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THE AUROREDAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 27 No. 2 905-727-3300

TheAuroran.com

FREE

Week of October 23, 2025



Every Saturday

Aurora's Town Park 8am-1pm

AURORA Farmers Market

May to October Rain or Shine

and Artisan Fair

www.theaurorafarmersmarket.com

Saturday marks the final day of the Aurora Farmers' Market and it will be one to remember as Paddy Honey, Alison Hughes and Lauren Hanna join forces to create a barrier-free celebration at Town Park.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

No Tricks, Just Treats this weekend as volunteers come together for accessible Halloween fun

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

From Aurora's Haunted Forest to a new spin on the perennially-popular Rocky Horror Picture Show, there's plenty of activities going on around Aurora to get you into the Halloween spirit early this weekend – but a new event is ditching the tricks for a whole lot of treats this Saturday.

On Saturday, October 25, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., No Tricks Just Treats will take place at Town Park, in conjunction with the Aurora Farmers' Market. Billed as a fully accessible Halloween event, No Tricks Just Treats, a collaboration between Aurora residents Lauren Hanna and Alison Hughes, with the Market, the event will include an accessible trick-or-treat and costume parade, time on Town Park's inclusive playground, and an

opportunity to learn more about how to make Halloween inclusive. It will also be a chance for residents to pick up signs to indicate their home is a barrier-free place for trick-or-treaters to have some fun on Halloween night, which is part of the Treat Accessibly initiative, a grassroots movement the Town of Aurora has supported over the last several years. "As a child, I loved trick-or-treating

Continued on page 11



SHOWING LOVE FOR MS. WALTERS

The Aurora Montessori School community has put their talents together for a very visible display of love for late Vice Principal Lisa Walters. For more on the artistic tribute on Industrial Parkway at St. John's Sideroad, see Page 9.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Aurora looking at 2.2% tax increase in 2026

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurorans could see a less-than-forecasted tax increase in the year ahead. On Monday, Mayor Tom Mrakas tabled the Town's proposed 2026 Budget – with a proposed tax increase of 2.2 per cent, down from the 2.9 per cent initially estimated for the coming year through the Town's multi-year budget plan. The initial budget, which will be subject to further discussions around the Council table, includes a 0.6 per cent increase for

Continued on page 8



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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

October 23, 2025



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Tuesday, October 28	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, October 28	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Wednesday, October 29	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Special Public Planning
Monday, November 3	6 p.m.	Council Chambers	Budget Committee
Tuesday, November 4	9:30 a.m.	Newmarket CC	Joint Council Committee (CYFS)
Monday, November 10	6 p.m.	Council Chambers	Budget Committee
Tuesday, November 11	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, November 11	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Committee of the Whole
Wednesday, November 12	10 a.m.	Holland Room	Community Recognition Review Advisory Committee
Wednesday, November 12	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Wednesday, November 12	7 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board
Thursday, November 13	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment

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

What's Happening

AURORA'S 2025
HAUNTED
FOREST
20TH ANNIVERSARY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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Aurora Town Hall, Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex
or Aurora Town Square

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aurora.ca/HauntedForest
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Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: Christine Valentini - Retrospective

This show features a wide-ranging collection of artworks, comprising watercolours, India inks, pastels, mixed media, and mono prints. These pieces, created over many years, capture the beauty of Canadian landscapes, florals, historical homes, and intuitive interpretations of semi-abstract nature scenes and seascapes, which I would like to share with Aurora. 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.



2026 Budget

Mayor Markas has officially tabled Aurora's proposed 2026 Budget, launching the Town's annual review process.

Residents are encouraged to attend Budget Committee meetings starting **November 3** and delegate on issues that matter to them.

The proposed budget includes strategic investments in Town operations, fire services, and capital reserves—supporting long-term financial sustainability.

Share your feedback: ourtownbudget@aurora.ca

Learn more: aurora.ca/Budget2026.

Fall 2025
Program Guide

The **Fall 2025 Program Guide** is available to view online at aurora.ca/ProgramGuide. Registration is open for Recreation and Aquatic programs. View the interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., S.A.R.C. or A.T.S.

2026 Aquatic Leadership Courses

Aquatic Leadership registration is now open for all seasons of our 2026 Aquatic Leadership courses. Full details at aurora.ca/AquaticLeadership. Register online or pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., S.A.R.C. or A.T.S.

Winterfest Camp – Junior & Senior

Register now and take a break from the cold weather as you join us for games, sports, crafts and more! Winterfest Camps are available for ages 4 to 6 and 7 to 12. Dates for our camps run **December 22, 23, 29, 30 and January 2**. Full details at aurora.ca/Camps.

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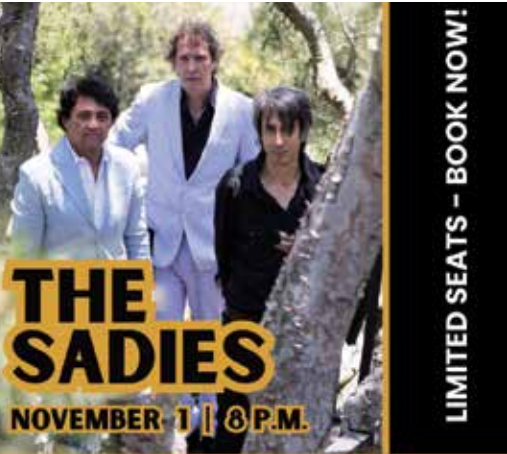
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aurora.ca/TreatAccessibly



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Blue Door’s Construct set to go national on fifth anniversary

“When we invest in people, we transform communities”

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora-based Construct, an initiative of Blue Door, is set to go national as the employment social enterprise marks its fifth anniversary in York, Peel, and Durham Regions.

The national expansion was announced at their fifth-anniversary celebrations held Tuesday afternoon at their Earl Stewart Drive headquarters.

Construct provides in-class training, on-the-job work experience, and wraparound supports to vulnerable members of the community, helping them find long-term, well-paying jobs in the trades.

The foundations for Construct were first laid by Emmy Kelly, now Interim CEO of Blue Door, as part of her dissertation while pursuing her MBA. Looking back over the last five years, she says the program “was born from a bold idea that meaningful, well-paid work can be one of the most powerful ways to prevent homelessness.”

“Five years later, what that means to us is we are seeing more than 750 lives that have been changed, that have been supported, to move from survival to stability, and from exclusion to contribution,” she says. “What I’m personally very excited about, too, is that this celebration isn’t just about what we’ve built so far, but it’s about what comes next.

“We’re going to be bringing this now-proven model to communities across Canada as Construct Canada. With the cross-sector partnerships we’ve built, we are planning to scale that impact to create a national blueprint for change. The team has already built out the digital portal and the partnerships to replicate this model across our nation.”

Going national, she says, was a goal for Construct as soon as they got off the ground.

“We have direct service delivery now in York, Durham, and Peel, and then the replicable parts have been to build out a curriculum and training elements and partnerships that can be replicated,” she explains. “We have a training portal that has access for both facilitators and participants.”

Building on such partnerships Construct has built locally, such as those with LiUNA, Habitat for Humanity, and the YMCA, similar partnerships can be leveraged by other charities and organizations aiming to replicate the Construct model.

“We have an expansion team in place and we’ve run a pilot in both Niagara and Halifax, which have been super-successful, and this year we’re going to do two more and continue to expand that reach.”

While Construct is something of a local success story, regardless of how far they expand across Canada, the core measures of success will remain the same: the people they serve.

“Construct has a 95 per cent graduation rate and an 85 per cent success rate into long-term and stable careers,” says Kelly. “The whole basis of this trades-based employment social enterprise is to improve housing stability through increased incomes. Those will always be our baselines. Essentially

those who have been detached from the labour market are detached for a reason, and so we provide the wraparound and individualized supports that are needed to move past those barriers and to connect to careers.

“When you’re benefiting from one of these programs, like emergency housing, you’re in your very most vulnerable state and it’s not generally a point of pride; you’re working hard to get out of those circumstances whereas with the Construct program, we find that participants are really proud of the work that they do and what they create with their hands, and it does feel like a successful step forward.

“When people like Matt, who once faced closed doors due to incarceration, I mean a lot of closed doors; after he came out he was able to find Construct and the team worked with him. He graduated from Construct, he gained employment, he studied for his degree, he’s a manager now, and he comes back to Construct to mentor our participants – and that’s just proof that when we invest in people, we transform communities.

“With this program, because of its very intentional work, it does really feel like we’re starting to build fences at the top of the cliff rather than hospitals at the bottom.”



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Messages bring Regional matters into focus

Eric Jolliffe, York Region Chairman and CEO, has been regularly contributing Letters to the Editor in The Auroran, and I've enjoyed reading his insights. I believe many readers would benefit from more frequent updates about what's happening at the regional level. It's time to give Mr. Jolliffe a dedicated column — he deserves one, and it would be a valuable addition to the paper. I often find there is confusion about which responsibilities fall under the Town and which are managed by the Region. Compared to the provincial and federal governments — where it usually takes a large collective effort to raise an issue — at the municipal and regional levels, one informed voice can still make a meaningful difference. I hope Mr. Jolliffe and The Auroran will explore this possibility.

Anna Lozyk Romeo
Aurora

Premier sends greetings on Diwali

Today, people in Ontario of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain faiths will gather to celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights. While this holiday of hope has different meanings across regions and religions, its shared, universal values are unifying — light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and community over division.

Today also marks Bandi Chhor Divas, the Day of Liberation. Celebrated by Sikh communities around the world, this day is a powerful reminder of the enduring importance of freedom, justice and courage in the face of adversity.

Both holidays bring people together to light Diya lamps, enjoy fireworks and share meals in the spirit of togetherness. To those celebrating, may this special time bring light, joy and hope to your homes, communities and places of worship.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I wish you all a happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas!

Premier Doug Ford



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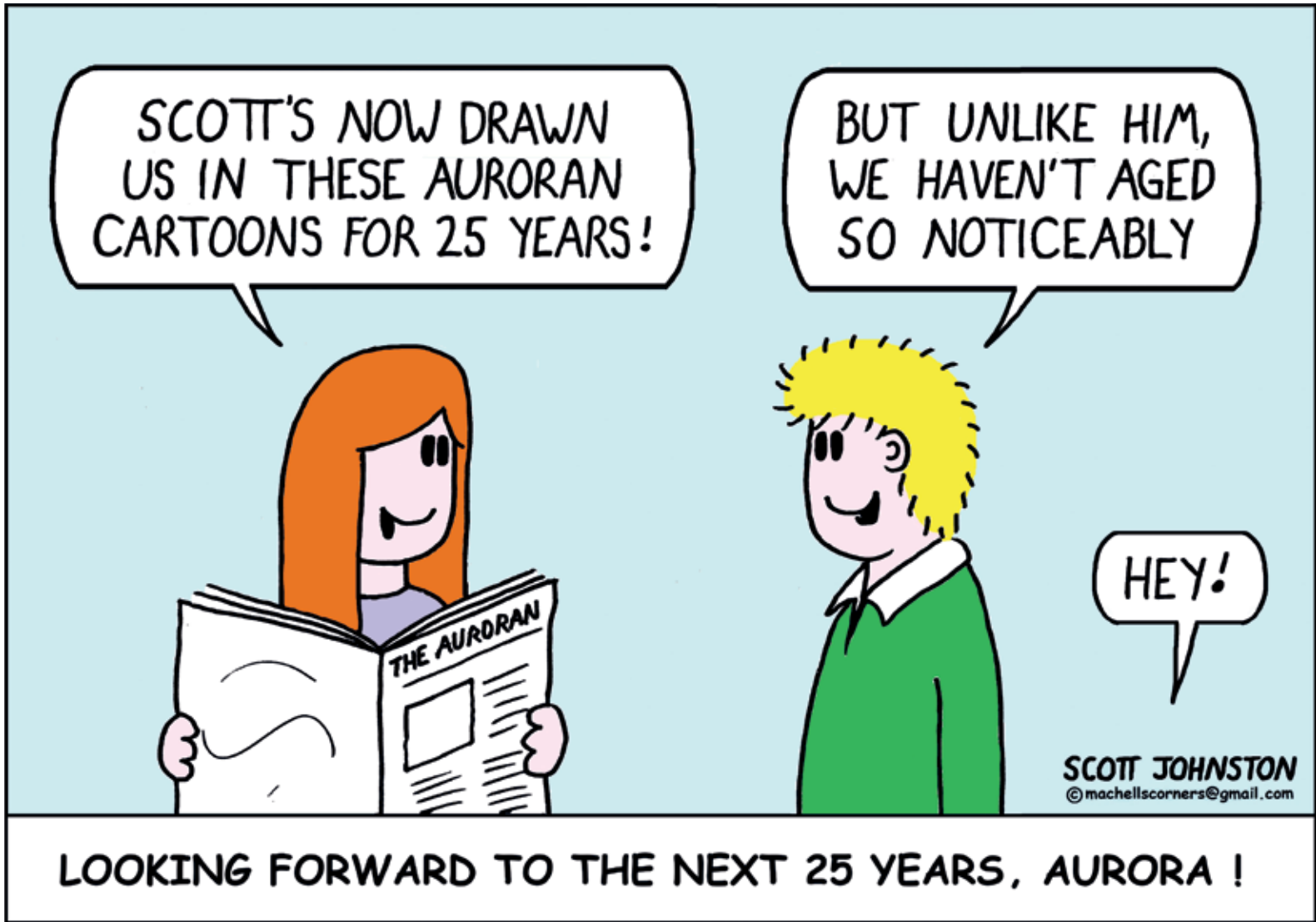
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Deadline for submissions

is Sunday at 1 p.m.

Machell's Corners



Schoolyard Views



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

had there were hit or miss, but the hits thankfully outweighed the misses.

One such teacher, even though she was not my homeroom teacher, had a sense that my own transition from one school to the other could be easier due to a little bit of bullying and some other factors simmering in the background. She took me under her wing and allocated time almost each and every day to take me aside and discuss the events of the day, how I was feeling, and helping me find my bearings.

I hope, looking back, I adequately expressed my gratitude for her taking the time to go above and beyond the call of duty, and I was curious as to what other long-lost memories would be stirred by walking those halls again.

Those memories, however, will have to sustain me as my own memory failed me so spectacularly.

I've been thinking about those influential teachers quite a bit lately.

With so much discussion happening at Queen's Park lately about our education system, how it operates, and how students and families are represented, and as back-to-school season shifts gears into a well-oiled machine, there is a lot to be said.

On Monday, for instance, Ontario Minister of Education Paul Calandra announced the Province had declared a trustee seat in Haldimand County vacant after the seat-holder in question failed to pay back \$50,000 they expensed for a Board trip to Italy. It was, he said, a move to ensure education dollars are spent correctly — that is, on student success rather than junkets abroad — and it's hard to argue with that sentiment.

What's a bit dicier, however, is the idea being investigated to do away with trustee positions entirely within Ontario's respective school boards.

On the one hand, it's vital, in my view, for parents and students to have effective

representation on school boards which are ultimately intended to serve them, particularly if we're required — and rightly so — to support our school boards with our tax dollars. On the other, however, having observed many school board meetings over my near 15 years as a journalist within our communities, I have seen a number of examples where elected trustees are not particularly effective in representing the people they serve — such as letting one's personal views and ideology get in the way not only of progress, but in how students and their families wanted to be represented.

There's a balance to be found, but I'm not quite sure where.

Student success is at the heart of all of these decisions, but what I would personally like to see enter the conversation is more talk on how we — writ large — can support teachers on the road to delivering that success.

Last week I had the poignant pleasure of interviewing members of a school community who stepped up in September to pay tribute to a beloved teacher who passed away over the summer. This was not a teacher who clocked in and clocked out as if it was a regular workday, but one who saw some of the needs faced by her students and, to address them, carved out a unique role for herself within the school community.

Last spring, at another area school that was working with community businesses to secure healthy snacks for their charges where they would otherwise have to go without, faculty members and parent volunteers outlined the stark reality that the role of teachers today.

Their reality was being called upon to do much more than impart the “three Rs” and having to take on the roles of counsellor, meal planner, and so much more for their students — often doing so out-of-pocket — in an environment that is, sadly, becoming increasingly thankless.

Much has changed over the last few decades when it comes to the role of public school trustees, and the same can be said for those persons who find themselves day in and day out at the front of classrooms, doing far more than what teacher's college prepared them for.

Looking back over my own high school days, perhaps these teachers have always gone above and beyond to meet student needs but their efforts have all too often flown under the radar.

If we're looking at significant changes to the structure of how our school boards operate, the realities that teachers now face day to day should be part of the conversation, too.

THE AURORAN
Aurora's Community Newspaper

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is cheering...

Let’s Go Blue Jays!

(This illustration of a Blue Jay is from the 1945 book “Birds of Canada” by P.A. Taverner, part of the collection of the Aurora Museum & Archives (81.7.11))

Did you know that Blue Jays are incredibly clever? These brilliant birds have been known to mimic hawk calls to outsmart rivals and even use tools to solve problems. Their intelligence and adaptability make them truly fascinating creatures — and it’s no wonder the Toronto Blue Jays share that same clever spirit! Now, their namesake team, the Toronto Blue Jays, are soaring into the World Series, proving that clever plays and cool composure aren’t just for the wild. With strategy, skill, and a whole lot of heart, they’ve shown time and again that they know how to outsmart the competition and rise to the occasion. Let’s go Blue Jays!



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Autumn Angst

To rake, or not to rake: that is the question.

We all love the colours of autumn. For a month or so, deciduous trees across Town look beautiful in their coats of red, gold, orange and yellow.

But all good things must come to an end, and eventually the leaves drop off and create a vibrant carpet that while visually pleasing, is less fun to deal with.

In a forest, field or other natural area the leaves will slowly decompose over time with the help of bacteria, worms, insects, fungi and the elements. Their nutrients will be returned to the soil ready to nourish a future crop of leaves.

But Aurora isn’t all natural space, and it’s a bit of a different story on the manicured grass that makes up the majority of our residential properties.

That’s why every year the Town collects thousands of kraft bags full of leaves raked up by residents from their yards, and left at the ends of their driveways.

At the same time, municipal vehicles continually clear roads, gutters and catch basins of leaves to prevent our drainage infrastructure from being clogged and overwhelmed.

While it would be ideal to just let the leaves decompose on our lawns, and in areas where there are only a few trees this may work, often in many areas there are just too many trees. As well, it takes time for leaves to decompose.

I learned this the hard way one fall shortly after we moved into our house when an early snowfall covered the lawn before I could rake it. I ended up just leaving that job, and hoping Mother Nature would take care of the work for me.

In the spring the snow melted to reveal a soggy brown biomass covering the lawn. There wasn’t a hint of green to be seen, and even with some sunny weather, the organic matter stayed stubbornly wet.

Showing no sign of breaking down any time soon, I opened up a small patch in the litter. You could almost hear the grass giving a gasp of relief as it was exposed to sunlight for the first time in five months. I raked it all up, vowing not to let that happen again.

Part of the problem may have been the sheer size of the leaves. Perhaps mulching them up into tiny bits so they could settle down into the base of the grass, thereby giving nature a head start on decomposition, would do the trick.

One autumn I gave this a shot, waiting until the majority of leaves were down and firing up the trusty and freshly blade-sharpened mulching mower.

Starting onto the lawn the machine went about a foot before it stopped working, completely overwhelmed by the mass of leaves. I cleaned it out and started again, successfully clearing another small step.

After repeating this process several times, I had mulched an area about the size of a large desk. The mower was pleading for mercy, and the remaining leaves were laughing at me, while more continued to drift down from the trees to join the fun.

In the end I’ve reached a bit of a lopsided compromise. When the majority of leaves have fallen, and are about 10 cm deep on the lawn, I rake them up, typically filling about 50 bags.

But that doesn’t account for all of them. After that, as the remaining ones settle onto the lawn, they get taken care of by the lawnmower. With a smaller volume to deal with, it manages to chop its way through them eventually, so at least some nutrients are being returned to the soil.

It’s turned out to be a successful solution. Unless of course, the first snowfall of winter comes early.

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

This week I tabled the Town of Aurora’s 2026 Operating Budget and 10-Year Capital Plan — a plan that reflects our community’s values, strengthens our financial foundation, and continues the steady, responsible leadership to which you have become accustomed over the past several years.

This year, I’m calling it “The People’s Budget”, which is reflective of my ongoing focus on putting people first. And I heard from many of you loud and clear over the past year: the cost of living is rising, you’ve been tightening up your family budgets, and you expect your government to do the same.

With your feedback in mind, this budget keeps the tax-levy increase moderate — protecting residents’ pocketbooks — while continuing to invest in the services, facilities, and infrastructure that make Aurora one of the most desirable communities in Ontario.

The 2026 tax-levy increase is 2.2 percent — down from our initial forecast of 2.9 percent.

This year’s 2.2 percent increase is comprised of:

- 0.6 percent for Town operations,
- 0.6 percent for Central York Fire Services, and
- 1 percent for capital reserve contributions — an investment in Aurora’s long-term stability and future infrastructure.

For a home assessed at \$800,000, that represents an annual increase of \$56.94.

Now, we all know these have not been easy years. Families have been dealing with higher costs at every turn — groceries, gas, mortgage rates. That’s why I made it my top priority to bring forward a budget that protects residents from unnecessary increases, while ensuring we don’t compromise the future of our Town.

Working closely with our CAO, finance team, and department directors, we achieved that balance by finding efficiencies, reducing discretionary spending, pausing non-essential projects, and implementing a temporary hiring freeze for 2026 — with no new staff positions added.

That decision sends a clear message: we are doing more with what we have.



Mayor Tom Mrakas

GETTING THINGS DONE

We are respecting taxpayers by focusing on productivity, not payroll, and ensuring every dollar goes toward improving service delivery, not expanding bureaucracy.

I am aware that the idea of a zero percent tax increase has garnered some interest among local decision makers. That may sound appealing in the short term, but the reality is zero-percent budgets are short-sighted and irresponsible, and often rely on the temptation of using one-time reserve funds — like the Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve — to cover ongoing operational costs.

While that might make a budget look good in the short term, it’s fiscally irresponsible and would leave future Councils — and future residents — facing a shortfall of nearly six million dollars that they would have to make up later.

That’s not the kind of budgeting that builds a strong community — that’s kicking the can down the road. And that’s not how we do things in Aurora.

A zero-percent increase would also mean deferring road repairs, delaying playground replacements, and cancelling investments that protect our infrastructure. That’s not leadership — that’s passing today’s problems on to tomorrow’s taxpayers.

Aurora deserves better.

This budget represents the approach I’ve always taken as your Mayor — balanced, forward-thinking, and accountable.

It delivers real results that residents will see in their daily lives:

- Upgraded playgrounds and new park amenities;
- Additional pickleball courts to meet growing demand;
- Expanded trail networks connecting our neighbourhoods;
- Improved accessibility and facility upgrades;
- Replacement of aging Town vehicles to improve efficiency; and,
- Continued work on the Yonge Street Streetscape redesign, ensuring our historic downtown remains a vibrant, thriving destination for residents and local businesses alike.

And just as importantly, it maintains our investment in the essentials — our roads, water systems, and sewer networks — the backbone of a safe, reliable, and well-run Town.

Aurora’s success isn’t an accident. It’s the result of sound decisions, careful planning, and a clear vision for the future.

Over the past several years, even through a pandemic, we kept taxes low, reduced debt, maintained high service levels, and delivered major community improvements — all while protecting the financial stability that future generations of Aurorans will rely on and while continuing to maintain one of the lowest tax rates in the entire GTHA.

This budget continues that same approach — putting residents first, managing your tax dollars wisely, and making decisions that build on the strong, stable foundation we’ve created together.

Aurora continues to be recognized as one of the best places in Canada to live, work, and raise a family. That’s not by chance — that’s because of the choices we’ve made and the priorities we’ve set.

I want to thank our dedicated staff, our finance team, members of Council, and the many residents and businesses who provided input. Your ideas helped shape this budget into a plan that truly reflects Aurora’s values and Aurora’s vision.

This is a budget built for people, guided by principle, and focused on progress.

And it ensures that Aurora remains strong — today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

this building is an investment in our community.

I would also like to highlight Ontario’s \$1.5 million investment through the Skills Development Fund Training Stream, supporting youth right here in Aurora. Through local partnerships with STEM Minds and Boreal Farms, this project will address existing skills gaps and meet the growing demand for workers in Ontario’s agriculture and agri-food sectors.

Empowering young people, women, newcomers, and transitioning workers with immersive learning experiences, industry-relevant curriculum, and community engagement opportunities that will open doors to good jobs and long-term success. This investment is about building a workforce that is resilient, adaptable, and ready for the jobs of tomorrow.

Continued on page 21



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

gather for years to come. As a member of the Legion, I truly appreciate the support provided as I know our community enjoys not only the Friday evening dinners at the Legion, but all the various events held in the banquet hall – from Remembrance Day dinners, to the Robbie Burns dinner, to the wrestling events, and more. An investment in

As autumn paints our trees with rich shades of red and gold, we’re reminded of the beauty of change — and how, in every season, there’s an opportunity to grow, reflect, and give thanks.

The cooler air, local harvests, and community gatherings make this time of year truly special in Newmarket–Aurora. It’s also a season that highlights what we can achieve together when we invest in the strength and well-being of our community.

Here at home, I was proud to join members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 385 in Aurora to celebrate their \$110,300 investment by the province through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. For 50 years, the Aurora Legion has been a place of remembrance, service, and connection. This investment will help make important facility upgrades — ensuring Veterans and community members continue to have a welcoming space to



Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councillors John Gallo, Rachel Gilliland, Harold Kim, and Ron Weese, and representatives from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce joined Slabtown owners on Friday afternoon for the grand opening of Slabtown Aurora. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Slabtown Armoury celebrates new chapter in storied landmark

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The afternoon may have been grey and drizzly on Friday, but there was a celebratory atmosphere at Mosley and Larmont Streets in Aurora’s downtown core as the community came together to formally cut the ribbon on Slabtown Armoury.

Slabtown Armoury, the latest venture from Uxbridge’s Slabtown Cider Company, has been hard at work making the historic Aurora Armoury, previously home to a campus of Niagara College’s Canadian Food & Wine Institute, into a new dining and gathering space at the heart of the community.

“What an honour it is to stand here today as we reopen one of Aurora’s most iconic landmarks,” said Slabtown co-owner Lori Feddema, as she welcomed

guests who sampled a number of menu items, indulged in season-fitting candy apples, and a mocktail – Barracks Brew – which paid tribute to the Armoury’s military history as the long-time home for the Queen’s York Rangers.

“Slabtown started in Uxbridge in 2017 with the idea that we wanted to create an agri-tourism destination back in Uxbridge to bring people together with craft cider, amazing food, and local flavour. Today’s opening is monumental for us because it marks the next chapter in that story.”

Feddema heaped praise upon all the people who worked behind the scenes to make Friday’s opening happen, from Slabtown partners and employees, to municipal staff.

These sentiments were echoed by Mayor Tom Mrakas as he welcomed local foodies – and Council colleagues Ron Weese (Ward 1), Rachel Gilliland

(Ward 2), John Gallo (Ward 5), and Harold Kim (Ward 6) – to the celebrated facility.

He described Slabtown as “such a welcome addition to the community” and expressed excitement for all they plan to bring to Aurora’s historic core.

“Slabtown Armoury has exactly the kind of energy and creativity that we need as we continue building a more vibrant and dynamic downtown,” he said. “As many of you also know, the Armoury is an incredibly cherished landmark here in Aurora: one steeped in history, and one that has served as the backdrop to so many important moments in Aurora’s history for more than 150 years. More than anything else, it’s always been a place where the community has come together. And now with Slabtown Armoury opening its doors, I know we’ll be creating even more shared memories here for so many years to come.”

Speaking to The Auroran following the ribbon-cutting, the Mayor said the excitement extends to Slabtown’s commitment to the community, picking up where Niagara College left off when they pulled out of the Armoury this past spring.

“We fully know that [Slabtown] is committed to the community and that they’re looking at being here long-term, which is what we always envisioned for this spot,” he said. “We want to have a partner that is committed to being here in the Town of Aurora and serving the

*Slabtown Armoury
has exactly the kind
of energy and creativity
that we need*

residents of our community. They are 100 per cent committed to that and we’re looking forward to seeing all the wonderful things they’re going to be providing the community and all the events that are going to be occurring in this historic Armoury.

“I think [the Armoury] is one of the anchors of the Cultural Precinct. When you look at the Cultural Precinct, it runs from the GO Station all the way out to our downtown core at Yonge Street. To have such a facility in the area speaks volumes to what I think people are hearing and seeing about our Cultural Precinct and our downtown core, and I think that’s essentially [why] the owners of Slabtown Armoury decided to come here and open it here because they saw the potential that this building has and that this area has.”

Slabtown Armoury’s hours of operation will be Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to midnight, Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and they’re closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

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Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee Robert Reid relishes his retirement gig as an actor and his CFL career as an Ottawa Rough Rider tailback

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Robert Reid, who will be inducted next month into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame as an outstanding high school, university, and professional football player, is on his way down to Toronto for a television shoot as my phone call coincides with his commute to a “perfect retirement gig.”

Reid was not only a star tailback in the CIAU at Simon Fraser University and in the CFL with the Ottawa Rough Riders, but he is an engaging raconteur.

Our hour-long conversation was enjoyably circuitous—covering everything from his football career to his current acting career opportunities and accomplishments.

Reid’s transition from football to acting has been a seamless one; he maintains that “life is so good” and his post-playing acting career has ranged from “being principal actor before COVID to doing background work with Law and Order, Murdoch Mysteries, a Hallmark production The White Home, as well as roles on Reacher and Interview with a Vampire.”

The actor is in awe of how many Ontario residents are involved in the film and television production business in the GTA.

“The business itself involves so much Canadian content and so many Canadian performers are in demand. It’s also amazing to see how Toronto can be changed into an American city by the production crew.”

It’s evident that Reid appreciates not only Aurora’s proximity to his shoots in Toronto, but his upcoming enshrinement in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

“It was surreal when I was contacted by the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame about being inducted. I said to myself: ‘Who?

Me?’ We feel connected to the Town. The kids grew up in Aurora and we’ve been in Aurora for 31 years. We’ve seen it grow from a sleepy town to a town where we’ve got almost everything here. At one time, we’d have to travel to Richmond Hill to go to a Home Depot or even to see a movie. The restaurants and the night life are all so good. It’s been my home for over 30 years [and] to be a part of the community and to be enshrined in that community is kind of sobering. The guy that got cut from his high school football team. A walk-on at Simon Fraser. I often think about what made my dad come out with me to SFU and support my choice to work my way on to the football team, but it changed my life.

“My dad and I went out to British Columbia. After I played well during the first week of training camp, the Coach gave me a scholarship and residence—as a walk-on. After four years of playing running back at SFU, I was drafted in the first round by the Saskatchewan Roughriders.”

Prior to the culmination of his university football career in BC, the Toronto-born-and-raised Reid discussed his formative years as a football player at Newtonbrook Secondary School in North York. The multi-sport athlete remembered with great sentiment his perfect high school football season in his final year at Newtonbrook.

“The football team went 8-0. It was our only championship in my five years there, but, in 1979, we beat Downsview and their great quarterback Paddy O’Neil. We beat them 44-20 or something. Everything was working that game. We were well-coached by Bob Mayo who coached football, track, and basketball. He went on to have a great run of success with the Bathurst Heights Bears as a basketball coach.”

It’s evident that Reid, as a Canadian football player who has flourished at the



ROBERT REID

Glenn Rodger/Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Photo

high school, university, and professional levels, is singularly unimpressed with the proposed changes to CFL field dimensions and rules.

“Changing the length of the field goes against what makes Canadian football Canadian. We always talk about how exciting CFL game are and how entertaining the championship games are. It doesn’t seem to make sense since it is the difference between the CFL and the NFL.”

Reflecting on the prospect of these changes brought back his best professional football memories as an Ottawa Rough Rider.

“The coaching staff in Ottawa decided

to let me play tailback in 1986. Back in my day, not many Canadian players got scholarships or opportunities in football. Just a handful of guys—like Chris Schultz or Rueben Mayes—went to D1 schools and played in the NFL so there was a bias about putting Canadians in premier positions, but Ottawa and BC had decided to go with Canadians in the backfield.

“We were a talented group of running backs across the league and we were just as good as our American counterparts. Ottawa made Orville Lee from Simon Fraser their first overall pick and he won the Rookie of the Year Award. Chris Skinner played in Ottawa at fullback

Continued on page 19



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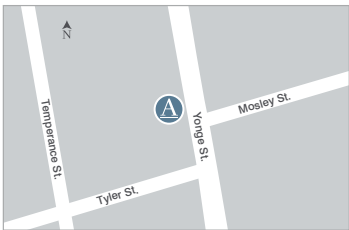
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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Aurora gets infrastructure funding boost from Ontario Government

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

More infrastructure funding is coming to the Town of Aurora from the Province of Ontario.

On Tuesday, October 14, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy was joined by Mayor Tom Mrakas at the corner of Temperance Street and Wellington Street West to commemorate an infrastructure investment of more than \$2.5 million that is flowing to Aurora.

“Strong infrastructure is truly the backbone of any thriving community and that includes right here in Aurora,” said Gallagher Murphy. “It’s what keeps our roads safe as well as our water clean and our neighbourhoods connected. That is why I am proud to be standing here today to announce that our government is investing more than \$2.5 million through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund in support for renewal and rehabilitation of critical infrastructure here in Aurora.

“This is an investment that represents a 10 per cent increase over last year’s funding, and this funding...affords stability and flexibility to plan and deliver important local projects. Since 2021, our government has invested more than \$13 million right here in Aurora

through the OSIF program, helping to ensure our roads, bridges and water systems remain strong, reliable, and ready to meet the needs of our growing community. Across Ontario, our government is spending \$400 million through this OCIF program to help 423 small, rural and northern communities upgrade essential infrastructure; here in Aurora, this means more than just new infrastructure – it means continued progress, greater safety, and long-term support for families and businesses that call our community home.”

In turn, Mayor Mrakas described the funding as a “significant investment” in the Aurora community that will allow the municipality to address “important road rehabilitation work” to keep residents “moving, healthy and safe.”

“The truth is that the predictable and stable funding we receive each year through OSIF is so important to building and strengthening Aurora, allowing us to confidently manage critical infrastructure renewal work while also reducing cost pressures on our municipal taxpayers. It also helps strengthen our local economy and businesses, while keeping construction crews safe.

“That stability matters, especially in these really uncertain economic times. The reality is that Aurora is growing



Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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quickly and that means that we’re going to have to continue maintaining and rehabilitating our existing infrastructure, while building new assets to accommodate that growth. And it’s

through the support of the Ontario Government that we’re able to fully meet the needs of residents today, while preparing the for the community of tomorrow.”

Aurora looking at 2.2% tax increase in 2026

From page 1

Town operations, 0.6 per cent increase for Central York Fire Services, and a 1 per cent increase to capital reserves.

Should the Budget ultimately pass at a 2.2 per cent increase, residents who own a home assessed at \$800,000, can expect to see the municipal portion of their tax bill increase by \$56.94.

“I heard from many of you loud and clear over the past year: the cost of living is rising, you’ve been tightening up your family budgets, and you expect your government to do the same,” said Mayor Mrakas in a statement. “With your feedback in mind, this budget keeps the tax levy increase moderate – protecting residents’ pocketbooks – while continuing to invest in the services, facilities and infrastructure that make Aurora one of the most desirable communities in Ontario.

“We all know that the past few [years] have not been easy. Families have been dealing with higher costs at every turn – groceries, gas, mortgage rates and so much more. That’s why I made it my top priority to bring forward a budget that protects residents from unnecessary increases, while ensuring we don’t compromise the future of our Town.

“Working closely with the CAO, finance team, and department directors, we achieved that balance by finding efficiencies, reducing discretionary spending, pausing non-essential projects, and implementing a temporary hiring freeze for 2026 – with no new staff positions added.

“That decision sends a clear message: we’re doing more with what we

have. We are respecting taxpayers by focusing on productivity, not payroll, and ensuring every dollar goes towards improving service delivery, not expanding bureaucracy.”

Since Aurora received Strong Mayor powers from the Province of Ontario, along with dozens of other municipalities, municipal budgets are now presented by the Mayor.

In his statement, Mayor Mrakas acknowledged calls from some quarters in the community, as well as motions around the Council table to deliver a zero per cent tax increase for 2026. Such a move, however, would have long-term impacts despite short-term appeal, he said.

“As we look ahead, this budget continues that same philosophy – putting residents first, managing your tax dollars wisely, and making decisions that build on the strong, stable foundation we’ve created together,” he concluded. “Aurora continues to be recognized as one of the best places in Canada to live, work, and raise a family. That’s not by chance – that’s because of the choices we’ve made and the priorities we’ve set.

“I want to thank our dedicated staff, our finance team, my Council colleagues, and the many residents and businesses who provided input. Your ideas helped shape this budget into a plan that truly reflects Aurora’s values and Aurora’s vision. This is a budget for people, guided by principle, and focused on progress. And it ensures that Aurora remains strong – today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.”

Budget deliberations begin November 3.

Hearts are full at Aurora Montessori for late beloved educator Lisa Walters

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Lisa Walters was known for her love of hearts – so much so that it wasn’t unusual for her students at Aurora Montessori School to keep an eye out for heart-shaped rocks “in the wild” to bring back to her.

Her desk at the Industrial Parkway North school practically groaned under the weight of all the souvenirs the kids brought back to touch her heart and, months after her tragic death, they still do – adding their finds to a little dish that stands outside the office she used as their Vice Principal of Student Life & Wellbeing.

Now, thanks to the Aurora Montessori community, her love for the symbol of just that has spilled out of their doors, and is at the “heart” of a long-lasting artistic tribute to the beloved educator whose primary job, according to principal Kelly Parker, “was to just take care of all of us.”

If you’ve been to the intersection of Industrial Parkway and St. John’s Sideroad recently, you may have noticed hundreds of paintings along the Montessori property line, many of them depicting hearts and butterflies. Each was painted by a single student in memory of a woman who touched so many of their lives.

“We were thinking of how we can bring our school community together to really remember this beautiful person,” says Parker. “Our school ethos is all about being kind and caring to one another, being respectful and supportive, and she was our talisman for that. She really was the person that we all looked to for that guidance.”

Walters, a long-time Aurora resident, was in her seventeenth year of teaching when she lost her battle with illness at the beginning of July. She first began at Aurora Montessori teaching Grades One and Two. She then took on a Vice Principal’s role and, in 2019, made the switch over to Student Life and Wellbeing, a role she essentially created for herself to fill what she saw as a need and gap.

“She noticed our students needed something in terms of building confidence, self-esteem, self-regulation, bullying, all the issues they’re facing no matter where they are,” says Vice Principal Rosanna Gaudio. “She thought it was important enough for it to be separated out of the Vice Principal position and addressed regularly and daily, not just when the need came up, but as a preventative and getting the



(Top) Kelly Parker, Principal of Aurora Montessori School, and Vice Principal Rosanna Gaudio are pictured with a selection of paintings created by students inspired by late educator Lisa Walters, pictured below. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

children to develop that agency to take care of themselves.”

Parents and children connected with Walters equally, she adds, noting one particular 10-pound heart-shaped rock one family brought her back from vacation as a prime example of this connection.

That lost connection was a difficult adjustment for the Aurora Montessori community, and they, particularly art teacher Kim Steffan, developed the idea of the paintings now decorating Industrial and St. John’s, replacing another artistic array the students made at the height of the global pandemic.

“We really were trying to think about what we can do where everybody feels like they’re doing something,” says Parker about the development of the project. “The previous paintings that went up during COVID was just to bring the community together and bring in some joy at a time that was very difficult for everybody. We thought after five years, let’s change and make a gallery of hearts and send the love that we all have for Ms. Walters out into the community as well so they can feel that love and caring from our school.

“We had to figure out a way to properly celebrate her. That’s how we sort of positioned it with the children – this is our way of showing our appreciation and gratitude for this wonderful person who we were so fortunate to have a part of our life.”

Gaudio, who trained as an educator with Walters in the late 1980s before their paths crossed again at Aurora Montessori, says her friend and colleague simply loved what she did



The art installation was spearheaded by Montessori art teacher Kim Steffen.

Photo by Kelly Parker

– and seeing the artwork only helped underscore that with her family.

“She loved it because it’s who she was, but it’s also that she knew she could make a difference for these children in a way that’s not just understanding a math question – it’s something so integral to who they are and who they will become and maybe how they will think about things later,” she says. “She was so patient, too. You need a lot of patience with adults, but even more with young children when they’re going through something they can’t identify, whether it’s a relationship with a peer or how they feel about themselves – whatever it is, you have to be willing to take the time to work through all the layers before you can help them figure it out. She had so much patience for that, and she was successful.”

“And she wouldn’t stop,” adds Parker. “She was very persistent. Children have a lot going on in their lives. Not every child’s life is shiny, happy rainbows and butterflies. There may be some significant family things happening. If a child was having difficulty, she was persistent, calm, and gentle in approach. Sometimes it may have taken her time, but eventually she would get to sort of the root of what was happening to be able to help in that way.

“The children are still collecting [the rocks]. I get them when I’m out on recess duty, they’ll come and bring stones over and, to be honest, some of them don’t look like hearts at all, but in their eyes, it’s, ‘I’ve got this for Ms. Walters,’ and they’ll place it in her little heart-shaped dish there. The feeling is still there for all of them.”

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Aurora Public Library hosts first Newcomers Fair – and all are welcome

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

If you're new to the community and want to know more about some of the resources available to you here at home, head over to the Aurora Public Library this Monday, October 27, for its inaugural Newcomers Fair. Hosted throughout the Library

(APL), the Newcomers Fair will feature more than 30 organizations offering a range of services from language training, to employment, to housing, to healthcare, education, transit and much more. "The idea behind organizing a Newcomers Fair is to bring together local organizations, service providers, and other community groups that serve newcomers to Canada, Aurora,

or York Region, and it gives them the opportunity to discover free resources and supports," says APL's Claudia Olguin, who is organizing the event with colleague Karen Ho. "We have invited over 30 organizations and they all serve newcomers and other members of the community. The idea is that since public libraries play a vital role in helping newcomers and other community members in their settlement journeys, so what better place to bring all these organizations together than Aurora Public Library?"

The APL has had a long-standing relationship with many of the participating community partners. They're often invited to showcase their services in the APL space, but this is the first time so many of them will come together under one roof. It's an indication of how important the APL's role as a community hub has become over the years. "A lot of newcomers when they first visit the library are just so surprised at what we have, so it makes sense to bring everybody here and have this be their launch pad," says Ho. "It's not just for people who are new to Canada; it's for anybody new to Aurora, to York Region, and we're open to newcomers in every sense of the word. It's also just for people who are looking to establish a new community in the area. "As I have worked here, it's been

very, very rewarding to see people come back again and again, to see the change they have had from the beginning – maybe they're a bit timid, maybe they don't know what's offered at a Library, and then, you can see them gain more confidence, they know what's here, they check out more stuff, they bring their friends, they meet new friends at our programs, and it's very rewarding to see that." Adds Olguin: "I've been working at the Aurora Public Library for nine years and have been able to see how this community is changing. It's embracing more newcomers to Canada and when someone is new to a country, they need support in all areas of their life, from employment, to language, and health supports as well. "I do feel in especially welcoming newcomers to Canada there needs to be awareness about the role that public libraries play in general because people usually think libraries are just for people who enjoy reading, but they don't realize that we offer more than just books; we're a community hub where people can learn, connect, and grow. Hosting this Newcomers Fair is one way APL helps these residents feel welcome, be a part of the community, create those connections, and learn something new." For a full – and expanding – list of participants, tinyurl.com/APLNEWCOMERS.



PUBLIC LIBRARIES WEEK – Ontario Public Libraries week is on now through October 25, and the Aurora Public Library kick-started the party on Saturday with a variety of events and treats for the Aurora community. Pictured here, APL's Claudia and Susan served up slices of cake in the Library's Living Room space. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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A STARLIGHT HALLOWEEN

Aurora's Microtel Inn & Suites was a Halloween destination for many families on October 18 as they hosted the Starlight Children Foundation Trick-or-Suite event. The foundation hosts Trick-or-Suite events each year where "no child is left behind – where every child, no matter their medical challenges, gets to experience the magic of being a kid." Billed as a "Halloween celebration where seriously ill children leave behind hospital walls and medical routines to experience the joy every child deserves," several rooms at the hotel were transformed into complete experiences – featuring your favourite superheroes, Ghostbusters, and more. And even Mayor Tom Mrakas stopped by to join in the fun!

Auroran photos
by Glenn Rodger



No Tricks, Just Treats this weekend as volunteers come together for accessible Halloween fun

From page 1

[but] it was often an inaccessible, slow and laborious adventure for my parents. Kudos to my dad for doing most of the doorbell ringing, bumping me up and down steps, getting my treats on my behalf," said Hughes, a long-time champion for accessibility in the community, a member of the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee, and a driving force behind the development of Town Park's playground.

"While we continue to push for more accessible trick-or-treating in all neighbourhoods, some families might not make it out on Halloween."

The idea for No Tricks Just Treats, she explained, came about after she met Hanna at the Town's Community Recognition Awards ceremony this past spring where Hanna was honoured with Aurora's 2025 Community Leadership Award. Among the achievements for which she was recognized was the popular annual Easter Egg hunt she brought to Cousins Drive.

Hughes says when she approached her with a Halloween event, she was immediately on board.

"We landed on creating an inclusive and intentional trick-or-treat experience at the Market," she continued. "We're excited to bring more families from Aurora and surrounding areas to our incredible, accessible playground and have a fun Halloween experience."

Added Hanna: "When Allison reached out, I was honoured and touched because, as soon as you meet her, you know she's a very smart cookie. There was no saying 'no' to her. This is really exciting because it's free, it's accessible, and it's designed to be inclusive for all kids. It will be the first of its kind in Aurora and one of the very few events like this in York Region."

Communities like Aurora, Hanna said,

need more inclusive events – and that is at the heart of Saturday's celebration.

"We simply want to make sure that kids with disabilities are included, full stop. Events like this are too far and too few. When you hear Allison share her story...it really makes you think about the fact that inclusion matters and that every child deserves to experience the joy of community celebration," said Hanna.

"For some families, many local and seasonal events can be difficult, as we can all imagine, difficult to access, or simply overwhelming if they make it. When we can create spaces that are welcoming and adaptable, we send a powerful message that everyone belongs. These events strengthen our entire community by helping us to connect, understand, and celebrate together.... As someone who is passionate about community connection and making sure no one feels left out, we wanted to help create an event that every family could enjoy without barriers."

After Hughes and Hanna made their pitch to Council last week, local lawmakers shared their enthusiasm as well.

"I really don't have words to say how much, or how many thanks I have to give you on behalf of so many people," said Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner. "What an exciting way to celebrate Halloween for those who find, as Alison did, it can be very tricky, and especially in the darkness or even if the weather is bad."

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: "We are truly blessed in the Town of Aurora to have an abundance of volunteers, and it's volunteers [like Hanna and Hughes] that are able to bring forward ideas like this and get them done in the community. I want to thank you two for doing this, and we're looking forward to many years of this successful event."



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Needles & Knits set to close after more than 30 years helping keep Aurora cozy

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Needles & Knits, Aurora’s only wool shop, is set to close this fall after more than 30 years of helping knitters in the community keep their loved ones warm and cozy.

Founded 31 years ago by Tove Gilje,



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a resident of Aurora for 41 years, the store is winding down operations this fall as the 81-year-old business owner eyes retirement.

A native of Norway, Gilje grew up in a time where knitting was not only a popular pastime, but a necessity – and even something that was taught in schools. Times may have changed, but the passion for the craft has not.

“I come from Norway and when we grew up, it was considered one of the poorest countries in Europe; it’s not anymore because they found oil in the North Sea and that changed the whole economic picture, but when I grew up, we were a poor country and Norway had been occupied for five years and had absolutely no resources,” Gilje shares. “So, we learned to knit. We had to keep the sheep farmers alive! That’s how we learned in school and knitting and crocheting was part of the curriculum.”

After she and her husband, Terke, came to Canada, they settled in this community where they ran an ocean transportation business, a venture that might seem unlikely for a rather landlocked town like Aurora.

“He made it work,” says Tove, but, as she approached her 50th birthday, she was looking for new challenges and a change of pace.

“My husband and I worked together, but you can only do that for so many years – and either you get a divorce or you get into something else,” she says with a laugh.



Needles & Knits owner Tove Gilje is pictured outside her Yonge Street shop, just north of Kennedy, last week.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Knitters and crocheters may be forgiven for letting out a sigh of relief she chose that second path; while there were three wool shops in Aurora when she first moved here in 1984, the last one closed the same year she opened Needles & Knits on Yonge Street, just north of Kennedy, in a former house that had seen many years as an antiques shop.

“Probably very poorly,” she says with a chuckle when asked about how she went about building the business from the ground up. “I had no background in retail, so it slowly grew. This is a peak-and-valley type of business, but knitting and crocheting will never go away. It’s been a joy to build this up and be able to help and assist people who do this type of craft.”

Looking back at what set Needles & Knits apart in the knitting and crocheting community, Gilje takes great pride in her knowledge of fibres, different kinds of yarns, offering a variety, and being able to provide advice on which materials work best for specific projects.

She finds customers often come in

with, at the very least, a “basic knowledge of knitting,” but “what I often find is that when you use a pattern, most of them have been translated from a different language and that translation can be somewhat confusing. That’s where I come in because I speak German and all the Scandinavian languages except Finnish.”

“If you run into a problem, either you give it up or you get help and I would like people not to give up, but to help them over that hurdle,” says Gilje, noting that with her closure, a “friendly competitor” in Newmarket might be the last one in York Region still standing. “I’m very proud of what I have done. I feel I accomplished something and now Karen in Newmarket will continue. I usually say we’re friendly competitors; we cooperate and I will continue to give her a hand when she needs it.”

As for what’s next?

“I probably should catch up with all the things I should have done over the years at home,” she smiles. “I have no regrets. It’s been fantastic – a really fantastic 30 years.”

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Municipal social media channels need safeguards from hateful messages, says resident

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Aurora’s social media platforms need safeguards against hateful comments, according to local resident Shaheen Moledina.

Moledina made the request to Council last week following a series of subsequently-deleted messages that were posted on the Town’s social media channels under a post related to Islamic Heritage Month.

While she said she was appreciative of the fact that the Town deleted the messages in question, they were left online for too long and exposed “a troubling undercurrent of hate and intolerance that cannot and must not be ignored.”

“Aurora has a long-standing pride in its commitment to diversity, inclusion and respect for all,” she told Council members at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting. “Our community thrives because of its people – people of different faiths, backgrounds and cultures who together make Aurora a vibrant and welcoming place to live. It is therefore deeply concerning that our Town’s own social media platform became a space where hateful and inflammatory comments were allowed to remain visible for nearly 24 hours.

“Let me be clear: these were not harmless opinions.... These are dehumanizing statements that perpetuate fear, division and discrimination. As a community, we must ask ourselves, what do we stand for? And are we willing to remain silent on the face of hate? The answer must be a resounding no.”

“Our silence in moments like this is a form of complicity,” she added, noting that municipal social media channels “or any public place” can’t be allowed to become “breeding grounds for intolerance.”

“After numerous calls and emails, the hateful comments were eventually removed and commenting was restricted. Thank you very much. I wish to thank Councillors who personally followed up with this matter. Your responsiveness was appreciated. However, the situation has made one thing very clear: Our system needs improvement. For the record, to prevent this [from] happening again, I’m calling for a comprehensive action plan to ensure that our online platforms truly reflect Aurora’s values and legacy. This plan should include clear community guidelines, establish and enforce a transparent set of rules that explicitly prohibit hate speech, discrimination and harassment on all Town platforms. Active moderation, employ dedicated staff or utilize technology to actively monitor comments, ensure hateful rhetoric is immediately removed and banned.

“Hate has no room in Aurora, and certainly not in Canada. Promotion of positive dialogue, encourage constructive and respectful conversations about diversity, inclusion and culture – let our platforms become spaces of education and understanding, not division.”

Improvements, she noted, could include education and awareness, clear reporting mechanisms, a “simple and accessible” process for residents to report “hateful or discriminatory” comments, and she also called for a public statement from Mayor and Council on the matter.

“The Town of Aurora has both the responsibility and stated intention to uphold respect for diversity, including religious diversity,” she concluded. “Our social media platforms must embody the same principle. We have the power. Let’s come together, residents, Councils, community leaders, to reject hate and embrace understanding. Let us stand in solidarity with our Muslim neighbours and with all who experience discrimination... Our [municipal] slogan, ‘You’re in Good Company,’ needs to be upheld digitally. Canada is a mosaic and that is our strength. And it is reflected in our Town.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas responded that “hate has no place” in Aurora.

“It is unacceptable and should never be tolerated, so I want to thank you for bringing to our attention. Vulgar language, regardless of whether it’s hate speech, defamation of persons or characters, all that stuff needs to be taken seriously, and we do not allow it here in the Town,” he said. “I know staff are working around the clock to make sure that this doesn’t happen again and we’re constantly looking at how we can always better our systems. We know that social media is always evolving, and as you mentioned, bots or whatnot could be happening. But we need to always be looking at how we can improve each and every day to make sure that this type of thing never happens in our Town.”

Similarly, Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland acknowledged the “negative” rhetoric that exists on social media.

“There’s a lot of negativity out there right now, and when it comes to an official body like the Town of Aurora, we should have some sort of policies in place to help safeguard that as we are the ones representing your community, and we do not want to exude that as something that we feel is acceptable,” she said. “I feel like we have acknowledged quick and swift. Communications behind the scenes has given us an update just recently, as of, I believe it was yesterday...with an update. I know that they’re being very proactive and that communication piece should be released shortly.”



LEST WE FORGET – Mayor Tom Mrakas and Bonnie Robertson, President of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, are pictured at a new crosswalk installed at Yonge Street and Murray Drive last week. Located near the Aurora Cenotaph and Peace Park, it pays tribute to all those who served King, Queen and Country – and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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Support hospital and help crown Southlake’s “Next Top Model” at upcoming fashion show

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The countdown is on to the ever-popular Whisky, Wine & MR Menswear fashion show.

A fundraising fashion show hosted by Aurora’s MR Menswear and featuring eight physicians from Southlake Health strutting their stuff down the runway, the event will take place this Thursday, October 30, at Newmarket’s NewRoads Performing Arts Centre, beginning at 6.30 p.m.

Proceeds from the fashion show will benefit Southlake’s Regional Cancer Centre, a cause very close to MR Menswear owner Mike Rathe, a cancer warrior who has dedicated so much to a hospital that has helped he and his family in myriad ways.

Tickets for the fashion show are on sale now and organizers are hoping to

raise \$75,000 to support top quality cancer care close to home.

“Our eight fantastic physician models have raised over \$7,300 so far and they are actively fundraising as we speak,” said Dionne Malcolm of the Southlake Health Foundation on Tuesday afternoon. “Two of them actually have match gift opportunities that they’ve secured, so we’re really excited to see them make real progress on fundraising.

“We want the community to come out and support Southlake’s Next Top Model. The physician that raises the most funds will get the esteemed title of Southlake’s Next Top Model, so every dollar is a vote in their favour.”

Five of the eight participating physician models will be taking to the catwalk for the very first time, so excitement around the local hospital is high, Malcolm adds.

Also adding to the excitement are myriad items that have been donated

to the event’s silent auction, including a tour of Spring Mill Distillery, and some “amazing items” that have been offered by MR Menswear as well.

“For us, this is an amazingly fun event,” says Malcolm. “It’s full of food, fashion, and philanthropy. You will not have a better time watching these incredible physician models take to the runway and the stage. They have so much fun. The crowd has so much fun, and it’s just a really heartwarming event to see the community come together, all in support of our regional cancer center at Southlake.

“I would like to say how grateful we are to Mike Rathke and the MR committee that supports this event as well. They’ve been doing incredible work putting this event together. I mean, Mike himself has raised over \$140,000 since 2016 in support of cancer care at Southlake, and we just couldn’t be more

grateful for his support. We continue to fundraise for the Regional Cancer Centre, so this event is absolutely supporting that. Additionally, we are also actively fundraising for emergency care at Southlake as well to renew our spaces in the emergency department, which has happened some already, and then also equipment and technology within the department as well. We continue to have urgent needs across the hospital throughout the year.”

Tickets to Thursday’s event can be secured at southlake.ca/MRMenswear and community members can make donations to support the eight participating physicians at the same link.

Additionally, the event’s silent auction will go live on the website Thursday, October 23, featuring a number of unique items, including a catamaran tour, food and beauty baskets, one-of-a-kind-experiences and more.



MARKET DAYS — The Aurora Farmers’ Market is preparing to wind down their outdoor season this Saturday at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. The sun shone down on the penultimate Market day on October 18, and among those who were there enjoying the day were (LEFT) the Third Aurora Scouts, who were selling apples, and (RIGHT) shoppers Kurtis, William and Xiaoya.
Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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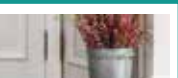
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“Lightning” Lazarou’s four-goal performance leads Junior Panthers to 10-3 comeback win over Ridley Tigers



Panthers forward Demi Lazarou (5) battles Ridley Tiger Vera Mae Camel (23) on Saturday. Lazarou scored four goals in a 10-3 win.
Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

“Big Goal” Van Berkel scores four in 10-1 barrage versus Brampton

BY JIM STEWART

The Central York Panthers—hot off a 10-1 thrashing of the Canadettes in Brampton on Tuesday night—roughed up the Ridley Tigers 10-3 at SARC on Saturday afternoon.

Annabella “Big Goal” Van Berkel lit the lamp four times to lead Central York’s offense versus Brampton and Demi “Lightning” Lazarou provided her own four-goal outburst to lead the Panthers over Ridley.

Van Berkel and Lazarou moved into sixth and ninth place in the U22 Elite Division scoring race with 17 and 15 points, respectively.

Although the final score on Saturday would suggest a blowout game from start to finish, the outcome was very much in doubt for most of the first period. Exactly one minute in, the Tigers struck first when Elouise Syer’s wrist shot from the right point skittered through a maze of players and eluded Panthers’ goaltender Jamie Sanford.

25th-place Ridley came to play versus the 2nd-place Panthers.

Although the Panthers were peppering Tigers’ netminder Jennifer Murphy in the opening minutes, the athletic ‘tender was up to the task. Murphy’s strong play early in the game reinforced her Ridley teammates. Exactly five minutes into the first frame, Tigers’ forward Ivy Morrissey banged in a rebound on the right doorstep past Sanford to stake the visitors to a surprising 2-0 lead.

Midway through the first period, Sanford repelled a breakaway by the Tigers, but a wrist shot moments later by Lola Timmons from the left circle eluded the Central York netminder and gave last-place Ridley an unlikely three-goal margin at 11:03.

Remarkably, the Tigers didn’t get on the scoreboard again on Saturday as Sanford transformed into a wall for the remaining fifty minutes of play. Simultaneously, the Panthers scored ten unanswered goals in a

display of raw offensive power.

It was the lightning-fast Lazarou who catalyzed Central York’s comeback. At the 6:40 mark of the first period, Lazarou took advantage of extra space created by offsetting penalties, found open ice in Ridley’s end, and displayed impressive marksmanship by beating Murphy high glove side from a sharp angle in the left faceoff circle to pull the Panthers to within two.

It was a goal-scorer’s goal and foreshadowed Lazarou’s big afternoon.

The speedy forward with the quick release described the importance of her opening marker versus Ridley.

“The first goal really got us started. It got us ramped up. We started winning puck battles and took the extra step we needed.”

With 1:37 remaining in opening frame, Lazarou slid a sweet feed to veteran Elizabeth Janovski who snapped the puck high glove side and bulged the twine behind the fallen Murphy to make it 3-2.

Twenty-eight seconds later, Lily Paisley banged in a rebound on the backhand—lifting the puck over Murphy to tie the game.

The Panthers carried their end-of-period momentum into the middle frame. Less than two minutes in, the tenacious Lazarou scored her second goal from the edge of the crease to give Central York its first lead of the game.

Lazarou discussed the importance of a players-only meeting between the first and second periods to reinforce the team’s best traits that have built the Panthers’ 11-1-0 record.

“We talked as a team between periods. After that, we settled into our roles and everyone bought into the same systems. We’ve focused on our team culture all season. We’re able to motivate one another. When things aren’t going well as they did in the first period, we hold it together.”

Five minutes after Lazarou’s go-ahead goal, Panthers’ goaltender Jamie Sanford joined the offensive outburst. On a Central York power play, Sanford earned an assist on a silky 100-foot pass to Zoe Ordanis behind the Ridley defenders at the blue line.

Ordanis—ranked 11th in league scoring—made a power move off the right wing, and fired a low shot five hole that hit the back bottom pipe behind Murphy to give the Panthers a 5-3 lead.

Midway through the second period and during another four-on-four, Panthers forward Abby Pak used her quickness to find open ice, sold the forehand on her breakaway, and, on the backhand, lifted the puck over Murphy blocker side to make it 6-3.

The Panthers’ sixth goal ended Murphy’s afternoon and she was replaced between the pipes by Grier Cooper.

Ridley’s substitute goaltender kept Central York off the scoreboard for the balance of the second period and half of the final frame. However, at 10:16, Lazarou displayed her defensive prowess when she stole the puck between the circles in the Ridley zone, took one stride to her right, and rifled a wrist shot past Cooper high stick side to give the prowling Panthers a four-goal lead.

With nine minutes left, Van Berkel made it 8-3 when she buried a rebound in a goalmouth scramble. The frustrated Ridley defenders took exception to giving up an eighth consecutive goal, but the Panthers skated away from trouble, suspended their skate-by celly, and lined up for the faceoff.

Lazarou scored her fourth goal with 2:32 on the clock by firing another wicked wrist shot that beat Cooper high glove side and gave the Panthers a commanding six-goal lead. The high-scoring rookie credited her line-mates for her big afternoon.

“Our line was on fire. I got great passes from Jano all game.” Van Berkel scored Central York’s tenth consecutive goal when she backhanded a rebound past Cooper with 40.8 seconds remaining.

On Tuesday night in Brampton, Van Berkel fired two first period goals to pace Central York’s offence. After Paisley put

the Panthers up by three at 13:52 of the second period, Van Berkel completed her hat trick less than three minutes later. Lazarou notched a shortie at 8:27 to give the visitors a 5-0 lead. Ella Frasca, Pak, Audrey Martone, Van Berkel, and Ordanis scored in the third period to overwhelm the Canadettes.

With three wins in a row in one week, including a 5-4 decision over the Ottawa 67s on Sunday afternoon at SARC during which Lazarou scored the winning goal, the second-place Panthers now trail the first-place Etobicoke Dolphins by one point.

Central York hosts Etobicoke on Saturday, October 25 in a battle for first place. Puck drop at SARC will be 1:55 p.m.



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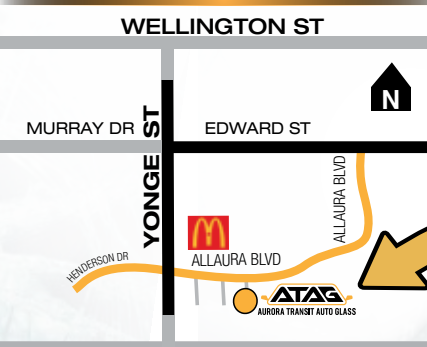
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Depleted Junior Tigers drop hard-fought 4-2 decision to regional rival King Rebellion

BY JIM STEWART

Lachland Larmand tallied two goals including an empty netter to lead the King Rebellion to a 4-2 victory over the Aurora Tigers on Friday night at the Aurora Community Centre.

The Junior Tigers faced myriad challenges both on and off the ice on Friday night.

Cooling down a red-hot Rebellion squad was going to be a tough task for the host team, but, to their credit, the determined Tigers put forth an effort reminiscent of their 2-1 winning performance last Friday versus Leamington.

Complicating matters for the Junior Tigers versus King was the absence of Head Coach Darcy Roy who was rushed to Southlake Regional Health Centre for an emergency appendectomy.

To make things even more challenging for Aurora’s roster was a pair of end-of-week promotions to the OHL. The Tigers’ lineup was considerably lighter after star goaltender Matt Humphries was recalled by the Niagara IceDogs and high-scoring winger Charlie Hotles, who scored three goals and three assists in five games, was recalled by the Flint Firebirds.

The OHL giveth and the OHL taketh away.

A very early goal by the visitors intensified the Tigers’ travails. Thirty-seven seconds into the game, Owen Bruining beat Aurora goalkeeper Finn Wilson to give King a 1-0 lead. Despite surrendering the quick opening goal to Bruining, Wilson turned in a sparkling performance for the Tigers by turning aside 36 of the 39 shots he faced.

The Junior Tigers tightened their D after the opening minute lapse and



Tigers defenseman Luke Howard (9) fends off King forward Max Anderson (90) while Aurora goaltender Finn Wilson hugs his post. King defeated Aurora 4 – 2 in OJHL action.
Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

countered with 1:28 left in the first period. Gianfranco Rosella, with assists from newly-acquired defender Nick Frasca and Aurora’s leading set-up man Anrijs Bundzenieks, beat OJHL-leading goaltender Owen Edwards to knot the contest at 1-1.

At 4:41 of the second period, Larmand, off a nice feed from Jared McNeil, rifled a shot top shelf stick side from the between the circles that beat Wilson. Larmand’s sixth of the season—also assisted by defenseman Ryan Castle – restored the Rebellion’s one-goal lead.

Four minutes later, on a King power play, Castle whistled one from the left point just above the faceoff circle which eluded a thoroughly-screened Wilson to extend the Rebellion’s lead to 3-1.

Three high quality saves by Wilson in the final minute of play in the second period kept the Tigers within striking range.

At the midway point of the third period, back-to-back penalties to Cerqua and Castle gifted Aurora with a 5-on-3 power play and compelled Tigers Coach James Thomson to call a

timeout at 11:08 and draw up a play for a key offensive zone faceoff.

King netminder Owen Edwards was his team’s best penalty killer during the Aurora two-man advantage.

The OJHL’s top goaltender repelled a pair of slot shots at 10:48 and 10:20 to stave off the Tigers’ determined efforts. However, with eight minutes remaining, Aurora’s perseverance was rewarded when rookie Cole Crawford one-timed a sweet cross-slot pass from Bundzenieks to pull the Tigers to within one. It was Crawford’s first OJHL goal and Bundzenieks’s tenth assist of the season.

After Wilson foiled a Bruining breakaway with 3:50 remaining, the acrobatic goaltender was pulled from the net for an extra attacker at 1:33. Larmand—who turned in a strong, two-way game for the Juniors from King Township—fetched a loose puck in the neutral zone, skated inside the Aurora blue line, and fired the puck along the ice, off the right pipe, and into the empty net to give King an insurance goal with 58 ticks left on the clock.

Rebellion Head Coach Geoff

Schomogyi, whose team was playing the first of three games in a row this weekend, delineated two keys to King’s tenth victory of the season: “We managed the puck well tonight and our forecheck was really heavy. We played well most of the night. When you’ve got three games in a row to play, winning the first one is key.”

Schomogyi, who won his 200th OJHL game in a 3-1 win over the Rangers in North York on Tuesday, discussed the personal significance and satisfaction of the milestone victory.

“It was symbolic to win it where I got my start as a Head Coach. It’s special to think about the hundreds and hundreds of players I’ve been lucky enough to coach in this league and to help them with their careers. You push your players to get the best out of them.”

The Tigers will push themselves to be at their best when they host Round 3 of the Battle of Yonge Street versus the Newmarket Hurricanes on Friday, October 24. The 4-game season series is 1-1. Puck drop at the ACC will be 7 p.m.

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HOMES



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Bill Kizovski, Executive Director of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, passes away at 68

BY JIM STEWART

The Town of Aurora lost one of its leading sports administrators and mentors last week when Bill Kizovski—the Executive Director of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club—passed away on October 14.

Kizovski was 68.

He was born in Krnov, Czechoslovakia on September 26, 1957, moved his family to Macedonia, and immigrated to Canada in 1972.

He is survived by his wife, Liz, and their children, Ashley (Matt), Tanya (Don), Jessica (Ricky), Laura (Anirudh), and Alexander—as well as his parents, George and Lena Kizovski.

Ron Weese, President of Sport Aurora, offered insights into Kizovski’s contributions to the Town’s sporting community: “I’ve known Bill for many years. I have admired him as a sports administrator and for his long history as a coach. He is known for his commitment to providing a safe and quality experience for young players and [his efforts] were so appreciated by parents. His struggle with his health has shown his courageous

personality and he will be missed by the sports community.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas posted words of tribute and condolence to recognize Kizovski’s passing: “I’m saddened to hear of the passing of Bill Kizovski, Executive Director of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club. Bill dedicated countless hours to supporting youth in our community — through his leadership with both the Aurora Youth Soccer Club and the York North Basketball Association (YNBA), he made a lasting impact on so many young lives. He will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege to know him. My heartfelt condolences go out to Bill’s family, friends, and everyone in the Aurora Youth Soccer Club and YNBA communities during this difficult time.”

Kizovski, who graduated from Emery Collegiate and the University of Toronto and co-founded DBTEK Solutions, coached and volunteered in the Aurora community for over thirty years.

Bill Kizovski’s funeral service took place on Monday, October 20 at Thompson Funeral Home.

Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee Robert Reid relishes his retirement gig as an actor and his CFL career as an Ottawa Rough Rider tailback

From page 7

and won a Grey Cup in Edmonton. Mervyn Fernandez was the CFL’s Most Outstanding Player in BC before playing for the Raiders in the NFL. My career highlight in Ottawa was not only starting in the backfield in 1986, but how nice it was to play at the same time as these guys for three years.”

Reid’s 1986 season with Ottawa and its Canadian backfield featured personal bests including four touchdowns and an impressive kickoff return average of 19.1 yards. In his natural position as a tailback, Reid rushed for 314 yards and averaged 4.5 yards per carry.

Reid’s legacy for Canadian football players is evident as we chat about current training methods compared to the workouts he did when his playing career started with Saskatchewan in 1984.

“When I got to Saskatchewan, I could out-bench some of the linemen. Not everybody was in the weight room in 1984. Now, everyone knows what to eat and they train year-round. The way people train has changed—it’s so much more a science. With all the better training and coaching available to young players across the country, over the years, we’ve seen more Canadians earn the premier positions in the CFL.”

The personable Reid acknowledged that the bias against Canadian-raised football players worked against him in his rookie season in Saskatchewan. In his reflective state, Reid chuckled when he recounted his initial undersized role as a Roughrider: “Canadians were at a disadvantage. American coaches in the CFL had a pool of guys from US Colleges and there was a bias towards American players so Canadians were given the fill-in spots like Strong Safety, Outside Linebacker, and Fullback. When I got drafted by Saskatchewan, I had a pretty good camp that year, but my only opportunity to make the team

and stay on the roster was as a Fullback. You try containing a Defensive End at 280 pounds who runs like the wind when you’re 5’11, 185!”

Reid was disappointed with his experience and roles with the Green Riders in 1984 and 1985: “I was a backup tailback in Saskatchewan and never got the best chance. When I got traded to Ottawa in 1985, there were better opportunities as the Roughriders were transitioning from an American backfield to a Canadian one, and I was able to take advantage of their big change in coaching philosophy in Ottawa.”

Robert Reid will be inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame on Thursday, November 6 during a ceremony and celebration evening at the Royal Venetian Mansion.

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(LEFT) Alan Dean presents Coach of the Year to Rocco Colarossi from Shaolin Martial Arts. (CENTRE) Sport Aurora President Ron Weese is pictured with emcee Jim Thomson, Aurora Junior Tigers Captain Simon Howard, and D1 commit Luke Howard. (RIGHT) MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy bestows championship medals on the U15 Tigers. **Auroran photos by Jim Stewart**

Eleven local sports organizations celebrated at Sport Aurora’s 14th Annual Breakfast of Champions

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Sport Aurora’s 14th Annual Breakfast of Champions celebrated the crowning achievements of eleven local sports organizations on Sunday morning at Stonehaven Banquet Hall.

One of Sport Aurora’s premier annual events, the Breakfast of Champions attracted scores of dignitaries including MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy who presented medals and congratulated dozens of athletes and coaches individually on stage.

The event was hosted for the eleventh consecutive year by Aurora Tigers Governor and Everest Hockey Director Jim Thomson.

The community-centred Thomson also subbed in for suddenly-stricken keynote speaker Grey Brett, Sport Aurora’s Athlete of the Year in 2023. Thomson, a rugged ex-NHLer who played for the Hartford Whalers, New Jersey Devils, Ottawa Senators, the Anaheim Ducks, and most notably the LA Kings with whom he battled for the Stanley Cup alongside Wayne Gretzky in 1993, offered engaging anecdotes to the audience about the importance of hope, resilience, and perseverance.

Ron Weese, President of Sport Aurora, was inspired by Thomson’s keynote address:

“One of the highlights this morning was Jim Thomson’s performance as our Emcee and Guest Speaker. I’m always interested in Jim Thomson’s inspirational story. His message about never giving up on your dream, and being thankful are lessons about life from a former NHLer that athletes in our community need to hear.”

Weese was also moved by the stories brought forth by the coaches in their presentations.

“Every year, I like to hear the stories from our coaches. It’s inspiring to see the reactions of our large audiences to the success of so many teams. The coaches also get a chance to thank their players and parents directly in an open setting. This event is an important forum for public appreciation of players, coaches, parents, and community volunteers.”

Two of the community volunteers in the audience were Aurora Tigers Captain Simon Howard and his brother, NCAA D1 RIT commit Luke Howard. Both Tigers greeted guests and connected to the community as leaders of the Town’s Junior A hockey team.

The appearance of at least two Tigers is an ongoing tradition at the Breakfast of Champions, as it is to have the team’s owner serve as Emcee.

Thomson—who met all the players and coaches on stage and extended congratulations to each with a handshake

and good word—enjoyed the gathering of local athletes and the recognition they received while praising the diligence of Sport Aurora: “Ron, Laurie, Sandra, Neil, and Alan put so much energy and effort into the athletes and families. The good they do in their community—it’s great to be part of it. We didn’t have this kind of community recognition when I was growing up. This event takes me back to my childhood. We’d have a year-end banquet for our team which was fun, but we never had a chance to celebrate with other sports.”

In addition to acknowledging the special experience afforded the attendees at this year’s Breakfast of Champions, Thomson hoped that his words had an impact on the young athletes gathered at Stonehaven: “I hope I was able to plant that seed of encouragement in them. As one coach said to our team, ‘Somebody here is going to do great things as an athlete.’ I was letting them know that no one seemed to believe that I’d make it to the NHL – but through my hardships, through resilience, and perseverance, my NHL dream came true. Someone in the room today will do great things on a big stage. Meeting all the athletes and families makes this a special day for me.”

It was a special day for Rocco Colarossi who was presented with the Coach of the Year Award by ASHoF inductee and Sport Aurora administrator Alan Dean.

Colarossi acknowledged in his acceptance address that he was “recently married” which elicited much applause and he admitted as a result that “he hadn’t had much time to prepare a speech” which amused the assembly.

The Shaolin Martial Arts instructor noted the personal and organizational significance of the Sport Aurora Coach of the Year Award: “I’m thankful and appreciative of the award. It was so nice to get recognition for the school, too.”

The veteran coach expressed how much satisfaction he derives from developing local athletes: “Watching the athletes grow as competitors and young people is one of the best parts of coaching. Some of them started as nine-year-olds with me. Now, they’re 15 and one is internationally-ranked. Ron Piklas is undefeated this year—he has the top fighting record in our School at 13-0. It’s a special achievement for Shaolin and the sport. Sanda [kick boxing] is not huge sport in Canada yet, but events like these give it a spotlight. It’s much bigger in Europe and Asia, but two of our athletes—Dan Wakefield and Ron

Piklas—have qualified for our national kick boxing team.”

In addition to Shaolin Martial Arts Canada, ten other organizations paraded their championship teams and individuals into the spotlight of the appreciative audience of 200 who also enjoyed a delicious hot breakfast prior to the festivities.

Thomson welcomed to the stage coaches and athletes from Evolution Gymnastics, York Artistic Swimming Club, York Curling Club, Aurora Master Ducks, Kids Super Gym, AMHA’s U15BB rep team resplendent in their matching yellow and black hoodies, Special Olympics Ontario, Cavalo Martial Arts, and Global Gymnastics.

The AMHA’s absent U16BB team was recognized by Thomson for winning a significant tournament last season.

Also absent was Sport Aurora’s 2025 Athlete of the Year Eugene Wang—a table tennis player whose championship tournament in South Carolina conflicted with the event.

Wang—a competitor at three Pan Am Games and a four-time Olympian—encouraged “all the young athletes to remember that every match is a chance to learn, to grow, and to become stronger.”

“Winning is great, but the most important thing is to keep improving and to enjoy the journey.”

Wang—through an email—reminded the athletes assembled to “Believe in yourself, respect your opponents, and always give your best.”

Despite some of these conspicuous absences and the sudden sickness of Grey Brett, Sport Aurora’s Executive Director Laurie Mueller—one of the chief organizers of the event—captured the atmosphere at Stonehaven on Sunday morning.

“The highlight of the event is the energy in the room. Every single year, there’s a new kind of energy. You feel the energy and the pride of each of the teams being honored. You feel good when you leave here.”

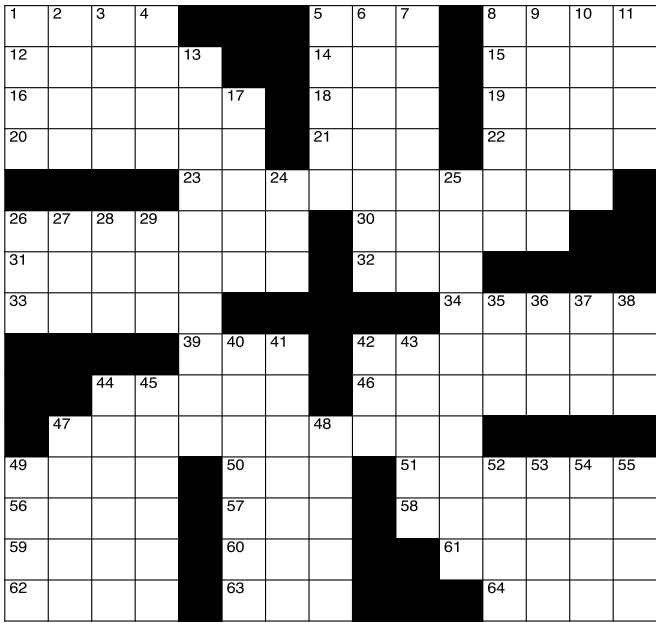
Weese, in his closing address, acknowledged the attendance of three Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductees. Paolina Allan, Jim Thomson, and Alan Dean were warmly received by attendees as was the recognition of sponsors that made the Breakfast of Champions possible: the Patron Sponsor E360S; Event Sponsors Microtel by Wyndham and Nothers Signs and Recognition; Table Sponsors Masterducks Swimming and LeGallais Veterinary Hospital; and Gift Sponsors—also LeGallais Veterinary Hospital.

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Remark
- 5. Upper body part
- 8. Expression of dismissiveness
- 12. Alternate name
- 14. Popular beverage
- 15. Swiss river
- 16. Step-shaped recess
- 18. Rocker Stewart
- 19. Bright shade of color
- 20. Popular “street”
- 21. Wrath
- 22. Heat units
- 23. Nocturnal omnivorous mammals
- 26. Fall back into
- 30. Remove from the record
- 31. Sound a splash made
- 32. Popular Dodge pickup model
- 33. Jamaican river

- 34. Notable event in Texas history
- 39. Cool!
- 42. Subset of Judaism
- 44. Newly entered cadet
- 46. Duct in urinary system
- 47. Exterminator
- 49. Snatch quickly
- 50. Have already done
- 51. Less healthy
- 56. Therefore
- 57. What couples say on the altar
- 58. Mysteriously
- 59. Look angry or sullen
- 60. Bird’s beak
- 61. Taco ingredient
- 62. Square measures
- 63. Google certification (abbr.)
- 64. Singer Hansard

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Pubs
- 2. Wings
- 3. Popular BBQ dish
- 4. Small sponge cake
- 5. Open-roofed entrance halls
- 6. Organize anew
- 7. Type of wine
- 8. Forums
- 9. North Atlantic islands (alt. sp.)
- 10. Pond dwellers
- 11. Large integers
- 13. Signaled
- 17. Brief
- 24. Type of student
- 25. Tibetan monasteries
- 26. Revolutions per minute
- 27. NY Giants great Manning
- 28. Local area network
- 29. Residue from burning
- 35. Illuminated
- 36. Vasopressin
- 37. Notable space station
- 38. Wood sorrel
- 40. Adhering to laws
- 41. Chose
- 42. Hovel
- 43. Stood up
- 44. European city
- 45. Works ceaselessly
- 47. Mistake
- 48. Sun-dried brick
- 49. Sicilian city
- 52. A steep rugged rock or cliff
- 53. Murder
- 54. Other
- 55. “Deadpool” actor Reynolds

THINGS... *you ought to know*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

Garden Aurora's speaker series continues with Shaun Booth speaking about Intro to Natural Garden Design. Shaun will explore how natural garden design differs from traditional horticulture, what benefits it brings to nature and our gardens, and actionable steps to make a place for nature in your yard using native plants and natural garden design. Join us for free at The Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Pkwy North (lower rear entrance). Doors open at 7 p.m., meeting starts at 8 p.m., followed by our flower show, coffee and snacks available. For more information please visit www.gardenaurora.ca

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26

The Aurora Farmers' Market will host the final day of its outdoor season today at Town Park between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Special Halloween activities and costume parade.

York Symphony Orchestra Presents: A Symphonic Halloween. Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria St. The first concert of the YSO's new season features music famous for its invocation of the spooky spirit of the season, including the final catastrophic movements of Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique, and Mussorgsky's very scary Night on Bald Mountain. Also featured is pianist Elly Hung playing Rachmaninoff's beloved Second Piano Concerto. Tickets at Eventbrite.ca or at the door

Aurora's Haunted Forest returns to Sheppard's Bush and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex tonight from 6 – 9 p.m. Wristbands are required. Aurora's Haunted Forest has been acclaimed as one of the Top 100 Festivals and Events in Ontario. Special thanks to Marquee Theatrical Productions and The Knuth Family for their countless hours and passion for creating displays and themes. Additional thanks to the more than 180 volunteers whose time and talent will be essential for getting this event ready. For more, visit aurora.ca/hauntedforest.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

The Aurora Historical Society's Speaker Series continues this evening at 7 p.m. with Barn-Raising, Threshing, & Quilting Bees: The Stories that Farm Diaries Tell with Cathy Wilson. Held at Hillary House National Historic Site and virtually over Zoom. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS members, or \$12.50 for non-members. "Cathy Wilson shares her recent book, Being Neighbours, about barn raisings and quilt-

ing bees in Ontario. She takes the audience into families' daily lives to uncover the subtle social politics of mutual dependency, the expectations neighbours had of each other, their relationships, and ways of managing conflict and crisis. Catharine Wilson is a Professor Emerita of History at the University of Guelph and Founder and Director of the Rural Diary Archive." Tickets can be purchased on at www.aurorahs.com or by calling 905-727-8991.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6

FIRESIDE HOLIDAY MARKET, hosted by Sisterz & Co. in support of the Aurora Food Pantry today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Northridge Community Church, 15338 Leslie St, Aurora, ON. Shop local for gifts, crafts, jewelry & treats. Free admission & festive family fun. Free photos with Santa!

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](https://www.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. 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.

DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

From page 5

Across the province, our government is continuing to take action to make life better and more affordable for all Ontarians. We're increasing funding to protect and expand the long-term care system by increasing annual funding to a record \$1.92 billion to support the significant increase in staffing in the province's long-term care homes over the past four years. This increase comes at a time when the government has surpassed its target of an average of four hours of daily direct care for residents by nurses and personal support workers this spring. This investment builds on the previous \$4.9 billion four-year staffing plan which focused on recruitment, training and retention and helped add more than 16,000 personal support workers and nurses to the provincial workforce. Building the long-term care workforce is one more way the government is ensuring Ontarians get the quality of care and quality of life they need and deserve.

Each of these initiatives — whether in Aurora, Newmarket, or across Ontario — reflects our government's ongoing commitment to building a stronger, more connected, and more resilient province. Together, we're supporting our people, protecting the services families rely on, and creating the conditions for every community to thrive.

As we head into November, a month of remembrance and gratitude, let's take time to reflect on those who have served our country and those who continue to build and protect our communities every day.

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Silver Stars docuseries shines a spotlight on Canadian women, with Aurora at the heart of the story



Lanette Ware-Bushfield
Contributed photo

BY BRITTANY GRENCI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora is about to take centre stage in a powerful new Canadian storytelling project.

Silver Stars—a five-part intergenerational docuseries—will celebrate the courage, wisdom, and legacy of twelve trailblazing Canadian women whose contributions and influence spans decades.

Produced by A WWB Production, an independent Ontario-based film and television company, Silver Stars is more than a documentary. It is a cultural movement designed to inspire future generations while honouring the women

who have helped shape Canada’s social and cultural landscape.

What makes this project especially meaningful for local residents is that its visionary leader, Lanette Ware-Bushfield, CEO and Founder of A WWB Production, is herself a proud Aurora resident.

A Celebration of Canadian Trailblazers

The series will highlight the stories of twelve remarkable women, with eleven honourees already revealed: Actor/Producer and CEO of RedCloud Studios Jennifer Podemski, three-time Olympian and morning host Rosey Edeh, Power Lifter, health and fitness nominee and grandmother Ninette Longworth as well as neuroscientist, Dr. Beverly M. Francis, PhD to name a few.

From pioneering entrepreneurs to elite athletes and visionary artists, these “Silver Stars” represent the best of Canadian excellence, specifically in STEM, sports and the arts.

“From the moment Lanette and I connected, I knew this would be more than a partnership,” said Rosa Calabrese-Teal, owner and founder of The Royal Rose Gallery in Aurora. “When values-driven companies unite, we don’t just tell stories—we shift culture. We’re honoured to stand behind Silver Stars, a fearless tribute to the brilliance, resilience, and legacy of Canadian women.”

Aurora Hosts the Gala and Exhibit

Filming for Silver Stars began this fall, and will culminate in a gala celebration in Aurora where Mayor Tom Mrakas will join the cast, crew and industry leaders,

underscoring the significance of this project for both Aurora and Canada as a whole.

The gala will unveil the twelve portraits featured in the upcoming 2026/2027 Silver Stars calendar. Following the gala, the gallery will host a public exhibit from November 9–13, offering residents and visitors alike a chance to engage with the stories behind the screen.

Purpose-Driven Partnerships

Backed by established partners including M·A·C Cosmetics, Flow Water, a local Aurora Starbucks, the National Film Board of Canada, ROOM Magazine, and Oya Black Arts Coalition, Silver Stars is already attracting attention across the country.

“We connected with Silver Stars right away,” said Heba Fawzy of Flow Water. “It’s important, it’s powerful, and it speaks to the kind of honest impact we want to be part of. We’re proud to support a project that’s rooted in real stories and real community.”

Lanette echoed this sentiment: “I created Silver Stars for those who lie awake wondering if they’re on the right path, questioning whether their dreams truly matter. With a few concrete examples of hope through twelve remarkable journeys, it’s my way of saying: yes, they do. If I can light even a small spark of belief in someone’s heart, then Silver Stars has done what it was meant to do.”

Call for Local Support

While Silver Stars already has national momentum, the production team is eager to welcome more local sponsors and volunteers from Aurora and beyond.

They are seeking any businesses or individuals interested in aligning with this initiative—whether through product placement, event sponsorship, or shared media exposure—to get involved. “This is a local-for-global project,” says Lanette, “and the more our community invests in it, the further its impact will resonate.”

Lanette and her team also warmly welcome donations and investments to help cover reproduction and printing costs for the Silver Stars calendar, the gala backdrop, and other high-end reproductions—ensuring this celebration shines as brightly in print as it does on screen. Lanette encourages all who wish to contribute to this transformative initiative to send an e-mail to info@awwbproduction.ca.

More Than Entertainment

At its heart, Silver Stars is about more than entertainment. It is about celebrating women who have shaped Canada while building opportunities for emerging BIPOC creatives in the film industry. Through mentorship and hands-on production experience, A WWB Production is creating pathways for the next generation of storytellers.

Aurora can take pride in being home to Lanette Ware-Bushfield, whose leadership is not only amplifying underrepresented voices but also putting the Town on the map as the birthplace of a cultural milestone.

As the November gala approaches, the excitement is building. For residents, the opportunity to attend the exhibit or contribute to the success of the project is more than an invitation—it’s a chance to stand behind a legacy in the making.

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Requirements: Active Ontario Real Estate License, strong
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B	A	R	B					A	R	M			P	F	F	T
A	L	I	A	S				T	E	A			A	A	R	E
R	A	B	B	E	T			R	O	D			N	E	O	N
S	E	S	A	M	E			I	R	E			E	R	G	S
				A	R	M		A	D	I	L	L	O	S		
R	E	L	A	P	S	E		E	R	A	S	E				
P	L	A	S	H	E	D		R	A	M						
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				R	A	D		H	A	S	I	D	I	C		
		P	L	E	B	E		U	R	E	T	H	R	A		
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G	R	A	B		D	I	D		S	I	C	K	E	R		
E	R	G	O		I	D	O		E	E	R	I	L	Y		
L	O	U	R		N	E	B			S	A	L	S	A		
A	R	E	S		G	D	E				G	L	E	N		

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Base + Commission

Let's Talk.

EMAIL RESUME FOR CONSIDERATION:

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416-803-9940
zach@pcmedia.ca



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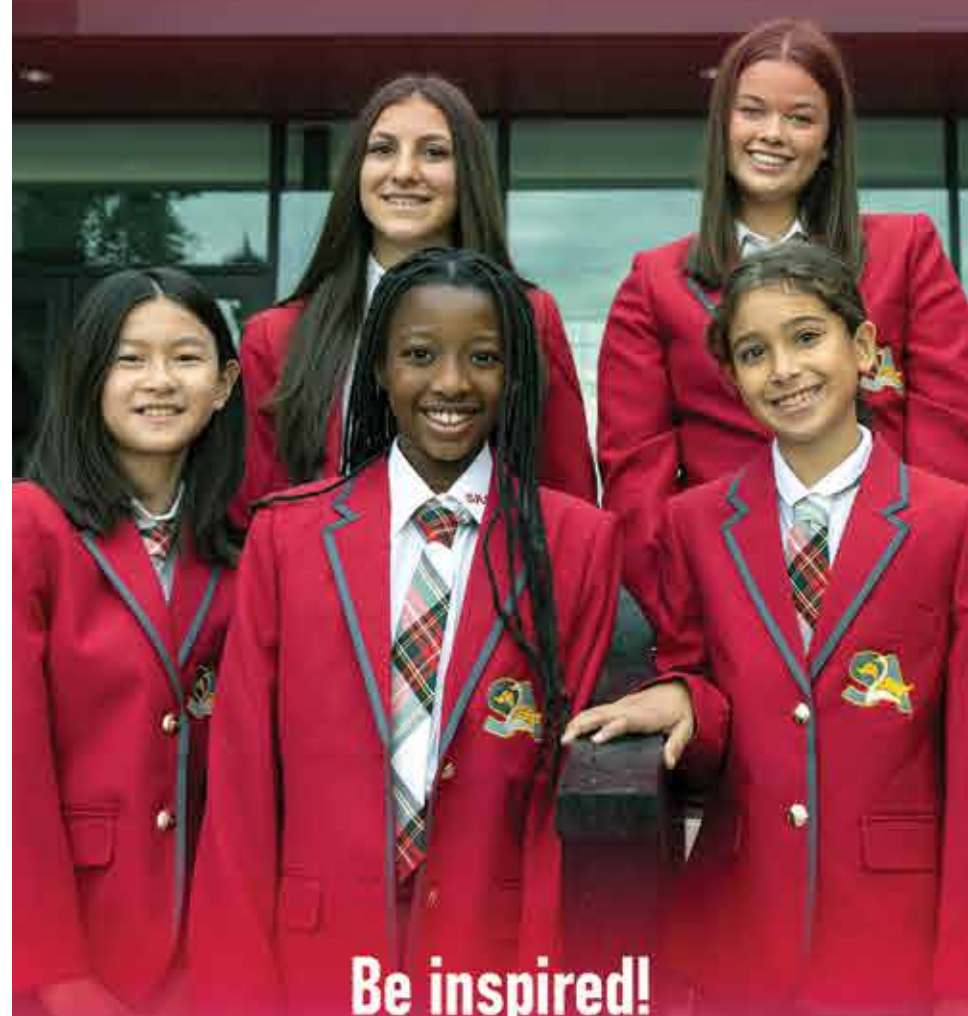
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