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Federal grant will help Aurora plant 4,800 new trees



July's microburst caused significant damage in Aurora's northwest quadrant.

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A Federal grant of \$635,350 will help Aurora strengthen its urban tree canopy, after a particularly rough summer season.

The grant, which is administered through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ Growing Canada’s Community Canopies Initiative, will result in an estimated 4,800 new trees planted in the Aurora community by the end of next year.

“The project will see approximately 800 larger-caliper trees and 4,000 seedlings planted on municipal lands across Aurora, including along streets, in parks, and other green spaces,” said the Town of Aurora in a statement. “Planting will be spread throughout the community, with a focus, where possible, on areas with lower existing canopy coverage and areas more affected by the urban heat island effect.

“Work is already underway with grant-supported planting completed this spring along Addison Hall Circle and William Graham Drive East, as well as enhancement plantings in Ada

Johnson Park and Thomas Coates Park. Naturalization planting has also taken place in Stewart Burnett Park in partnership with Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), with additional planting proposed for Thomas Coates Park this fall. Additional projects and locations are also planned this fall.”

The funding announced by the Town last week was alluded to at Council’s meeting in September when local lawmakers were looking at ways to restore portions of the tree canopy on Aurora’s northwest quadrant, which was significantly damaged by a microburst on July 3.

Last week’s announcement confirmed this direction.

“The planting represents a significant expansion of Aurora’s urban forest, adding new trees above and beyond the Town’s regular planting activities,” the Town continued. “With hundreds of trees lost across the community during the severe storm in July, adding 4,800 new trees will also help offset some of that canopy loss while continuing to grow Aurora’s overall tree canopy. The project supports the Town’s long-

term target of achieving 40 per cent tree canopy coverage across public and private lands by 2034.”

Ongoing and upcoming plantings, they say, will result in a mix of diverse tree species chosen to strengthen the overall resilience of the urban forest against climate change, disease, and pests.

“Trees are such an important part of what makes Aurora a beautiful and healthy place to live, and this investment will allow us to add thousands more across our community,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “Following the significant tree loss we experienced during the July storm, growing and strengthening our urban canopy is more important than ever. These new trees are an investment in a greener, more resilient Aurora for generations.”

The vision for these new trees, noted Tim Tierney, President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, will be “transformative.”

“FCM is proud to support the Town of Aurora’s transformative tree-planting project,” he said. “Through the Growing Canada’s Community

Canopies initiative and with the support of the Government of Canada, we’re helping municipalities of every size get the right trees in the ground in the right places, creating cooler streets, cleaner air, and healthier neighbourhoods for decades to come.”

Added Nathalie Provost, Canada’s Secretary of State for Nature: “Whether they are providing shade on a hot summer day, improving local green spaces, or bringing people together outdoors, trees make our communities better places to live. Together, we are helping communities expand their green spaces, providing lasting environmental and community benefits. The trees being planted will provide greater shade and comfort, and will contribute to a healthier, more resilient and sustainable community.”

Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger

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East Coast shindig raises \$23,000 for local mental health programs

Together, we are making a difference — and we have so much to celebrate!

On behalf of Northridge Community Church of The Salvation Army, thank you for helping us raise an incredible \$23,000 in support of mental health services in our community!

Whether you attended the Harbour of Hope: East Coast Shindig on September 17, made a donation, sponsored the evening, contributed an auction item, volunteered your time, or helped spread the word, you played an important part in making this success possible. We are deeply grateful for your generosity, enthusiasm, and belief in the importance of mental health care.

Your support goes far beyond a fundraising total. It represents hope for individuals and families who are struggling, encouragement for those who may feel alone, and access to professional counselling for people who might otherwise be unable to afford it.

Through the work of our in-house psychotherapists, Northridge provides compassionate mental health support to people in our community, helping them navigate life’s challenges, build resilience, and move toward a healthier future. Your generosity helps ensure that financial barriers do not have to stand in the way of receiving care and support.

We are reminded that when a community comes together with compassion and a shared purpose, wonderful things can happen. We are truly blessed to have so many people who care about the well-being of others and are willing to make a difference.

Thank you for being part of this important mission and for helping Northridge continue to bring hope, healing, and support to those who need it most. We look forward to building on this momentum together!

Mark in your calendar – Thursday September 16th 2027. I am planning to change things up a bit - but I promise it will be another great night of fun, food, music and inspiration.

Angela Covert
Community Services Manager
Northridge Community Church

Region extends condolences following tragic incident at CFB Wainwright

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I extend my deepest sympathies to the families, friends and colleagues of those who have lost their lives in the tragic incident at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright, Alberta. Our thoughts are also with those who have been injured and everyone affected by this devastating event.

We hold the brave women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces in the highest regard. Their service, commitment and sacrifice in protecting our country deserve our enduring respect and gratitude. We recognize the difficult circumstances facing military personnel, their families and the surrounding community at this time.

I also express sincere appreciation to the military personnel, firefighters, paramedics, police and all emergency

Continued on page 5

Machell's Corners



Now the work begins...



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

municipal elections this year, a decrease from the 548 experienced in 2022. Now, of course, this could be a sign of either satisfaction with the one person to step forward for the job or a sign of apathy in that nobody else wanted it, but, at the end of the day, it’s always nice to have a choice and a healthy exchange of ideas amongst candidates.

AMO’s data is broken down even further. According to their stats, 104 Head of Council races (Mayor and Reeve) were acclaimed, 29 per cent of who are female. This, compared to 23 per cent of 2022 candidates being female, while, overall the number of female candidates was up seven per cent compared to the previous ballot.

Through a different lens, 19 of Ontario’s 444 municipalities saw their entire Councils acclaimed back into power. This translates into five per cent of Ontario municipalities going down this route, compared to eight per cent in 2022, but it’s still a staggering statistic to consider in our communities when the fight for our limited number of seats was “spirited” to say the absolute least.

To the officials in communities where the entire slate of representatives were returned without a fight, congratulations! Evidently, you’re doing something right! To those who weren’t content with the status quo, but still found any number of reasons to sit back and do nothing, perhaps you will take this as your cue that you need to be the change you want to see in your neighbourhood.

That, however, brings up another question I’m sure will crop up in the coming days and weeks – why bother?

Before registrations for the 2026 Municipal Elections opened this past May, it was a question I pondered in this space in the context of our education trustees.

The outgoing municipal term was a fraught one for trustees across Ontario with the Ministry of Education keen to flex its muscles over the day-to-day operations of our school boards and trustees in both Peel and York, amongst other jurisdictions, effectively sidelined

while the Ministry did just that. They kept their titles but not much else.

In a situation where the position you’ve been elected to can be snatched away on the turn of a dime, one could be forgiven for wondering just why candidates would invest so much time and resources in securing a seat that might be pulled out from under them. The fact they did so speaks, I believe, to their passion and drive to make a difference, but only time – and the fickle finger of political fate – will determine if they are given the time to meet their objectives.

But, after this election, I wonder how many candidates for other positions are also asking the question, “Why bother?”

Now that the election is behind us, I have to say that in the five municipal battles I’ve been involved with, this was surely the most vitriolic trip to the polls I’ve yet witnessed.

Thankfully, with some exceptions across Ontario, the vitriol can’t be attributed to the candidates themselves, but rather some of the more engaged and passionate residents with favourite candidates in the race, and, indeed, some of the more engaged and passionate – and often largely anonymous – social media pundits who insinuated themselves into the conversation.

Don’t get me wrong, dialogue is essential in any democracy, regardless of what level of government is being discussed, but this season was rife in online misinformation, sometimes deliberately so, along with extremely personal attacks that were based more in personal opinion than fact, objectiveless insinuations, and an overall atmosphere that was nothing less than toxic.

Those who weathered this particular storm, whether or not the votes went your way on Monday, should be commended for doing so, and a double congratulations if you resisted the urge to pile on.

Recent years have underscored just how fragile democracies the world-over can be, and they’re often only as strong as the individuals who take part in it, whether their names are on the ballot or whether you’re simply casting one.

If things are allowed to remain as toxic as they have been, will it be an environment where emerging community leaders will even want to jump into the race if proverbial trials-by-fire are more the rule rather than the exception? If the cost ultimately paid is far beyond the dollars handed over to process your nomination papers? If not, where will that leave our communities?

Perhaps this is a question Monday night’s victors should consider as they chart their paths to 2030.

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From page 4

responders working under challenging conditions to protect lives and support those affected.

On behalf of York Region, we stand with all those grieving and extend our heartfelt condolences to everyone impacted by this tragedy. In honour of lives lost, flags at York Region facilities located at 17250 Yonge Street and 17150 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket have been lowered to half-mast.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO

“What I want to hear
Poilievre say,” says reader

It took four excruciating years to rid this country of its misbegotten love affair with the Trudeau government and the meandering direction it was taking our country, and Pierre Poilievre played a decisive role in bringing that about. Thank you, Mr. Poilievre.

However, true to their electoral successes over the years, the Liberals pulled another rabbit out of the hat to deny him the reward he might have deserved for that yeoman’s effort.

But the times had changed on a dime – times better suited to our former Central Banker, Mr. Mark Carney, who might as well have ridden in on a white horse. We, (and the world), were desperate for a leader with his true and wide international connections to confront You Know Who south of the border.

Our Prime Minister for 19 months now took to the task of changing this country’s course by borrowing widely from the Poilievre agenda: a smaller government, red-tape reduction, resource development, defense spending and trade expansion.

Early days still, but, by all accounts he’s doing a pretty good job of it, and bringing the majority of the country with him.

Everything’s on the move except Mr. Poilievre, who seems stuck in his old role of angry-man, believing that this still speaks for a majority of Canadians, because not long ago it did!

But today it doesn’t, and it’s time for him, like all of us, to play for Team Canada, and here’s what I think Canadians would like to hear from him:

“I am impressed with the transition taking place in our country under the leadership of our new Prime Minister, Mark Carney. We waited a long time for a change in direction, and he is delivering it. I applaud this along with the new respect he has earned for us around the world, and my team and I will join him and his government as partners to get Canada back on the right track.

“Working in cooperation does not, however, mean that we will for a minute abandon our role as your Official Opposition, overseers of your government and Canada’s budgets. But the time has come when we must all pull in the same direction to keep Canada one country and one people for the prosperity of all of us.

Something tells me that’s how Mr. Poilievre will regain his footing and his just role in the larger scheme of things.

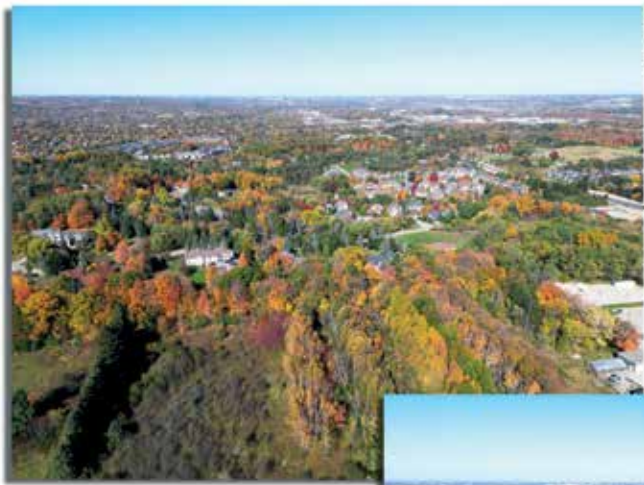
H. Richard Helbig
Aurora

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



Treaties
Recognition
Week
November
1 to 7

Treaties Recognition Week is an opportunity to learn about the agreements with Indigenous communities that shape our shared history. Since 2016, Ontario has dedicated the first full week of November to raising awareness of treaty rights and relationships. This year, Treaty Recognition Week runs from November 1 to 7. Aurora is part of both Treaty #13 (1805) and the Williams Treaties (1923); these agreements are legally binding and remind us that treaty rights and responsibilities are shared by everyone.



Treaty 13 (1805)
Yonge St. & Bloomington Rd.,
Looking North

Yonge St.

Wellington St. East

Part of the Williams Treaties (1923)
Leslie St. & Bloomington Rd.,
Looking North



As we approach November, we are reminded of the importance of taking time to remember and reflect on the sacrifices made by Canadians who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today.

In light of the recent Wainwright tragedy, our thoughts are also with those affected by this heartbreaking loss and with the families and communities grieving.

On November 11, Remembrance Day, we honour all those who have served our country and reflect on the courage, dedication and sacrifices of the men and women who have helped shape Canada. Their service and sacrifice must never be forgotten.

This summer has been a busy one, both here in Newmarket–Aurora. I’ve had the opportunity to attend more than 160 local community events, meeting with constituents and making important announcements for our community. I truly value those moments because they give me the chance to hear directly from residents, connect with local organizations and see the work being done to make our community a better place to live.

Last week, Premier Ford unveiled his updated team of parliamentary assistants. I was thrilled to be appointed as the Parliamentary Assistant to the Associate Minister of Artificial Intelligence Adoption. This is a new ministry just announced on September 10 as part of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.



DIALOGUE
WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

A Canadian Family
Worth Holding
Together

This is a subject near and dear to me and I am honoured to receive the Premier’s trust to help build Ontario as the most competitive, resilient and self-reliant economy in the G7. I look forward to being at the forefront of strengthening the province’s leadership in North America’s tech market while protecting Ontario’s digital sovereignty.

Locally, I recently had the pleasure of highlighting a \$100,000 investment from our government through the Ontario Trillium Foundation Seed grant to support the John Howard Society of York Region’s REALyouth

program, helping the organization continue its work with local youth building life skills, healthy relationships, resilience and leadership. Cornerstone to Recovery has also received a \$482,900 Grow grant over three years. Building on a previous Seed grant announced two years ago, this investment will allow the organization to expand its support for people facing barriers to addiction recovery.

We also announced \$598,300 in funding for repairs and upgrades at three local organizations: Community Living Central York, DeafBlind Ontario Services and Kerry’s Place Autism Services. These investments will help improve facilities and ensure these organizations can continue providing important services to individuals and families in our community.

As we look ahead to November, the holiday season is also getting closer. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Aurora Santa Under the Stars Parade and the Newmarket Santa Claus Parade. These events are a wonderful opportunity to come together, celebrate our communities and enjoy the traditions that make this time of year special.

As always, if you have questions or need assistance with a provincial matter, please do not hesitate to contact my constituency office. My team and I are here to help, and we remain committed to working together to build a stronger Newmarket–Aurora.



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Fall Limericks

Let’s take a look at some recent and upcoming events in Aurora through that well-known story telling device, the limerick.

Leaves

In the autumn one school of thought
Is to let your fallen leaves rot
Don’t take them away
Just let them decay
‘Less they’re metres deep on your lot

Newly elected councillor

The newbie arrived at Town Hall
Ready to get right on the ball
But the workload pile
Soon removed her smile
And she thought,
“why’d I run at all?”

Gambling in Town

Every year Aurorans bet
On the windrow pilot reset

Should we pay and opt in?

Will we lose or we win?

Depends on how much snow we get

Coming soon

It’s a wonderful time of year
The fall colours and smells bring cheer
It’s always a blast
While I wish it’d last
Is that “ho ho ho” that I hear?

Major project costs

Town budgets for projects I’ve found
Always go way up, not down
Will the Vic Hall mends
Continue this trend
Or’s that ship already left Town?

Farmers’ Market

We look forward to making our way
There each week, but on its last day
Should we feel glad
Or just a bit sad
Well at least it’ll be back next May

Candy reserves

October’s that time in the fall
When trick or treaters come to call
You should have handy
Lots of good candy
Unless you have eaten it all

Politicians using social media

With twenty-seven tweeting
Some folks can take quite a beating
It’s a modern craze
But back in the days
Slightings were just vented at meetings

Seasonal frights

There are ghosts and witches to fear
Skeletons and zombies appear
But what scares me most?
Is when the Town posts
Its budget for us for next year

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

Mayor-elect lauds community for “kicking negativity to the curb”

From page 1

Deane with 1,521, and Shi with 643.

Voter turnout was 31.2 per cent in 2026, a slight uptick from voter participation in the 2022 municipal election, and 15,773 Aurorans cast their ballots out of 50,578 eligible voters.

Joining the Mayor-elect at the table for the 2026-2030 Council term will be two incumbents and four new faces, with all of the newcomers women.

In Ward 1, Lauren Hanna was elected with 1,899 votes, with challenger Rocco Morsillo earning 1,211 votes. It was the first election for both Ward 1 candidates.

Ward 2 voters elected first-time candidate Angela Daust with 959 votes. She was followed in the poll by Marco Di Girolamo, who earned 733 votes in his second campaign to represent the Ward, past mayoral candidate Phiona Durrant with 556, and Brynn Lansdown with 284.

Ward 3 voters selected newcomer Nikki Alber with 1,632 votes. She was followed by Alexandra Bonham with 576, Robert James Fraser with 531, and Harold MacDonald with 609, all of whom previously contested the Ward in 2022. The Ward 3 ballot was rounded out by Reza Vaez Ghamsary who received 42 votes.

Two candidates stood for election in Ward 4, with incumbent Michael Thompson securing a fifth Council term with 1,370 votes, while first-time candidate Shaheen Moledina received 398.

Ward 5 brought out the largest field of candidates, with first-time candidate

Jessie Fraser being elected with 1,065 votes. Milton Hart placed second with 574 votes, followed by Terrence Zhu with 432, Charity Dela Cruz-Toupin with 376, George Tremtsidis with 288, and Harbinder (Binda) Thandi with 97.

Incumbent Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim easily secured a fourth consecutive Council term with 1,154 votes, followed by Zivka Kicic with 519, Nicholas Kashaf with 110, and Jibraan Khan with 519.

On the education front, Emma Sears was elected York Region District School Board Trustee for Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville, Brandon James Cescolini was elected York Catholic District School Board Trustee for Aurora, King, and Whitchurch-Stouffville, and Christella Basosila Lome was elected to represent Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir. Hanane Jaouich-Diakite was acclaimed to the role of Conseil scolaire Viamonde trustee.

“We’ve got a new Council, we’ve got new faces and we have some old faces coming back, and I’m excited about what’s going to happen for this Town,” said Mrakas in his election night remarks. “I’m going to continue with positive momentum, continue to do the things that have brought us to the place that we are, the fact that we are one of the top places to live and work and raise a family in Ontario. My commitment to all of you is the same as it has been since Day One, that I’m going to continue to get things done for our community because that’s what we deserve. What we deserve is results, not inaction, and we’re going to



Mayor-elect Tom Mrakas addresses supporters Monday night at Aw, Shucks.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

continue to get results for our community. It’s been a rollercoaster ride, but I’m glad we’ve gotten to this point.

“It’s going to be an exciting four years. I’m proud of everyone in this room for the support and the love that you have given me and my family. I say it every time I go see a business, and I know there’s a few business owners in here, and they know exactly what I say...every time they come and they open up a place here in the Town of Aurora: ‘We’re a family. We’re all one big happy family,’ and that’s the way we should all be in the Town of Aurora, and that’s the way we’re going to continue to be for the next four years.

GALLO, SHI THANK SUPPORTERS

As the numbers rolled in on Monday night, John Gallo conceded to Mrakas releasing a statement noting that while it is “not the result we had hoped for, I am proud of the campaign we ran.”

“We ran a principled campaign focused on restoring democracy at Town Hall, strengthening accountability and ensuring residents have a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect their community,” he said. “I want to thank every Aurora resident who took the time to vote, speak with us, attend an event, ask a question or share a concern. I am grateful for every conversation and every opportunity to hear directly from people across our community. I also want to thank our volunteers. You gave your time, energy and heart to this campaign, and I will always be grateful. And to my family, thank you for standing beside me throughout this journey. Your support means more than I can say.

“Public service has always been about more than one election, and tonight does not change that. This is not the end of my political journey. That said, tonight is about respecting the decision of Aurora voters, congratulating those who have been elected, and thanking everyone who took part in our local democracy. Aurora will always be my home, and I will continue to look for ways to serve the community I care so deeply about.”

Yafang Shi also thanked her supporters and her family for believing in her vision and priorities for the Aurora community.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to hear the concerns, ideas, and suggestions of residents across Aurora as I canvassed the Town, particularly those from marginalized communities whose voices

deserve to be heard and valued. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported my candidacy and voted for my platform centred on human rights,” she said.

“My campaign was driven by a commitment to advancing a Human Rights Action Plan, strengthening local democracy, and promoting greater transparency and accountability in municipal governance. Although the campaign has come to an end, my commitment to these causes remains unwavering. I will continue to advocate for human rights, equity, inclusion, and social justice through my art and ongoing advocacy. Congratulations to the newly elected Council on earning the mandate to serve Aurora residents over the next four years. It is noteworthy that all newly elected members are women, resulting in a Council with a majority of women. I hope this milestone in representation will be accompanied by meaningful progress in municipal governance. I also hope that those who campaigned on equity, inclusion, accountability, and transparency will translate these commitments into concrete actions that benefit all Aurora residents.”

MRAKAS LOOKS TO FUTURE

Speaking to The Auroran after addressing his supporters, Mayor-elect Mrakas said he was “honoured and humbled” with the trust community members placed in him and said the incoming Council will “bring certain expertise and talents to the table.”

“I think we’re going to have a good four years working together to get things done for our community, so I am looking very forward to it,” he said. “We always have our orientation and we’ll sit down, start to get to know each other a little better, and really start to gel and be able to work together. The first thing to come up is our budget, so I’m looking forward to sitting down with Council and working through [that] and coming up with a budget that continues to be one of the lowest in the GTHA when it comes to the tax rate, and I’m looking forward to working with each member of Council to make sure that we deliver that to the residents of this community.

“I’m actually very, very excited and very thrilled at this opportunity to lead a new Council and continue on the momentum that we’ve built over the last eight years.”

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New and returning faces on Council looking forward to getting to work

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora residents elected a dynamic new Council on Monday night, with four first-time Councillors joining two long-time incumbents – with the majority of representatives at the table now women.

Councillor-elect Lauren Hanna, a first-time candidate, secured Ward 1 with 1,899 votes. Reflecting on October 26’s Election Night, she said she was grateful for all the support she received from volunteers, friends, neighbours, and Ward 1 residents as a whole.

“I really am humbled by the process,” she says. “I’m not only honoured to step into the role to serve the Town in any capacity, but I am reminded more than ever that building community takes a village, and so did my campaign. There were so many different people who were involved in one way, shape, or form, and it really makes you appreciate that we’re all in this together.”

Looking ahead to the start of the new Council term next month, she says she will be “good to my word” in listening to and engaging with residents and “making sure that we’re all working together to make it an even better Town than it already is.” She adds both she and challenger Rocco Morsillo worked hard to engage voters and the way she campaigned is reflective of how she intends to serve on Council.

“I’m really excited about the new faces around the table, the fresh perspectives that will be there, and the opportunity that creates for a new wave of collaborative leadership in the Town,” she says. “I’m really hopeful that we can really work together to advance the Town’s best interests and have really constructive and respectful dialogue and debate around the table. I think it’s really amazing that there are four women on Council.... That to me is really an important demonstration of the Town believing in strong women and their voices around the table. I’m really excited for that.”

Over in Ward 2, Councillor-elect Angela Daust is also looking back on a campaign focused on resident engagement and says one of her first orders of business will be to present 25

pages of input she received from residents at the door, outlining the wants and needs of the Ward to her fellow Council members.

“I just want to make sure [residents are] heard on Council, and that was my main objective,” she says. “That’s why my platform was ‘Your Strong Voice on Council’ because all residents want is to be heard.

“I want to say thank you to everybody who, first of all, voted for me, and also for all the support I had from residents, from my family – it’s overwhelming to think that being a [first-time] person campaigning that I would have so much support. I was really overwhelmed.”

Looking back over the campaign, she notes “a lot of rhetoric” over the use of Strong Mayor Powers and says Council cohesion going forward could show that “it won’t be necessary for that to be used in the future.”

“If we can come to conclusions where we can work together and actually move decisions forward without the use of those powers, I think it will make for a much more functional Council,” she says.

Listening will also be key for Ward 3 Councillor-elect Nikki Alber, who will take over from long-time Councillor Wendy Gaertner. In a statement, Alber thanked all those who took the time to vote, thereby “helping shape Aurora’s future.”

“To all the candidates who put their names forward, thank you for your dedication to our Town and for running a great election. Putting yourself forward takes courage, commitment, and countless hours, and I am grateful to everyone who stepped up,” she said.

“To my family, friends, volunteers, and supporters: thank you for your encouragement and for the time and energy you gave throughout this campaign. This would not have been possible without you. To every resident of Aurora, whether we met at your doorstep, spoke at an event, or have yet to connect, I look forward to listening, learning, and working hard on your behalf. I am proud to call Aurora home and honoured to have the opportunity to serve you.”

A familiar voice was returned in Ward

4 with four-term Councillor Michael Thompson earning a fifth from voters.

“It’s always an honour and a privilege to represent the residents of Aurora, and specifically Ward 4, and I feel very blessed and fortunate tonight,” he told The Auroran after the ballots had been counted. “I hope what really resonated for them was my record of results. I’ve been on Council for 16 years now. I’ve always tried to do my best for Aurora, the community, the neighbourhoods, and let some common sense and practical judgement guide my thoughts along the way. I’ve been very fortunate to be on Council as a group to accomplish some wonderful things, and I trust that the people saw my record and felt that I’ll continue to do positive things for the Town.

“I think we have a great opportunity over the next four years to do some wonderful things, and I’m looking forward to collaborating with each and every [elected member].”

That excitement is shared by first-time candidate, and now-Councillor-elect Jessie Fraser, who will replace John Gallo in Ward 5.

“I think it’s a group of very, very strong, intelligent, well-informed people. Yes, there’s a lot of diversity in our opinions or preferences or things that we value as more important, but that’s what it’s supposed to be like,” she says. “We all just want what is best for Aurora. We just may have different ideas about how we land there, but this is how it is supposed to work. There are supposed to be differing opinions and different priorities and a well-functioning Council is able to deal with that. We are meant to disagree on some things and agree on other things. We are meant to problem solve together and discuss and debate, [and] respectful, constructive dissent can be productive. Debate and discussion lead to positive change, and I think that the people around the table are capable of that, all of us.”

The fact the incoming Council will have four women at the table, she adds, will “add an interesting new dynamic” to the proceedings.

“I’m honoured and grateful, obviously,



Ward 3 Council candidates Nikki Alber and Robert James Fraser wait for numbers to roll in at Town Hall on October 26.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

that the community has put their trust in me to be their Councillor. I’m really excited to get to work. I want to thank everybody who voted, no matter who they voted for, for taking the time to show how important Aurora is,” she says.

Looking over the course of his fourth successful campaign, Ward 6 Councillor-elect Harold Kim said that while it was a “harsh campaign,” he was “relieved that a positive message about what one is going to do for the residents and the Town still resonates.”

“It’s not about creating wedge issues and what’s wrong with the Town or what’s wrong with a certain person or Councillor. It just reinvigorates my faith in people that good news and the truth still sells,” he said on Monday night. “Relationships are not built on social media or through email. It’s through face-to-face contact. I had the good fortune of 12 years of building relationships. I’m very encouraged by the voting results and I’ll keep on doing the same.

“When I first came to Council in 2014, I sensed divisiveness, and I think I remember at one time, I spoke on Romans: 8, about many hearts but one body. I’ll continue to espouse that, but you know what? I think you have to win every Council member over. This is about the Town. It’s about the residents. It’s not about us. It’s not about personalities. It’s about doing what’s best for residents, and if we focus on that, we’ll find the common denominator.”

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Chamber recognizes entrepreneurship, growth and community at Business Excellence Awards

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Sandra Farran was 60-years-old when she decided to start a new chapter in her own life.

In the two years since she opened Saltbox Café on Wellington Street East, she has turned a historic Aurora building not only into a business but a thriving community hub.

On Thursday night, she was recognized with the New Business Award by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce at their annual Business Excellence Awards.

“I think everybody here has acknowledged just how wonderful it is to do business in Aurora, how much the community steps up and just makes that part of their business is really incredible,” she said, accepting the award from the stage at the Royal Venetian Mansion on October 22. “This is for anybody who maybe has a sister or a brother, but particularly a grandmother, an older aunt... I just want to encourage anyone who feels that it is too late that it is never too late. It’s hard world, you have to be prepared for that, but it’s also extremely rewarding, and I truly believe that there’s so much potential in all of us.”

The potential of the business community, and those who are a part of it, were celebrated before a packed house as

local businesses, groups, and individuals were rewarded in the fields of Non-Profits, Top Employer, Retail, Women-Led Businesses, and New Business.

“As Chair of the Board, this is one of my favourite events because it gives us the opportunity to recognize the incredible businesses, organizations, the individuals, the operations who make Aurora such a great place to live, work, and do business,” said David Olesen of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. “What became very clear through [the nomination] process is just how fortunate we are in Aurora to have such exceptional people operating businesses and being a part of our community here in Aurora. So, to all of our nominees and our finalists, a huge thank you for choosing Aurora as a home and a place to run your business.

“Being recognized by your peers and your community is an achievement in and of itself. I hope that each of the nominees who are here tonight took a moment to feel proud of what you’ve accomplished. Whatever the outcome of this evening, always know that your hard work, your leadership, your contributions deserve to be celebrated every single day. You are all part of what makes Aurora’s business community, and Aurora itself, an incredibly strong community.”

These sentiments were shared by Aurora Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Alison Mumford, who said it’s a time to recognize “excellence, innovation, leadership, and perhaps most importantly, people who have mastered the art of running a business while making it look suspiciously easy.”

Thursday’s ceremony was attended by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson, Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim, and a number of Council candidates who were in contention in Monday night’s municipal election.

In his remarks, Mayor Mrakas said the businesses and organizations in the room that evening “make this community stronger and more dynamic.”

“It’s not just through the services and products you provide, it’s also through creating thousands of good jobs, supporting local families, and giving back to so many important charitable initiatives,” he said. “The truth is that I don’t think the average person appreciates just how much it takes to run a successful business and everything that you deal with every day, from dealing with rising



Saltbox Café’s Sandra Farran, centre, accepts the New Business Award from Gurleen Dev and Zoe Stefanidis of Foundation BTS.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

costs to looking after your employees and adapting to an economy that seems to be consistently changing. Running a business isn’t a regular nine-to-five. I know from experience there are so many early mornings, late nights, and calls at all hours. It takes incredible courage and determination to do what you do, and I want you to know how grateful I am for everything that you contribute to our community.

“I’ve said this many times before, but all of you also play a huge role in continuing to attract new investment to Aurora. When I talk to entrepreneurs and business leaders looking to establish themselves here, they look at the success of our existing businesses as evidence that they too can succeed in Aurora. While I know that there are still plenty of challenges for many of you, especially as we continue to navigate this ongoing trade war, there’s also so much to look forward to.... I again want to thank all of you for your hard work, for taking risks, putting in the long hours, and persevering even when things get difficult, for your charitable work that helps support so many of our most vulnerable residents, and for simply helping make Aurora the amazing place it is.”

This year’s nominees and honourees were:

NON-PROFIT AWARD – Celebrating the valuable contributions non-profit organizations make to the community of Aurora, recognizing community service and leadership:

- Community living Central York
- **Hope House Hospice (WINNER)**
- Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers
- Yellow Brick House

TOP EMPLOYER – This award recognizes an organization that prioritizes its people by fostering positive workplace culture and investing in employees’

wellbeing, growth and engagement:

- Almac Industrial Systems
- **Apple Self Storage (WINNER)**
- Highland GM
- Microtel Inn & Suites

RETAIL AWARD – Recognizing a retail business that delivers an exceptional customer service experience:

- **The Glitter Hub (WINNER)**
- KIBO Natural Body Care Products
- Our Dog & Co.
- Sweet Dutchess Kitchen & Café

WOMEN-LED BUSINESS

- A4 Group Construction Services
- The Car Girls
- Monaco Interiors
- **The Social Pup (WINNER)**

NEW BUSINESS AWARD – Recognizing a new business that has demonstrated early success, innovation, and a strong potential for long-term growth within its first three years of operation:

- Game Day Men’s Health
- LK Laser Aesthetics
- Saffron Restaurant
- **Saltbox Café (WINNER)**

PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD

- **Bessie Correa Real Estate - Re/Max (WINNER)**
- Billyard Insurance Group
- Dekade Clothing
- Elliott Raben Productions
- Filly & Co
- The Hive Wellness Collective
- Ivish Interiors
- Love 4 Dogs
- Sheldon Stanleigh - Re/Max
- Swiss Chalet
- Thrive Gymnastics
- Westview Golf

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AWARD

- **Anthony Garramone (WINNER)**
- Artistica Ballroom Dance
- Royal Rose Art Gallery
- St. Andrew’s College

A long-time community volunteer, Garramone was recognized for his work with the Town of Aurora, Aurora Cultural Centre, the Chamber, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Independent Order of Oddfellows, and CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors), among other organizations.

“I love Aurora, I love giving back, I love volunteering for the community,” said Garramone. “Thank you for this award. It’s an honour to receive it and, to my late friend Harvey who inspired me, this is for you.”



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TOP EMPLOYER AWARD
Apple Self Storage



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AWARD
Anthony Garramone



RETAIL AWARD
The Glitter Hub



WOMEN-LED BUSINESS AWARD
The Social Pup



NEW BUSINESS AWARD
Saltbox Cafe



CHAMBER CHAMPION
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Additional honourees on Thursday night were, clockwise from top left, Anthony Garramone, pictured with event emcee realtor Lindsay Strom, who received the Community Involvement Award; Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House Community Hospice, centre, and Hope House's Kelly Sedynek, accepted the Non-Profit Award from Magna International's Erin Cerenzia; Apple Self Storage, represented by Scott Campbell, David Allan, and Scott Allan, was recognized with the Top Employer Award, presented by Mayor Tom Mrakas; The Social Pup's Leanne Stevenson was recognized with the 2026 Women-Led Business Award by Chamber Board member John Long of Smith & Long; and realtor Bessie Correa received the second-annual People's Choice Award, which was voted for online by residents at large, and presented by Chamber Board Chair David Olesen and Executive Director Alison Mumford.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



Citizen of the Year raises alarm bells over the state of community volunteerism

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora's Doug Steele is an active and long-standing community volunteer.

At the age of 61, Aurora's 2026 Citizen of the Year stays active in many areas, including serving as Chair of the Executive Council at Aurora's Welcoming Arms, and staying hands-on as a dish washer after their weekly community meal programs.

But, as he looks over the teams of dozens of volunteers who come together to make the organization tick, he finds himself "on the young side" of those tireless people who give so much to local non-profits.

"That scares me," said Steele, who served as keynote speaker at last week's Business Excellence Awards hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. "As many people who have supported community organizations for decades, we are getting older; we can't assume there will automatically be another generation of volunteers ready to take their places.

"I don't necessarily believe this means younger people don't care about their communities. Of course, people have a lot of competing demands for their time: they're working, raising families, caring for aging parents, and dealing with the daily complexities of life. Some would probably be quite willing to volunteer, but simply can't commit on a regular schedule. Others may not know what opportunities are available or how to get involved."

Steele has been a part of the local business community for decades, working in the hardware and wholesale industries, as well as operating two small manufacturing firms. The long-time contributor to the councils of the schools where his children were educated, as well as to the Aurora Cares Community Action Team, Steele took

the opportunity of his keynote as a chance to rally the group of business and community leaders at the Royal Venetian Mansion on October 22 to re-think what it means to be a volunteer and opportunities the community as a whole can provide.

"In 2024, the Mayor asked me to join the newly re-established Aurora Community Cares Action Team, which has been comprised of several individual citizens, members of the Lions Club, Rotary Club, Salvation Army, Welcoming Arms, and York Regional Police. The purpose of this group was originally to help people during the pandemic. Now it serves to address situations that fall outside the local service group's mandates," Steele shared.

"In the two years that I've been involved, we have done things including providing backpacks and school supplies for Aurora students whose families are in need and funded school-based meal programs, as well as coordinating activities between our local agencies. The collaboration between our groups has been very productive. It's a good example of what can happen when organizations work together. No single group has the resources or all the answers, but by sharing what we have and making use of one another's strengths, we can often accomplish a great deal more."

During that time, however, he said he has also seen the wealth gap widen across the country, more and more people needing help to get by – "some on a daily basis" – while homelessness has grown.

"In the big picture, raising up those in need helps make our community stronger, socially and economically. It helps build a more cooperative community that will benefit everyone, residents and businesses alike," he said.

Continued on page 21



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Local dancers raise more than \$140,000 for Easter Seals kids



(LEFT) This year’s Dancing with the Stars contestants are pictured here with the Artistica Team – Anastasia, Kelly, Patrick, and Sarah – celebrating a successful evening. (RIGHT) The family of restaurateur Sam Saber, a prior contestant in the Dancing with the Stars Aurora-Newmarket, were greeted by Anastasia, Patrick, and Kelly after the evening began with a tribute to Sam’s contributions to both Easter Seals Ontario and the wider community.



Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local celebrities hit the dance floor at the Royal Venetian Mansion this month, raising more than \$140,000 for Easter Seals kids and their families.

The 11th annual Dancing with the Stars Easter Seals Stars Aurora-Newmarket was another success for Easter Seals Ontario as eight community and business leaders were put through their paces by Anastasia, Kelly, Patrick, and Sarah of Aurora’s Artistica Ballroom Dance Studio.

Dancers Neysa Abrego, Erin Cartwright, Ed Gundert, Lucy Jackson, Paul LePage, Bianca Rollo, Alison Mumford, and Mike Waddington, began training with the Artistica team in the latter part of the spring, working hard throughout the summer and into the fall to master new moves with their professional partners.

Some came to the dance floor having had a family member as alumni of the Dancing with the Stars program who were able to give them a few tips along the way. Others were going in cold, putting any trepidation aside knowing that it was all for a good cause: helping send kids with disabilities to summer camp, while providing supports for their families along the way.

“It’s honestly been the best experience working with Patrick and the entire team at Artistica. It’s been amazing – all the other dancers, you truly inspired me,” said Mumford, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, after her first number. “Watching you guys today was awesome. You guys all killed it. I’m so, so grateful to have met you and seen you dance, but most importantly, the money that we

raised for Easter Seals is important.” This support was returned by Patrick who said Mumford came into the studio from the outset with “a super-positive attitude.”

LePage was similarly enthusiastic about the event and the cause, adding, “For me, it’s not being proud of myself, it’s being lucky to be a part of a big experience like this. To be honest, we made such a difference for these kids. The whole community’s gotten together to rally behind this cause, and I’m just grateful to be a part of it.”

That gratitude was returned, in turn, by 17-year-old Easter Seals Ambassador Miles Checkley who spent the eve of his birthday at the event and was on the receiving end of a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday To You” sung by the nearly-350 guests in attendance.

Checkley lives with cerebral palsy and has a goal of eventually becoming a sports broadcaster.

“I think it’s important that people focus on what someone can do, rather than what he can’t,” he said when appointed Ambassador earlier this year of the importance of these camps and recreational opportunities. “Everyone can participate; some may just do things differently.”

On the floor of the Royal Venetian, he shared some of his sports credentials, entertaining audiences with stories of his 10-year friendship with former Toronto Blue Jays Manager Buck Martinez, himself a long-time supporter of Easter Seals.

“Thank you for being here because your support means everything to an Easter Seals kid,” said Miles. “It helps with getting funding for home and vehicle modifications and helps kids go to camp, which is the greatest place on earth, I’d say. Your support is truly unforgettable. I can’t thank

you more. It’s awesome.” Reflecting on the event, Andrea Peterson, Director of Development for Easter Seals Ontario, said it was a “beautiful evening” that also allowed contestants and Easter Seals alike to pay tribute to people that had an

impact on the event in the past – and those who had an impact on the performances delivered that evening. “I want to give a huge congratulations and thank you to Artistica Ballroom Dance Studio

Continued on page 11

CULTURALLY

speaking

by Derek Andrews

Aurora Cultural Centre

PERFORMING ARTS

GALLERIES

EDUCATION



Tulua translates to “Tribe of Many Paths” and the current path is a remarkable 22 date tour of Canada where Aurora Cultural Centre lands mid-way.

The band has notched accolades worldwide from extensive touring to Australia, Germany, France, Netherlands and the US. The troupe appeared on our radar as they were included on the prestigious Putumayo compilation release “Celtic Voices” with the track “Western Passage”, one more step in the right direction! Murmurs have emerged since Tulua showcased in Montreal at the Folk Alliance International Conference, supplemented by gigs at the wonderful Goderich Celtic Festival. The talent in Ireland is legendary and by the look of the young Tulua quartet, there is more promising talent on the horizon. We look forward to sharing the music and mirth that Cian O’Grady (guitar / banjo / bouzouki), Kaleigh Moran (fiddle), Diarmaid Murphy (flute), Ella McGrory (piano / fiddle) will bring to our stage.

Opening the night are local Celtic heroes North Atlantic Drift featuring Cape Breton fiddle sensation Dan MacDonald, Sligo County’s guitar and banjo gift to Toronto, Brian Taheny and Ontario raised piper Ross Griffiths. Their “Broadview” CD release points fans to the Saturday afternoon session at Noonan’s pub, a renowned music meeting.

Musically Speaking. Before the year is out, we have four more events, two in the big Davide de Simone venue and two in Brevik Hall, one comedy night, one classical afternoon (with tea and delicacies), one Family Show and to end the season, a Jazz concert with Emily-Claire Barlow. This is typical of the variety we try to provide as we evolve comfortably into

Aurora Town Square. Martha Chaves has become the curator of comedy for the Aurora Cultural Centre, always being the alchemist of chaos, bringing pals together from her touring and media appearances. Often heard on CBC Radio, Martha has playfully dubbed this night, Martha and da Muffins, riffing off the legendary Queen West “new wave” band famous for their tune “Echo Beach”. On offer November 20 with Martha are: Scott Faulconbridge, Debra Di Giovanni, Chrystal Ferrier and host DK Phan.

Suzanne & Erica - flute & harp. Acclaimed flutist Suzanne Shulman, and internationally celebrated harpist Erica Goodman provide an intimate afternoon of elegance, warmth, and exceptional artistry. Float away on a Sunday afternoon with tea and company on November 22.

Ken Whiteley and His Music Friends means we are in for surprise guest performers joining the legendary folkie father figure who has released and produced more records than any of his peers. His credentials glow in his recording success with Raffi, Fred Penner, Al Simmonds and many others. He covers “All Of The Seasons” on his afternoon concert at Brevik Hall on December 12.

Emilie-Claire Barlow left her Toronto origins in favour of a new residency in Quebec City where her bilingual musical approach has prospered. She is a high pedigree Canadian jazz vocalist having won the JUNO in that category twice, alongside ACTRA, ADISQ Awards within her catalogue of fourteen releases, plus oodles of nominations. Aurora will enjoy a seasonal offering from this respected Canadian talent!

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Local dancers raise more than \$140,000 for Easter Seals kids

From page 10

because they are an amazing group of people. Without them, this show wouldn't be what it was. I truly love working with them and working on this event. Each of the dancers dedicated their songs to someone specific in their lives and that person that was being dedicated to didn't find out until the night of," she shared. "When the dancers came out and they danced for them, it was just really, really lovely and had a huge emotional tie to it.

"We did our opening number dedicated to Sam," she continued, referencing local restaurateur and past Dancing with the Stars contestant Sam Saberi, who died suddenly earlier this year, sparking a huge community outpouring. "Being able to recognize Sam from our point of view was an awesome thing because he was so predominant in the community. He didn't just help Easter Seals. He helped everybody. He was always there, always supportive, and we wanted to take the time to honour him and all he has done."

The words offered by Miles, and the lived experiences shared by others, she added, really drove home what continues to drive contestants, Easter

Seals Ontario as an organization, each year.

"When you see a child in a wheelchair, when you see a family with a child with a disability and they're using a walker, a cane, a wheelchair, or whatever the case may be, you look at that and sometimes that's all you really think about; you think about the limitations that must cause or the issues they have. But it's never just that," she said. "Chances are, there is more than one apparatus that this child uses, and it's very costly for the families. If a child is unable to walk, they need help getting out of bed, they need help getting into the washroom, they need help going from the washroom, they need help showering, they need help getting dressed – these are all things that chair lifts, commodes, and shower chairs and lifts, [help with].

"The cost that it takes for these families to get their children up and ready for school and out the door for a day in comparison to a family where both children are able-bodied...We talk about bringing independence, dignity and confidence to these children and they need this equipment to be able to just move around and do things like everybody else, like able-bodied people."



(TOP) Alison Mumford, Executive Director of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, hit the floor with Patrick. (Centre) Event emcee Jimmy Brennan speaks with Easter Seals Ambassador Miles Checkley. (Above) Getting the party started. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

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NO TRICKS, JUST TREATS - The annual No Tricks, Just Treats Halloween event will take place at the Aurora Farmers' Market this Saturday, October 31. The event, which is set to begin at 10 a.m., will feature an accessible trick-or-treat costume parade, a sensory tent space, and opportunities to play at Town Park's fully accessible playground. Pictured here, event founders Allison Hughes and Lauren Hanna (now Councillor-elect for Ward 1) popped by the park to promote the event.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Spooky season continues beyond the "Forest"

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Families got the spooky season started off right this year as Mother Nature offered perfect conditions for Aurora's ever-popular Haunted Forest at Sheppard's Bush on Saturday night. (See Page 20)

Hundreds of families descended upon the Bush – and on the Aurora Family Leisure Complex for indoor activities – for thrills and chills designed for every taste.

It was another resounding success for the 21st-annual event, which is often named as one of the Top 100 Festivals & Events in Ontario, but there is still much more fun to be had throughout the community in the lead up to the big night on Saturday, October 31.

Through Sunday, November 1, residents are invited to take part in the Haunted Forest GooseChase Activity Challenge. Powered by the GooseChase

app, participants can register for the activity challenge designed to get you into the Halloween spirit. Each challenge completed through the app will earn you points and the top finishers will be entered into a draw to win prizes."

"The Challenge has more than 50 Halloween missions on it completely free to help people get engaged with the Halloween spirit," says Shelley Ware, Special Events Supervisor for the Town of Aurora. "We've really expanded that and made the most out of Halloween."

In addition to the Activity Challenge, the Town is curating a Haunted House Tour of some of the spookiest haunts across Aurora.

At press time this week, more than 10 local homes had signed up for the tour, with room for additional entries through this week.

The tour is interactive, self-guided, and go-at-your-own-pace.

For more information, visit aurora.ca/hauntedforest.

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However, many people are hesitant to have surgery given its invasive nature. It is important to know that although surgery is sometimes necessary, it is considered a last resort in most cases.

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Dr. Michael Paluch, Deputy Head of School



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VOL 28 | NO. 3 | 905-727-3300 *TheAuroran.com* FREE WEEK OF OCTOBER 29, 2026

Former NHLer and founder of ‘50 Mission Cast’ Shayne Stevenson skates and fishes his way into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



SHAYNE STEVENSON

Photo courtesy of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame



BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora’s Shayne Stevenson has found a recipe for enjoying life after an eleven-year professional hockey career, including three seasons with the Boston Bruins and Tampa Bay Lightning.

He noted that it’s “Darts, golf, and euchre after we’re finished fishing. It’s all about bragging rights in the Stevenson family between my son Cam, my brother, Dale, and I. After hockey, I wanted to have a sport and my father-in-law taught me about darts. Jack was a machine and made me better. He was the best around and encouraged me to throw 700 darts a day while my kids were watching videos. Eventually, I won the Darts Ontario championship in 2004 and 2006 for Zone 15 which stretches from Sutton to Highway 7. We only play nine holes of golf after a charter, but we have a lot of fun. It’s all about having fun, but we get ‘worked’ if we’re not pulling our weight at the dart board, the golf course, the card table, or on the boat.”

Stevenson feels connected to Central Ontario lakes and rivers most of all and acknowledged, “I’ve always had a boat in the water.” It was this lifelong love of boats and fishing that ignited Stevenson’s entrepreneurial spirit when his professional hockey career began to wane in the early-1990s.

His charter company 50 Mission Cast is a perfect combination of hockey, fishing, storytelling, and the outdoors for the Aurora-raised 56-year-old.

Stevenson and his crew offer a slice of Canadiana to charter customers on idyllic fishing adventures: “We based the name on The Hip’s song about Bill Barilko. We heard ‘50 Mission Cap’ playing on the radio while we were fishing on the French River over 20 years ago. It’s where 50 inches and 50 pounds is the mission. Those are the magic numbers for muskies.”

The founder of 50 Mission Cast has been offering muskie and walleye charters on the Upper French River for decades,

but the trips took on deeper significance for the former NHLer: “Fishing provided an escape for me after the hockey season and it was a way to have fun. Near the end of my playing career, I would fish right up to December and then I’d call up every pro team across North America looking for a veteran player to play for the rest of the season. No training camps. No playing my way into shape.”

Stevenson declared himself a free agent after each of his single-season contracts which took him to far-flung hockey outposts across the continent including the Atlanta Knights and Fort Wayne Komets of the IHL, the Muskegon Fury, St. Thomas Wildcats, Utica Blizzard, Saginaw Lumber Kings, and Brantford Smoke of the Colonial Hockey League, the Port Huron Border Cats of the UHL, and the San Angelo Outlaws of the WPHL. His final pro hockey destination was in Europe where he played for the Ayr Scottish Eagles of the British Ice Hockey Superleague.

Junior hockey came easy for Stevenson and he starred for two championship caliber teams in Kitchener in the late 1980s. In the 1989-90 season, the productive centre amassed 28 goals, 62 assists, and 115 PIM in 56 games for the Rangers then put together a great playoff run with 16 goals and 21 assists in 17 games.

“Everything just came together. We were a good team with four good lines. In the playoffs, we dropped down to two lines most of the time so I was more productive, and lucky enough to beat Eric Lindros by one point in the scoring race. However, we lost the OHL championship and the Memorial Cup to Lindros.”

Despite the bitter losses to Lindros and the Oshawa Generals on Junior hockey’s biggest stages, Stevenson’s strong seasons in Kitchener caught the eye of NHL scouts. He was selected by the Boston Bruins 17th overall in the first round of the 1989 NHL draft and commenced his career in the NHL. However, his role with the Bruins was a difficult one for Stevenson to perform.

“Mike Milbury told me you’re on a Stanley Cup team—we had everybody back for the 1990 roster. He told me, ‘Shayne, you’re not going to be our goal scorer,’ and that I’d have to fight my way into the Bruins lineup. I was only 190 [pounds] and having to fight guys like Probert, Donnelly, Mann, Ray—I didn’t want to be a fighter. I was a scorer.”

Stevenson played 14 games with the Bruins in his rookie season, but showed that he could score in the AHL with the Bruins affiliate in Maine where he scored 22 goals and 28 assists in 58 games while racking up 112 PIM.

“When I went down to the minors, everyone left me alone after my fights in the NHL.”

The combination of toughness and scoring touch with the Mariners was recognized by the Tampa Bay Lightning who drafted the unprotected Stevenson for their inaugural season. Stevenson recalled his first discussion with Lightning

GM Phil Esposito who was joined by his brother, Tony, as well as Wayne Cashman and Terry Crisp.

“Harry Sinden says you’re a hell of a player. We want you to settle down, get married, and get ready for the season.” I showed up for camp in the best shape of my life, but during a scrimmage, I was tripped and it looked like I was going to take out Manon Rheume who was the goalie. I would have seriously injured her so I got into a roll to break the slide but hit the net which didn’t move and I hurt my back. I tried playing through back spasms, but I felt like I was done at 22 and I’d had my shot at 18.”

Prior to his run of bad luck in the NHL and his meteoric rise to prominence in the OHL, Stevenson made an auspicious debut in Junior hockey as a 14-year-old with the Aurora Tigers—against the wishes of his father.

“We had won the Ontario major peewee championship—my first and only hockey championship. In my minor bantam year, I was coached by [ASHoF inductee] Lowell McClenny. He made me captain for the first time. During the minor bantam championship, we were losing 12-3, but I scored the three goals. Junior Tigers Head Coach Ted Tobias came up to me after the game and told me ‘I want you to start coming to practice with us.’”

Stephenson added: “I was only 14 years old and it was going to be tough playing guys who were six years older than me, but I got a call from Ted’s assistant coach on a Friday night. He told me, ‘The Tigers are sending a cab and you’re playing in the second period. Ted had put my name on the game sheet since the team was short-handed after a big fight the night before. My dad told me from his place of work that

‘You’re not going’ but I said ‘I’m going.’ I got an assist in the third period and I looked up the crowd at the ACC and my dad was there. He’d left work to see me play.

“I started playing for the Junior Tigers and went all the way to the Centennial Cup in 1984 as the youngest player at the tournament. Brian Fogarty was on the team, too, and he was only 15. I was so proud to be wearing a black Aurora Tigers jacket at Aurora High with a #9 on it. The ACC was jammed every night we played. Standing room was six deep. I realized that I’m 14, playing in my hometown, and living the dream. The problem was that every time there was a fight, I’d get beaten up by the older players, but Jody Matthews would come to help rescue me. Now he’s a Criminal Lawyer so he’s still helping to rescue people.”

Stevenson’s fond connection to the Tigers at so many levels of hockey has made his upcoming induction in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame even more meaningful.

“After having been through so much in my hockey career including sixteen concussions and playing for over ten seasons, I had walked away a bit upset with the game. So, to get this honor—after all that—means the world to me. I want to be remembered as a kid from Aurora playing Junior A hockey for the Tigers who made it to the NHL. It proved that you didn’t have to play in bigger centres like Toronto. You could play right here and Aurora at that time had a population of about 10,000.

“Being inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame is a fantastic way to finish my hockey career. It’s great to be recognized by my home town—it’s such an honor. It’s been a great year for me and I’m looking forward to a great time on November 5.”



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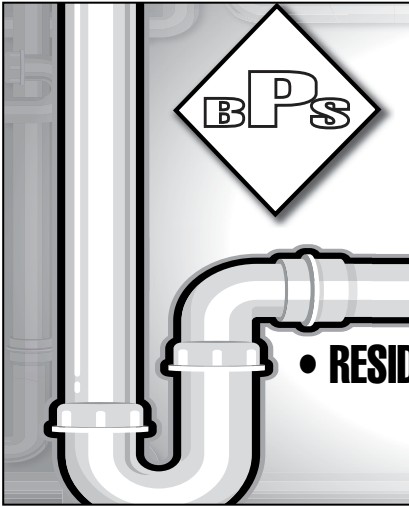
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YRP suspends partnership with Crime Stoppers following data breach

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

York Regional Police has suspended its partnership with Crime Stoppers after a cybersecurity breach back in March.

The move came after the breach caused Toronto Crime Stoppers to stop taking anonymous tips by phone, online, or through their app on October 21.

News of the breach left multiple questions unanswered for the organization, including the precise nature of the tips that had been accessed.

“Since 1984, people in Toronto have come to Toronto Crime Stoppers because we promised they could stay anonymous. This week’s reporting shows that for some of them that promise was broken. We are deeply sorry,” said the organization last week. “We know what this asks of people. For more than 40 years, people in Toronto have relied on Crime Stoppers to share what they know without giving their name: a witness afraid of retaliation, a neighbour who can’t be seen talking to police, someone reporting a person close to them. Their courage has helped solve crimes, prevent tragedies, and save lives. Pausing our program means that option isn’t available now, and we did not make this decision lightly. We are pausing because those people deserve a system we can fully stand behind.

“In March, hackers stole data from P3, the tip software we have used since 2018. P3 is owned by Navigate360. Navigate360 has told us that 176,859 Toronto tips, dating from January 2022 to November 2025, were in the stolen data. It has also found 14,973 names in those tips. It has not told us

whether those names belong to people who submitted tips, to people who were named in those tips, or both. We never ask for your name, and we don’t want it. But people sometimes include details to explain what they saw. Before a tip goes to our investigators, our practice is to remove those details. It has come to light that some of those original tips containing potentially identifying information were stolen from P3.

“Despite numerous requests through our legal counsel, Navigate360 has not provided us with the text of the stolen tips, so we cannot see what each one says. Anonymously sourced information that has been reported publicly...has not been shared with us – not by Navigate360, not by hackers, not by anybody.”

In response to the question why they didn’t stop taking tips as soon as the breach was identified, Toronto Crime Stoppers said they had been told since March by Navigate360 that P3 remained secure and “it told us Toronto’s data had not been taken.”

“When it told us in June that Toronto’s data was affected, it didn’t say what was exposed,” Toronto Crime Stoppers continued. “To date, we still have not seen the text of the stolen tips. We have been pressing for answers for months and continue to do so, especially in light of this week’s reporting.”

In their own response, York Regional Police said they “recognized the concern” the information of the data breach might raise, particularly for those who provided information to Crime Stoppers “with the expectation of anonymity.”

“Preserving the anonymity and safety of those submitting tips is imperative to maintaining public trust and the integrity of investigations,”

said York Regional Police. “We are actively reviewing data included in the breach and assessing the impact to police operations, and the safety and privacy of tipsters who provided information to support York Regional Police investigations.

“Citizens seeking to provide information about a crime or public safety concern should contact police directly through our existing reporting channels. In an emergency or to report a crime in progress, always call 9-1-1. For non-emergency matters, call 1-866-876-5423. Individuals looking to provide information to

investigators may leave a message by phone to 905-764-1310 or by email at tips@yrp.ca. When calling, please listen to and follow all guidelines provided to you. This line connects tipsters directly with York Regional Police, and while we will work to keep your identity private, anonymity can’t be guaranteed.”

If you are worried any tip you submitted to Crime Stoppers has been exposed, Toronto Crime Stoppers says they will never call to ask for your tip number, password, or anything else of that nature. If you feel you are in danger, they advise calling 9-1-1.



STRONG DEBATERS – The Country Day School placed 2nd overall among Canadian schools at last weekend’s International Independent Schools’ Public Speaking Competition (IISPC), hosted by MacLachlan College in Oakville. All three CDS competitors—Sasha, Adhya, and Charlize—delivered strong performances. Special congratulations to Adhya (center), who placed 3rd overall and was named the 2nd overall Canadian speaker, qualifying her for the World Championships in Shanghai, China, in March 2027! **PHOTO COURTESY OF CDS**

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THRILLS AND CHILLS AT SHEPPARD'S BUSH



Aurora got its Halloween celebrations started early on Saturday as the Town of Aurora hosted its ever-popular Haunted Forest event at Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area, with additional activities held at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. Hundreds of families descended on the event, many dressed in costume, to take in a number of attractions, including two trails depending on the thrill-and-chill level you could handle, on-trail scenes brought to light by Marquee Theatrical Productions, The Canadian Children's Theatre Company, Theatre Aurora, and dozens of volunteers of all ages – and, if you worked up an appetite along the way, the Optimist Club of Aurora was in place with their traditional barbecue.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

Welcoming Arms helps address housing challenges through Way Forward

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Welcoming Arms, the ecumenical organization founded 20 years ago to help residents in need make ends meet, navigate often challenging systems, and to simply stave off hunger, is adding another service in their menu of community programs: helping clients address housing challenges.

The Aurora-based organization has broadened their Way Forward program thanks to funding received from the Federal Reaching Home Strategy via the United Way. The grant funding is to address the needs of those experiencing – or in imminent risk of – homelessness.

The program, which operates as part of the Coordinated Access System in York Region, works in two streams: keeping individuals housed and getting them housed if there are not currently, according to Welcoming Arms Executive Director Sally Freitas.

“We’ve already in six months fully housed somebody, we’ve avoided a couple of evictions, and part of our funding is we take a housing first approach,” Freitas explains. “That’s prioritizing housing with a sense that once people are housed, you can also start working on other concerns or issues they might be dealing with. Sometimes having the stability of being housed can help move that process along.

“We are offering a year of wraparound support. Once folks are housed and successfully moved into that phase, then we can continue to support them. I think it’s really vital in terms of keeping people housed, because getting folks housed is one thing, and keeping them housed is another set of skills”

Those are skills Brooklyn, who was recently brought on board as Welcoming Arms Housing Case Manager, brings to the table.

As she shapes the program going forward, Brooklyn says it’s very important to keep things client-centred, “meet people where they are at,” and put their heads together on goals clients want to work towards.

“What I really like about this program is we do really want to fill the gaps that we’ve noticed within the system,” she says. “I think it’s the value of building that rapport, taking tiny steps to work towards their goals, and then going to housing once they feel they trust me, they have gotten all their ducks in a row, essentially, to get there. It’s not just like, ‘we need to house you’ and that’s it; we can work on things and slowly get there.”

Many clients, she says, are on Ontario Works, which is not enough to live on. That can be a barrier to clients even approaching them for services as oftentimes that income simply can’t cover a room to rent.

Income is a huge focus of the initiative, along with helping clients interested in finding employment shape what that might look like, whether it is connecting them with an employment agency, filling out applications, and even just providing support to make that all-important first call.

“Income is a big one, just not having enough money,” says Brooklyn, noting the essential role government-issued identification can play in the smooth path forward. “I.D. for unhoused folks is a big one; either they get stolen or misplaced, and you need I.D. to do a lot of things, unfortunately. If you lose it, then you’re kind of starting from square one, having to get that birth certificate and working from there. Then, little things – if they’re still dealing with any addiction or mental health issues, how does that impact their daily living and what does that mean for housing? We want people to be set up for success, so if they’re still working through some mental health and addiction, then maybe focusing on getting them supports for that, as opposed to just jumping straight into housing where they might not be able to maintain it long term.”

That’s where Housing Readiness comes in. This initiative offers a year of wraparound support for clients once everything is in order to move into the housing phase.

“When you’ve been experiencing

homelessness for X amount of time, you can lose those life skills like cooking, like cleaning, and how you maintain your home,” says Brooklyn. “The wraparound supports are very important: checking in on them, making sure they’re still okay, and if they’re falling behind in their rent or something like that, making sure that they feel comfortable at least reaching back out so that we can try to be proactive and maintain their housing before it reaches a point where they no longer could.

“I always say my goal is to work myself out of a job and when nobody needs the service anymore I know we’ve been successful, but there’s obviously definitely a need for it. I’ve noticed that maybe with a client for the first time they’re a little closed, maybe they don’t want to talk too much about anything. Then I see them the next week and maybe I’ll get a little bit more information. I even find small things like that a success because they went from not being comfortable talking to me at all to maybe three weeks in hearing everything that is going on.

“Long-term success [of this program] would be the amount of people we’ve housed, maybe the amount of evictions we’ve been able to prevent, how many people we’ve had to move from one spot to another, and how many referrals or connections to supports we were able to make.”

Citizen of the Year raises alarm bells over the state of community volunteerism

From page 9

“We’re celebrating four local not-for-profits tonight, all who do great work in making things better for our community. Keep in mind there are literally dozens of other not-for-profits that serve the Aurora area as well. Almost all of these groups survive on volunteers. For example, Welcoming Arms has two-and-a-half part-time staff and 175 active volunteers. Volunteers are essential to our continued operation. Here’s the problem: across Canada, volunteering participation has been declining

“According to Statistics Canada, formal volunteering rates dropped from 41% in 2018 to 32% in 2023. That’s a decline of nine percentage points in just five years, and the rates were dropping prior to that study. Not only have the numbers of volunteers dropped, but also the number of hours spent by those still volunteering has also dropped. Across Canada, the average annual contribution from volunteers fell from 206 hours in

2018 to 173 hours in 2023. These figures represent a significant loss of volunteer time. For organizations that depend on people giving their time to keep their programs running, that loss can be difficult to make up, especially when the need for their services continues to grow.

“Ontario’s requirement for high school students to complete 40 hours of community service is a worthwhile introduction to volunteering. It gives young people an opportunity to see firsthand what some of these organizations do, but completing those hours don’t necessarily mean that someone will continue volunteering as an adult. I think we need to look at how we encourage that involvement to continue after the school requirement has been met.

“These findings confirm what many in the non-profit sector have been feeling for some time. We’re coming to a critical juncture. With fewer donors, fewer volunteers, and increasing community needs, organizations are being pushed

to do more with less. Without active recruitment, volunteers are not being replaced at a sufficient pace to keep them viable. But recruitment is only part of the problem. We also need to retain the volunteers we already have. People need to feel their time is being put to good use, that their contribution is being appreciated, and that they can continue to be involved even when their circumstances change.

“If we don’t address these issues, there

could be some serious consequences. Organizations may eventually have to reduce programs, limit the number of people they can serve, or discontinue some services altogether. When that happens, the need doesn’t disappear. It simply places more pressure on families, other agencies, and the community as a whole. I don’t think we can afford to wait until organizations are struggling to keep their doors open before we start looking for solutions.”

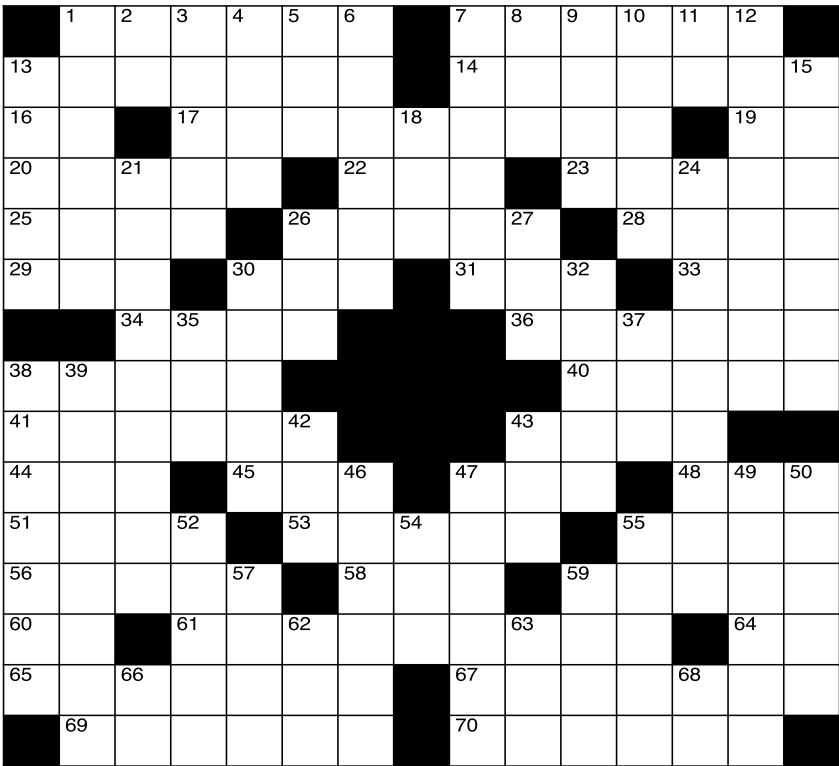


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CLUES ACROSS

- Spiritual leaders
- Containing salt
- Fortified wine
- Edible mollusk
- Blood type
- Make a comparison
- Government lawyer
- “Game of Thrones” actor Ciaran
- 8th month of the year (abbr.)
- Very willing
- __ ex machina
- Satisfies
- New Zealand mountain
- A doctrine
- Popular Dodge truck model
- Dekagram
- Naturally occurring solid material
- Company higher-up
- Villains
- Cricket frog genus
- Influential early psychologist
- Endured
- Servant
- You can get stuck in one
- __ and feather
- Passive optical network
- French ballet dynasty
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Forming a bottom layer
- Sound
- Yankees slugger Judge
- Dickens character
- Beloved late sportscaster Craig
- “The Mount Rushmore State”
- Sarcastic and critical
- Atomic #79
- Longtime Atlanta Braves pitcher
- Humor
- Shawl
- Preliminary assessment of patients

CLUES DOWN

- Animal disease
- Commercial
- Craft supplies
- Containers
- A way to save for your golden years
- Common Arabic greeting
- Bulged downward
- Acquired brain injury
- Lay about
- Intestinal
- Not yes
- In a way, pleased
- Messianic figure in Islam
- Resulting from intense conviction
- Not in
- Number above the line in a fraction
- Lawn pest
- Pouch
- Ancient language (abbr.)
- Start anew
- Wild flower
- Fourteen
- Graphical user interface
- Facing the same way
- Campaigns
- Touch lightly
- “Boardwalk Empire” actress Gretchen
- Violent seizure of property
- One who supports the Pope
- Malaise
- Body fluid
- Inauthentic person
- Title of respect
- Moth genus
- Central Japan city
- Silk garment
- Draw from
- Automobile
- A male
- Powerful government lawyer

Southlake invites residents to learn more about future of healthcare in Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

There are big changes on the horizon for Southlake Health, and the local hospital is inviting Aurora residents to learn more at an information session set for Monday, November 2.

The session will take place from 5 – 7 p.m. at Brevik Hall, within the Aurora Cultural Centre.

A formal presentation will take place at 5.30 p.m., but residents are invited to stop by at any time during the evening to speak with staff and review the

information provided.

“The open house will provide community members with an opportunity to hear directly from Southlake leaders, learn more about the future of health care across the Region, and ask questions about how Southlake’s plans will support the needs of growing communities,” say organizers.

“In April 2026, the Province of Ontario endorsed Southlake Health’s vision for a Distributed Health Network (DHN) and announced a \$10 million planning investment to support the redevelopment of Southlake’s Davis

Drive campus and the planning of a second acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury. Together, these hospital sites will serve as the anchors of a connected network of care that will also include community-based services delivered through Advanced Care Centres in Georgina and Bradford West Gwillimbury.

“As a regional hub for specialized and advanced care, Southlake serves patients from across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County, including through regional cardiac and cancer programs. For Aurora residents,

Southlake’s plans are part of a broader effort to connect services and care settings to better meet the needs of the region’s growing population. The open house will feature informational displays and opportunities to engage with Southlake leaders and subject matter experts, learn more about the DHN vision and ask questions about the future of health care across the region.”

For more information on Southlake Health’s Distributed Health Network and plans for campus redevelopment, visit southlakeDHN.ca.

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Gaertner, Gilliland, and Weese saluted for service at final meeting

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurorans went to the polls on October 26, and there are few certainties in any election. One guarantee, however, was the Council of 2026 – 2030 would have at least four new faces with the retirement of Councillors Wendy Gaertner and Ron Weese, the departure of Councillor Rachel Gilliland, and the decision of Councillor John Gallo seek the Mayor’s chair.

At the last regular meeting of the 2022 – 2026 Council term, and Gaertner, Gilliland, and Weese were lauded for their years of public service – and, in the case of Councillor Gaertner, more than two decades of continuous service on Council.

Leading the tributes was Councillor Gallo, who began with heartfelt words to Councillor Gilliland, who was then in the middle of her ultimately successful campaign to become Deputy Mayor in the Township of the Blue Mountains.

“For Rachel, Aurora has been much more than a place she represented. It is a place where her [family has called] home for nearly three decades, a community where she and her husband raised their family and a Town where her family connections reach back generations,” said Gallo. “Throughout her time on Council, Rachel brought energy, determination, and a strong commitment to the residents she represented. She was never afraid to ask questions, raise concerns, or advocate for an issue she believed was important to the community.”

Councillor Weese, said Gallo, brought “something very important to Council – a genuine passion for community,” a passion that was particularly reflected in his dedication to recreation, sport, trails and active transportation, accessibility, and staying active.

“Whether it was recreation, sports, trails, active transportation, accessibility, or simply encouraging people to get outside and be active, Ron consistently brought those issues forward because he believed they contributed to a healthier and stronger Aurora,” Gallo continued. “Ron has also demonstrated something I think is important in public service: you can disagree on an issue, debate it vigorously, vote differently, and still respect the people sitting around the table. I admire that trait. Persistence, which Ron has a lot of, comes from caring about the community and



Outgoing Councillors Ron Weese and Wendy Gaertner are pictured at September’s Council meeting.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

wanting to make it better.”

The final tribute went to Councillor Gaertner, who was first elected to Council 23 years ago.

Gallo said he and Gaertner had agreed and disagreed on many issues over the years, but that Gaertner’s genuine care for the community was never in question.

“Anyone who has served with Wendy knows she’s prepared. Wendy asks questions, then she asks follow-up questions, just like tonight. And occasionally, just when you think we’re ready to vote, Wendy finds one more question,” said Gallo with a smile. “Wendy believes our job around this table is not simply to accept what is put in front of us. It is to understand it, challenge it when necessary, and make sure that we are doing the right thing for Aurora.

“Nowhere has it been more evident than in her commitment to our environment. Long before environmental sustainability became something every municipality talked about, Wendy was talking about it. Her environmental involvement goes back years and her time on Council. She served on the Aurora’s Environmental Advisory Committee and later chaired it. Over the years, she has consistently raised issues involving our trees, our natural environment, energy use, climate change, stormwater infrastructure, and the long-term environmental consequences of the decisions that we make.

“Wendy has never been afraid to be the lone voice around this table. I really respect that. When six people were already ready to move and Wendy wasn’t convinced, well, we weren’t moving quite yet. That persistence can sometimes make Council meetings longer, but over the years, I have

come to appreciate something important about it: Democracy needs people who ask, ‘are we sure?’ It needs people who are willing to question the majority, to look at an issue differently, and sometimes to make the rest of us feel uncomfortable enough to take another look.”

Having served on Council together for several terms, Gallo said he respected Gaertner’s commitment and dedication to the Town.

“You have given an enormous amount of your life to Aurora,” Gallo continued. “You have been consistent, persistent, and yes, occasionally relentless, and I mean that as a compliment. Your voice has made a difference, your advocacy for our environment has made a difference, and Aurora is better for having had someone around the table who was always willing to ask one more question. Wendy, thank you for more than two decades of service to our community. Thank you for caring, thank you for your friendship, thank you for the contribution you have made to the Town we all love.

“As you leave the Council table for this second last time, I hope you do knowing that your voice mattered, your work mattered, and your years of service left their mark on Aurora. Twenty-plus years from now, people may not remember every debate we had or every vote we took, but they will enjoy the trees you fought for, the natural spaces you stood up for, and a community that is better because you cared enough to keep asking questions.”

Joining in the tributes was Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson. Suggesting he was expecting to make more fulsome comments at Council’s final meeting in November, which is often more of a farewell than a meeting that moves municipal business forward, he heralded Gaertner’s “contributions and dedication” and the service given to the Town by Gilliland and Weese.

Gilliland, who participated in the meeting virtually due to illness, also suggested she would have more to say on November 10, but said she appreciated Gallo’s remarks, which “took me by surprise.”

Gaertner, however, shared some insights into her political journey.

“In 2004, Councillor (John) West called me ‘a little mouse,’ and Councillor (Danir) Vrancic said that he wasn’t allowed to call me a little mouse. The next thing I

remember being called was, ‘I was like a dog with a bone.’ I wouldn’t give up,” said Gaertner, noting this tenacity was even reflected in a skit performed at the farewell party for a long-time department director, where she was depicted asking “just one more question.”

“Maybe the final interesting thing is that when the last meeting when Councillor (Evelyn) Buck was here, she came over to me and she said, ‘I wish we’d been on the same side.’ I took that as a compliment. Anyway, thank you both. It’s not easy to vote alone, but I got used to it!”

THINGS... you ought to know

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28
Garden Aurora's Speakers Series continues. Join us for free at The Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Pkwy North (lower rear entrance). Doors open at 7:00pm for second hand table, information exchange, exhibitions, coffee, and snacks. Come early to chat with friends over tea, or coffee, and enjoy snacks. Lug a mug for the environment. Speaker: Dugald Cameron: Hardy Hydrangeas. Dugald is a bulb specialist and is happy to answer questions about amaryllis etc. Photo competition and voting - send up to five photos to Donna Lewis before October 23. Speaker starts at 8:00 pm, followed by our flower show. For more information, please visit www.gardenaurora.ca.

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
Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, will host its annual Trinity Christmas Market today from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 79 Victoria Street, Aurora. Featuring artisan vendors, specialty coffee in their cafe, a silent auction, children's face painting, premium fashions from the Clothes Closet, a bake table and more. A hot and cold luncheon will be available from 11 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Come join us and get warmed by the Magic of Christmas.

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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