





Aurora's Community Newspaper

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The Auroran.com

**FREE** 

Week of July 3, 2025















Serving Aurora, York Region and surrounding areas for <u>25</u> years.

Community<sup>\*</sup> ROYAL LEPAGE

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#### Mayor aims for "balanced" budget approach after Councillors vote for 0% tax increase

BY BROCK WEIR

Mayor Mrakas lawmakers formally voted in favour residents. aiming for a 0% tax increase for the year ahead last week.

For full parade coverage, see Page 15.

June 24, formally signed off on a Councillor Harold Kim. told motion brought forward by Ward 5

Voting against the motion were drafting and presenting the Budget is Mayor Mrakas, Ward 4 Councillor

Council, on a vote of 4 - 3 on Michael Thompson, and Ward 6

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

While the majority of Council Councillors he would take a Councillor John Gallo calling on the voiced their position through the "balanced" approach to presenting Mayor to draft next year's budget vote, under Strong Mayor Powers Aurora's 2026 Budget this fall after with a one-year-only tax break for granted to communities like Aurora by the Provincial Government,

Continued on page 9









Jay Blues, a featured performer in the Aurora Cultural Centre's 2025-2026 Performing Arts Season, performed at Thursday evening's season launch at Town Square.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

#### Aurora Winter Blues Festival set for Cultural Centre revival

BY BROCK WEIR

The Aurora Winter Blues Festival will make its return to the community in 2026, hosted by the Aurora Cultural

Last held in 2019, and forcibly placed on the backburner due to COVID-19, its revival was announced by the Centre on Thursday evening as they launched their

Continued on page 16



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#### TOWN OF AURORA

## **NOTICE BOARD**

July 3, 2025



#### **Council & Committee Meetings**

**Date** Thursday, July 10 Committee of Adjustment Video Conference 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 16 Aurora Cultural Centre Board 7 p.m. School House Mtg Room

Location

\*Committee of the Whole, Public Planning and Council meetings are available to the public in-person and via

live stream on the Town's YouTube channel.

#### Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

**Time** 

#### Featured Artists: Beth Boudreau - Birds of a Feather

Growing up in a large family in the country, Beth spent most of her childhood exploring the fields and woods nearby. This created her love of nature where even a raindrop on a leaf inspired wonder! Beth has been painting nature for many years, exploring many styles and techniques. She works in various media: acrylic, oil, watercolour and collage. Painting with vibrant colours truly reflects her love of abstracted landscapes and nature subjects - such as birds and plants. Her "Birds of a Feather" exhibition comes as a result of many years observing, listening to, and capturing the essence of all species of birds. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.





The multi-use courts at Trent Park & Edward Coltham Park will be closed starting the week of July 1 through the week of August 24, weather permitting for court resurfacing.

The project includes full removal and replacement of the existing surface, installation of larger courts, acrylic colour surfacing, and fencing around the pickleball courts.

To find other courts during the closure, visit aurora.ca/Pickleball.



2025 final property tax bills have been mailed out and as the deadline approaches remember, there are many easy & convenient ways to pay final property taxes - including online via your banking institution, mail or pre-authorized payment. Learn more at: aurora.ca/PropertyTaxes.

#### **Document commissioning services**

We are pleased to offer document commissioning services at both Aurora Town Hall and the Joint Operations Centre. Our authorized staff are equipped to witness and sign your personal affidavits for a nominal fee. To schedule an appointment, please contact us at 905-727-1375.



#### 2025 Summer **Camps Program** Guide

Meeting

The 2025 Summer Camps Program Guide is available to view online at aurora.ca/SummerCamps. Registration is open for Summer Camps programs. View the interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C. or S.A.R.C.



A great workout perfect for beginners and

experienced dancers, ages 10+.



Register: aurora.ca/WhatsOn



#### What's Happening



#### **Concerts are free**

JULY 9

**JULY 16** 

**JULY 23** 

**JULY 30** 

Ultimate 80s Simply The Best

**Tribute to Tina Turner** 

X & Y - Tribute to Coldplay

No Sugar Tonight Tribute to The Guess Who, **Burton Cummings & BTO** 

For complete series line-up, please visit aurora.ca/SummerConcerts

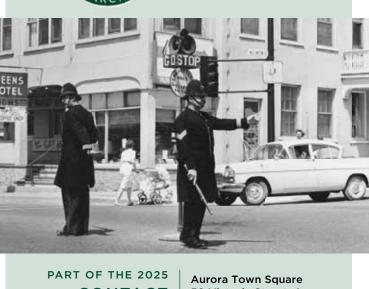
Food donations for the Aurora Food Pantry are greatly appreciated. Licensed beverages and food options available

for purchase on-site. For your seating comfort, please bring your own lawn chairs.

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[UN] FRAMED **IN FOCUS** 



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#### **Aurora Town Hall**











### Pole carvings at John Abel Park showcase local wildlife



A series of wooden pole carvings created by Ontario-based chainsaw artist Bobbi Switzer now take pride of place at John Abel Park, located on Hartwell Way. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

#### BY BROCK WEIR

John Abel Park, one of Aurora's newest greenspaces, is now an artistic destination following the installation of a series of wooden pole carvings immortalizing local wildlife.

The carvings, which were formally installed last week, are the works of noted

the park's position as a gateway to the our region home." David Tomlinson Nature Preserve.

touch to John Abel Park, blending seamlessly with the natural surroundings, said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. Ontario chainsaw artist Bobbi Switzer, a "They're a fantastic addition to one of

resident of the Bruce Peninsula, and reflect our most beloved green spaces, sparking not only the artistic passion of late deputy curiosity, encouraging outdoor exploration, mayor John Abel, who died in 2018, but and celebrating the diverse species that call

Announcing the new installation just off "These carvings add a unique artistic Hartwell Way, the Town saluted Switzer as "one of Canada's pioneering professional female chainsaw artists" who has been working in the medium for nearly 15 years.

"There's so much beauty in nature and

that's my inspiration," Switzer tells The Auroran. "I myself live in the bush and am inspired daily by my surroundings, which is an all-natural setting, and I just kind of carve what I see in nature."

Before becoming a chainsaw artist, Switzer says she was a children's book illustrator and fine arts painter, but shifted to a very different medium as a way to realize her vision.

"I stumbled upon chainsaw carving and loved it because now I can create something three-dimensional in my mind and bring it to reality," she says. "As it's three dimensional, you can walk around it, you can touch it, and everything that came from your mind...you can touch and people can experience. I love painting, don't get me wrong, but you just look at it, where other ones you can touch it, walk around, see it behind and you can experience it fully, that idea that was in the artist's mind."

When she was commissioned by the Town to create the sculptures, the task was simple enough: capturing the wildlife that was native to the area, including the trumpeter swan, which has made a comeback in Ontario thanks to the efforts of late Aurora resident Harry Lumsden.

"They basically said, whatever you want to do, as long as we can keep the native wildlife, [so] I was able to do not just animals, but also incorporate some of the plant life, like the trillium, some cattails and whatnot, and I guess it just really suited everything they wanted to portray in the carvings," says Switzer, noting that initially the plan included making the carvings out of poles that had been donated to the Town, but they ultimately opted for Ontario white cedar for durability, its resistance to bugs, and the artistic grain within the wood.

"I am very happy and pleased with how this all turned out," she continues. "I've got

Continued on page 19



- **BUILDING FEATURES AND FINISHES**
- LUXURIOUS ROOF TOP TERRACES WITH BBQ STATIONS
- HIGH SMOOTH CEILINGS
- HARDWOOD FLOORING
- FLOOR TO CEILING WINDOWS
- PREMIUM 6-PIECE APPLIANCES
- SMART HOME SYSTEM
- 15 COMMERCIAL UNITS
- PREMIUM GOLF COURSES
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#### Considering the Canadian identity

With all Canada Day talk about "elbows up patriotism" and rejection of American "annexation," perhaps we should recall W. L. Morton (1908-1980), a committed Canadian nationalist, a "red tory," and a man whose ideas might neither attract Mark Carney nor be understood by Pierre Poilievre.

In his book, "The Canadian Identity" (ironically published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1972), Morton argued that the USA was born of revolution. In a singular violent episode it separated from Britain and became the first "new nation." Canada would later choose peaceful evolution instead.

Revolution is like a religious conversion. It rejects the past but must replace it with a replacement civil faith. America's was formed from inherent contradictions. It championed freedom but embraced slavery. It implied democracy but revolutionary Alexander Hamilton disdained the "people" as a "great beast."

It lauded "equality," but John Jay, its first Supreme Court Chief Justice, declared that the country "should be run by the people who own it." Its founding slogan was "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (happiness being code for money—not the having of it, but the right to compete for it).

Its revolutionary myth-dream, which no one fully understood, but to which all were required to swear allegiance, provided the ultimatum: "America: Love It or Leave It!"

Canada didn't happen that way. Built upon a combination of British, French, and American "loyalists" (but with little acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples), Canada needed no new ideology to justify dramatically breaking with tradition. When the time came to separate slowly, stepwise, and peacefully, we adopted the slogan "peace, order, and good government" as our formula for nationhood.

Canadians were united at the top by a common lawful "allegiance" to the Crown, rather than on a "covenant" joining people to a homogenous common culture at the bottom.

Constitutional monarchy, after all, requires no common language, no established religion, and no uniform political ideology. As long as we agree to live under the rule of law, to respect differences, and to pursue various versions of happiness without forcing our views on others, we can enjoy a peaceable kingdom.

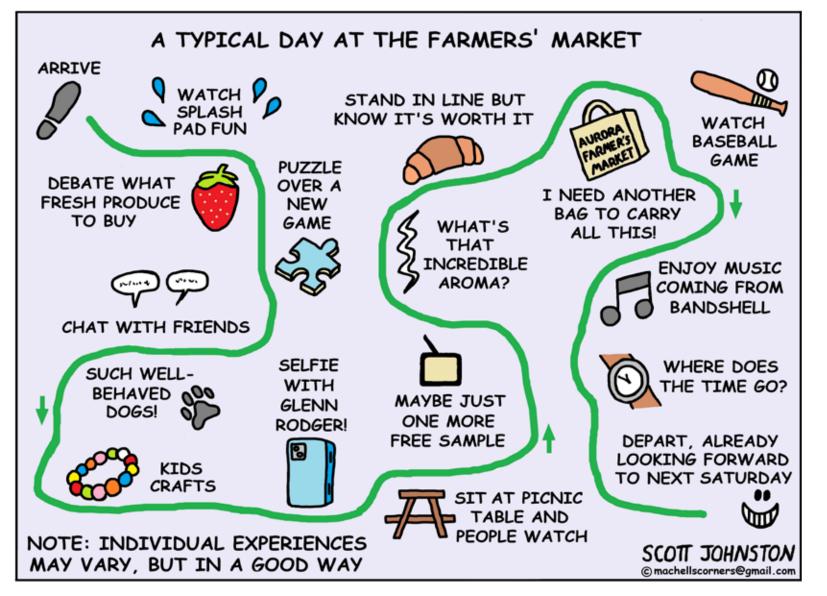
Now, of course, Morton's "red tory" dream of patrician democracy with an accepted authority, public services for all, a skeptical attitude toward technology, and a cautious approach to change has been purged from the nolonger-progressive Conservative Partyrelentlessly American in tone and texture; but it is worth remembering what our ancestors imagined when they sought to build a humane alternative to American liberalism on the northern half of the continent.

In 1965, George Grant (1918-1988) "Lament for a Nation," his premature obituary for Canada. Morton followed with "The Canadian Identity." In between, the radical wing of the NDP (curiously called "the Waffle") articulated and advanced specific policies to free Canada from American economic domination. Some genuine conservatives and some democratic socialists created a vision of a better Canada. The time was not right.

A half-century later, we must figure it out again. I respectfully suggest that we pay attention to the likes of Grant and Morton as well as to the demands and strategies for social justice and equity from the legacy of the left. Witlessly waving flags while indebting ourselves to the US "military-industrial complex" may not be our best alternative. Things could be otherwise.

> Howard A. Doughty Oak Ridges

#### **Machell's Corners**



#### **Brain Drains?**

How often do you climb up to shake a few branches of your family tree?

Maybe I'm something of an outlier, but just who came before me, and whose ingredients, no matter how diluted, now flow through my veins has always fascinated

It's trivial, to be sure, but as far as trivia goes, it often does spark the imagination. Even if some people like to pre-emptively throw cold water on your findings!

Genealogists in the know, for instance, often say that if you have just a single ancestor of English descent, no matter far back, chances are more than likely you're descended from Edward III, who reigned between 1327 and 1377. If, by any chance, your branches somehow missed Edward, you can most likely claim regal descent, whatever your background, from either Charlemagne or Genghis Khan – two very well-travelled and apparently busy men.

With that in mind, how can anyone not find the topic at least marginally interesting?

When I was a university student with a negligible social life, I took the opportunity to trace the branches of my family in earnest – and, thanks to the work of people who were bitten by the bug far earlier than me, I could trace some of my relatives back to the 1400s.

Some of my favourite findings were of the regal variety, but others were just plain neat—such as a 15th century female forebear on my paternal grandmother's side who was apparently imprisoned in a Swiss castle for alleged witchcraft... and subsequently made a daring escape, rappelling down the side of a turret at the stated age of 98... a claim that surely didn't lend any gravitas to those witchcraft accusations, but I digress... I was heartened that even back then sisters – or, in this case, x-times great-grandmothers were doing it for themselves!

While my interest waned somewhat in the years since my university days, there was one nagging question about a matter on my paternal side I was never able to answer and rekindled a near-cold research ember last month.

It relates to a family story which was passed down strictly through oral tradition rather than with any written record. With no paper trail, I've often wondered whether it was a true tale, or a tall tale spun to cover socially less acceptable at the time.

This latest climb up my family tree revealed little in either direction, but it did yield another x-times-great grandmother with the unlikely name of "Mary Christmas" back in the 1600s, so it wasn't an entirely fruitless mission.



#### **BROCK'S BANTER**

**Brock Weir** 

endures, and it's really a testament to the devices we always have ready, accessible power of oral tradition.

interesting podcast on how our language – and our use of it – has shifted over time. The first installment that caught my attention without looking at their screen are, in my took a deep dive into Queen Elizabeth experience, few and far between. II's first televised Christmas Message in 2021. The focus was how her vowels, word selection, and general communication style evolved over time, and why certain inflections endured over 60-odd years while time is going by just a little bit faster than it others did not.

pointed out, the monarch in this preteleprompter era had a copy of the speech close at hand, which she glanced at from time to time, but the vast majority of the script was clearly committed to memory.

"70 years ago, it was just a little more normal to speak to our history of oral storytelling lost for the most part with modernization. Reading, memorizing, reciting used to be a huge part of Western culture. When I think about it, I believe we're giving up something very tragic there to the convenience of proper grammar. To employ it requires a certain amount of respect and a standard of education. It means something, it promotes a higher culture, one that considers such things. And now, we just offload that [integral] part of our entire history to Grammarly and spellcheck."

for something that might have been – well, luddite, here was one gem of wisdom found in the cesspool that is so often the comments section of YouTube.

> Don't get me wrong, there's very little value in recitation and memorization within education just for memorization and recitation's sake; there has to be some journal? sort of practical volume or demonstratable

reason why this bit of knowledge needs to be permanently etched into our grey matter, but perhaps the simple act of doing so is the most basic brain exercise we have.

It's not even a matter of recitation and memorization of facts, figures, and poetry.

Not too long ago, my grandmother, who died in 2012, took exceptional pride in her ability to remember telephone numbers of friends and acquaintances going back decades, regardless of whether or not the person assigned to the number was still alive to pick up. Useless knowledge, particularly where the deceased are concerned, or so I thought.

Nowadays, with the ability to store Yet, despite no evidence, it's a story that numbers, handles, and email addresses in wherever we happen to be or whatever we Last week, I happened upon an happen to be doing, the number of people who can spout off any number other than their own with complete confidence

In the time since the Global Pandemic, 1957 compared to her final broadcast in people have said the passage of time feels just slightly different than it did in the "before times."

I can't say I disagree. It often feels like did, with special occasions like Canada Day, In the first broadcast, one commenter creeping up with accelerating speed each year. But maybe it's a factor that we don't need to be as conscious of time in the ways we once were.

We're automatically reminded of the big stuff. We don't have to be clock conscious "Just a totally different time," they wrote. because we know there's one in our pocket ready at a moment's notice; we don't have to drum appointments into our heads and that's one of the many things we've before we forget because we'll get automatic reminders. Heck, we often don't even need to enter them into a calendar ourselves, all done automatically and with barely a thought.

Even reminiscences are something we modern technology. It's like language and don't really need to worry about. Instead of sharing some nostalgia with friends, family or other loved ones on a special anniversary, or even when something inconsequential triggers some unexpected recollections, we have the Memories feature on any number of platforms to do the heavy lifting for us.

But, how many memories, skills, and While I'd hate to ever be considered a mental muscle flexes are we leaving behind us in the process, confident that all of our devices, apps and programs will have our backs? How do we safeguard them in the event of any number of glitches?

Rote memorization? Stories around a campfire? A good, old-fashioned diary or

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What are you doing?

Letters

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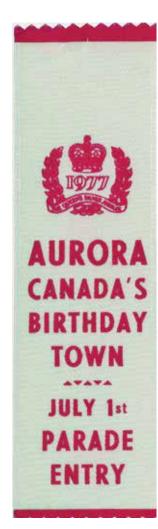
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To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@lpcmedia.ca. Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m

News Media Canada Médias d'Info Canada



The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating... Canada Day!



To say Aurora was ahead of its time in celebrating July 1st would be a big understatement. On June 9, 1969, the Town of Aurora Council approved a proclamation establishing Aurora as Canada's Birthday Town! It wasn't until the early 1980s that it became a standard for local municipalities to observe July 1st as a proper holiday - and that took incentives and encouragement from the Federal Government. The 1969 celebrations attracted 15,000 people and were broadcast nationally on the CBC. The party was such a hit that the Town of Aurora made it an annual affair. Here's a ribbon from the 1977 parade (84.3.21). Happy Canada Day from Aurora, Canada's birthday town!



Ihope everyone in Newmarket—Aurora had a joyful and meaningful Canada Day! It's always heartening to see our community come together in celebration of our shared values—freedom, unity, and the enduring spirit of the True North, strong and free.

This month, I'm proud to highlight several significant investments that will make a lasting impact in our community.

First, our government is providing \$6.89 million to York Region to help transition individuals out of encampments and into safe, stable housing. This funding supports critical projects such as Inn From the Cold's New Home on Yonge Street, St. Mark's Apartments, and the Gorham Street Community Housing Redevelopment. These initiatives will increase shelter capacity, add transitional spaces, and provide wraparound supports that restore dignity and opportunity to some of our most vulnerable neighbours.

Second, I was honoured to announce \$1.09 million in one-time funding for the to participate from home. launch of the York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre. This new 24/7 the launch of Communauté du Trille facility will support individuals aged 12 Blanc's Village Vitalité programme. This and up facing mental health and addiction Francophone-led initiative will deliver challenges. With 10 crisis beds and 10 withdrawal management beds, it will reduce strain on emergency departments and offer culturally appropriate care, delivered with compassion and dignity. This Centre and financial literacy sessions to lifestyle inspiring July!

#### **DIALOGUE WITH DAWN**

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

represents a transformative step forward in providing timely, community-based mental health support. The opening of this centre is scheduled for 2027.

I'm also thrilled to share that Newmarket—Aurora is receiving combined \$100,000 investment through Ontario's Seniors Active Living Centres (SALC)programme—an initiative designed to keep seniors engaged, connected, and thriving. This includes the creation of the Virtual Aurora Seniors Centre, which will offer accessible digital programming like fitness classes, social events, and educational workshops—making it easier for seniors facing transportation or mobility challenges

In addition, I was pleased to announce inclusive, health-focused activities tailored for Francophone and Francophile seniors, supporting their wellbeing and community connection. From elder abuse prevention

and wellness classes, both of these SALC programmes are helping older adults across our community stay active, healthy, and socially connected.

These two projects are part of Ontario's plan to establish up to 100 new SALC programmes across the province, backed by a \$17 million investment over three years. By supporting municipalities, nonprofits, and community organisations, we're ensuring that older Ontariansregardless of where they live or what language they speak—can age with dignity, purpose, and meaningful connection.

Together, these announcements reflect the spirit of the 2025 Ontario Budget, which focuses on protecting jobs, strengthening the economy, and supporting Ontario families. Whether it's through housing stability, accessible mental health services, or empowering seniors to thrive at home, we are building a more caring, inclusive Ontario—one that responds to local needs and lifts every corner of our community.

Thank you to the local organisations who are making these initiatives a reality—Inn From the Cold, Blue Door, CMHA York Region South Simcoe, Communauté du Trille blanc and the Town of Aurora. Your work is vital, and I'm proud to support it.

Wishing you all a safe, vibrant, and



"Your house is your home only when you feel you have jurisdiction over the space" - Joan Kron

As a baby boomer, after my children grew up, got married, at least one of them, they both had moved away. Thank goodness it wasn't too far off. For the first time, our home became immaculate, dust was nowhere to be found, and each room was as picturesque as if it came from a home and gardens magazine.

Rooms were empty but clean and tidy for the very first time, it was a sight to behold. Yes, you caught it, "was" and then one of our children moved back due to some financial strains along with an extra. A four-legged feline who has the most adorable little disposition and face moved in with my son. However, the constant hairs found everywhere and every moment, has been a losing battle of trying to keep up with the cleaning.

I am not complaining, I adore them both, but how we care about our home is a subtle but significant expression of our own self-esteem. I love our home as it has been a refuge for all who enter and find asleep.

into your home, here are four old

#### **Senior Scape**

BY CHRISTINA DOYLE

quality of your daily life beginning today. Whisper them into your family's ear.

If you take it out, put it back; If you open it, close it; If you throw it down, pick it up; If you take it off, hang it up.

No home is perfect and instead it pays to take a softer, more light-hearted approach.

In therapy, they say talk to yourself like you're talking to a friend, and the same can be said for our homes. Instead of criticizing, offer your home your compassion. Forget material objects and focus on all things your grateful your home has given you. That might be laughter around the dinner table, a warm embrace at the end of the day or the sense of safety you get when you fall

To jump-start the bringing of order abundant life no matter where they live if for one is to keep smiling especially fashioned rules that can change the when times get tough. However, just the month filled with friendship and love.

act of smiling triggers hormones in the body associated with happiness.

So, if you are a senior or are a caregiver, encourage your loved one to smile in the mirror when first waking up in the morning. Starting off with a smile may set a positive tone for the whole day.

Make the most of your outdoor space, whether it is a backyard, a balcony or a sunny window, find plants that thrive in your home. Make it your concern to care for them and reap the rewards of watching them bring much color and joy to your home.

However, if none of these apply to you, then try your best to get outside and enjoy nature.

The sound of the birds, a waterfall, the warm sunshine, the gentle breeze and the air blowing in your hair and on your face are the best kind of remedy for depression and your mental and emotional health - no matter your age. Just sitting in this kind of setting will work wonders for you and your loved one. Bring a thermos of tea and Every senior can be happy and live an a few cookies and you have the most beautiful and memorable afternoon.

Dear readers, enjoy this warm

#### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

#### Open letter to Premier Ford, Province from pflag

I'm Tristan, President of pflag Canada York Region. I'm writing to you to acknowledge your government's recent efforts over the last year. I do feel compelled to send you one more letter in my capacity as President before I step down at the end of the month to highlight other ways your government can support our community. Funding is important, but so are actions which leave no room to question your government's unwavering support of our community.

biggest opportunity surrounds access to gender affirming care for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Non-Conforming individuals. Access to this care, and public opinion, are increasingly impacted by effective campaigns of disinformation involving the use of arguments around "grooming", "gender ideology", and "parental rights". Such disinformation campaigns have been successful, and have been used in provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan as the foundation for discriminatory legislation.

Here, they have been used by some members of your government with organizations like ours quick to offer our criticism. Such language and action is lifethreatening with rates of suicidal ideation amongst trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals 14 times higher than that of the general population.

Today in Ontario, wait lists are growing at institutions in Toronto like Sick Kids and Women's College Hospital. The wait list for CMHA York Simcoe's Gender Affirming Clinic remains precariously open, but waits are months long and the program itself has shutdown intake in the past for up to a year.

Family doctors and endocrinologists who offer support to the community ask their patients refrain from sharing their services in fear of being overrun and limiting their ability to provide other health care needs. Additionally, supporting and treating individuals who decide to access puberty blockers or hormone replacement therapy is specialized training most family doctors are unequipped to provide. Access overall is sparse and difficult to navigate.

Your government voted against the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee which, if passed, would have mandated a study, in partnership with organizations to study the gaps in this area of health care and provide recommendations. Such work can be done with or without this act, but a lack of follow up from your government to address the matter is troubling.

Though no legislation or directive exists in Ontario, the impression left with school boards have led to actions of "outing" kids before they are ready to connect with their parents in spite of the protections for gender identity and gender expression under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Anecdotal reports of these actions have made their way to us. Our organization will soon be taking our own actions to hold York Region school boards accountable in absence of leadership from the boards and from your government.

I would be remiss to also remind you and anyone reading this letter of the reasons your government originally chose to participate in the York Pride March rather than Toronto, originally citing the participation of police. We want to remind you of the historical and present experiences our community members have with law enforcement. Though very strong in-roads have been made in York Region, we fully support Pride Toronto's decision to keep the Toronto Police Service out of marching in Pride.

Marching in Pride is sacred. It is a right, not a privilege. We have expressed this position to our partners at York Pride and have encouraged them to apply pressure where necessary to ensure your government continues to act in the interests of our community. Especially since your government has lacked engagement with organizations like ours despite our efforts to reach out. I challenge that there is still work to be done, and despite your recent

Continued on page 18

#### Young leaders of today honoured with **Leaders of Tomorrow scholarship**

John West Memorial Scholarship honours community contributions

BY BROCK WEIR

Hailey Graham and Dabria Peta-Dragos have already made indelible marks on the Aurora and York Region communities as powerful advocates for their peers and, as they prepared to graduate high school last week, they were recognized as Leaders of Tomorrow.

Graham and Peta-Dragos were honoured in Council Chambers on Tuesday night with the John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship.

Presented by the Town of Aurora each year to up to two students, and funded by a beguest to the Town of Aurora for this purpose by the late mayor John West, the Leaders of Tomorrow scholarships recognize the achievements of senior students attending high school in Aurora community as the Student Council and who are moving on to post-secondary

education at either university or college.

The recent grads were introduced to Council by Sparrow Als, Youth Programmer for the Town of Aurora, but many of the community contributions made by the recipients needed little introduction for local lawmakers.

"Hailey's story is that of courage, perseverance, and advocacy," said Als. "Working hard to overcome personal struggles early in life, Hailey became an active voice, advocating for others who didn't feel as though they had a place amongst their peers. Through her position with York Region District School Board's Youth Space Mental Health Initiative, she's had the opportunity to lead symposiums on mental health awareness across York Region, using the results to design and implement a number of board-level projects that have been implemented in over 100 York Region schools.

"Hailey her serves immediate president of her school, Dr. G.W. Williams,



Dabria Peta-Dragos and Hailey Graham are this year's recipients of the 2025 John West Memorial Scholarship. The graduates are pictured outside Town Hall last week after receiving their recognition in Council Chambers. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

where she ensures that she focuses on Observership where she shadowed Toronto promoting inclusivity and creating opportunities for all students to engage with their communities and thrive. Hailey McMaster University where she's been utilized her passion and skill in music to co-create a brass quintet that has received national acclaim. Despite her busy schedule and high level of accommodation, Hailev makes sure that her ensemble finds time to support initiatives that give back to her give back by performing at the Chartwell Retirement Community for residents."

a familiar face at Town Hall where she served two years as co-chair of Aurora's Youth Engagement Committee (YEC).

"As a leader of the YEC, Dabria was integral in connecting the Town of Aurora's recreation team and the Aurora youth the scope of her initiatives and impact," community. She helped design, promote, and implement countless events and initiatives to connect youth to the Town, Aurora, Mayor and Council are incredibly and more importantly, to one another," said Als. "Along with her involvement with the YEC, Dabria has received honors for being the first ever two-term president of the York Secondary Catholic Presidents Council, where she represented the voice of over 50,000 secondary students.

Catholic District School Board to launch centre of the Chamber. and sustain a record number of Boardto Spotlight of the Month, Good News families in Nunavut. Dabria's advocacy and leadership extends beyond youthspecific engagements. Dabria spends Retirement Home, where she spends time and residents."

of the University Health Network's STEM future holds for both of you."

Genera Hospital's chief thorasic surgeon.

This fall, Peta-Dragos is headed to accepted into its Health Sciences program where Als said she "hopes to continue exploring her passion for medicine during her time at school while continuing to community."

Graham, on the other hand, is headed Peta-Dragos, on the other hand, is to the University of Guelph for arts and sciences where "she hopes to continue to exercise her personal pillars of advocacy, public service, and mentorship through university and into the workforce, drawing on her Auroran experience as she widens said Als.

> "Hailey and Dabria, the Town of proud of your accomplishments and contributions to our Town. We are honoured to present you both with the 2025 John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship Award," said Als.

This sentiment was echoed by Mayor Tom Mrakas after this year's recipients "Dabria has used her role with the York were congratulated by lawmakers in the

"On behalf of the Town of Aurora, we wide initiatives, including but not limited are extremely proud and I know that you guys are excited to...begin the journey, the Movement, Where Are They Now? and next chapter of your lives as you go out... most notably, Secret Santa Presents for into the world, into university. I think we're Indigenous Children, where she organized excited for you and I know you're very a gift drive for underprivileged Indigenous excited," he said. "We know you're going to do great things and we know you're going to make Aurora proud.

"There's lots of things that Aurora the little free time she has volunteering should be proud about, about many people. at Southlake Hospital and Chartwell There's a lot on the sporting side, but you guys are on another side, which we should providing support and comfort to patients all be tremendously proud about. We know that we have such a bright future when we Along the way, Peta-Dragos has been see youth, just like yourselves, stepping up nominated for several scholarships and and taking action. Thank you for what you awards, and was the youngest-ever recipient do and we look forward to seeing what the







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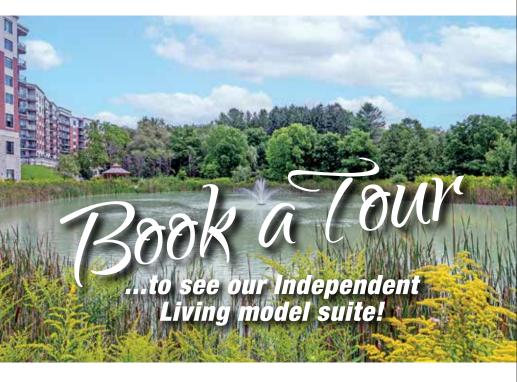
Aurora's Canada Day celebrations were a two-day affair this week, getting off to an early start on Monday night as the community came together for the annual Dance in the Park, the traditional beginning of celebrating Canada's Birthday in Canada's Birthday Town. Held at Town Park, the evening's festivities included performances from North of the Border, a five-piece cover band dedicated to presenting music by Canadian artists, and Tangent, which bills itself as "not your average dad band," as well as the Rotary Beer Garden.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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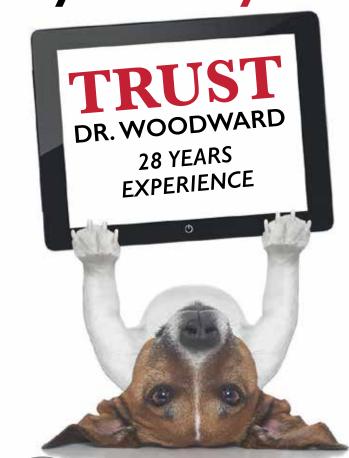




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## BUSINESS FINANCE



#### Regional Mental Health Centre gets Provincial boost as it eyes 2027 opening

BY BROCK WEIR

York Region's Mental Health and Community Care Centre is eyeing an opening in "early 2027" following a fresh infusion of cash from the Provincial Government.

The project, which will be led by the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS) in Newmarket, received a significant boost in support from the Ontario Ministry of Health on Thursday afternoon when Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy presented the project with a one-time grant of \$1,095,100.

The grant is intended to help the CMHA-YRSS in start-up costs as work continues to transform a disused commercial building on Yonge Street into a place where all can come to receive immediate mental health care interventions and referrals.

"Mental health is deeply personal to so many of us, whether it's a family member, a friend, a neighbour, even ourselves," said MPP Gallagher Murphy. "Today, I am truly proud to be able to stand before you and announce that our government is investing \$1,095,100 in one-time funding for the [year] 24-25 to support the first year of facility and start-up costs for the new York Region Mental Health and



Rebecca Shields, CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe joined Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor, members of the CMHA-YRSS team, and project supporters last week for a funding announcement related to the upcoming regional mental health centre. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Community Care Centre.

"This new 24-7 community-based facility will offer critical support to individuals in mental health crises. Once open, the hub will provide up to 10 crises and stabilization beds. The Centre will be the first of its kind in York Region, providing care for individuals age 12 and up. Through its integrated approach and strong partnerships, it will guide people to the next step in their

recovery and away from emergency most. rooms that are already stretched thin."

CMHA-YRSS that the June 26 deserving or equity denied-groups, all announcement was "one of many to come" and acknowledged the the Black community, from different organization's "passion, leadership and ethno-cultural communities, care" within the communities it serves.

by Rebecca Shields, CEO of the place for those when they come - a CMHA-YRSS.

Shields said she was grateful for Gallagher Murphy's "tireless advocacy" both on the mental health file and in what's going to happen after. Working making this Centre a reality – and she with all of our other mental health and noted the ongoing work behind the social care partners from Addiction scenes to make it a reality as well.

Shields, standing in front of the community providers, primary care, stripped-back building which was most on how do we make those referrals and recently a Mission Thrift Store which transitions? Because if you're going moved to a space across the street two to make sure somebody's first mental years ago. "Over the past year, we've health crisis is their last, you have to done a lot of site preparation work, a make sure that they're connected to lot of the capital planning work, we've the right supports that they need." been inside removing the mold, fixing all the soil testing and getting read.

we cost out in this next stage. "We're happy to be on site as we need help." prepare over the next year to get our police and paramedics on how we bring people into the Centre. We've really excited about that because this is what it's all about: ensuring that people get the right immediate access the Lead the Way campaign, visit www. to specialised care when they need it thecentre-yr.ca.

"We've also been working with our Gallagher Murphy assured the partners to look at all of our equitythe way from youth, individuals from Indigenous partners, to ensure that This appreciation was reciprocated this is a culturally safe and welcoming lot of planning work around health equity. We've also been engaging in a tremendous amount of work as to Services of York Region, all the "We are making progress," said way from our shelters and our other

To bring the facility fully into up the roof, and we've been doing all fruition, Shields noted the CMHAthe excavations. We've been doing all YRSS' Lead the Way capital campaign the site permitting, we've been doing is ongoing, allowing residents at large "to make the difference and make the With the support of the Town of experience in this hub what it's really Newmarket, we got our zoning bylaw meant to be, which is somewhere amendment, so we are ready to go as where people feel welcome [and] this is where they want to come when they

"Whether your age is 12 and up, those shovels in the ground, but really and you're coming because you have to get the renovation going. On the anxiety or you're coming because planning side, we have six committees you're having trouble with substance up and running. These committees abuse or alcohol, this is a place where range from our first responders like you're going to get the care and the supports we need," Shields concluded. "Thank you again to the Government been able to submit documents and of Ontario for ensuring that we can attestations around having this centre continue to do this work and get ready as an alternate destination, and we're to open the doors, hopefully early in 2027."

If you are interested in contributing to







#### Potential funding models in September will determine future of windrow removal

BY BROCK WEIR

September pending new funding models coming forward to Council.

on the 2024-2025 Windrow Removal Pilot Program, in which staff identified several concerns about the ongoing viability of the program. Questions were raised over to eligible residents, how much applicants might need to pay, and costs to secure plowing equipment to make the program more efficient.

While staff recommended the Town scrap the program altogether, Council importance of making this program members were unwilling to call it a day just yet, giving staff – and themselves – more time to explore different funding models, including raising the costs for eligible residents to subscribe to the program, or even stipends to eligible residents helping them to secure private snow removal

by the Operational Services Department, was a more accurate reflection of typical expectations. It should be made clear to

winter conditions, with eight deployments and a total snowfall accumulation of The future of Aurora's windrow 188 centimetres, more than double removal program will be determined in the previous year," said the Town in a statement following last week's meeting. "The program faced several operational Lawmakers last week received a report challenges due to the increased snowfall and limitations of the equipment used."

While Council voted to look at different models, last year's pilot program received a thumbs-down from resident Jordan the ongoing cost of delivering the program Drodge who said he agreed with staff concerns that the program "is not effective and putting the Town at risk of potential liability and claims" – but said there was definite room for improvement.

"I would like to speak more to the work," he said. "The staff who attempted to implement this service should be commended for their efforts, despite the initial pilot being doomed to failure due to inadequate resources and misaligned expectations from the participants.

"As stated in [the staff report] the spirit "The second year of the pilot, delivered of the service that the Town attempted to provide was not in line with residents'

program participants that the Town's Windrow Clearing Service is not intended to meet the service level of perfection that one might expect with private snow clearing services, but to provide emergency access and ease the burden on our emergency personnel when they are responding to residents' distress calls."

Drawing a personal connection to the program, he said amid the heavy February snows earlier this year, he twisted his ankle in his driveway and was unable to get up.

"By the time the paramedics arrived and we were on our way to the hospital, nearly a full hour had passed in what could be described as the best-case scenario for these conditions at the time," he continued. "Had the driveway not been cleared, it would have been much more stressful on the first responders and taken additional time to get me to the ambulance, time that could make the difference between life and death for someone else in need of their services.

"With our aging population of seniors, those with disabilities, and the increasingly poor cardiovascular health amongst all age groups, the strain on emergency services responding to cardiac and other injury

they believed Mayor and Staff

could accomplish its objectives with

leadership team are capable of being

able to do this work," said Ward

1 Councillor Ron Weese. "We've

looked at the last budget, we look at

where trimming is possible, and I am

in favour of it – and I think it's the

right thing to do for an empathetic

"I have great expectations that the

minimal impact.

events is only going to increase. This puts not only the residents, but the responders themselves at increased risk of injury and burnout. This problem is expected to become so prevalent that I have taken pre-emptive steps to ensure at least one automated external defibrillator is publicly available within my neighbourhood.

"I strongly believe that with some guidance and proper allocation of resources, through mutual assistance, this windrow removal program can provide a type of combined insurance to achieve its intended result and not only reduce the risks to residents most in need of this service, but to our first responders as well who work so very hard to ensure the safety and well-being of us all."



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#### Council has different views on 0% tax increase suggestion

From page 1

now under the purview of the Mayor. Speaking to his motion last week, Councillor Gallo said he was bringing it forward with "a clear and focused objective to deliver a 0% tax increase in 2026... without compromising service levels or our long-term fiscal

sustainability."

"Aurora residents are feeling the ongoing effect of inflation, highinterest rates, and rising household costs," said Councillor Gallo. "As a municipality we have an obligation to demonstrate resistance and empathy during these challenging times. This motion charts a responsible course that balances affordability for residents and continued investment in our Town's future. The foundation of our tax rate stabilization reserve, which currently holds a balance of \$6.4 million. My motion proposes using a small portion, approximately \$630,000, to fund the 1% fiscal strategy contribution that typically goes forward towards our capital reserves. This allows us to maintain infrastructure commitments without raising taxes in 2026.

"Let me be clear: the use of this reserve is targeted, temporary, and well within our financial means. The remaining reserve balance remains strong, and any impact on future years will be minimal, especially as we direct staff to explore a comprehensive set of cost containments and efficiency strategies. This includes freezing non-essential hiring, delaying lowpriority capital projects, identifying grant opportunities, and reviewing our service levels for efficiencies, all while keeping service levels intact for our residents. This motion also calls for meaningful public engagement so that residents have a voice in was shaping our budget that reflects the Thompson contended. needs and priorities.

compassionate, and forwardthinking budget approach, one that keeps services strong, puts residents first, and protects our financial health. I respectfully ask for Council's support, and the Mayor send a strong message to the residents of Aurora that he is paying attention, he cares, and is prepared to move forward with a 0% tax increase for 2026."

Mayor Mrakas, however, said that he "always listens to residents" and will, alongside staff, "look for every efficiency we possibly can to make sure that we deliver the best possible budget and continue to provide the best possible service at the best possible price."

"That is our obligation to the residents of the community, and of this approach lies in the strength we've been doing that for a very long time," he said. "This is why we take a balanced approach to it, and I will not harm the future of our community for something... that...many economists call fiscally irresponsible."

Indeed, these views were shared by Councillors Thompson and Kim, with the Ward 4 representative questioning Town Treasurer Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel whether a 0% tax increase in 2026 would put Aurora behind the financial eightball in 2027 and going forward.

"If we do a one-time draw from the tax stabilization reserve for \$630,000 that would be used for 2025, we would need to catch up on that for the remaining nine years of the 10-year plan," she said, referring to Aurora's 10-Year Budget Forecast. "It would be somewhere around \$5.7 million that we would lose in capital funding for tax-funded projects, unless we replace that in the future with higher tax increases."

This figure of \$5.7 million "not minimal," Councillor

But Councillors who ultimately "In summary, this is a prudent, voted in favour of the motion said



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#### Portraits of Giving honours Aurora resident Smith in Class of 2025

BY BROCK WEIR

Greg Smith of Music Aurora is this year's Aurora honouree in the 2025 Portraits of Giving program.

Portraits of Giving is the brainchild of Richmond Hill photographer Karen Merk and since its inception more than 15 years ago has honoured dozens of York Region residents who have proven themselves dedicated volunteers.

This year's Aurora recipient, Smith, a long-standing local business leader and proponent of live music within the community.

Each honouree is featured in an artistic photographic portrait by Merk at the location of their choice, and Smith's chosen location is a poignant one: John Abel Park, a greenspace dedicated to Aurora's two-term Deputy Mayor, a good friend of Smith's, who died suddenly just days after his term on Council came to a close in 2018.

Smith was recognized Wednesday night with a reception hosted by Merk at Chartwell Hollandview Trail, just north of Town Hall, where the story that accompanies Smith's portrait was shared by Rod Johnson.

"His fingers are always on the pulse of Aurora's growth," read Johnson. "When you hear him boast, you will not hear him boast or brag about his own accomplishments, and you've probably never heard him even mention Promotional Marketing, his creative, clever, and



Karen Merk of Portraits of Giving presents a congratulatory certificate to Greg Smith, this year's Portraits of Giving Honouree for Aurora.

Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan

adaptive marketing business, he's kept thriving over the past 40 years, making massive impacts on our culture and history, as Canadian and as sports enthusiasts.

"In 2013, Greg met [Abel] and because of their community-centered priorities and involvements, the two became fast friends. Greg has been an important member of many local organizations, including the Odd Fellows, Downtown Aurora BIA, he's a board member of the Aurora Public Library, and his not-for-profit Music Aurora created and produced the award-winning Aurora Winter Blues Festival, the Aurora Music Festival, and Porch Fest, supporting youth and live music in and around Aurora.

"Anyone who had the opportunity to know John knows the wound of his absence and the irreplaceable heart

he had for our Town and its people. As of 2024, we now have a place to honour and keep the spirit of the name John Abel alive and continue to impact the community [with] John Abel Park. Located on Hartwell Way, it features a nature-based playground, a natural rock amphitheatre, a gorgeous community garden, and the trailhead plaza connects to the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve if you want to keep exploring.

"Trying to keep his emotions steady, Greg confessed, 'I'm a better person because of him. Not a day goes by that I don't think of him, and I often ask myself, what would John do? And that's how I live my life now without him physically here.' John's passions and love lives on in our hearts and in the community. We didn't get to say goodbye to him, and

we do not wish to. Love does not stop when life leaves the body. Love does not end."

Kudos were also shared by Stewart Maclaren of Music Aurora, before Smith took to the podium himself, thanking Johnson and his brother for sponsoring the evening.

"John was very much a person that didn't really seek the limelight [and] that was one reason we connected," said Smith, sharing a story that shortly after Abel's passing Smith took part in a Rise and Shine breakfast hosted by Aurora United Church for vulnerable members of the Aurora community, where Abel was a long-time volunteer and musician. "I'm standing there, and this lady, very frail with pain, comes over and talks to me, and she says, 'You're a friend of John's... Let's sit down.' So, we sit down and have a conversation. For many years she was living in her car, and she would be there at breakfast, and John would always sit with her, and she'd go and get John a coffee, and John would slip some money into her bag or whatever. He'd never talked about this or anything like that, but she tells me that she's originally from China, and that she had never been back to see her family. She tells me the story of how John helped her be able to get plane tickets and stuff to go back, and then showed up, dropped off at her house without anybody knowing,

Continued on page 13

# Summer Camps @Aurora Cultural Centre CREATIVE ADVENTURES FOR AGES 4-12

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The Wonderful World of Nature & Animals

Week 2: July 7-11
Artistic Imaginations

Week 3: July 14-18
Art & Science Fusion

Week 4: July 21–25
Eco-Art

Week 5: July 28-August 1
Art Through the Ages

Week 6: August 5-8 (Short Week)

Visual Art & Music Harmony

Week 7: August 11–15
Famous Artists & Their Styles

Week 8: August 18–22
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Week of July 3, 2025

#### Legendary cameraman and Sportsbeat Aurora co-creator Steve Mitchell passes away at 61



Photo courtesy of the Stouffville Spirit

**BY JIM STEWART** 

Mitchell—who recorded decades of Aurora Tigers Junior A games and cocreated the popular program Sportsbeat Aurora which ran on Aurora Cable TV for 26 years – passed away last week at Southlake Regional Health Centre. He was 61.

Mitchell videotaped Junior A hockey teams-including the Aurora Tigersfor Aurora Cable from 1979 to 2008. in the broadcast booth.

camera, Mitchell videotaped thousands of Junior A hockey games and the gondola at the Aurora Community Centre is named the Steve Mitchell Media Box in bond with Thomson and the Tigers as his honour. The ice at ACC Rink 1 may be out for the summer, but a trip inside the venerable arena reveals Steve Mitchell's historical effect on Aurora hockey.

Framed by the Aurora Tigers' national championship banners from 2004 and 2007, the Steve Mitchell Media Booth at the ACC serves as a testament to his impact not only on the Tigers, but on the Town's sporting culture.

A significant part of the Town's sporting culture is Aurora Tigers' President and Owner Jim Thomson. The former NHLer was moved by Mitchell's passing.

"It was a real sad day when his daughter Jennifer called me. Steve was so well-loved and respected throughout the league. He was our cameraman and was so loyal to the Tigers. He was there every game when he couldn't be, his daughter Jennifer would take over. He was so very dear to me and dear to the Tigers."

Thomson elaborated on his long-time connection with Mitchell.

"Eleven years ago, when I bought Aurora's beloved videographer Steve the Tigers, Steve was such an important part of the organization. His skills in the broadcast booth came with the purchase of the team. When he took ill, we—both the Tigers and the Town - needed to do something to honor his contributions not only to our hockey club over the years, but to the Town of Aurora. The Steve Mitchell Media Booth seemed like the right kind of recognition for someone who had such a love of sports and such a love He became a station manager of Aurora for the Tigers. We invited Steve to take his Cable in 1983 and served in that capacity equipment from the booth—including until Rogers bought ACI in 2008. Mitchell his camera and his monitor—after he continued to serve as cameraman at became ill, but he wanted the equipment Aurora Tigers games for ten more years to stay there in the booth. It made him until declining health reduced his workload feel connected to the team and to a place he spent so many meaningful years. Our During his illustrious career behind the current announcer Kevin Dean is still using Steve's camera and monitor to call Aurora Tigers games."

Not only did Mitchell develop a deep their cameraman, but the innovative pioneer was also behind the camera for Sportsbeat Aurora—a much-loved community program on Aurora Cable television that featured the stories of local sports teams and players from 1982 to

The popular television show had an incredible run of 26 years and was created in part by Mitchell and Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Media inductee and broadcaster Lowell McClenny who served as cohost for decades.

McClenny was also Aurora Cable Television's play-by-play voice for Tigers Junior A games and worked side-byside with Mitchell for decades-- creating cultural history with the broadcasts which are now archived safely at the Aurora

During our phone interview, McClenny praised Mitchell's ingenuity in the studio.

"I was working as the President of the AMHA in the 1980s and Steve was He was still at Seneca and was working eagerness to make things better. He at Aurora Cable as part of the school's was such a hard-working colleague co-op program. Steve approached me congenial, approachable, and, most of all, to do play-by-play for minor hockey. We Steve was a person who accepted others' had the conversation when Aurora was ideas. We traded ideas over a 26-year getting bigger and I asked if we could do period and we ended up being like family." a sports show. We started taping in June 1982—Aurora Cable had converted a and Ward 1 Councillor, was similarly house into offices and gave Steve the okay to build a studio. We did our first taping of Sportsbeat Aurora when it was sweltering hot in June. Steve had converted one of the bedrooms into a studio—we had one microphone, and one cameraman. Steve Buffery was a co-host who was working for The Banner at the time."

The engaging raconteur characterized his long-time broadcast partner as

breaking into the big wide world of sports. "dedicated—Steve always had an

Ron Weese, President of Sport Aurora moved by Mitchell's passing and praised the legendary cameraman for "being so knowledgeable and passionate about broadcasting and sports."

Weese reflected fondly on his many appearances on Sportsbeat Aurora in its heyday and applauded Mitchell's creative talents and innovative spirit.

"Steve was one of those pioneers that Continued on page 18



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#### FUTURE HALL of FAMER of THE MONTH

*June 2025* 



#### JONATHAN QIN

#### CARDINAL CARTER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Jonathan Qin is a standout student-athlete whose contributions extend far beyond the playing field. A graduating senior at Cardinal Carter, Jonathan has participated in an impressive range of sports throughout high school, including track & field, ultimate frisbee, volleyball, flag football, basketball, and badminton. His versatility is matched by his character: Jonathan is a respected leader known for his humility, composure, and quiet determination.

On the field, Jonathan is a coach's dream—skilled, hardworking, inclusive, and driven. He consistently demonstrates heart and perseverance in every practice and competition. He's also a mentor to younger athletes, often leading drills and teaching techniques with patience and clarity. His leadership is just as impactful off the field. Whether guiding younger students on overnight trips to Muskoka Woods or serving as a calm and focused role model in the classroom, Jonathan leads by example with integrity and kindness.

This spring, Jonathan's athletic abilities shone brightly as the top male javelin thrower at the school. This qualified him for the OFSAA Central Regional Track & Field Meet in late May where he placed fifth. While basketball is his favourite sport to play, he has clearly found a true talent in track & field, particularly in javelin.

A dedicated student and community member, Jonathan works as a lifeguard and swimming instructor at the Zancor Centre and serves as an altar boy at Our Lady of Grace Church. His favourite athlete is Kobe Bryant—an inspiration reflected in Jonathan's quiet intensity and unrelenting work ethic. His favourite musical artist is Frank Ocean.

Jonathan's positive influence, leadership, and faith have earned him Cardinal Carter's highest honour: the 2025 Dave Brennan Christian Athlete of the Year Award, presented annually to one graduating student. This fall, Jonathan will attend the University of Guelph, where his leadership and character will no doubt continue to flourish.

Congratulations, Jonathan!























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#### HOPE CONTINUES

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa congratulates Darrell Fox in Richmond Hill over the weekend as the brother of Canadian icon Terry Fox continued his National Ride of Hope, a 7,000 km coast-to-coast journey raising money for the Terry Fox Foundation and cancer research. At the Richmond Hill stop, Fox met with supporters at the Yonge Street statue bearing Terry's image, a lasting memory of the man, his Marathon of Hope, and his tremendous legacy.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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#### Baysox take over top spot in NDBL senior league

BY BRIAN LOCKHART

The Owen Sound Baysox have taken over first place in the senior division of the North Dufferin have a 7-5-1 record. Baseball League after going on a four-game winning streak.

The Baysox have a 10-2 record for games. the season. Their only losses have been to the Bolton Brewers and the Angels are barely on the plus side New Lowell Knights.

The Baysox have a low runs against average of 4.3 runs per game.

Strother Cup champion team from the diamond.

top seed in the league, and Bolton Orillia Majors, Clarksburg Blues, has now dropped down to third place Mansfield Cubs, and the Caledon with five losses after 14 games.

In second place, the Lisle Astros a good effort and have always been a season. strong team in the NDBL.

record. The Rangers had a five-game this year's Strother Cup champion.

winning streak in June which moved them up in the standings.

The Midland Mariners are in fifth place in the League. They currently

The Mariners are in a bit of a slump after losing their last four

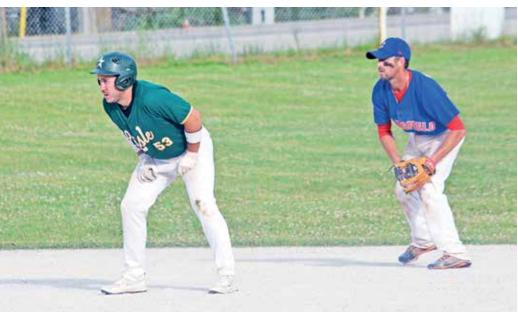
In the number six spot, the Barrie with a 6-4-3 record.

The New Lowell Knights are in the middle of the pack in seventh place Owen Sound is the defending with a 7-4 record after 12 times on

In order, the rest of the teams in the The Baysox replaced Bolton as the standings are the Creemore Padres, Cardinals.

It is a 22-game regular season have a 9-6-1 record after 16 games schedule this year so most of the this season. The Astros always put in teams are at the halfway mark in the

The regular season will wrap up at In fourth place, the Ivy Rangers the end of July with qualifying teams are on the plus side with an 8-5-1 going into the playoffs to determine



The Mansfield Cubs hosted the Lisle Astros on the diamond in Mansfield during a recent game. The senior division of the North Dufferin Baseball League is now halfway through the regular season schedule Photo by Brian Lockhart



#### Seniors' Centre receives boost to keep seniors "fit, active, connected"



Photo courtesy of MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy

BY BROCK WEIR

The Aurora Seniors' Centre will take virtual programs to the next level through various activities," she said. after receiving a grant from Ontario's Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility funding supports something that's last week.

joined by Mayor Tom Mrakas at the she presented the Town and the Aurora Seniors' Association with a grant of Living Centre funding.

recipients of Seniors Active Living Centre funding across Ontario this year designed to "help improve seniors" quality of life and build community engagement."

activities and services to more seniors a way to help seniors stay in touch in Aurora," said, Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility with an emphasis on "brain-building in a statement. "This program will help activities." older adults of all abilities to thrive in their homes and communities."

The enhanced Virtual Seniors' Centre will be a "great addition" for local services, said the MPP.

"It will offer seniors from the entire community the opportunity to stay fit, active, health, and socially connected

Added Mayor Mrakas: "This incredibly important: making sure MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy was all seniors have the opportunity to stay active, connected, and engaged. Aurora Seniors' Centre on June 23 as Digital programming helps break down barriers like limited mobility or lack of transportation and makes it easier for \$50,000, the result of the Centre's more people to participate. The Virtual successful application for Seniors Active Aurora Seniors Centre is a great example of how we can use technology The program is one of 100 new to build a more inclusive, supportive community, and we're grateful to the Ontario Government for continuing to invest in that vision."

The Seniors' Centre Without Walls program was first rolled out by the "We are delighted to expand Aurora Seniors' Centre in 2019 as through over-the-phone programs,

> It served Centre members well when they were forced to close their John West Way doors due to the global pandemic, and has gone from strength to strength ever since.

#### Portraits of Giving continues to honour community-builders

From page 10

to go back to China. He was very John Abel Park." selfless. Even his wife never knew anything about that.

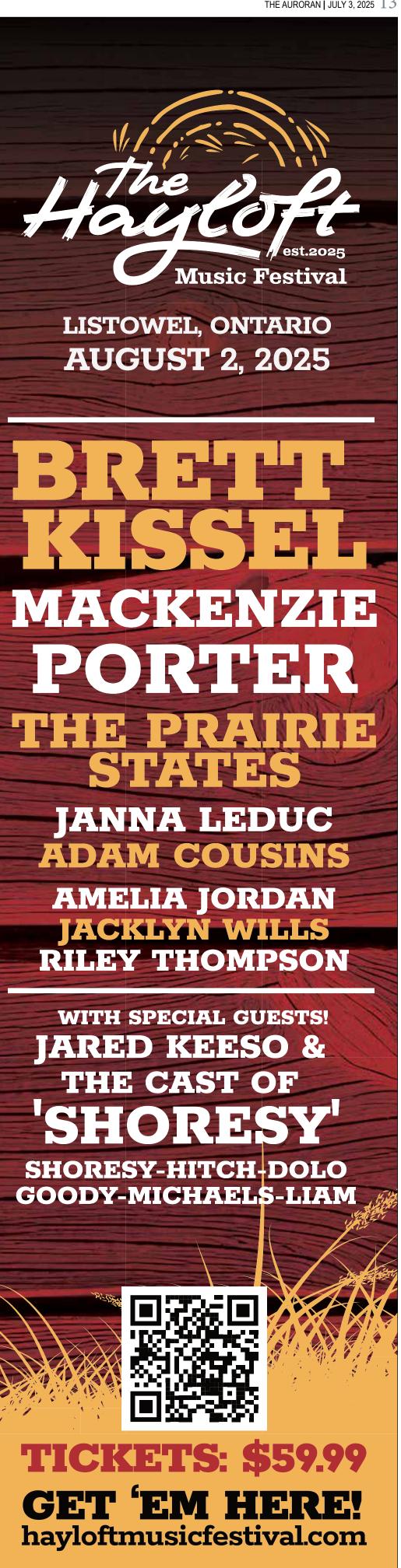
ball in your pocket, and if you hit Pax. a lousy shot, you'd yell, 'Jerry,' and then you could put a ball down and chance. And he was very much like portraits-of-giving.

that throughout his life, and that's sent her luggage for her in order what inspired me to get the photo at

Portraits of Giving's of 2025 includes The Belcastro "I had never heard anything about Family, Don Miller, Rob Payne, John doing something like that, but Rosa Cirillo, Vincenza (Vee) and that was the kind of guy he was. For Alan Palenchuk, Allyson Park, many of us who golfed on Sunday Annie Rong, Sam Daskalopoulos mornings at Westview where John and family, Muhammad Kermalli, worked, he had this saying...When Wasim Jarrah, Elisabeth Jaja, you teed off, you would put another Leanne Sexton and Ron Marino &

For more information on this year's hit another shot. It was kind of program, recipients, and where to see their John's way of giving people a second portraits, visit www.merkphotography.com/













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## A fine day for a Canada Day parade

















































#### Aurora Winter Blues Festival set for Cultural Centre revival

From page 1

2025-2026 Performing Arts Season – a season fittingly titled, "Let Our Stage Surprise You."

The season launch on June 26 was hosted by comedian Martha Chaves, who has become a Cultural Centre regular in recent years, and featured a variety of acts - including Canadian



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Flamenco artist Tamar Ilana and Joe

"The Blues Festivalis backin Aurora," said Derek Andrews, Programming Arts Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre. "When I started here [at the Centre] there was no Blues. There had been Blues Festivals for 10 years produced by Music Aurora... and COVID crushed it."

Andrews said he approached Suzanne Haines, Executive Director

of the Aurora Cultural Centre, on the Vaughan in two performances. prospect of bringing it back.

said, 'Bring it back, if you can.' We Against the Machine on November 21. can and we have!" said Andrews. "Why Blues? Those guys [Music Aurora] did round out November programs, when it because they loved it and, of course, the Great Artist Music Series returns Blues is the bedrock of all other music. on November 30. There would be no Rolling Stones, no Led Zeppelin, or any of the popular in December as the month opens with acts we hear on the radio, and the Blues A Christmas Carol, a family-friendly was the forerunner of that."

Blues Festival will continue to be a the "fiery fiddle tunes" on Saturday, February affair, beginning on Thursday, December 13 with the Allison Lupton February 26 with multiple Juno-winner Christmas Show. Jack de Keyzer. Additional concerts include Suzie Vinnick, supported by Jay of our friends who know us well, and Blues and featuring guests Kevin Breit I am grateful that you were able to join and Tony D. on Friday, February 27; us [and] be a part of the incredible Glenn Marais' Jook on the afternoon cultural community that's here in York Saturday, February 28, with Dominique Fils-Amie performing that evening; Thursday's launch event. "You make and, on Sunday, March 1, the Festival everything we do worth the effort and concludes with Harrison Kennedy with you deeply impact how creative our Brock Stonefish and Dave Mowatt in community is. the afternoon, followed in the evening by Little Magic Sam.

cent Canadian talent.

The Centre's upcoming season formally kicks off Thursday, September 18 with roots-rockers Skydiggers.

bill as Cooo takes the stage with two performances as part of the Centre's Magic Carpet series, which is designed to introduce the youngest audience members to arts and culture.

The Great Artist Music Series, one of the Centre's longest-running programs, Payadora takes the stage on October 3. They will be followed on October 18 by by popular demand.

Quebec folk music will be in the programming continues on November tickets, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca. 18 with Le Vent du Nord, followed on November 15 by Divine Brown Sings Fitzgerald, Billie Holliday, and Sarah January.

Comedy is also part of the fall fare "We met with Music Aurora who as Chaves and comedy pals present Age

Moshe Hammer and Angela Park

The holiday season takes centre-stage presentation by Dufflebag Theatre The new edition of the Aurora Winter on Sunday, December 7, followed by

> "This room is filled with so many Region," Haines told supporters at

"A very special thank you to the people and organizations that make It's just one component of a jam-this season possible. As a not-for-profit packed season ahead that the Cultural charitable organization, we could not Centre proudly boasts features 100 per produce, present or teach the arts to the community without them. I'd like to start by thanking the Town of Aurora. The Town is an extremely special and sustaining partner for us. We have an Family-friendly fun is next on the even stronger relationship with them since we moved back into Aurora Town Square, and we coexist in this beautiful venue. A true operating partner that helps make everything that we do possible. I just couldn't be more grateful to Doug (Nadorozny, Municipal CAO), Robin McDougall (Aurora's Director kicks off a busy October when of Community Services), Phil (Rose, Cultural Services Manager for the Town of Aurora), Mayor Mrakas, and Lori Cullen and Talia Schlangher, folk all of Council for continuing to trust artists who are returning to the Centre us to provide cultural services on the Town's behalf to the community."

For more information on the 2025spotlight on November 8 as fall 2026 Performing Arts Season, including

NEXT WEEK: The British Invasion Ella, Billie and Sarah – a tribute to Ella meets R&B with favourite artists returning in

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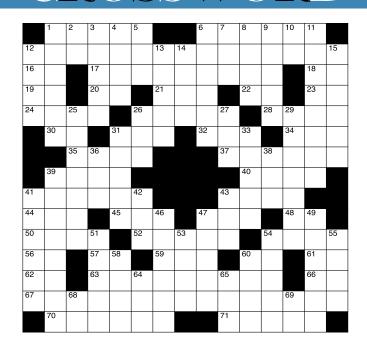
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#### Puzzle No.TAJULY325 • Solution in Classifieds



#### **CLUES ACROSS**

- 1. Notes
- 12. ESPN's nickname
- 16. Spanish be 17. Disadvantage
- 18. Of I
- 19. Actor Pacino
- 20. On your way: route 21. Fifth note of a major scale 22. Companies need it
- 23. News agency 24. Faces of an organization
- 28. Samoa's capital
- 30. Partner to "Pa"
- 31. Adult male
- 34. Used of a number or amount not specified
- 35 No No No 37. Hosts film festival
- 63. Malaria mosquitoes 66. Unit to measure width
  - 70. Affairs 71. Letter of Semitic abjads

40. Made of fermented honey

44. Thyroid-stimulating hormon

47. One point north of due east

59. "The world's most famous arena" 60. Larry and Curly's pal

and water

43. College army

45. Consume

48. For instance

52. Alaskan river

56. Atomic #22

57. "The Golden State"

61. One billion gigabytes

62. Conducts inspections

54. Not soft

41. Chief

#### **CLUES DOWN**

- 1. Follower of Islam
- Trauma center
   French young we
   Norse god 5. U.S. commercial flyer (abbr.)
- 6. Merchant
- 9. Tree-dwelling animal of C. and
- S. America
- 10. "Pollack" actor Harris
  11. Stuck around
- 12. Put on

- 13. Influential Norwegian playwright

- 14. Christian \_\_, designer
  15. Fulfills a debt
  25. Style 26. More (Spanish)
- 27. A baglike structure in a plant
- 33. "The Martian" actor Matt 36. Express delight 38. Brooklyn hoopste 39. 1900 lamp

31. Disturbance

- galaxy 43. Relative biological effec (abbr.)
  - 46. Compels to act 47. Gardening tool 49. Ancient country
  - 51. Frightening 53. Wimbledon champion Arthu
  - 54. Popular plant 55. Database manage 58. Gasteyer and de Armas are two 60. Where soldiers ear
- 64. Tenth month (abbr.) 65. Illuminated 68. Atomic #18

69. Adults need one to travel

#### THINGS... you ought to know

#### WEDNESDAY, JULY 2

Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series gets underway tonight at Town Park from 6 - 9 p.m. Tonight's entertainment: the Dave Mowat Trio. Be at Aurora Town Park on Wednesday, July 2, where from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., the air will be filled with authentic and heartfelt blend of country and Chicago blues. The trio of Dave, Terry, and Clayton bring the history and tradition of the blues to every note they play. Available for purchase, enjoy a variety of delicious food vendors and licensed beverages. Concert is free to attend, however if you are able, to bring non-perishable food donations to support the Aurora Food Pantry, it would be appreciated. Whether you consider yourself a dedicated blues fan, a lover of bluegrass, or are simply looking for an enjoyable way to unwind and connect with your community, come check out this fun evening of live music! Remember to bring your lawn chair and blanket!

**SATURDAY, JULY 5** The Aurora Farmers' Market will take place at Town Park

today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 9** 

Aurora's Concerts in the Park summer series continues

this evening. From 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Aurora Town Park, experience X&Y skillfully bring Coldplay's famous musical catalogue to life, performing their timeless hits live for you to enjoy! While enjoying Coldplay's greatest hits, treat yourself to a variety of food vendors and licensed beverages available for purchase. Concert is free to attend, however if you are able, to bring non-perishable food donations to support the Aurora Food Pantry. Bring your cozy blankets and lawn chairs, gather your friends, and immerse yourself in an atmosphere of musical joy and celebration! Don't let this memorable tribute pass you by!

#### **SATURDAY, JULY 12**

The Aurora Farmers' Market will take place at Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

#### **WEDNESDAY, JULY 16**

Aurora's Concerts in the Park summer series continues this evening. From 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Aurora Town Park, experience the Ultimate 80s: "Flashback to the era of legends - Madonna ruled the dance floor. Michael Jackson lit up the stage, Prince redefined cool and Whitney Houston hit notes

we're still chasing. This show is your backstage pass to the decade that changed music forever! Produced by George St. Kitts." While enjoying the music, treat yourself to a variety of food vendors and licensed beverages available for purchase. Concert is free to attend, however if you are able, to bring nonperishable food donations to support the Aurora Food Pantry. Bring your cozy blankets and lawn chairs, gather your friends, and immerse yourself in an atmosphere of musical joy and celebration!

#### **ONGOING**

Partagez le Français: Ce groupe accueille les ADULTES / 18+ (des francophones aux débutants capables de converser) - qui cherchent à mettre en pratique leurs compétences Conversationnelle en français. Over Zoom with a nominal fee of \$2.50. RSVP by visiting meetup.com/Partagez-le-francais. For more information, email partagez.york@outlook.com.

Support AbuseHurts' Delivering Hope Full Circle Program textile recycling and donation program. In the current COVID climate, a greater number of people are

wanting to donate or get rid of unwanted items, increasing the need for more outlets being available to receive the items. This program will provide a convenient way for people to donate or get rid of used/unwanted clothing, blankets, linens and furniture and will help lessen the amount of items ending up in landfills. Materials that were previously perceived as waste will now be seen as a valuable resource further encouraging redistribution. The items will be recycled in the following ways: To be given to individuals who are survivors of violence and are transitioning from shelters into new homes; To be sold in our store: To be sold to a textile recycler, which makes for an ongoing source of funding for Abuse Hurts enabling them to provide their services to the thousands of people that require them each year. When and Where: Monday and Wednesday, every week, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., with 30-minute time slots - only 1 drop off per time slot. If you do not have an appointment, we cannot accept your donation. The Abuse Hurts Warehouse is located at 1208 Gorham St, Unit 4, Newmarket - rear unloading dock. Visit AbuseHurts.ca to select your drop off time slot.

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#### Legendary cameraman and Sportsbeat Aurora co-creator Steve Mitchell passes way at 61

From page 11

contributed so much to sports in Aurora. When Aurora was a small town, Steve helped sports to become relevant and a force in the community. He presented both small and large groups in his programs and nothing stood in his way to promote local teams—their coaches and athletes. He was a strong man with a great sense of humor. I'll always remember him as the great guy behind the camera during Sportsbeat Aurora—a smiling, lively character that was always helpful."

In addition to Mitchell's laudable characteristics as delineated by Thomson, McLenny, and Weese, the talented cameraman and studio manager made media history when he became the first person to create a 24/7 dedicated High Definition community channel in Canada.

His technical innovations were also applauded by the OJHL's Stouffville Spirit. In its Facebook post on Friday afternoon, the hockey club referred to Mitchell as "one who pioneered Junior A video production."

Steve Mitchell is survived by his wife, Judy, and his children, Mark and Jennifer.

A Celebration of Steve's life will take place at the Aurora Community Centre



The Steve Mitchell Media Booth at the Aurora Community Centre is seen last week

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

auditorium on Saturday, July 12 from 12 noon to 4 p.m.

Remembrance Words of commence at 1 p.m.

Donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation are encouraged in honor of Steve Mitchell.

#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Continued on page 5

yet. Our partners at York Pride are your participation.

Your recent actions show more promise than there has been over your last eight years in government. We know your government is capable, and are willing to take bigger and bolder actions to improve the lives of Ontarians everywhere, and this letter is to remind you that there is much to do.

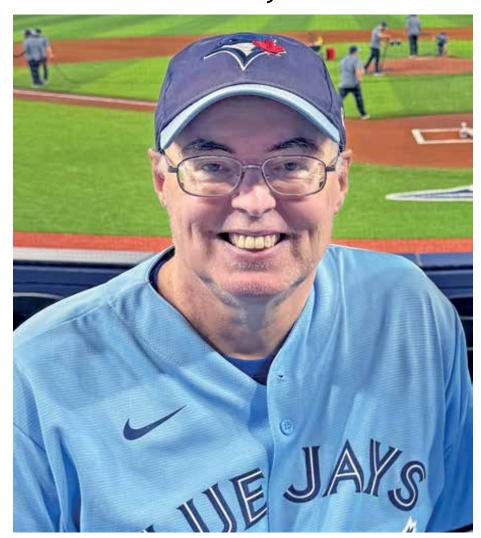
There is an unquestionable amount of political capital your government has to spend, and that capital in politics is hard to find. What you do with it will

speak volumes. Your government is actions, you have not met that criteria fully capable of breaking new ground, busting the common myth that aware of our differing perspectives on Conservatives are not supportive of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals or causes, and embrace the idea that doing the right thing isn't about appealing to a specific base, but about affirming and supporting all Ontarians. Some of us need just a little more support than most, and I know you are capable of providing it.

> Where there is a will, there is a way. The real question is, do you have the will?

> > **Tristan Coolman** President, pflag York Region

#### MITCHELL, Steven Glen



Steven Glen Mitchell passed away Friday June 20, 2025 at the age of 61 at Southlake Health.

Steve, beloved husband of Judy (nee Stares). Proud and loving father of Mark and Jennifer (Ben). Loving son of the late Relph and Betty Mitchell. Cherished brother of the late Wendy Hennigar (Bruce), Catherine LaPlante (Jody) and Brian (Donna). Uncle to Kevin Hennigar (Jessica), Carly Lichty, Andrea Mitchell (John MacKenzie), Lisa Mitchell (David Circelli), Matthew Stares (Catherine), Joanne Stares, Heather Madden (Greg), Daniel Dillabough and Elanor Dillabough. Dearly missed by extended family and friends

He first started videoing Jr A hockey games in 1979 for the Aurora Tigers and Aurora Cable 10. He became a station manager of Aurora Cable in 1983 until the company sold to Rogers in 2008. Steve has videoed thousands of Jr A hockey games for various teams throughout the GTA. He was the first person to bring a 24/7 dedicated High Definition community television channel in Canada. He was very well known and loved in the community of Aurora. He loved sports, videography, video games and animals. He was a very kind and generous husband, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew, cousin and friend to many.

Steve had a heart transplant September 19, 2019, thanks to the selfless act of an organ donor. He got an extra 5 years and 9 months with family and friends, which he never took those extra days for granted and often encouraged others to sign their organ donor card. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Cremation has taken place and a celebration of life will be at the Aurora Community Centre auditorium on Saturday July 12th from 12pm-4pm with words of remembrance starting at 1pm.

Per Steve's wishes the dress code is to wear your favourite sports jersey.

As an expression of sympathy donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, heartandstroke. ca/how-you-can-help/ways-to-give, would be appreciated by the family. The family also encourages everyone to sign up to be an organ donor at beadonor.ca

Peter Munk Cardiac Centre Campaign, uhnfoundation.ca.

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#### Pole carvings at John Abel Park showcase local wildlife

From page 3

to be honest – when I had it here at my studio, I fell in love with the pieces and didn't want to let them go, even though it was already commissioned as [Aurora's] pieces. This is the problem with being a alive that when I carve a character inside and they're continuously coming back Instagram @bobbichainsawcarving

chainsaw carver – you love the work and the wood, it kind of brings a second life for pieces because they said these pieces you love the pieces, and for the short time to that wood. It's not just like a concrete give them so much joy and I love hearing they're here you really get to enjoy them statue where you just look at it – it stirs up that." and it's hard not to get attached to them! joy in your heart when you look at these. "I think it's because the wood was once A lot of my clients are repeat clients

For more on Bobbi Switzer's work, follow her on

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Come join a dynamic, fast paced, growing entrepreneurial company looking for driven, enthusiastic sales representatives. A rewarding, lucrative opportunity for the right candidate.

#### **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- . Sell advertising in our local community newspapers across numerous regions for maximum growth
- . Be part of an ever growing team, developing new verticals and supplements for new revenue and income opportunities

#### **EXPECTATIONS:**

- · Have a positive attitude
- · Willing to work hard and enjoy rewards in a team environment

. Willing to take chances and learn from your peers

#### **DESIRED SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:** Sales Driven

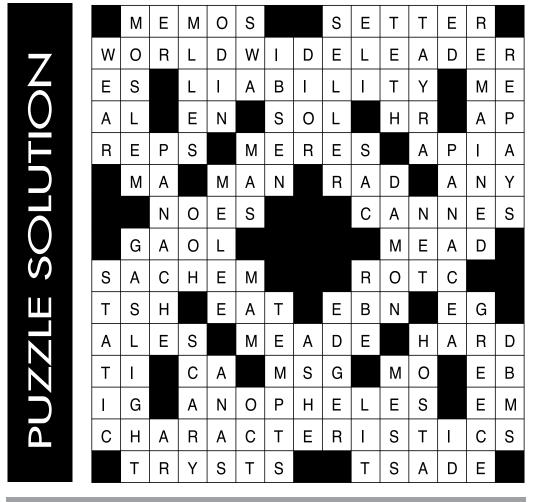
- · Great Personal Skills
- . Some Sales Skills Preferred but would be willing to train the right candidate
- Works Well with Deadlines and Budgets Organized with an Intermediate Knowledge

#### of Microsoft Excel **COMPENSATION:**

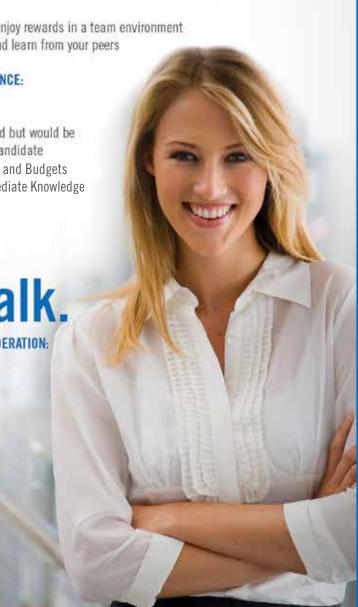
Base + Commission





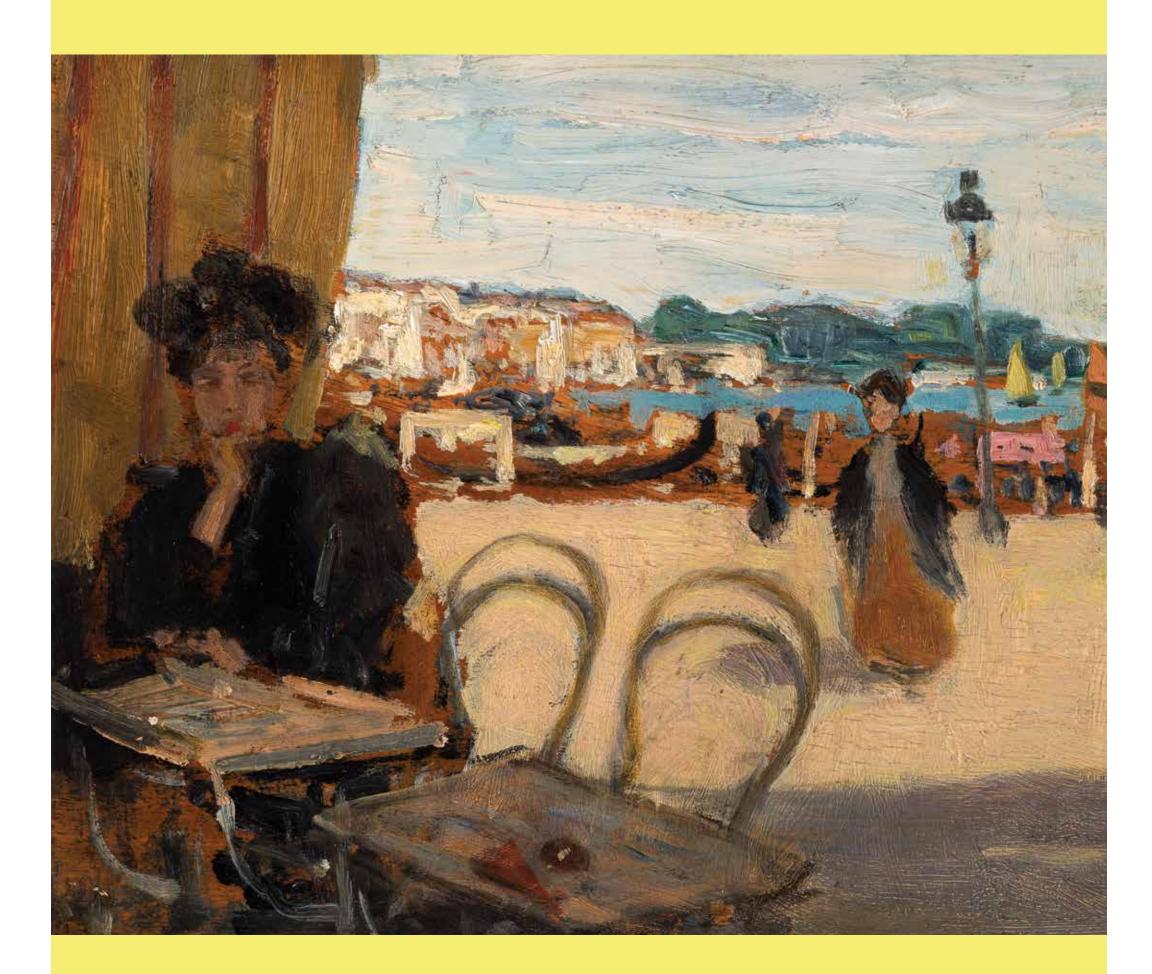


To advertise please call direct 905-751-6013



#### THE AURORAN | JULY 3, 2025

## McMichael



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