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Week of July 24, 2025

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MASTER AT WORK – Retired geologist and artist Rose Zhao led a live painting demonstration at the Aurora Farmers' Market on Saturday morning ahead of her upcoming exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre, *From Rocks to Brushstrokes: A Geologist's Artistic Transformation*, which opens July 31. For more, see Page 6. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Council has “serious concerns” about Provincial legislation, but stops short of opposition

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora Council has expressed “serious concerns” with Provincial legislation the government says is designed to “streamline” the creation of homes and stimulate the economy, but critics claim will result in a serious hit to both the environment and a municipality’s power to plan for growth.

The formal expression of concern came at a Special Council meeting on July 15, which was called by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo.

Mayor Tom Mrakas, Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson, and Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim did not attend the

meeting.

Councillors went into last Tuesday's meeting with a motion from Councillor Weese calling on Council to formally "oppose" Bill 5 – the Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, and Bill 17, the Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, both of which are

Continued on page 8



HONORED ATHLETES – Sport Aurora, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, held its annual Sport Aurora Student Athletes of the Year recognition ceremony at Town Park on July 17. The occasion, which is now in its ninth year, recognized 34 athletes from 17 elementary and secondary schools in the Aurora community. For more on this year's honourees, see Page 12. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

A black and white portrait of Jeff Gordon, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored collared shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

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Abuse Hurts launches new online platform to support survivors of domestic abuse

EmpowerWeb launched July 22

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Incidence of domestic abuse rose dramatically over the course of the global pandemic as so many were forced to stay home, potentially making a bad situation worse.

The rise was a stark statistic for organizations looking to help those fleeing such situations and underscored the need to have empowering tools just a few clicks away.

The result is EmpowerWeb, a new online platform offering safe support for survivors of domestic abuse.

An initiative of Abuse Hurts, the platform was formally launched Tuesday, July 22, at the Central branch of the Richmond Hill Public Library.

EmpowerWeb, which is available to all Ontarians and funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada, brings together multiple tools and resources for survivors of domestic abuse, their families, friends, and more, connecting them with the knowledge they need to escape their situation safely, and connect with community resources as well.

It was shaped with feedback received from those who have suffered through intimate partner violence who were “forced to navigate the system,” says Helena

Kameka, President of Abuse Hurts, as well as through focus groups, questionnaires, and polls that tapped into those with lived experience.

Their input helped identify missing information and gaps in the system.

“We went across Canada to determine what are the issues contributing to this increase,” says Kameka of the rise in instances of domestic violence during that time. “Clearly there are gaps, clearly there are problems, and there’s not enough education or awareness. What is the problem here and how can we reduce the incidence and impact? How can we address this?”

“We held three cross-Canada conferences which included first responders. We included everything from education, police, healthcare services, EMS, all the different first responder areas, and survivors. We combined that and we came up with all these learnings and we found out that there was a lot of issues from both sides: Lack of accessibility, a lack of understanding, sort of like a one-size-fits-all treatment. Someone’s who’s First Nations, maybe, or from a different culture really needs different help than someone, let’s say from the LGBTQ community. We need different protocols and understanding and awareness and

education.”

They also found that similar organizations weren’t really communicating with each other to fully understand who provides what service and how and, as such, persons seeking out services would have to “retell their story every time they get passed on from one agency to another.”

“We realized people didn’t really even know how to detect signs of abuse, especially the first responders,” Kameka continues. “Someone could go on a call, like dentists, and need training on how to recognize signs of abuse because a lot of people don’t report it. There were so many different things. Then, of course, what we specialize in is trying to educate and bring awareness to the community so that these incidents wouldn’t happen in the first place, really arming people with tools to learn how [for example] to establish healthy boundaries so that someone doesn’t get you into a position where all of a sudden you’re being abused. We knew that we had to create something to help combat that.”

EmpowerWeb, she says, was created to address many of these areas to create a better experience for survivors.

Anyone can access the platform which provides valuable resources to those who need them and, crucially, available when they need them, too.

“If you’re a survivor, you may not have the luxury of calling a social services agency between the hours of nine and five to find out information,” says Kameka. “Maybe you only have until at 11 o’clock or two in the morning. You have a lot of anxiety about approaching an agency, you don’t know what to expect, you aren’t prepared, so what this does is it allows a survivor to access it 24-7 from a safe place. You can even go to a public library and find out information in a way that you wouldn’t get from a phone call or from an agency’s website, because what we’ve created is

these very short information sessions that were co-created with persons with lived experience.

“If you think you need to go to a women’s shelter, you can access EmpowerWeb, and there will be information sessions from women’s shelters that were co-created [and] it’s not information that tells you this is the service we provide; it’s literally this is what you are going to experience if you come to our shelter, from beginning to end – what you need to have prepared in advance, what is actually going to happen step-by-step as you go through the system. It eliminates a lot of fear, a lot of the unknown, a lot of anxiety. It will show you exactly what will happen, and answer a lot of the questions that, honestly, people that work at these places just don’t have the time to answer for you.”

EmpowerWeb will evolve as they continue to receive feedback from the community. While they say the best measure of the platform’s success would be for it to be no longer needed at all, it’s there for those who need it.

“We place a high importance on getting feedback from survivors so that we can improve our own programs,” says Kameka, noting that while the platform brings together community partners in York Region, the information is universal, and could prove particularly valuable for people outside of York Region who feel safer accessing services outside of their home communities. “We want people to know that this will benefit everyone, whether you live in the community, work in the community, or are accessing services in the community. Statistics across Canada show a minimum of four out of 10 women in Canada are experiencing domestic violence and that’s huge, so we want to reduce that number.”

For more information on EmpowerWeb, visit abusehurts.ca/empowerweb.

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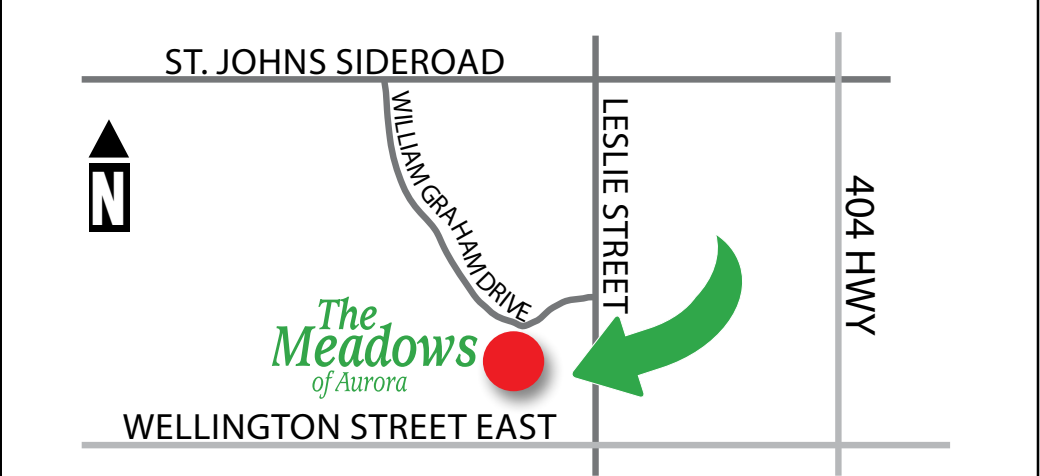
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Kitchen Party will be maritime celebration to benefit local mental health programs

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A traditional Newfoundland kitchen party is taking shape in Aurora – and it’s not just a time for a new spin on being Screeched In, it’s all to benefit local mental health programs.

The Newfoundland Kitchen Party in support of Community Mental Health Services is set for Thursday, September 18, at the Salvation Army’s Northridge Community Church and picks up after two years of galas helped foster the important mental health services that come out of their community hub on Leslie Street, just north of Wellington Street.

Angela Covert, who has led fundraising for Northridge for the last few years, including the past two years of galas, was inspired to switch things up from the previously formal affair to more of a celebration partially out of the wonderful experiences she and her husband had last summer visiting the Province – but also in recognizing the unique position our country is now in.

“I had known when I started at the Salvation Army that (the organization) continues to have a very big presence in Newfoundland,” says Covert. “A lot of the officers I connect with through the Salvation Army have their roots in Newfoundland themselves, including Captain Fred Reid here at our office, and I started to think about the impact of the Salvation Army, not just in Newfoundland but in Canada in general. Looking at all that, and having a better sense not only of the Province but its people, the fun, and the impact of the Salvation Army there, I got to thinking about what it might look like to do a kitchen party over the gala.

“The other influence for me has been just the challenges that everybody is facing, not just financially, but just the sadness of what is happening in the world... and the impact

of Trump’s tariffs and also the rhetoric of taking us over; I just wanted something that was purely Canadian and fun.”

Since its inception, the first two mental health galas hosted by Salvation Army Northridge raised nearly \$60,000 for their community programs, and has significantly boosted awareness of what the Salvation Army has to offer for people who are struggling with their mental health – so much so they have formed valuable partnerships with such local organizations as Southlake Health and Abuse Hurts to be part of that mental health continuum in the central and northern York Region area.

This is expected to only ramp up as they gear up for the September 18 event.

It promises to be an evening of great music featuring Off the Rock, North America’s premier tribute to Great Big Sea, a band which has been gaining a steady following in the Greater Toronto Area, traditional food, a type of Screeching In ceremony where, at this alcohol-free affair, a mixture of Newfoundland’s Purity Syrup will be mixed with water as a stand-in for the potent potable, and a marketplace of traditional Newfoundland products courtesy of Freezerland.

Organizers also promise “a few surprises that may include a fish,” so perhaps it wouldn’t be a bad idea to bring some Chapstick in case you’re asked to kiss a cod!

“I took note of all the other events that were happening in our community and there were a lot of galas, a lot of higher-end-price-point fundraisers, and that helps generate funds, but I just wanted to offer something that was a little bit lighter, a lot more fun,” says Covert, adding food will be provided by Carmen Holloway, previously of The Puffin, which served the Holland Landing area with traditional maritime fare. “Kitchen party? How much fun is that? When you have people over to your house, where do people often hang out? It’s in the kitchen and that’s where all the great

conversations happen. I think it resonates with individuals just because, in my line of work, we just often see the bad, but my hope is this is really going to bring the good and just the joy. I want there to be that atmosphere of, ‘I’ve come to somebody’s house and we’re just having a party.’

“Our focus is mental health and the event will be for our mental health services. Right now, we have our psychotherapists on staff and my hope is now that that’s getting

more and more established, we will be able to branch out into more specific programs for youth and hire at minimum a part-time person who would look at more youth counselling supports.”

Tickets for the Newfoundland Kitchen Party in Support of Community Mental Health Services are on sale now. To purchase, call 905-895-6276 or visit Salvation Army Northridge at 15338 Leslie Street.



RACING FOR A CAUSE

The Aurora Optimist Club was well-represented in Georgina last weekend as area Optimists came together for a charity bed race, which made its way through Sutton. The Aurora team, which placed third, was led by Alex Ansell, pictured here on the bed, accompanied by Bill Hack, Glen Sharp, Rob Gaby, Deb Finnear, and Kim Robertson.

Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Approving infill development on Heathwood Heights would “open Pandora’s Box,” says neighbour

I am writing to you after reading about the proposed development on Heathwood Heights Drive.

I have been a homeowner on this street since its inception. I remember Heathwood being a dirt road, not even out to Bathurst Street yet. I remember Sevario, who was the construction lead man all those years ago.

It is so hard to believe that an application was even put forward to Council. Why would anyone want to disrupt the ecosystem of a quiet neighbourhood? We all bought houses here because we were not on top of one another like in Toronto. We have greenspace for our gardens and for privacy from our neighbours. I don’t know who this “applicant” is, but he does not come from Aurora nor live on this beautiful street.

I don’t fully understand why you can even change the Aurora Official Plan. It’s like breaking a contract. It is breaking a contract – with us. Again, this is why we bought up here, one of the most coveted streets.

Even though I live down from 161 Heathwood, I still live here and I will have my say. I would imagine that the owners of the house in question were offered a lot of money.

Even though that probably will not be disclosed, it does present as a dangling participle.

To let this application even get this far is like opening a Pandora’s Box, causing so much tension between everyone in the neighbourhood. It’s a very upsetting time.

Heathwood is a very lovely street and we want to keep it that way. There are other streets to build houses on.

Susan E. Aurora

Open Letter to Council on Bill 5 – Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025

There are so many issues with this Bill it is hard to know where to start, but playing the wait and see option should not be one of them. I have listed but a few issues with it and I had previously requested that my MPP not to vote in support of the Bill 5 legislation. In fact I’ve heard nothing.

As the Premier has previously stated: “The Ring of Fire is our No. 1 priority over anything, because that’s going to generate more revenues, and if we get shovels in the ground, get permits in less than two years, and then we can sell those critical minerals to everyone in the world that needs those critical minerals,” he said.

“We can be the wealthiest, richest, most prosperous sub-sovereign nation anywhere in the world if we get those critical minerals out of the ground.”

To this end the Conservative Government is embarking on a mission to destroy this province.

Why is it that the reasoning is to fight against the USA tariff aggression and create jobs for Ontarians in Ontario. This Bill will not create any job security in the long term nor will it be for the benefit of the people of Ontario. All that this bill will do is run roughshod over the treaty rights with the First Nations and decimate our environment.

Continued on page 16

Machell's Corners



A vote is worth more than a hill of buttons



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

and bags of party swag for us with him.

And there it was – an election that came down to a hill of beans, er, buttons.

It was not, of course, the most sophisticated way to gauge the pulse of students with even the slightest of political inclinations, but we were young, unsophisticated, and living in an era where Beanie Babies and POGs were traded like currency, so kudos to the CHP candidate for “getting” his electorate and introduced a new trading token into our schoolyard economy!

While everyone likes swag to some degree, I think it’s pretty clear that the youth of today are far more sophisticated and politically savvy today than we were back when the 1997 Federal Election unfurled across the country.

Today’s youth are more tuned in to the issues that matter than ever before. While some might be more susceptible to A.I. and so-called fake news than others, by and large, have, in my observation, not only a firm grasp on the issues that matter but no shortage of great ideas to foster the change they want to see in the world.

With this in mind, I was very interested in an announcement made last week by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, outlining his intention to lower the U.K.’s voting age to 16.

“Prime Minister Keir Starmer said young people who ‘pay into’ the system should have the opportunity to say what they want their money to be spent on,” the BBC reported. “Conservative MP Paul Holmes hit back at the government’s announcement, arguing there would be no opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny until September due to the recess – describing the proposal as ‘hopelessly confused.’ Leader of Reform UK, Nigel Farage, said he didn’t support lowering the voting age to 16 ‘even though we get lots of votes.’ And Lib Dem MP Sarah Olney said changing the minimum voting age to 16 was a ‘no brainer.’”

The BBC went on to speak to 16- and 17-year-olds on how this proposal was going over in their demographic, as well as pollsters, who speculated on just how different the results of their last Federal election might have been if this age change was in place at the time (spoiler alert: not much), and whether this age group, which would account for just two per cent of the electorate, would even care.

“It’s not a huge amount and we know that younger people are slightly less likely to vote than older generations,” pollster Luke Tryl told the BBC. “But, then again, we are in an era where small shares of the vote can deliver you lots of seats and multi-party politics.”

We don’t have to search too hard in this country for prime examples where a small number of votes turned out to make a big difference – the most recent examples being the recounts that had to take place in a number of ridings after our last trip to the polls on April 28.

That being said, however, I’m not sure I buy the idea of younger people being slightly less likely to vote than older generations being a permanent situation.

Should Canada ever consider following the United Kingdom’s lead in lowering the voting age, there will be a lot of questions that will need to be answered before such a change is implemented, but at first blush – well, most current blush, as this is far from a new idea – I think the pros significantly outweigh the cons.

Starmer, in my view, is correct that young people who pay into the system should have an opportunity to have a say on where their money is spent. If a 16-year-old is expected to pay taxes on the money they earn from their part-time jobs – and, let’s be real, lucrative “side-hustles” are fast becoming the norm – it’s hard to find a valid argument on why they shouldn’t be able to help shape the system, particularly when their peers who are just two years older, have the same privilege.

There might be a prevailing idea that younger people are “slightly less likely to vote than older generations,” but perhaps at least a part of that can be attributed to the current voting requirements and the missed opportunity to instill civic duty – and, most importantly, engagement – from an earlier age.

Should Britain’s plans come to fruition, the results of this significant shift will be worth watching. In the meantime, however, don’t feel compelled to bust out the button-maker.

THE AURORAN

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is glimpsing...

Aurora’s Historic Places!



A Glimpse of Aurora’s Historic Places highlights a selection of the Town’s notable heritage buildings through artwork, photographs and artifacts. This display offers a chance to get familiar with the unique elements of these sites, which continue to shape the look and feel of Aurora today. Whether you’ve passed by them daily or are just now discovering them for the first time, these places offer a glimpse into the heritage that remains an important part of Aurora’s identity. This exhibition is on now at Aurora Town Square!

Who lives in the best country in the world? This is a question I jubilantly asked the thousands of people that lined up Yonge Street to participate in the Canada Day Parade.

It truly filled the heart to see so many people, of all ages, participating in the celebration of our great country. A sea of red and white adorned the Town of Aurora with flags, caps, shirts, pins, mugs, glasses and even temporary tattoos. Participants came well prepared and included a plethora of colourful costumes, floats, displays, musical bands, dancers, first responders and many more.

We are fortunate to live in one of the most diverse communities in the country. What a gift it is to see folks who have chosen Canada as their home proudly celebrate our national holiday.

In the Greater Toronto Area, there are over 160 languages and dialects spoken daily. Immigration is necessary for our country given that we have more deaths than births on an annual basis. However, it is imperative that the immigration system is managed in a manner that is both reasonable and sustainable.

The Liberal Government has had no less than seven Immigration Ministers over the past ten years. This has not been helpful. In fact, the Fraser Institute released a study recently that confirmed what we already knew: the Liberals broke our immigration system.

This is a point expressed widely by residents in our community as well when I knocked on doors leading up to this year’s federal election. With my appointment to Parliament’s Standing Committee on Citizenship & Immigration I intend to focus on the concerns that were shared with me. In this regard I am sharing the Conservative Party’s position on immigration which I believe responds to points raised by people across Canada.

- Our immigration system must



COSTAS’ CORNER
MP Costas Menegakis
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

put Canada First. That means inviting the right people in the right numbers, numbers we can absorb into housing, health care and jobs. It means having a system that allows newcomers to succeed as part of the Canadian family. It also means restoring the value of citizenship, so that everyone who calls our country home regardless of where they come from is Canadian above all else.

- By contrast, Liberal immigration policies have overwhelmed our housing, health care and job market. That is not fair to people who come here. Conservatives believe we must reduce the numbers so health care, housing and job creation can catch up.
- We must also end the abuse of the temporary foreign worker program, the international student program and the fraudulent refugee claims.
- Any temporary resident convicted of any crime must be deported.
- The government must do real and full security and criminal vetting of everyone who comes to Canada.

- Those whose visas expire and who are not eligible to renew must leave on schedule or be deported.
- We oppose the Century Initiative and other radical proposals that seek to boost the population to 100 million people by 2100.
- We don’t blame people for wanting to come to Canada. We blame the Liberal government’s radical policies and incompetent management. We want those who come here to succeed. For example, we will set up a Blue Seal professional standard for provinces to sign onto so internationally trained doctors, nurses, and others can prove they are qualified and can get working anywhere in Canada.

Conservatives will make Canada a place where anyone from anywhere can achieve anything by working hard, following the rules and contributing. Liberal policies have allowed corporations to add large numbers of low-wage temporary foreign workers (TFWs), who drive down wages and block Canadians from jobs.

Conservatives believe in reducing the number of TFWs and setting a hard rule that Canadians must always come first for Canadian jobs.

The Temporary Foreign Worker programs cannot be a tool to suppress wage growth; employers must pay fair wages to Canadians and TFWs alike.

While farms and a small number of businesses in low-unemployment regions may need these workers, they should not be used to displace Canadian workers anywhere in Canada.

We do indeed live in the best country in the world! Let’s keep it that way.



Time Travellers Diary

By Claire Smith,
Museum Professional

“The Radial Railway”

“Would you like a photograph taken of you and your wife, sir?” an older man carrying a camera asked Sloane.

“No thank you, sir. We are fine,” Sloane replied.

The old man nodded and soon began asking the family standing next to us if they wanted a group photograph to commemorate the day.

It was September 28, 1906, and Sloane and I were attending the grand opening celebration of Aurora’s new radial railway station. The excitement for today’s celebration had been building for over a year now after local resident Hermas Proctor sold his property on Yonge Street located on the north side of the United Church at Tyler Street, to the Toronto & York Radial Railway Company. The new Aurora station would become a stop on the already established Yonge Street Line which now ran straight down the centre of Yonge Street in downtown Aurora.

“I wish you weren’t so fussy about having our pictures taken, Sloane. It would be nice to have a memento from our assignment,” I said as I admired the exterior design of the new station.

The station was a single-storey building, which contained a waiting room as well as a freight room for passengers to store their belongings and other larger items.

“You could have it framed and put it on your desk in that sad impersonal space you call an office back at the agency,” I said trying to sound casual.

Sloane turned away from his logbook and gave me a long stare before speaking.

“Unlike Ellis and Charlotte, Ruth, I believe it is best not to leave any record of our trips to the past, just in case we are discovered as time travellers,” he said.

“For a scientist, I think it is safe to say that you have watched too many bad time travel movies, Sloane,” I said with a laugh.

“There is always a chance that something could happen, Ruth. Therefore, my caution and attention to detail makes me a better time traveller,” Sloane argued.

As the opening celebration began, I turned and whispered into Sloane’s ear, “Remind me again why it’s called a radial railway.”

“Really, Ruth?” he whispered back. “It was written down in our assignment brief the agency sent us months ago.”

“Well, unlike yourself, Sloane, I don’t have an eidetic memory and have a tendency to forget what is included in our assignment briefs,” I whispered back. From the corner of my eye, I saw an older woman give me a harsh look; clearly not impressed by whispering during the opening remarks.

Sloane rolled his eyes at me and then whispered back, “It’s called a radial railway because it originates from a central location, this one being downtown Toronto, and radiates outwards to other locations on the line, such as Richmond Hill, Newmarket, and now Aurora.”

“Oh, that makes sense. Thanks, Sloane,” I quietly replied.

“Don’t thank me, Ruth. Thank my eidetic memory,” Sloane smirked and continued taking notes.

Last week, four members of Council called a special meeting.

My office was not consulted on the date and time of the meeting, and I was formally notified by the Clerk only after the date and time had been set by the four members. Unfortunately, this meant I was unable to attend.

Even though I was unable to attend the meeting, I’m glad to see that the Councillors ultimately amended the motion to reflect a more reasonable and effective approach — one that followed the position I had already outlined and that aligns with the



GETTING THINGS DONE
Mayor
Tom Mrakas

Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

While the meeting itself brought nothing new to the conversation, I’m pleased that my formal statement submitted to the agenda (and received for information at the meeting) helped inform Council’s decision to revise the original motion and

take a more constructive path forward — focusing on concerns rather than opposing the legislation (Bill 5 & 17) in its entirety.

As Mayor and Head of Council, I will continue to stand up for Aurora’s interests—just as I’ve consistently done throughout this term. That means cutting through the noise, staying focused on results, and working directly with the Premier and Ministers to ensure our voice is not only heard but taken seriously at the Province.

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Aurora’s Naomi Lee is York Region’s top scholar for 2024-2025

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora student Naomi Lee is not only celebrating her successful completion of high school, but doing so in spectacular fashion.

Lee, who recently completed Grade 12 at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, was named last week as the York Region District School Board’s Top Scholar for the 2024-2025 school year.

The student graduated Williams with a remarkable average of 100 per cent.

Other students who posted similarly impressive marks were Ivan Sivakov of Woodbridge College, who scored 99.83; and Darren Tai and Yi Xing, both of Richmond Hill’s Bayview Secondary School who each graduated with an average 99.70.

“Congratulations to this year’s top scholars on their achievements,” said Ron Lynn, Chair of the York Region District School Board in a statement. “Their accomplishments reflect the role of staff, families and community members in supporting student success.”

Added Director of Education Bill Cober: “These students are representative of the hard work of the thousands of York Region public students who strive for success every year. Thank you to the educators, administrators and all staff for their role in delivering high-quality programming every day in YRDSB classrooms.”

Speaking to The Auroran on Monday, Lee said seeing the final mark was a “total shock.”

“It wasn’t really something I was aiming for at all during my time at high school, so it was really quite a surprise to me when I found out,” said Lee. “I really liked math and science because I like understanding the world around me, so I thought that was fun. I also liked music since it has been a part of my life since I was very young.”

Lee plays the piano at home, and also tackled the oboe in band class. Playing the piano “created so many good habits,” said the student, including building focus, fostering discipline, and it also served as a creative outlet outside the classroom.

“I can go and play piano and just not think about anything else and I can just focus on that,” says Lee.

This fall, Lee is headed to university to study computer engineering, and as much as it is a time to look to the future, there’s also a bit of nostalgia in the air being a part of the final graduating class to come out of Williams’ present location on Dunning Avenue before the school community moves to its new building at Bayview Avenue and Spring Farm this fall.

“I feel very proud to have been part of the last graduating class at this building,” says Lee. “The building holds a lot of fond memories for me. I’ll be sad that Williams is no longer going to be there, but I’m really happy to have had the opportunity to go. Williams was overall such a wonderful experience. I was lucky to meet a lot of great teachers who made my experience very educational and very fun. I met a lot of friends who also I had fun with, and I really appreciate the support of my parents throughout my years at high school. It was just such a great experience.”

MARKET DAYS CONTINUE



The Aurora Farmers’ Market continues to be a top Saturday destination in the community and this Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., they will host their annual Customer Appreciation Day. This past weekend, however, there was music in the air featuring Eric on the guitar, and a visit from Aurora Sports Hall of Fame honoured member Charles Leeming, accompanied by wife Judith.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Southlake marks first anniversary of new approach to senior care

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As our population ages, more and more seniors are opting to age in place, and stay in the home they love as long as they can. Here, Southlake Health’s Acute Care of the Elderly Unit (ACE) is marking its first anniversary of helping seniors do just that.

Southlake’s ACE is celebrating a full year of community success, serving more than 750 senior patients and clients, and improving their level of function by the time they’re set to head home.

Groundwork for the ACE was first laid in 2022 when the Newmarket-based hospital launched its Senior Care Strategy. Until then, Southlake didn’t have a specific blueprint to care for the senior population, but the Strategy proved to be a game-changer both for the hospital and the communities it serves.

“We know that the population is aging, but more specifically we know that if we look at those individuals living with frailty, we’re expecting those numbers to increase by 52 per cent and 105 per cent respectively,” says Jennie Popplow, Southlake’s Director of Senior Care. “We know there is going to be more of these patients coming through the doors and we know that they require, especially when they have frailty added on top, an additional level of care. We wanted to look at what was a model we could use to really target this type of population.”

ACE units are not new as a concept, with the ACE at Toronto’s Mount Sinai Hospital providing something of a template. It was new, however, for northern York Region and South Simcoe.

Before the launch, the study looked at the local 65+ demographic, modelled the types of patients that might need such an ACE, potential length of stay, and “discharge destinations,” a particularly important statistic given the growing desire for people to stay in the homes they love as long as they can.

“Ultimately, that’s what led us to our admission criteria, which is actually patients being admitted need to be over the age of 75,” says Popplow of the 23-bed unit. “They need to have two or more of what we call ‘geriatric giants’ and must have the potential to return to the community. That’s where our specialists come in to really help return people to where they want to age.”

While they predicted the average age of those admitted to the ACE to be those in the neighbourhood of 75, the reality proved quite different.

In their first year, they found ACE patients have an average age of 85 – with the vast majority of them coming out of the ACE “maintaining or improving their level of function.”

“Their day-to-day ability to get up and moving and doing those day-to-day tasks,” says Popplow. “Typically in the hospital you wouldn’t see that level of function. We often see, especially in these older adults, patients coming in, they spend time in bed, they start to deteriorate, and as a result they either can’t go home right away, they have to go to another place to continue their rehab, or ultimately, they can’t go home at all. So, 95 per cent of our patients over the past year have either maintained or improved their function, which was what we were hoping, what we were expecting, and we also see that 87 per cent of our patients return directly to their admitting location in

the community – that could be home, a retirement home – the only exclusion we have is long-term care.

“It means our patients are getting the care they need, getting well, staying well on the unit, and getting home as soon as possible with the supports they need. I think we were surprised about the age, but we haven’t been terribly surprised that our patients are doing well and going back to the places we were expecting them to go.”

As the ACE enters its second year of serving the community, they’re doing so content that their “criteria is working, we’re getting the right patients, and the skill mix of staff that we have on the unit is working.”

“What sets us apart from a regular unit is the number of allied health that we have; we have occupational therapists, physiotherapists, rehab assistants, rec therapists, social workers, speech language therapists, dieticians, and they are all what really wrap around our patients to get them home, as well as the nursing staff has additional geriatric training,” says Popplow.

“What we want to take into Year Two is that everyone we bring on board gets that same level of dedicated training. Like paediatrics is not just little adults, geriatric care is not just older adults, although we often refer to them that way. They come with their own complexities and they need to be seen as a specialty. From the perspective of what the ACE will look like going forward, it will look very much the same. The model is set, but really it will be around reenforcing and ensuring that we continue to go back to those geriatric learnings that we’re able to continue to apply, and that that

It means our patients are getting the care they need, getting well, staying well on the unit, and getting home as soon as possible with the supports they need.

doesn’t go by the wayside as we move forward.”



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Council has “serious concerns” about Provincial legislation, but stops short of opposition

From page 1
now enshrined into law following Royal Assent.

During the discussions, however, the wording was softened from “oppose” to an expression of “serious concern,” pending further information from the Province.

“These bills are not trivial, and while some may wish to take a wait-and-see approach and not join the growing number of municipalities and environmental groups that are questioning the content of these bills, I am not one of them,” said Councillor Weese at the start of the meeting. “I believe that open and accurate discussion of these bills in public by this Council will provide information that reflects our interests and is part of the role of this Council.

“Let me say that there are parts of this legislation, as well as the intent, that are supportable as we navigate the economic realities that face us and wish to maintain our authority over our community and our country. Likewise, I don’t think these motions before [us] are perfect. They may not be exactly reflective, and I welcome both discussion and amendments from my colleagues that express our values here in Aurora.”

Councillor Weese said the motions came following a June 10 Committee of the

Whole meeting at which Kathy Duncan of Climate Change Newmarket Aurora asked Council to formally oppose the legislation, followed by similar delegations to Aurora’s Environmental Advisory Committee. He noted he hoped to have the motions on the table at Council’s July 24 meeting, the last one before the summer recess, but “was rejected for discussion at that time because it had been submitted and needed a two-thirds majority for inclusion.”

“I didn’t get that support when three Council members voted against it, and so we are here tonight,” said Weese.

A similar perspective was added by Councillor Gallo who said he was “disappointed we had to go through significant hoops in order to get here.”

“Even if you don’t agree with these motions, it’s important to have those discussions publicly,” he continued. “I am glad to see that our Procedural Bylaw allows the majority of Council to do this as we are doing tonight.”

The intent to hold a Special Council meeting was announced earlier this month, an announcement which was followed by a statement from Mayor Mrakas that it was not the right time to move forward with firm opposition as many variables had not yet been fleshed out by the Province.

He did not respond to The Auroran’s request for comment on why he did not attend the July 15 meeting, but posted a statement to social media on July 20 addressing the issue.

“Last week, four members of Council called a Special Meeting,” he wrote. “My office was not consulted on the date and time of the meeting, and I was formally notified by the Clerk only after the date and time had been set by the four members. Unfortunately, this meant I was unable to attend. Even though I was unable to attend the meeting, I’m glad to see that the Councillors ultimately amended the motion to reflect a more reasonable and effective approach — one that followed the position I had already outlined and that aligns with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

“While the meeting itself brought nothing new to the conversation, I’m pleased that my formal statement submitted to the agenda (and received for information at the meeting) helped inform Council’s decision to revise the original motion and take a more constructive path forward — focusing on concerns rather than opposing the legislation (Bill 5 & 17) in its entirety.

“As Mayor and Head of Council, I will continue to stand up for Aurora’s interests — just as I’ve consistently done throughout this term. That means cutting through the noise, staying focused on results, and working directly with the Premier and Ministers to ensure our voice is not only heard but taken seriously at the Province.

Councillor Kim told The Auroran he was unable to attend the meeting due to a family commitment.

“Unfortunately, no one advised me of this Special Council meeting until a week or two prior to the meeting,” said Councillor Kim. “I am in agreement with the amended motion that was passed by Council. Streamlining housing and infrastructure development is needed but it needs to be balanced with environmental concerns.”

Similarly, Councillor Thompson said he informed staff and all Council members “well in advance” that he had an all-day work commitment that conflicted with the meeting’s 5 p.m. start time.

“Had the meeting been held at our regular 7 p.m. start time, I would have been able to attend and participate,” he said. “As for Bill 5 and 17 I share the opinion that aspects of these Bills raise practical concerns that merit further discussion and collaboration between the Province, municipalities and key stakeholders. While the goals of stimulating economic development and addressing housing supply are important the implementation of these Bills introduces significant implications for local governance, environmental stewardship and community planning.

“Constructive dialogue is essential, and I support efforts to bring all parties to the table to explore adjustments/changes, identify unintended consequences, and create solutions that are workable, fair and sustainable for all communities across Ontario.”

THE CONVERSATION

Following the presentation of the Motions, Councillor Gilliland, who chaired last week’s meeting, addressed the issue by saying she wanted to “speak from a place of thoughtfulness and concern.”

“The idea of accelerating economic development and reducing red tape resonates with many of us in the public

office, especially at the local level, where delays and duplication can sometimes slow good projects,” she said, before putting forward an amendment to change the wording to “serious concerns.”

“The introduction of Special Economic Zones could, under the right circumstances, help unlock investment jobs and even local innovation. But good intentions aren’t enough. What concerns me is how the Bill was passed and what was left behind in the rush. In just 49 days, this Bill moved from the first reading to a Royal Assent, with little time for public consultation, limited debate, and no meaningful municipal engagement,” she continued. “Even more troubling are the gaps in accountability and protection. One, it allows the province to override local planning authority, potentially without local consent. Two, it weakens long-standing environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act. Three, it offers broad immunity from legal challenge, effectively cutting off residents and communities from seeking recourse if harm occurs.”

She said she did not agree that the Bills should be opposed by Council in their entirety as that would be “premature and somewhat dismissive of the potential benefits that do come along with this Bill,” but it was Council’s “duty to raise the red flags where necessary and to suggest a better and more balanced way to go forward.”

The wording change, she said, “recognizes the value of economic progress, but insists on transparency, consultation and accountability.”

Councillor Gallo, who participated in the meeting over Zoom, noted the wording suggested by Councillor Gilliland was somewhat “lighter” than what was put forward by Councillor Weese, and this was a factor which made Councillor Gaertner oppose the wording change, although she ultimately voted for the motions as amended.

She noted “I don’t think that this goes far enough to express the deep concern that I have.”

“Bill 5 just guts the endangered species protection and creates economic zones where pretty much anything goes,” she said, going as far as to describe the economic zones as “above the law.”

“It’s called eliminating red tape, and whatever else one wants to say, but if you really look at it, the intent is very, very clear,” she continued. “It was clear in the Speech from the Throne. It was clear during the discussion of the Bills, the wording in the now-laws...they don’t leave much doubt that everything is not as important as the economic advancement. I agree...we need...to make our province healthy and to help Canada as a whole, but at what cost are we looking at?”

“The proposed legislation replaces the province’s 18-year-old Endangered Species Act with a narrower Species Conservation Act. The new law gives cabinet, not a committee of scientists, as was previously the case, the power to decide which animals and plants should be protected and abolishes obligations for the government to create recovery strategies and report on them, which is always important for transparency.

“It further says that any other decisions about species at risk can also be delegated to the deputy minister or any other employee in the ministry. It’s ludicrous. The concern that comes about the lack of accountability and transparency in the execution of this new act is very concerning, and I believe should be very concerning to anybody who lives in this province or even this country.”



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Residents supported Council motion to oppose Provincial legislation

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As Council voted to formally oppose pieces of Provincial legislation they believe will have a negative impact on the environment, development, and how communities plan for themselves, they did so with the backing of two residents who delegated to last week’s Special Council meeting to express their support.

Stepping up to also voice their opposition to Ontario Bills 5 and 17 were Kathy Duncan of Climate Action Newmarket-Aurora and historian David Heard, who has been a long-time advocate for the environment.

While the two were in agreement over the potential negative impacts of the legislation, which is now law, they were also united in “disappointment” that only four members of Council – Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner and, virtually, Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo – participated in the meeting.

“I would like to remind the folks that are here that on their website, the Town of Aurora bills itself as an environmentally savvy town, which is dedicated to the management and protection of our local environment. Key concerns that Climate Action Newmarket-Aurora has around the Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, Bill 5, are predominantly, as we are a climate group, the reduced environmental protections and oversight,” said Duncan.

“Aurora is home to a number of flora and fauna, which are considered to be species at risk. Included within this, but not the only ones, are the butternut tree, which has been designated as an endangered species, the eastern whippoorwill, which is a bird and has been designated a threatened species, the monarch butterfly, which has been designated a species of special concern, and the northern map turtle, which has also been designated as a threatened species. As well, the Jefferson Salamander is noted as a threatened species. The amendments that have been passed into the Acts have the ability to limit this Town and every municipality in the province of Ontario’s authority, to require developers to conduct comprehensive environmental impact studies.

“They also limit the reports that can be requested for other design and development components of a project. Moreover, if a special economic zone is approved by the Minister of Cabinet, it can override all other legislation, approved official plans, green standards, community energy plans, and land protections.”

While Mayor Mrakas was not in attendance at the July 15 meeting, Duncan referenced a public statement he made earlier in the month, when notice for the meeting was given, in which he said he believed it wasn’t the time to oppose the legislation outright until it’s fleshed out by the Province and its full impacts can be determined.

“Mayor Mrakas, in his public statement, notes that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario includes 444 municipalities, and he indicates that the AMO recommends a wait-and-see approach,” she said. “What’s not mentioned is that a number of those member municipalities of AMO have

The fact remains that the concerning wording is included in these new laws. No matter what regulations are brought in, the words and the ensuing powers within these acts won't change with regulation.

issued formal letters and or motions of Council to the province in opposition to these bills, despite the recommendation of AMO. In some cases, even subsequent to the passing of those Bills into law, the municipalities have called for one or both of those pieces of legislation to be rescinded.


“The fact remains that the concerning wording is included in these new laws. No matter what regulations are brought in, the words and the ensuing powers within these acts won’t change with regulation.”

Both Duncan and Heard underscored the impacts the legislation will have on Indigenous Peoples and how their voices were “completely ignored” when the legislation in question was drafted.

“I listened to the Councillor in the chair read the land acknowledgement, didn’t hit home like it used to,” said Heard of the start of the meeting, which was led on a Council vote by Councillor Gilliland. “I’ve done land acknowledgements myself recently very proudly at many Town events as a vendor for the Town. I don’t [think] I can say one after this Bill anymore the way I did before. And I’d actually ask the Town to reconsider rewriting that land acknowledgement after rereading this Bill again and see if it fits. Also, as a long-time Aurora resident of six decades, I’ve watched our heritage fall apart. Say it straight out. I’ve sat on the Heritage Committee twice. I fought for over a decade to preserve the Aurora Pet Cemetery – a long battle. This is a tougher battle. We have had so much put against us sitting on the Heritage Committee, being asked to reassess 287 homes and watching appeals, MZO’s and everything. It’s just I’m watching our history disappear. And as a person who has deep roots to the early 1800s, I’m highly offended. I’m more offended for our First Nations with this Bill.

“History is storytelling. Who were the best at it? How was it passed down? It’s through our First Nations people. And we have deep roots here. You know, stories in history are preserved as reminders. Now we can wipe out like, what, environment history and archaeological?

“I heard water mentioned. There’s nothing more important than water.... We have watched communities in Ontario have generally evidence-based, one manufacturer completely taint and destroy a water source. An example is Elmira, ON. This is serious stuff we’re playing with, and I’m going to say that the only thing we have now, I believe, is we need to push this up the hill to the Federal government and ask them for their help. Maybe we need a two-tiered heritage system, national designations, and also a secondary heritage property or land of importance, because the province ain’t helping us.”



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Images courtesy of Theatre Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

What’s the result when you combine two elderly sisters, a carafe of poisoned wine, and a long string of gentlemen who meet their maker after just a few sips? Surprisingly, it’s a lot of laughter in the classic 1941 play *Arsenic & Old Lace*. Originally written by Joseph Kesselring and later adapted for the 1944 film classic of the same name starring Cary Grant, the dark comedy has a long history of making audiences laugh – and it has a long history of coming to Theatre Aurora.

Arsenic & Old Lace, which is set to open May 1, 2026, running on select dates and times through May 9, is the final offering of Theatre Aurora’s upcoming season, but it was originally slated to hit the stage on Henderson Drive nearly six years ago.

Five weeks into rehearsal on that particular production, COVID hit and much of our world was shut down. At first, the cast and crew thought the theatre would only be dark for a few

weeks, but, as we all know, those weeks turned into months, and then years.

The lights may have cooled, but passion for the play did not, and the Theatre Aurora team is thrilled to be able to finally bring it to fruition.

Arsenic & Old Lace is not the only bona fide classic set to come to life at Theatre Aurora in 2026; their first production of the New Year is one that has been beloved by theatre-goers spanning three centuries: Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

First performed in 1895, its sparkling wit, dialogue, and social commentary has rendered it timeless, according to Theatre Aurora president Neill Kernohan.

“You know the sharp, witty dialogue and biting critique of classic convention still works today, but we really wanted to include a good old classic in the season,” he says. “It’s still really relevant and it’s very funny, and we think it’s really cool that it will allow the actors to flex their comedic timing.”

The Importance of Being Earnest will open on January 30, 2026, and run on

select dates and times through February 7.

This British classic will be followed between March 20 and March 28 by an emerging Canadian classic, *Where You Are*, written by Kristen Da Silva.

“It’s very funny, but it’s also very touching and heartwarming,” says Theatre Aurora Artistic Director Judy Cragg. “It’s got those pull-at-the-heartstrings moments – two sisters in their late 50s and early 60s who live and grew up on Manitoulin Island. One of them stayed there, married there, and is now a widow. The other one was the wild child sister who had a child out wedlock at a somewhat early age, took off, lived her crazy life, and now she has come back, living with her sister, and they’re just having this life. Then the wild child’s daughter shows up unexpectedly.”

“It’s a beautiful, heartwarming story. The setting is beautiful and the story is beautiful.”

Even *Arsenic and Old Lace*, the final offering of the season, offers its heartwarming moments.

“It was the show that was closing out our 2019-2020 season,” Cragg explains. “As everybody did, we kind of naively thought, well, this will be over in a month, so we put it on hold and thought instead of having it at the beginning of May, we could have it at the end of May – and that didn’t happen. Then we thought, okay, we’ll hold off until September. After a while, we realized that wasn’t going to

happen, so we had to make the really difficult decision to cancel it completely.

“As you can imagine, the cast and team were pretty devastated. It was very difficult and just disappointing, but it’s always been in the back of our minds, and from time to time, some people from the cast or patrons would say, ‘Are you bringing it back? We really want to see it.’ Finally, this year, I thought, ‘Okay, let’s bring it back.’ It’s a great show, it’s a dark comedy with two crazy little old lady sisters who are basically poisoning these men who they think are only going to have a sad life and they’re doing them a favour. It’s old-fashioned mayhem, but very, very funny. It will be six years in the making, but we’ll get there!”

As Theatre Aurora looks forward to its upcoming season, which, as The Auroran reported last week, will begin on September 19, 2025, with Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *A Grand Night for Singing*, they’re doing so knowing they’ve pieced together a season with back-to-back shows that are fun in their own ways.

“Whether it’s a dark comedy, whether it’s the completely wacky Panto, they’re all fun in a different way,” says Cragg. “You’re also getting an interesting cross-section of different types of theatre.”

Tickets for the upcoming season are on sale now and can be secured through theatreaurora.com or by calling the box office at 905-727-3669.

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Aurora resident and University of West Virginia Mountaineer Sam White signs free agent deal with the Toronto Blue Jays



Photo courtesy of Sam White

BY JIM STEWART

Aurora’s Sam White capped off a terrific collegiate baseball career last week by signing a free agent deal with the Toronto Blue Jays.

The Aurora High School graduate starred at the University of West Virginia over the last three years and rolled up impressive numbers for the Mountaineers. White hit .310 with 168 hits, 33 doubles, 19 home runs and 111 RBI in 161 NCAA Division 1 games—roughly the equivalent of an MLB season.

Despite those gaudy offensive numbers, White was not selected in this summer’s truncated MLB draft. The former Aurora-King Jay was batting over .400 when he tore his labrum after hitting a home run this Spring. Despite the injury, White led the Mountaineers with a sparkling .361 batting average in 2025 and the Jays took a chance on him when other Major League clubs were not as inclined to draft an injured collegiate player.

White described his feelings about signing with Toronto’s major league club: “It was awesome, especially because it was with the Jays. It meant so much more to me to play for the organization I’ve cheered for my entire

life. When the draft didn’t work out, it was big relief to have an offer from the Jays.”

The Jays were clearly impressed with White’s body of work in West Virginia. He complemented his power bat by playing left field, right field, second base, first base, third base, and catcher over his three years with the emerging NCAA Division 1 powerhouse.

While White enjoyed defending all over the diamond for the Mountaineers, he acknowledged in our phone interview from Dunedin that he did have a favorite defensive position.

“I liked playing second base, for sure. I like being up the middle. The ball is in your hands more and you can play a bigger part of the game.”

Coincidentally, that is what the Jays’ coaching staff in Florida have suggested will be his primary position in the organization.

“The Jays see me as a second baseman or third baseman. I’ll be ready to play there for Spring Training once my shoulder is rehabbed and I go through all the graduated steps to get back to throwing, fielding, and swinging the bat again over the Winter.”

White is currently rehabbing in Dunedin after he had “major shoulder

surgery about three weeks ago.”

“It was performed by our West Virginia team doctor on June 26. I’ll be ready to go for next Spring. The only thing I am allowed to do right now is biking.”

Despite the frustration of not being able to throw or swing for the next twelve weeks and being restricted with a brace for at least the next six weeks, White’s journey back to health has been shared with fellow Mountaineer and Jays pitcher Alek Manoah who is scheduled to return to Toronto’s pitching staff in August.

“I met Alek at Russell Martin’s retirement party and we’ve been training together in the facility over the last few weeks. He saw me play in the Clemson Regional and really liked how I played in the regional playoff games. I was happy he knew my name.”

In addition to creating a baseball bond with a fellow Mountaineer in Dunedin, White reflected on his favorite moments as a University of West Virginia ballplayer.

“Most recently, winning the Clemson Regional in the Spring. We beat Clemson and then Kentucky twice—we won all three games with comebacks. In my freshman year, we set a Mountaineers record for wins in a season with 41. We broke that record this year with 44 wins. It was exciting to be on teams that were making school history. My sophomore year, we hit the most home runs of any UWV team. We had so many achievements as a team over the last three years.”

After a successful career with the

Mountaineers, the former Team Ontario Astro shortstop described the thrill of signing with the Blue Jays as a player born and raised in Canada.

“That means the world to me. The Jays were my favorite team growing up and it feels so good to enter the Complex in Dunedin and seeing the giant Blue Jays logo with the Maple Leaf in it. It’s a great feeling as a Canadian to be in the Jays organization.”

As a Canadian playing in West Virginia since 2022, White felt one of the reasons for his success at the NCAA Division 1 level was the consistency of his college coaching staff.

“We had coaching consistency in my three years. It definitely contributed to our team success and it was huge for me to have a comfortable setting in my freshman year. Steve Sabins was our Assistant Coach when he recruited me and then he became our Head Coach in my third year. It was great to be supported.”

Coach Sabins and veteran players like White led the Mountaineers to both a Big 12 regular season championship and an NCAA tournament regional title in 2025. White’s father, Todd, praised the University of West Virginia coaching staff for showing him that his son was ready to be a professional ballplayer.

“It was just the way the coaches talked to him and about him. They said Sam was the team leader. Under their direction, Sam got better every year. Getting to D1 was quite an achievement in itself, but the coaches saw Sam as a pro player—and they

Continued on page 19



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Thirty-four School Athletes-of-the-Year honored at Sport Aurora’s ceremony at Town Park

BY JIM STEWART

A little pre-event drizzle didn’t dampen the spirits of participants at Sport Aurora’s 9th Annual School Athletes of the Year celebration on Thursday evening at leafy Town Park.

The rain held off for the ceremony and the breezy, 17-degree conditions were a welcome respite from six consecutive days of stifling humidity, torrid temperatures, and bad air days caused by wildfires in three provinces.

Amid the comparably fresher climatic conditions, Sport Aurora honored 34 student-athletes from 17 Aurora elementary and secondary schools. The 29 winners who attended the ceremony showcased the abundance of local athletic prowess in the Town of Aurora. All honorees were selected as the 2025 School Athletes of the Year by their respective schools.

Sport Aurora President Ron Weese spoke glowingly about the honored athletes in attendance.

“The best part of hosting an event like is when I ask them how much they enjoy the sports they play. You can see how enthusiastic they are about athletics and how proud the athletes are of their accomplishments,” he said. “The rounds of applause they get from the audience are tremendous public recognition for our dedicated and talented local school athletes. It’s also great to see the parents at these events and how appreciative they are to see their kids recognized by Sport Aurora. The celebration of sport is one of our most important roles as an organization.”

In its 20th anniversary of service to local community athletes, teams, and organizations, representatives from Sport Aurora—including Weese, Emcee and ASHoF Inductee Alan

Dean, Executive Director/Secretary Laurie Mueller; Vice President and former Aurora mayor Geoff Dawe, Treasurer John Reich, and Community Volunteer Recognition Event Emcee Stephen Forsey – distributed certificates of recognition to the top athletes as they crossed the stage of the Town Park band shell.

Local dignitaries augmenting the Sport Aurora executive on stage were MPP and Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services Michael Parsa (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill) and Nadia Hansen who represented MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy (Newmarket-Aurora) in her absence.

The 2025 Aurora elementary school Student Athletes of the Year were:

- St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School**
Sophia Venuto and Theo Marion

St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School
Cohen Smith and Mia Dimmell;

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School
Cameron MacGillivray and Lawson Gamble;

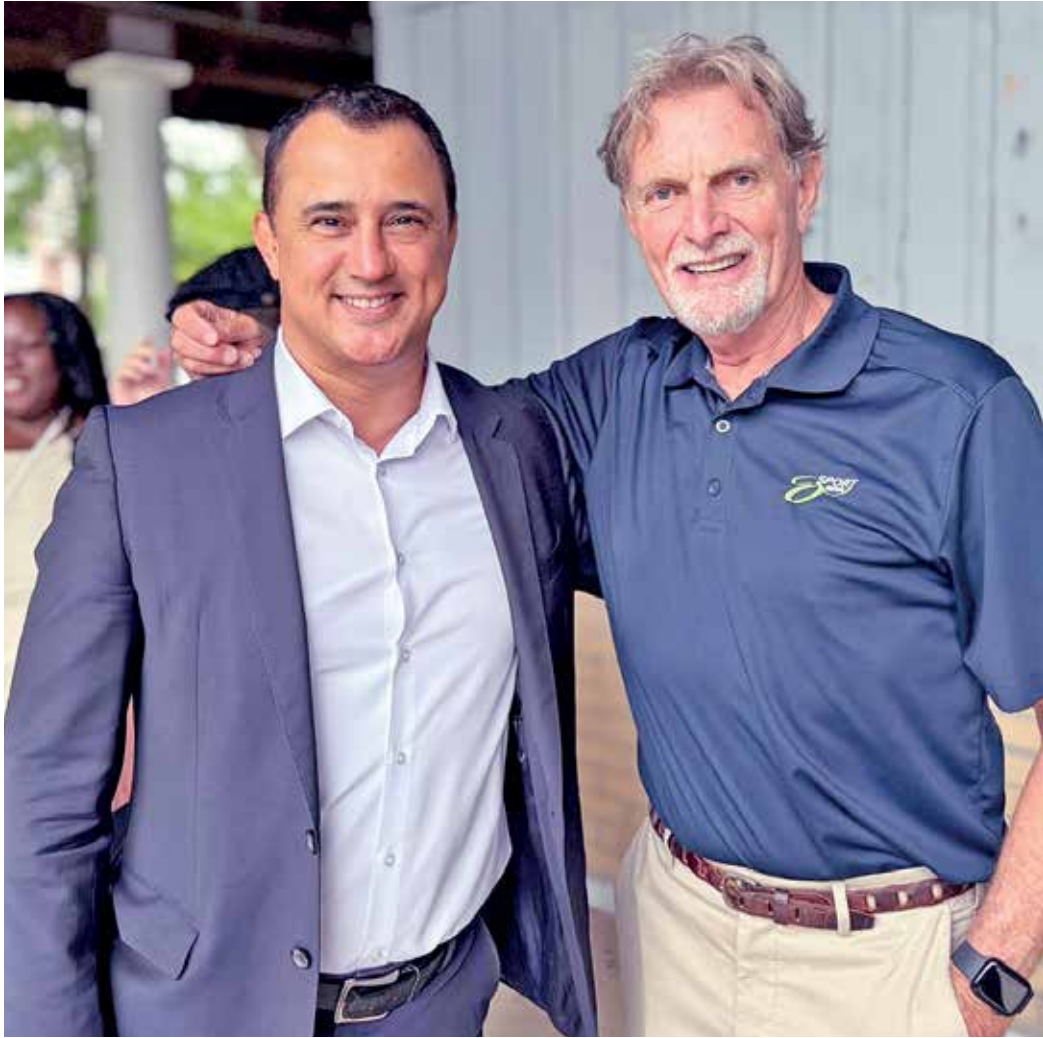
Holy Spirit Catholic Elementary School
Katelyn Rantz and Nicholas Di Lucia;

Light of Christ Elementary School
Katerina Mihaiescu;

Aurora Heights Public School
Kunyanut Jenchiewchan and Penn Duncan;

Northern Lights Public School
Jayden Fu;

Wellington Public School
Ethan Peng and Jacob Wahda;



Participating in Thursday’s presentation to student athletes were Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa and Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese in his capacity as President of Sport Aurora.
Photo courtesy of Sport Aurora

- Lester B. Pearson Public School**
Beckett Hawthorne;

Hartman Public School
Ivan Yen and Mya Stickle;

Rick Hansen Public School
Kennedy Hunter and Liam Gao;

Devins Drive Public School
Tyson Navarro and Seth Morris and Kiana Ansari;

Regency Acres Public School
Rosha Nejad-Javadi
- Cardinal Carter Catholic High School**
Noah Wetzel and Abigail Lee;

Aurora High School
Maddie Law Heese, Ali Worden, and Lucas Mochizuki;

St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School
Elliott Pileggi and Kaitlyn Toner;

Dr. G.W Williams Secondary School
Abigail Thompson, Karson Stickle, Ashlyn Donald, and Judah James.



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Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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17. Anger
18. Irritations
19. Hindu holy man
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24. Smaller portion
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26. Belonging to a thing
27. Horsley and Greenwood are two
28. Scottish language
29. Prose
30. Exclamation of surprise
31. Russian river

THINGS... you ought to know

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23
Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues tonight at Town Park from 6 - 9 p.m. Tonight's entertainment: Simply the Best: A Tribute to Tina Turner, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. "Karen Durrant brings Tina Turner to life in a powerhouse performance packed with hits, high energy and heart. It's more than a tribute - it's a rock and roll revival." 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. Remember to bring your lawn chair and blanket!

FRIDAY, JULY 25
The Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion will host its annual Christmas in July lunch from 11.30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tickets in advance for \$25 per person. Come dressed festive and enjoy a traditional turkey dinner and some fun and games.

SATURDAY, JULY 26
The Aurora Farmers' Market hosts Customer Appreciation

Day at Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
WEDNESDAY, JULY 30
Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues tonight at Town Park from 6 - 9 p.m. Tonight's entertainment: No Sugar Tonight: A Tribute to The Guess Who, Burton Cummings, and BTO, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. "Celebrate the iconic sounds of Canadian rock legends with a show full of classic hits and unforgettable melodies. Pure Canuck rock nostalgia." 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. Remember to bring your lawn chair and blanket!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2
The Aurora Farmers' Market continues today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6
Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series continues tonight at Town Park from 6 - 9 p.m. Tonight's entertainment: Outlaw State of Mind: A Tribute to Chris Stapleton from 7

p.m. to 9 p.m. "Grit, soul and powerful vocals - this tribute delivers the raw intensity of Chris Stapleton in a show that's been selling out venues. A must-see for fans of country, blues and rock." 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. Remember to bring your lawn chair and blanket!

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“Have You Seen My Breasts” show challenges stereotypes at Royal Rose

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Cynthia Darling has never been shy about her art.

The Aurora artist, who now lives in Newmarket, has always been fascinated with the beauty of the human form, and the fruits of her labour were often found around the house – including three-dimensional sculptures of female breasts, which have become something of a signature.

This, however, sometimes raised questions when her children had friends over to play, and one day, when one of



Artist Cynthia Darling held an artist talk on her Royal Rose Gallery exhibition, "Have You Seen My Breasts?", on Thursday evening.
Photo courtesy of Royal Rose Gallery

her daughters’ male friends arrived, she decided to cut through any questions right off the bat with the simple question, “Have you seen my breasts?” followed by a look at her studio.

Darling chuckles remembering how her local exhibition, Have You Seen My Breasts?, which is on now through July 30 at the Royal Rose Gallery, got its name.

Have You Seen My Breasts? is the second time Darling’s work has been featured at the Royal Rose Gallery. She first took part in a group exhibition in late 2023 when several artists were invited to create 10x10 works.

It was something of a full circle moment for Darling who remembers going into the gallery space many years ago when it was Mary’s Flower Shop – and later Caruso & Company – and picking up paint-by-number kits as a gift.

“I really liked the energy that was in here,” says Darling, noting when Rosa Calabrese opened the Royal Rose Gallery,

she had to come back to see how such a classic space was reimagined.

Passers-by the gallery, which is located on the west side of Yonge Street, just south of Wellington, in Aurora’s historic downtown core, may have found themselves doing a double-take recently as they passed by a series of sculpted bare chests – male and female. But as much as her work focuses on anatomy, Darling says it’s about much more than that.

“It’s about how much of our bodies we show, what cultures think of that, and I don’t see that as using your ‘feminine wiles’ in any way,” she says, before pausing, lest she dive head-long into what she describes as a “political” discussion. “I addressed this with the women I knew. There’s that sexual person, and then there’s that mother; daughter, companion – all those good things. If you’re a young without any children, that’s a sexy woman. You turn out to be an ‘old’ woman like me, you’re kind

of invisible.”

It’s a topic especially important to Darling, a lesbian, who is a co-parent with her partner of four daughters.

It’s also an important topic for gallery owner Calabrese, who says there are “so many narratives” about women’s bodies “and how society sees the female body as well – it can be stereotypes, it can be so many stipulations and assumptions.”

“[Our storefront display] definitely sparks curiosity, community engagement and discussions around the topic – any art should do that,” says Calabrese. “We definitely like to showcase emerging artists – and with emerging artists, just because they’re starting off, it doesn’t mean they’re less talented. Some emerging artists are more talented than some of what we would call ‘established artists.’ We just love to give the opportunity to artists in general who want to exhibit and share their pieces.”



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Aurora resident and University of West Virginia Mountaineer Sam White signs free agent deal with the Toronto Blue Jays

From page 11
thought he was someone that the younger players could look up to and they were encouraged to imitate Sam's work ethic."
The longtime resident of Aurora described what went through his mind when his son signed as a free agent with the Jays: "It was mostly relief for him. Sam worked very hard in West Virginia. The second day of the draft was an up and down roller coaster

of a day for him and Sam hasn't had much disappointment as an athlete. However, the Jays had spoken to him two days before the draft so he had that in his back pocket. I was so happy for him to have that option and I hope to see him up with the big club someday."
When Todd White was asked about the best part of seeing his son sign a professional baseball contract, he expressed his own kind of relief: "He can pay his own bills now!"

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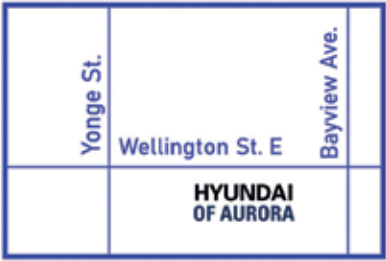
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