significant impact on our environment and green space. Unfortunately, the provincial government restricts municipalities from enforcing environmental standards beyond

the provincial baseline, so as Councillor I will advocate to change that provincial standard. Locally, we can set green space targets and long-term frameworks with regular review by independent environmental advisory bodies and build reciprocal partnerships with local Indigenous communities, whose wealth of knowledge about the land is a resource we should be sharing if they are willing.”

TERRENCE ZHU – “My top environmental concern in Ward 5 is managing growth without losing the green space, tree canopy and quality of neighbourhoods that residents value. Environmental responsibility and responsible growth should work together. As new development occurs, I would look closely at impacts on trees, parks, stormwater, traffic and existing infrastructure, and support development in appropriate locations where infrastructure can accommodate it. I would also support practical investments in energy efficiency and climate resilience where they provide measurable environmental benefits and long-term value for taxpayers. Aurora needs housing and economic growth, but growth should be planned carefully so that we do not unnecessarily sacrifice the natural features that make our community a great place to live.”

WARD 6

ZIVKAKICIC – “My biggest environmental concern in Ward 6 is overdevelopment and the congestion that comes with it. Our Ward is increasingly being treated as a construction zone, with buildings going up faster than the roads, infrastructure and community services needed to support them. Consider Wellington and Leslie, where two projects are already underway. Traffic at this intersection is a serious concern, and the addition of another 250 homes will only increase the pressure. At 271 Holladay Drive, another six-storey building with 147 residential units has been approved. Adding to this are three rental buildings totalling 345 units at the proposed Polo Club Condos on Leslie Street, north of Wellington, consisting of three seven-storey

buildings. The cumulative impact of these developments raises serious questions about whether our roads, stormwater systems and infrastructure can handle the additional demand. Growth is inevitable, but it must be managed responsibly. If elected, I would push for better coordination between development approvals and infrastructure planning, ensuring roads, services and green spaces keep pace with growth. Development should enhance our community, not overwhelm it. Ward 6 deserves to become a complete, connected community, not remain a construction zone indefinitely.”

(Responses from the following candidates had not been received by press deadline: Reza Ghamsary Vaez (Ward 3), Michael Thompson (Ward 4), Milton Hart (Ward 5), Harbinder Thandi (Ward 5), George Tremtsidis (Ward 5), Nicholas Kashed (Ward 6), Jibraan Khan (Ward 6), and Harold Kim (Ward 6))



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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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(LEFT) Elder Pat Floody used White Buffalo Sage to smudge participants at the start of the ceremony. (RIGHT) Municipal staff were on hand to serve up soup created by Indigenous caterers, and other treats. Auroran photos by Brock Weir



National Day for Truth & Reconciliation gathering urges standing in solidarity in the face of denialism

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

True restitution would be the ability to bring back “every single child that was murdered, starved, raped and killed” in Residential Schools, says Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley.

While that is not possible, of course, she says it is important to continue to stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities in the quest for truth and reconciliation – and in the face of growing denialism.

That was the message delivered to more than 150 community members who came out to Aurora Town Square on September 30 to mark National Day for Truth & Reconciliation.

The gathering, which was led by Wheatley and elder Pat Floody began with members of the Town of Aurora team presenting the leaders with gifts of tobacco before Wheatley led the community in a thoughtful discussion.

“I want you to know that we are extending a hand of friendship regardless of the atrocities that have been committed against us and the most vulnerable segment of our population, which is our children,” said Wheatley, who was joined at the gathering by daughter Destiny, who recited two poignant, emotionally-charged poems she had penned. “We’re not here to poke a finger of blame. We’re not here to have you feeling guilty. We’re not here to hurt you, even though we have been hurt – that is not our way. I hope you continue to stand in solidarity with us. I hope you have time to reflect, because time is the most precious gift you give to another.”

While Wheatley said they were not there to “poke a finger of blame,” she did not shy away from calling out what she underscored were ways Canada was not living up to its commitment to follow the path of Truth & Reconciliation, particularly in addressing the 94 Calls to Action that were made in the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation’s final report more than a decade ago.

Some progress has been made in the Federal government addressing some of the 94 Calls, but the ones they have tackled, she suggested, were some of the lower-hanging fruit.

“When we think about what has happened, the word ‘cultural genocide’ has been used a lot, and we’re currently, 11 years in, experiencing a huge uprising of denialism. There are people across this country saying, ‘It didn’t happen. Where are the bones?’ They’re asking us where the bones are. We’re asking the same question. The churches did not tell us where they buried our babies. There are mass burials yet to be discovered. A very dehumanizing, racist request of us,” she said, noting a recent incident in British Columbia which saw a group dressed all in white unfurl a banner reading “Where are the bones?” in a First Nations community has left her feeling “unsafe in this country.”

“I’m wondering with our governments in this country, why aren’t they standing up and demanding justice for us? We’ve been asking for justice always. We have done everything we can to say it is unjust. We call on you to make it just,”

she said. “If you haven’t read the TRC report, it’s free. It is a roadmap on how not to repeat the egregious behaviours of the past. It is a roadmap for safety, for those that are still here and those that will come after us. It is a roadmap that you can self-adjust. You don’t need us to come and break it down for you. You have 94 options to align yourself with. Just pick one. Just pick one – and champion that. And then maybe, if you’re ready, you can expand that.

“But if you haven’t read the report, you are not walking towards the road of reconciliation and a relationship with us. This is not an Indigenous problem. We didn’t ask to be treated like this. We didn’t voluntarily give up our children. We didn’t want our language and our culture destroyed.”

When people are asked to “stand in allyship” with Indigenous and First Nations communities, Wheatley said they are not being asked to speak for others; rather, they are being asked to “create space for us to step forward and share our truth.”

“If you put that into a percentage point, 15% of the 94 calls to action in 11 years have been addressed. In school, if you get 15% on a test, you fail. So, guess what, Canada? You fail,” said Wheatley. “And they took all the low-hanging fruit. They didn’t do the big, hard things, like give us water. Water’s life. They did the easy stuff, declaring a date. It’s not even a federal holiday. Some people get it off, some people don’t, but all the federal employees get it off. And are they here? Are they celebrating with us? Some are.... All Canadians should have that day off. All Canadians should step forward and show us they do care. All Canadians have a responsibility to ignite that flame of hope. Everybody here cares. But what about all the people who aren’t here? And why aren’t they here? And why don’t they care? Do they need a conversation from you? Do they need maybe a little bit of hand-holding to get down the path of understanding and experience truth? Maybe. That’s something you can all do: Hold people accountable. When you see a wrong, speak up and speak out.

“We are sovereign in this country. You are sovereign Canadian citizens, and we are sovereign Indigenous citizens. We have a nation-to-nation agreement with all of you. That’s what makes you a treaty partner. A treaty partner has two sides. Right now, it’s not in balance and harmony. Let’s make it so. Let’s choose that. Your greatest power is free will.... Use your power. You may not get an award, you may not get any recognition, you may get some pushback, people might start to leave you because they’re like, ‘They’re always harping on this Native stuff,’ but we need you.

“I hope that what you heard here today gives you the courage, the momentum, and the belief to move forward, to step into the truth, whole and complete, to continue to learn and educate yourself. When you leave here today, I want you to leave better than when you came, but I want you to share with somebody who wasn’t here. Find somebody. Talk to somebody about this. Stretch the message. Let it ripple out with your passion, your belief, your courage, and your truth.”

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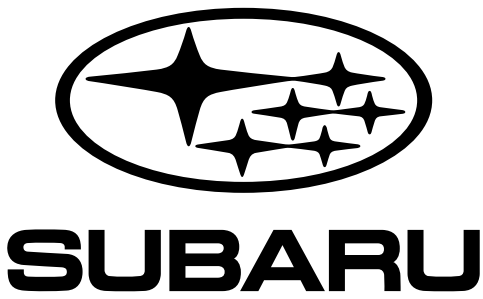
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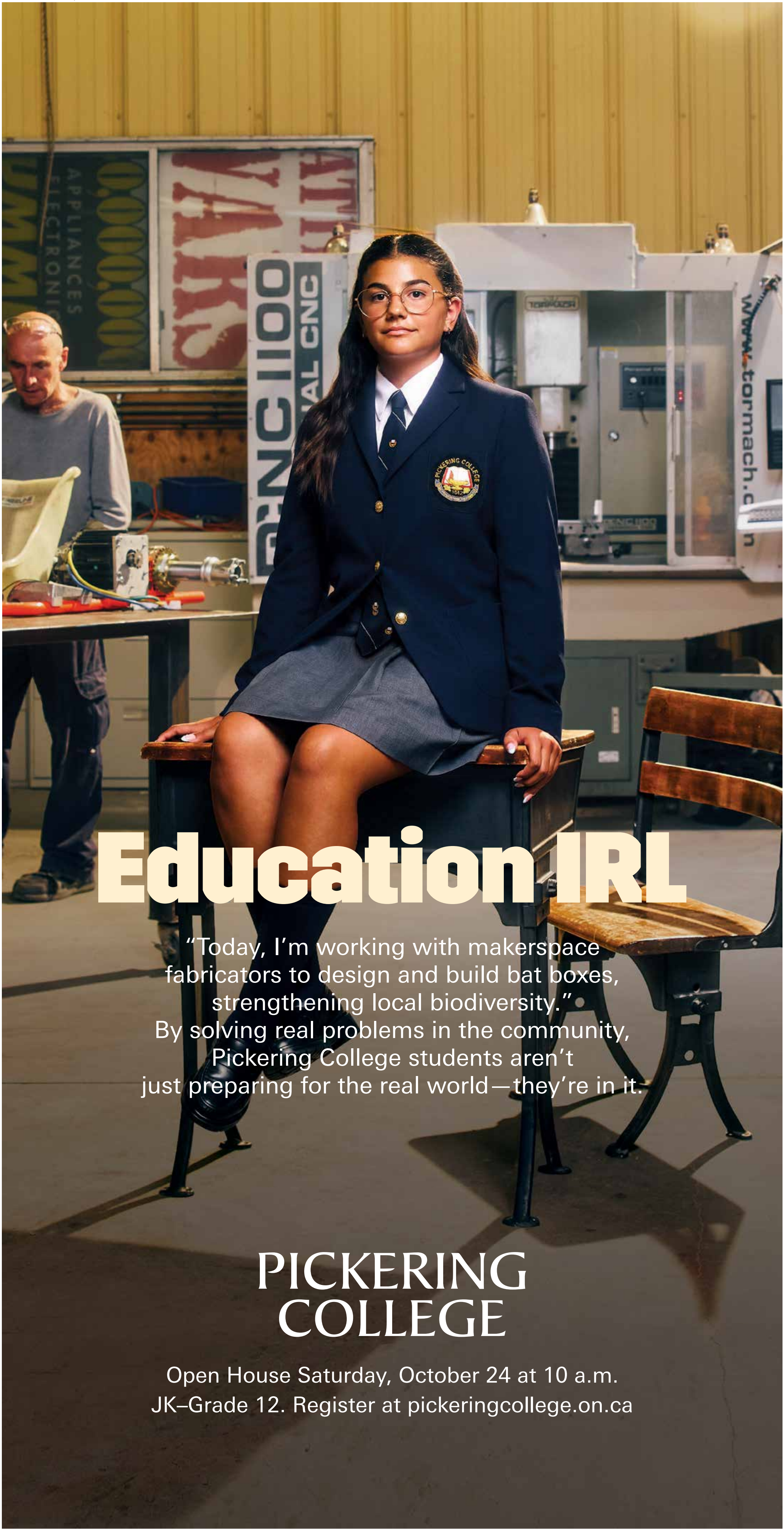
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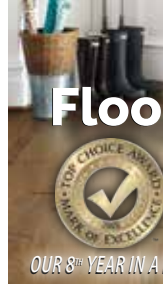


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Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s Class of 2026

Twenty-five years of service propels AMHA President Joe Bentolila into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

After enjoying an Alaskan cruise and copious amounts of King Crab last week, Joe Bentolila is the picture of relaxation at our booth at Wicked Eats on a radiant October afternoon.

Getting back to work and resuming his daily commute to Toronto is a whole other matter for the long-time Aurora resident as he battled Monday afternoon northbound traffic to get to our interview site.

“My brother Aron and I run a printing company at Dufferin and Steeles. We’ve been in business together for over 40 years. We’ve been extremely successful, even though the printing business is experiencing some challenges. I’ve been grateful for a patient brother who respected my passion for hockey and giving kids a great experience on the ice. I put in forty hours of hockey admin work per week during the day—often at work—so my brother was relieved that I’d start getting some work done after I retired as President of the AMHA.”

The personable Bentolila, who spent equal amounts of time at our booth bonding with owner Robert Stewart regarding their mutual love of the Chicago Blackhawks and responding to interview questions, paused between bites of boneless chicken wings and scrumptious meatballs and reflected fondly on his quarter-century of service to the Aurora Minor Hockey Association.

The sports organization saw its highest per season levels of registration under Bentolila’s leadership—peaking at over 1,500 players.

“The most important part was the kids having fun. ‘Fun’ was the word I wanted to hear from prospective coaches during their interviews with me. We also put in place some key elements to retain players. Coaches who were fair; tryout processes that included the use of a panel of impartial evaluators; kids that deserved to play rep hockey were selected. By the same token, house league was for house league players. I wanted to see the kids playing hockey with smiles and rosy cheeks.”

One of the kids with a smile and rosy cheeks that Bentolila provided an opportunity to play rep hockey turned out to be an NHL superstar.

The amiable retired AMHA President recalled receiving a phone call request for a tryout with the Tigers from Newmarket parent Dave McDavid whose six-year-old son was not be permitted by the local association to play up at the next level of rep hockey.

“I mentioned to Dave to ‘Let me look at your son on the ice.’ When they got to the ACC, six-year-old Connor shook my hand and said, ‘Thank you for giving me a chance, Mr. Bentolila.’ He goes on the ice with the six-year-olds and I mentioned to Dave that, ‘He’s got it.’ We moved him up to the seven-year-olds and then the eight-year-olds and he was the best player on the ice. I mentioned that we could

move him up with the nine-year-olds—that it would push him. I’ve still got his registration card with his signature—it’s one of my favorite hockey collectibles. So, the story that circulates about me is that I gave Connor McDavid his first opportunity to play rep hockey. He still visits Aurora and does his summer skates at the ACC with Leon Draisaitl.”

Bentolila also reflected on McDavid’s gift to him at his AMHA retirement party held in the ACC auditorium.

“Connor sent me one of his framed signed jerseys and a personal note thanking me for giving him his start in rep hockey. It’s a great keepsake, as was receiving the key to the Town from Mayor Mrakas. To be in the same company of Robert Thomas of the St. Louis Blues and Barclay Goodrow of the Tampa Bay Lightning who were Stanley Cup champions and received the key to the Town was an incredible feeling.”

That same kind of incredible feeling was experienced by Bentolila when he received the phone call from the ASHoF nomination committee confirming that he would be a 2026 inductee into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

The 35-year resident of Aurora described the best part of his upcoming enshrinement: “I’m so humbled by this—by this recognition. I did stuff for children, not for accolades. It’s extremely rewarding and I’m grateful to the Hall of Fame for seeing the pathways I created for kids to have fun playing hockey. It’s great to be included with such a great class of inductees this year—a runner, two hockey players, and a local hockey team, but for me, as an inductee and Builder, I built sporting opportunities for children. I love the fact that we as a Board looked after children playing a sport they loved and we tried to keep it as inexpensive for their parents as possible.”

Bentolila described his continued connection with the AMHA even though he’s been retired as President for three years: “When they ask for help, I like being the first one to be called. My old line for them is ‘Joe don’t say no.’ I still enjoy feeling the spirit of being a volunteer and once you’re involved, it’s hard to get away.”

One place that Bentolila did get away to—with Andrea, his wife of 35 years—was Alaska and he described their recent cruise to “The Last Frontier State”: “When you go to Alaska, you have to have the Alaskan King Crab. We shared two pounds of it. Incredible. Seeing whales popping in and out of the water. The glaciers—the mountains—the scenery is spectacular. My wife even enjoyed a specialty drink which was an Alaskan King Crab leg in a Bloody Mary. I also took a picture of the ugliest fish that I’ve ever seen—the Monkfish—which is what they eat in Alaska.”

Monkfish likely won’t be on the menu when Aurora’s Hometown Minor Hockey Hero Joe Bentolila is enshrined at ASHoF’s Induction Ceremony on Thursday, November 5 at the Royal Venetian Mansion.



JOE BENTOLILA
Photo courtesy of Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



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Junior Tigers’ win streak reaches three with 4-1 upset of Stouffville Spirit



Connor Adam (12) scored his first OJHL goal in Aurora's 4 – 1 upset of the Stouffville Spirit on Friday night at the ACC. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Junior Tigers fired four unanswered goals in a compelling 4-1 win over the fifth-place Stouffville Spirit at the ACC on Friday night.

Connor Adam, Max Skinner, Anrijs Bundzenieks, and Tommy Nitsopoulos scored for the Tigers. Bundzenieks, the Tigers’ smooth-skating, 6’3” Captain, described the keys to the home ice victory: “Sticking to our systems, finishing our chances, and our lock down defense made the difference tonight. Everyone knows their role on

this team and we’re getting balanced scoring. It feels amazing to win three in a row, and we’re finishing games better than we did last year.”

The two-year Tiger veteran, who scored 50 points for Aurora in 2025-26, credited his Head Coach Ilir Mehmeti for calling a crucial timeout with 2:34 left in the first period.

“It was a great move. Our line changes needed to be quicker and we were able to settle in with the right line matchups.”

The regional rivals battled to a scoreless tie after twenty minutes of play with goaltenders Hudson

Cicchelli and Colby Booth-Housego delivering highlight reel saves for the Spirit and Tigers, respectively.

Twenty-eight seconds into the second period, Stouffville’s PK broke the 0-0 deadlock. Declan Torrance caught the Tigers’ power play unit napping and finished off a nifty two-on-one with Griffen Boyle to give the visitors a 1-0 lead.

It was the only goal that Booth-Housego surrendered on Friday night and Bundzenieks applauded his goaltender’s 27-save performance.

“He played amazing tonight. Colby made some insane saves—especially at the start of the game. After he made that first glove save, he got in a rhythm and we were able to get some goals for him tonight.”

After Booth-Housego yielded the shortie to Torrance, the Tigers roared back 10 seconds later in support of their tender to tie the game. During the resumption of the Aurora power play, Connor Adam found open space in the slot, and batted the puck out of midair past Spirit goaltender Hudson Cicchelli into the white mesh. It was Adam’s first OJHL goal and his timely tally kept the Tigers from deflating after surrendering an early-period shortie.

The black-jerseyed Tigers continued to forecheck with ferocity in the middle frame—reminiscent of their effort last weekend in Newmarket to deprive the Hurricanes of time and space – and the Junior squad’s proficiency yielded three consecutive goals to seal the victory.

Six minutes into the second period, towering power forward Sheamus Gunn earned his sixth assist of the season when he sauced a perfect pass to red-hot Max Skinner who one-timed the puck past Cicchelli to give the home side a 2-1 lead. It was

Skinner’s seventh of the season—tying him for third in OJHL goal-scoring.

Less than two minutes later, Bundzenieks gobbled up Nick Frasca’s shot off the end board that took a fortuitous carom to the slot.

The Captain corralled the spinning puck and flipped it over the fallen Cicchelli in one quick motion.

Bundzenieks’s second of the season gave Aurora a 3-1 lead heading into the third period.

Although Stouffville had the edge in play in the third period, the Spirit could not solve Booth-Housego.

The rookie netminder kept Stouffville off the scoreboard by making 12 saves in the final frame and his steady work earned him First Star of the Game honors as determined by OJHL staff.

With 2:20 left in the entertaining contest enjoyed by almost 200 fans, Cicchelli was lifted for an extra attacker. The strategy backfired when speedy Aurora forward Tommy Nitsopoulos won a race for a loose puck off the left boards in the Spirit defensive end and his backhand shot slid into the vacated cage to provide the margin of victory.

The Tigers’ post-game dressing room was a place of raucous celebration after the three-goal victory and Captain Bundzenieks, amid the shouts and hoots of joy, acknowledged the importance of the win prior to the OJHL Showcase in Niagara Falls.

“We need to keep this going. We need to stick to our systems against Mississauga on Monday and King on Wednesday. It’s important to keep this momentum going.”

The surging ninth-place Tigers (3-5-0-0) host the twelfth-place North York Rangers (1-7-0-1) on Friday, October 9 and the second-place Wellington Dukes (6-2-2-0) on Saturday, October 10. Puck drop at the ACC for both games will be 7 p.m.



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Council candidates share gratitude ahead of Thanksgiving holiday

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving this weekend, a holiday that is, for many, shared with friends, family, and often a meal that brings everyone together.

This week, as the observance approaches, Council candidates were asked to identify the one thing they are most thankful for about Aurora.

Here's how they answered:

WARD 1

LAUREN HANNA – “What I’m most thankful for about Aurora is our sense of community. I’ve felt it especially strongly throughout this campaign. From my launch and the Aurora Street Festival, to door-knocking, meet and greets, lawn signs, endorsements and donations, hundreds of people have supported me in some way. Family, friends, neighbours, local business owners, colleagues and even people I had never met before have stepped forward to help. But I’ve experienced that same generosity long before becoming a candidate. Whether organizing an annual Town Park Easter egg hunt, community events, or a solidarity walk for Ukraine in 2022, I’ve repeatedly been struck by how willing people in Aurora are to show up and help. Aurora is full of people who are generous, caring and willing to contribute. This Thanksgiving, I’m especially grateful for those relationships and for the community my family and I are fortunate to call home.”

ROCCO MORSILLO – “With Thanksgiving around the corner, I have an opportunity to reflect on all I am thankful for and what Aurora has given me over the years. I feel truly blessed to have met so many wonderful friends and made lasting connections throughout our community. Aurora is a special place, thanks in large part to the people who continue to give their time and energy through volunteering and community events. From Concerts in the Park and the Farmers’ Market to the many special events held throughout the year, there are countless opportunities to come together, connect, and enjoy what our community has to offer. I am grateful to call Aurora home, to be part of this community, and to have shared so many wonderful memories here.”

WARD 2

ANGELA DAUST – “When we moved here 30 years ago, Aurora was a much smaller town. We liked it because of its small-town feel. Aurora has grown a lot since then. But what has been lost in that small community appeal has been made up for by the vibrancy this Town now possesses. We love the fact that we can walk to concerts in the Town Park or the Town Square, as well as great restaurants, and street events. Also, having Viva and the GO train within walking distance makes venues and events in Toronto easily accessible. As such, what I am most thankful for about Aurora is that it is a town with a vibrant culture, but it is also a town that has easy access to Toronto, a culturally diverse, world class city.”

MARCO DI GIROLAMO – “The thing I’m most thankful for about Aurora is the community environment in which my family and I have been fortunate enough to call home. Over the years, Aurora has given my family so many opportunities to build memories, form friendships, and feel a real sense of belonging. What means the most to me is seeing how people in this community come together — whether it’s supporting a neighbour, volunteering, showing up for local events, or simply looking out for one another. I’m grateful that my family has been able to grow and put down roots in a community that is so welcoming and caring. Aurora truly feels like home to us, and that is something I never take for granted. This Thanksgiving, I’m especially thankful for my family, our neighbours, and the wonderful community we’re lucky to be part of.”

PHIONA DURRANT – “Since immigrating to Canada in 1998, Aurora is where I have spent the longest time of my life, and I could not be prouder of that decision. This is where I found myself, where my family thrives, and where my children attended incredible schools. I love everything about this Town. When faced with challenges, I didn’t just sit around; I immediately planted myself in the action of making our community better. I am profoundly grateful to live in a Town where people truly see me for who I am. The immense love and support I receive here has allowed me to look far above any negative or unkind experiences. In fact, when the community called on me to run, I knew that refusing would be a shame. I care deeply about Aurora. I am running to give back on a greater level to the place that embraced me, so we can continue to evolve and enhance an inclusive, supportive town for all of us.”

BRYNN LANSDOWN — “This Thanksgiving, I’m especially thankful for the people I’ve met through this campaign. I expected door knocking to be a way to introduce myself and hear what matters to residents. What I didn’t expect was how much it would strengthen my own sense of connection to Aurora. I’ve had so many conversations with people who, like me, think Aurora is a beautiful, vibrant community. We’ve talked about the things we love, the memories we’ve made here, and what makes Aurora feel like home. Of course, there are things we can improve, but I’ve been reminded that there isn’t something fundamentally wrong with our town that needs to be fixed. The stories people have shared at their doors have meant a lot to me. I’m grateful for the conversations, the

laughs, the different perspectives, and the reminder that community is built by connecting with the people around us. That's what I'm most thankful for this Thanksgiving."

WARD 3

NIKKI ALBER – “I’m most thankful for the people. Over the past several months, I’ve had the opportunity to knock on thousands of doors. What has struck me most is how much we have in common and how deeply people care about this community. Aurora is a place where people show up for their neighbours, support local organizations and businesses, volunteer their time, and genuinely want to make their community better. This campaign has given me an even greater appreciation for the people who make Aurora feel like home.”

ALEXANDRA BONHAM – “I am extremely thankful to live in a town that makes me proud to call it home. I’m thankful for our extensive trail system that connects us to beautiful conservation spaces. I’m thankful for our commitment to hosting events that help maintain small town character in this connected community. But more than anything I’m thankful for the ability to meet residents and discuss not only their concerns while campaigning but also when they relate to me what makes them happy and proud to call Aurora home as well.”

ROBERT JAMES FRASER – “I am thankful to live in a Town with a strong sense of community, surrounded by neighbours who care.”

HAROLD MacDONALD – “The people, Aurora has grown but has retained that ‘small town feel’ because of the people who live and work here.”

WARD 4

SHAHEEN MOLEDINA — “I am incredibly thankful for my family, friends and the vibrant and tight-knit community spirit that defines Aurora. As a mother, I have seen how deeply our residents care for one another—whether it is protecting our natural spaces, helping each other in the time of need and supporting our independent businesses, or volunteering. We are a community proud of our heritage and identity, and that shared dedication is exactly what makes Aurora such a wonderful place to call home.”

WARD 5

CHARITY DELA CRUZ-TOUPIN — “I’m most thankful for Aurora’s diversity. I grew up in the Philippines, where Thanksgiving was not something we celebrated, so for me, this holiday has become a special opportunity to reflect on what I’m grateful for. I’m especially thankful that Aurora is a community where people can be proud of their culture, share their traditions, embrace other cultures and celebrate together. As an immigrant, that means a lot to

me. I love seeing different cultures come together; sharing food, music, traditions and stories. To me, that is what makes a community strong...not that we are all the same, but that we can be different and still come together. Aurora is home to many cultures, and I'm thankful that we have the freedom to celebrate where we come from while building something together."

JESSIE FRASER – “I am most thankful for the sense of community in Aurora. I grew up in Unionville and moved to Aurora because it had that same cozy small-town feel – and in the decades I’ve lived here I’ve learned to love it even more. In the neighbourhoods, in the parks, at the concerts and celebrations and special events, even just out at the grocery store – there are always smiling, familiar faces, a cheerful chat, a helping hand. This community truly feels like one big family.”

TERRENCE ZHU – “What I’m most thankful for about Aurora is its sense of community. Since my family made Aurora our home in 2019, I have met neighbours, families, seniors, business owners, volunteers and community leaders from many different backgrounds who genuinely care about where they live. As a father of two, I’m especially grateful that my children can grow up in a community that feels safe, welcoming and connected. During this campaign, knocking on doors and attending community events has given me an even greater appreciation for how willing Aurora residents are to share their ideas, concerns and experiences. We may not always agree on every issue, but that willingness to participate and care about our community is something I’m very thankful for this Thanksgiving.”

WARD 6

ZIVKA KICIC —“As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself especially grateful for the community I’ve been fortunate to call home for so many years. I’m thankful for Aurora’s beautiful natural spaces, our trails and the opportunity to enjoy them with my family and our dog. Those everyday moments are easy to take for granted, but they are part of what makes Aurora feel like home. I am also thankful for the people who make Aurora such a welcoming and inclusive community. Aurora is home to people from many different backgrounds and walks of life, and I appreciate that sense of belonging. Most of all, I am thankful for the opportunity Canada and Aurora have given my family. After coming to Canada many years ago and building our life here, I do not take that opportunity for granted. This Thanksgiving, I am grateful for my family, my community and the privilege of calling Aurora home.”

(Responses from the following candidates had not been received by press deadline: Reza Ghamsary Vaez (Ward 3), Michael Thompson (Ward 4), Milton Hart (Ward 5), Harbinder Thandi (Ward 5), George Tremtsidis (Ward 5), Nicholas Kashel (Ward 6), Jibraan Khan (Ward 6), and Harold Kim (Ward 6))



OPEN FOR BANKING – TD hosted the formal grand opening of its new location at 50 Goulding Avenue, near Wellington Street East and Highway 404, on Saturday afternoon, with Mayor Tom Mrakas on hand to help cut the ribbon. Pictured here with Mayor Mrakas at the event, which saw TD donate \$30,000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association, were David, Catherine, Alona, and Gerard.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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“Laser” Lazarou tallies two in Junior Panthers’ 5-3 win over Ottawa 67’s



Panthers’ rookie goalie Kallee Seca turned aside all 24 shots she faced in Periods 1 and 2 en route to a 5 – 3 win over the Ottawa 67’s at the ARC on Saturday. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Captain Demi “Laser” Lazarou fired two top shelf goals to lead the U22 Central York Panthers to a 5-3 win over the Ottawa 67’s at the Aurora Recreation Complex on Saturday afternoon.

Avery Mann, Anna Downey, and Elizabeth Shapira added one goal each as the Panthers improved their early season record to 4-1-0.

Lazarou, who was selected to play for Team Canada’s 18U squad alongside teammates Audrey Martone and Claire Hicks, described the keys to the Panthers’ victory: “We did a good job at putting the puck deep and when we put pressure on them, it led to a lot of success. We created turnovers that turned into goals.”

One of those turnovers figured prominently in Lazarou’s unassisted goal which opened the scoring.

In a brilliant individual effort, the Panthers sharpshooter gained possession in the Ottawa zone, pivoted off the left circle, cut through two defenders, and snapped the puck from the slot into the top left corner above Brayah Bemrose’s glove to break a scoreless tie with 1:03 left in the first period.

Central York’s leading scorer described her fourth goal of the season: “I saw a way to the net and saw the top shelf was open. I was able to get the shot just above her glove in that space.”

Lazarou’s highlight reel marker stood as the difference on the scoreboard until the 7:45 mark of the second period when Panthers rookie forward Avery Mann

teed up a slapshot from just inside the left point.

Mann’s blast flew through a maze of blue-jerseyed Panthers and white-jerseyed 67’s and knuckled past Bemrose to provide Central York with a 2-0 margin heading into the third period.

Lazarou and Sarah Martin earned assists on Mann’s third of the season. The talented first-year Junior is second in team scoring with five points.

3:24 into the final frame, speedy Ottawa forward Samantha Salo took advantage of a Central York defensive lapse, burst down the right wing on a clear-cut breakaway, and fired a wrist shot blocker side that eluded Kallee Seca to pull the 67’s to within one goal.

The rookie Panthers goaltender had been flawless up to that point—turning aside all 24 shots she faced in the first forty minutes of play.

The Panthers responded to the incursion by Ottawa with two quick goals to steal momentum back from the visitors.

Less than three minutes after Salo’s breakaway goal, Panthers forward Anna Downey stole the puck off a 67’s defender, deked Bemrose, and backhanded it high over the outstretched arm of the fallen Ottawa goaltender. Downey’s first goal of the season restored Central York’s lead to three goals.

Thirteen seconds after Downey’s first goal of the season, Elizabeth Shapira lit the lamp to give Central York a 4-1 lead. The Panthers’ second-year center one-timed the puck past Bemrose in the slot—earning assists for her hard-checking linemates Anastasia Trifon and Audrey Martone.

Less than two minutes later, veteran defender Mackenzie Cotey set up

Lazarou who sniped her second goal of the game—once again high glove side past Bemrose to give the home side a commanding 5-1 lead.

However, Central York got into penalty trouble in the remaining nine minutes of the third period and a steady stream of Panthers to the sin bin created opportunities for the 67’s. The Ottawa side capitalized on the home side’s truculence and some dubious calls by the officiating crew. Forward Quinn Toll found space in the slot on the power play, banged one past Seca, and into the cage to reduce the visitors’ deficit to 5-2 with 3:08 on the clock.

With both Lily Paisley and Martone residing in the penalty box in the final minute of play, Toll scored her second power play goal with 12.4 seconds on the clock when her wrist shot deflected off two players and through Seca.

The post-game mood was less-than-celebratory for the Panthers due to their uneven performance in the third period and Lazarou acknowledged, “We needed to keep it simple. The penalties needed to be limited. If we didn’t get those penalties, they wouldn’t have had all the late scoring chances being taken.”

Despite the letdown at the end of the contest, the Panthers’ Captain offered reasons why the club is off to a strong 4-1-0 start to the 2026-27 season: “We have a lot of returning players who have been leaders for the new players. We had a really good training camp where we worked on our systems. It’s helped us to grow as players and the new players are developing well. They’re great. [Mann and Downing] scored today, we have talented rookies, and they’re working well with our systems.”

Ratepayers’ debate stirs discussion on finance, infrastructure with Mayoral candidates

From page 8

social progress, economic growth, and environmental protection and enhancement” to outline their visions to “ensure sustainable development in Aurora.”

“Aurora is growing, and the planning decisions we make today will shape how our Town looks, functions, and feels for generations to come. That is why I believe we need to plan thoughtfully and carefully,” said Shi. “When we consider new development, we need to look at the whole community. That means consider our diverse housing needs, residents concerns, infrastructure capacity, environmental protection, and heritage preservation.

“Growth should not be simply about building more homes. We need to make sure that our roads, transportation system, water and wastewater infrastructure, parks and community services are ready to support that growth. We also need to listen to residents who live in the community where development is taking place. Their experiences and concerns are important to good planning. At the same time, we must protect Aurora’s natural environment and heritage. Climate change also needs to be part of our planning decisions. The Town of Aurora has set a goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions

by 2050 with both corporate and community-wide reduction targets. We need to think about climate adaption and resilience when we build and renew our infrastructure. Our infrastructure should be designed to better withstand extreme weather, protect our environment, and serve our community over the long term.”

As an incumbent member of Council, Gallo said the Town has a “variety of plans to deal with sustainability,” including through the Town’s Official Plan and various environmental plans.

“Ultimately, it’s a question of implementing these plans in a meaningful way, executing on them collaboratively amongst Council,” he said, paying tribute to outgoing Councillor Wendy Gaertner for her environmental advocacy. “The next Council will have to be brought up to speed on all those plans and bring them into fruition.”

While Deane said he believed sustainable development “is a great concept,” it can be very costly when tied to a budget – whether it’s a municipal budget or a household budget.

“I believe there is a lot that we can do to protect the environment that costs nothing, and that’s changing our behaviours at home. There’s Climate Action Newmarket-Aurora’s website that has an exhaustive list of

simple things we can do to protect the environment by changing our ways. I’m all for the concept of investing in the environment, sustainable buildings, etc., once we consider the return on investment,” he said. “If the return on investment doesn’t make sense, especially now in this economy, then it would be very hard to justify.

“We have also headwinds. The little bit of an impact that we can make between now and 2050 to go to net zero is going to be undermined by the forces of our economy, which are promoting data centres, Bitcoin, the exploitation of our own natural resources, and adding 8,000 new homes in Aurora. How does

that protect the environment?”

Last word went to Shi, who said spending “responsibly” is key, but it’s also important to look beyond budget line-items.

“If your own concern is about the budget, it’s very short-sighted because we are facing climate change. If we do not invest, if we do not build up the adaptation and resilience you will pay more in the future. When we make decisions, we cannot only make those short-term decisions to please some residents. We need to think for long-term, for long-term interests, for generations to come.”



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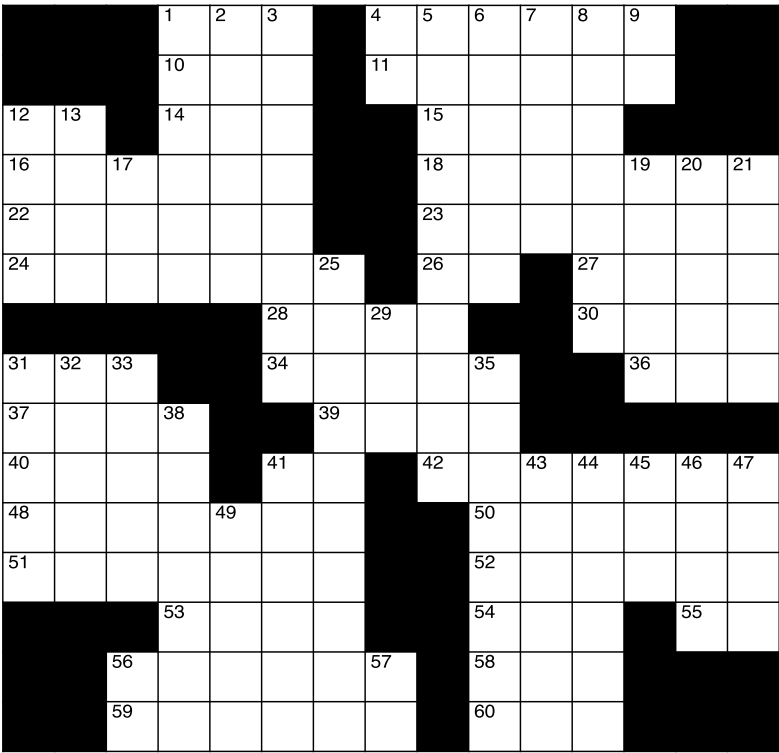


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CLUES ACROSS

1. Small Eurasian deer

4. Province in Northern Ireland

10. A major division of geological time

11. Broadway actor Lane

12. Canadian province (abbr.)

14. Human gene

15. Two

16. A notable one was “blue”

18. Utter repeatedly

22. Ring-shaped objects

23. Sullies

24. Occurs

26. Commercial

27. Near

28. Tools you may need

30. A pledge

31. They start the alphabet

34. Silk garments
36. Soviet Socialist Republic

37. Longtime mayor of Rio

39. Hot meal

40. A type of gin

41. Atomic #84

42. \$10 bill

48. About ground

50. Medicine man

51. Seedless raisin

52. National capital of Albania

53. Appendage

54. OJ trial judge

55. European government entity (abbr.)

56. Bike parts

58. Friend to “Barbie”

59. Stretched to see or hear

60. Commercials

CLUES DOWN

1. Make up for

2. Baltimore ballplayer

3. Wages

4. International organization of countries

5. Engravers of gems

6. Declared as fact

7. One who steals

8. Jewelry

9. Hospital worker

12. Nonsense (slang)

13. Town in Galilee

17. Value

19. Alternative identity

20. Sheep in their second year

21. Town in Surrey, England

25. Appropriate to a time of year
29. Creative work

31. Recesses

32. Largely forested municipality in Germany

33. Rider of Rohan

35. Ancient symbol co-opted by Nazis

38. Pioneer

41. Scribe

43. Painted a bright color

44. Member of British nobility

45. “Pulp Fiction” actress Thurman

46. Helps people walk

47. Crest of a hill

49. People of southeastern Alaska

56. One’s own device

57. The Mount Rushmore State



THINGS... you ought to know

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 17
An Introduction to Book Re-Binding Workshop at Hillary House – 1 p.m. at Hillary House National Historic Site. A beginnerfriendly, hands-on workshop in book re-binding. Learn the basics of giving new life to a favourite book or notebook. All materials are provided, and you may bring a book you'd prefer to rebind. Tickets are \$30 pp. For more, visit aurorahs.com.

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 tuncful 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.

Aurora Historical Society launches its Intimate Concert Series today, starting at 6.30 p.m. at Hillary House. The Intimate Concert Series brings exceptional live music into the historic Hillary House Ballroom, where audiences can experience classical performance in a uniquely close-up and welcoming setting. International Clarinetist and #1 Best-Selling Author, Paul Weston and celebrated pianist Joanna Grace open the series in October with an intimate

program of classical works by Lutoslawski, Mozart, Baermann, and Arnold, showcasing the expressive blend of clarinet and piano in a close-up setting. Tickets are \$75 per person and available at aurorahs.com.

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 7
Aurora Historical Society's Intimate Concert Series continues this evening, starting at 6.30 p.m. at Hillary House. The Intimate Concert Series brings exceptional live music into the historic Hillary House Ballroom, where audiences can experience classical performance in a uniquely close-up and welcoming setting. The violin-piano duo Gemmell & Smith bring their dynamic, emotionally rich chamber music to Hillary House in November. Violinist Corey Gemmell and pianist Benjamin Smith are known for their virtuosic technique, interpretive depth, and engaging rapport with audiences. Tickets are \$75 per person and available at aurorahs.com.

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

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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 at occasional pop-up sales; 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, every week, 10:30 a.m. – 1.30 p.m., with 15-minute time slots, and Wednesdays from 10.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. with 15 minute timeslots. If you do not have an appointment, we cannot accept your donation. Visit AbuseHurts.ca to select your drop off time slot. Located at 120 Harry Walker Parkway North, Newmarket.

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Safe Sport Day focuses on fostering better environment for athletes, groups

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Sport can provide invaluable opportunities for people of all ages, but, in some instances, the sports field might not be the most inclusive and safe of spaces for all participants.

Set for Saturday, October 17, hosted by the Town of Aurora, the seminar Safe Sport for Organizational Success, invites local sports organizations, coaches, volunteers, sports administrators, and more to come together to “strengthen the culture of sport in our community.”

“Aligned with Aurora’s Sport Plan, this event supports the Town’s commitment to safe, inclusive, and positive sport environments by providing local sport organizations with the knowledge, tools, and leadership perspectives needed to foster healthy sports systems,” say organizers. “Safe Sport is not only about preventing harm, it is about building strong organizations where athletes, coaches, volunteers, and families can thrive. Through expert-led discussion and open dialogue, participants will gain insight into how Safe Sport principles support organizational governance, athlete wellbeing and sustainable sport development.”

The seminar is framed around two sessions, “Safe Sport & Organization Success,” and “An Honest Conversation on Safe Sport in Canada,” hosted by Olympian Allison Forsyth, founder of Generation Safe, and journalist Rick

Westhead.

Promoting Safe Sport is a tenet in Aurora’s recently-updated Sport Plan.

Lisa Warth, Recreation Manager for the Town of Aurora, says local sports organizations have been looking for further education “on creating safe sport environments within their own organizations.”

“I think local organizations understand that it’s everyone’s responsibility to keep participants safe,” she says. “There’s things we need to do to ensure that that happens in terms of policies, procedures, and systems. We also understand that our organizations are mostly run by volunteers, who have a lot of pulls on their time and responsibility. We really want organizations to understand what their responsibilities are, and that they need to make safe sport part of their culture for their organization. It doesn’t have to be a huge investment; it’s simple changes to policy and procedure that can make an enormous impact around Safe Sport.

“We’re pleased that our organizations are asking for this information. They understand that it’s important because it has to be a part of the organization’s culture, but it doesn’t have to be onerous. These policies, procedures, things that they need to do to build that culture of safe sports – it doesn’t have to be an onerous undertaking, but there’s definitely some tips, tricks, and education that need to happen for these organizations to be able to build Safe Sport environments.

The morning session, which runs

from 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon, will touch upon the foundations of Safe Sport in Canada, how to create positive sport cultures that prioritize athlete wellbeing, practical strategies for implementing Safe Sport policies within community sports organizations, the roles of coaches, volunteers, and administrators in building safe environments, and aligning Safe Sport practices with long-term organizational success.

The afternoon discussion, from 1.30 – 3 p.m., will see Forsyth and Westhead “explore the challenges, progress, and responsibilities facing sport organizations at all levels, from grassroots community sport to the national stage.”

“We’re doing a lot of work to ensure that everyone feels comfortable in sport and has an opportunity to participate and doesn’t want to drop out,” says Warth. “If they want to play and participate, they should be able to play and participate regardless of who they are, what gender they are, what age they are. We’re putting a lot of emphasis generally on gender equity, but that does include all genders, working with organizations to help them develop policy procedure, to make everybody feel included and that if they want to play, they should be able to play.

“We want to have a strong sport infrastructure, and we know that a lot goes into that. We know a lot of our sport organizations are volunteer-based, so we’re trying to provide resources and support because we know that sport creates healthy communities, and sport

We want to have a strong sport infrastructure, and we know that a lot goes into that. We know a lot of our sport organizations are volunteer-based, so we’re trying to provide resources and support because we know that sport creates healthy communities, and sport can lead to lots of really great stuff.

can lead to lots of really great stuff. The organizations that are providing it need help. They have a lot of responsibility. They have a lot on their plate, and it can be quite onerous. We’re just trying to promote and provide support and resources to help our sport organizations thrive, and...the bigger picture is it helps our community in general thrive because there’s so many benefits to participating in sport. At the end of the day, when you look at the big picture, that’s what it’s about. It’s about building a strong, thriving community.”

For more information about the October 17 session, and other upcoming programs, visit www.aurora.ca/sportworkshops.

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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.



FIGHTING FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY

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.



MORE FOR AURORA’S SENIORS

Aurora’s population is changing, and our municipal services and facilities need to keep pace.

I support expanding facilities, programming and opportunities for seniors so residents can remain active, connected and engaged in the community.

Planning for Aurora’s future means making sure the people who helped build this community continue to have a meaningful place in it.



A STRONGER LOCAL ECONOMY STANDING WITH AURORA BUSINESSES

Our local businesses create jobs, support community organizations and help give Aurora its character.

With businesses facing uncertainty and pressure from U.S. tariffs and changing economic conditions, I believe the Town should be looking for practical ways to support local employers, encourage residents to buy local and make Aurora an attractive place to invest and do business.

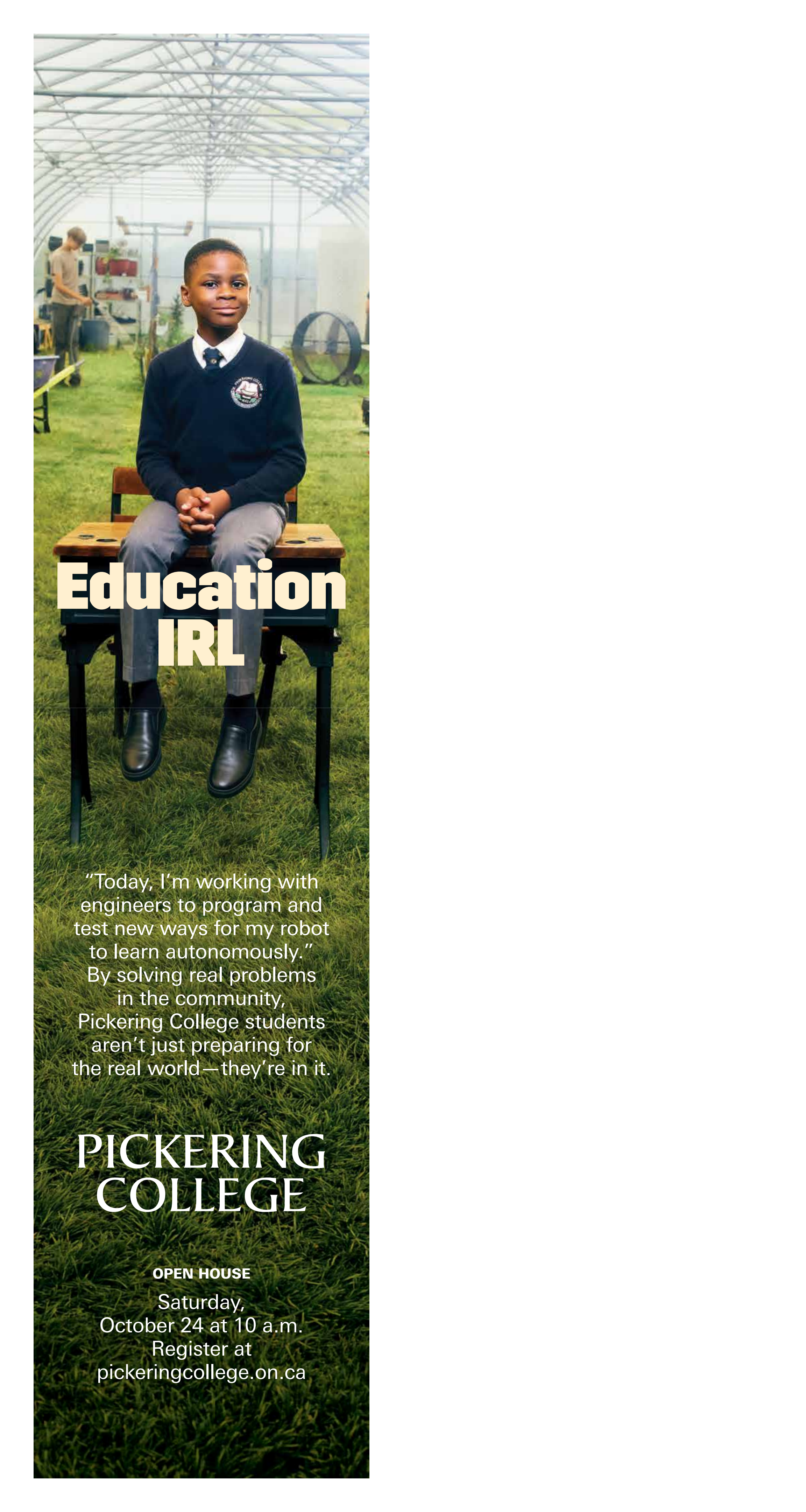
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JohnGallo.ca

AUTHORIZED BY JOHN GALLO

A young Black male student is sitting on a wooden bench in a greenhouse. He is wearing a dark blue V-neck sweater over a white collared shirt and a dark tie. He has his hands clasped in his lap and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The greenhouse has a high, arched glass ceiling with a metal frame. In the background, another person is visible working near some equipment. The floor is covered with green grass.

Education IRL

“Today, I’m working with engineers to program and test new ways for my robot to learn autonomously.”
By solving real problems in the community, Pickering College students aren’t just preparing for the real world—they’re in it.

PICKERING COLLEGE

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday,
October 24 at 10 a.m.

Register at
pickeringcollege.on.ca

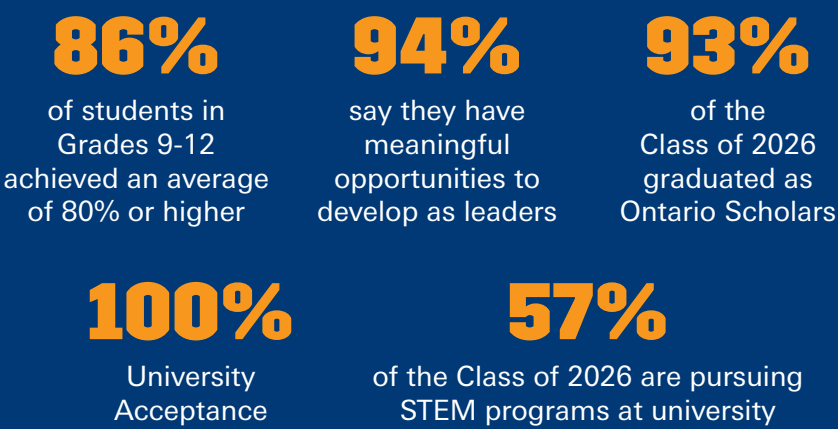
Education IRL

From Kindergarten to graduation, Pickering College inspires students to think deeply, explore with curiosity, develop as leaders and apply learning in the real world. Woven throughout the Pickering College experience, the Global Leadership Program helps students connect ideas to action, develop their strengths and take on increasingly complex real-world challenges.



Rigorous learning. Real achievement.

Pickering College students are challenged to think deeply, pursue their interests and take ownership of their learning.



Our students received \$2.5 million in scholarships offers and were accepted to universities across Canada and around the world, including:

- Brown University
- Imperial College London
- Johns Hopkins University
- McGill University
- New York University
- UNSW Sydney
- University of British Columbia
- University of California
- University of Michigan
- University of St Andrews
- University of Toronto

Strong academics matter.

So do curiosity, confidence, leadership and the ability to apply what you know. At Pickering College, students discover they can do more than they thought they could. Education IRL starts here.

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