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THE AURORA

Aurora's Community Newspaper

*TheAuroran.com*

Vol. 27 No. 3 905-727-3300

FREE

Week of October 30, 2025

CHEERS & CHILLS

There was plenty of both in Aurora to go around last week as the community gathered to cheer on the Toronto Blue Jays in their World Series bid and kick-start the Halloween party. (MAIN) Tea, Makoa, Ben, and Elliot let out a cheer in the halls of the Aurora Cultural Centre as the Town hosted the first of a series of viewing parties at Aurora Town Square on Friday night. (INSET TOP) Following a screening of the Rocky Horror Picture Show and a performance by Marquee Theatrical Productions, theatre-goers joined the viewing party. (INSET BOTTOM) The following day, the Sanderson Sisters welcomed Aurorans to the Town's annual Haunted Forest, which celebrated its 20th season on Saturday evening. For more on the Jays viewing, see Page 11. For full coverage of Haunted Forest, see Page 20.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

Chamber of Commerce celebrates 45th anniversary honouring businesses it serves

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

When Omars Shoes co-owner Raz Khamissa began learning the ins and outs of business from his father, Omar, he didn't understand the importance of Chambers of Commerce to local businesses – at first. But this importance was driven home quickly as he learned more “and became

wiser.” Omar, alongside Eric Smith, were just two of a handful of local business leaders who saw the importance of such an organization early on, laying the groundwork for what became the Aurora Chamber of Commerce in 1980. As the Chamber celebrated its 45th anniversary on Thursday night at the Royal Venetian Mansion, it was a full circle moment as the younger Khamissa delivered

the keynote address at the Chamber's annual Business Excellence Awards. The drive to create the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, he said, was powered by the recognized need to “create a united voice, one that could advocate for local business, and help shape the future of our Town.” “Aurora was a much smaller town back then. In 1968, when we moved to Aurora, it was 5,500 people, so it's changed a

Continued on page 11



Recipients of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's annual Business Excellence Awards gathered for a group photo at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Thursday night. Full coverage of this year's honourees begins on Page 12.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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# New planning system could allow for significant redevelopment in Aurora’s downtown

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A new Community Planning Permit system in Aurora could lead to significant intensification in Aurora’s historic downtown core.

The new system, which is intended to streamline the planning process for the Aurora Promenade area, bordered by Temperance Street in the west, Centre Street to the north, Victoria Street to the east, to 70 metres south of Church Street, will be up for discussion at a Special Council meeting this week.

The goal of the system, if ultimately established, will give the municipality more control on how the Town’s historic core is intensified – from building materials used to height limits – while maintaining the facades of heritage-designated buildings.

The new system will set an approval timeline for applications at 45 days.

It prescribes minimum setbacks from the street level for intensification projects, and could lead to builds of up to eight storeys in the core set back at least 10 metres from the heritage frontages.

“At large, the Official Plan recognizes this area as a destination that will build on its assets and evolve into a vibrant place to live, shop, work and play,” say municipal staff in a report that will be before Council on the October 29 meeting, noting the Promenade area, as well as the Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) around the GO Station, are identified as Aurora’s “primary focus area for growth and intensification, accommodating the highest densities, while also maintaining and preserving the built heritage assets.”

“This is where the community meets, interacts, celebrates, shops, entertains, and is where visitors will want to come to experience sophisticated culture in a small-town setting,” the report continues. “The Community Planning Permit Bylaw will become the primary tool setting the development standards in the Bylaw area. The CPP Bylaw will outline the policies, standards and provisions surrounding use, heights, step backs (the horizontal recession of an upper storey), setbacks (distances from property boundaries), parking, façade articulation and materiality, amongst other matters.”

The “continued preservation of heritage buildings and facades” is a recommendation within the plan, with significant step backs of ten metres on upper levels of buildings above the three-storey heritage facades and above the fifth storey. It will also set a general height limit of six to eight storeys on interior blocks

within the area subject to the step backs.

A maximum height of nine stories “strategically located at Wellington Street West and Temperance Street due largely to the slope in elevation and reduced impacts on neighbouring properties” is also recommended, as is limiting heights to “interior blocks behind the heritage facades to protect the distinct Yonge Street heritage street wall.”

“The initial development concepts were presented at an Open House [in June] and feedback from residents, business owners, and property owners were generally supportive,” the report continues. “Suggestions provided by the attendees stressed the need for protecting the heritage façade and materiality of existing buildings, incorporating street beautification elements and infrastructure, and increasing height where appropriate. In addition, there were also suggestions of the CPP Bylaw going further as the bylaw will guide long-term growth in the area. There is a need for the CPP Bylaw to recognize the necessity of incorporating greater densities based on current and future housing demands and realities. However, the increase in density cannot come at the expense of neighbourhood character or heritage buildings.

“The general consensus was that balance was necessary, respecting the character of the Downtown and providing transition to lower-density areas while overall heights and densities increased in a sensible manner, and where impacts are minimal, such as the portion of lands near Wellington Street West and Temperance Street.”

This initial feedback resulted in changes to what will be before Council this week, including increases in height in strategic locations and ensuring appropriate step-backs.

Feedback on the proposals were also offered at the Town’s Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) earlier this month. While local historian David Heard, a delegate to the HAC meeting, expressed concern on the preservation of facades – citing examples on Wellington Street East where such facades were to be maintained but were ultimately demolished after being left to become structurally unstable, and how the site of the Fleury Foundry, now home to Bacon Basketware, could be incorporated into the vision – feedback was cautiously positive.

“The benefit for the Town is that by taking on this Planning Act tool, which is available to us, it puts us in the driver’s seat. It allows us to be a bit more proactive in setting

the actual detailed development standards for our downtown,” said Town Planner Adam Robb at HAC.

“Through this, you can actually go back and say, ‘I want stone, I want brick, I want certain materials,’ so that’s a positive here. But recognizing this, too, it’s our downtown core. Our downtown core has heritage assets galore, as we know, designated heritage properties, and the premise of all of this work is that those are to not be unsympathetically altered in any way. Those heritage facades need to be maintained.”

Protection of area heritage assets, Robb added, was “a non-negotiable.”

“That is absolute,” he said, noting passage of the new system will not

*Suggestions provided by the attendees stressed the need for protecting the heritage façade and materiality of existing buildings, incorporating street beautification elements and infrastructure, and increasing height where appropriate*

impact heritage designations already in place.



**WEAR A POPPY** – Community leaders gathered at Town Park for a ceremonial flag raising to mark the start of the Royal Canadian Legion’s annual Poppy Campaign. Participating in the ceremony were, from left, Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Aurora Legion President Bonnie Robertson, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger



TOWN OF AURORA  
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC PLANNING MEETING

AURORA TOWN COUNCIL will hold a Public Meeting to receive input on a proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment:

Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 7 p.m.

Aurora Town Hall, Council Chambers, 100 John West Way, Aurora Ontario

APPLICATION: The applicant has applied for an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications to change the land use permissions to permit a 5-storey apartment building with 148 units and underground parking. The designated heritage “Red House” will be relocated to 255–257 Old Yonge Street.

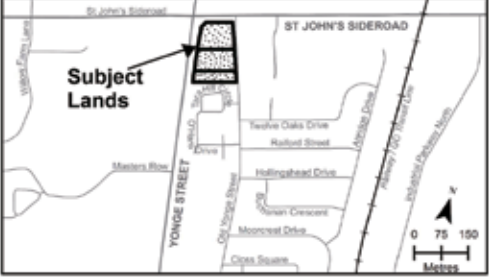
PROPERTY: 16003 Yonge Street & 219 -257 Old Yonge Street

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Plan 461 Pt Lots 1 and 2

APPLICANT: 6768148 Canada Ltd.

FILE NUMBERS: OPA-2025-03 & ZBA-2025-04

WARD: 1



PROCEDURAL INFORMATION:

Parties interested in speaking during the public portion of the meeting may attend in person or electronically. To participate electronically, pre-registration is required. For more information, visit: [aurora.ca/participation](http://aurora.ca/participation)

The meeting will be live streamed at: [youtube.com/TownofAurora](https://youtube.com/TownofAurora)

The Planning Report will be made available the Tuesday before the Public Planning Meeting date on the Town’s website, by visiting the Agendas and Minutes section, located at: [aurora.ca/agendas](http://aurora.ca/agendas)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Any questions regarding the proposed application can be directed to Antonio Greco of the Planning and Development Services Department at 365-500-3103, or by email at [agreco@aurora.ca](mailto:agreco@aurora.ca).

Comments may also be mailed to the Planning and Development Services Department at 100 John West Way, Aurora, ON. L4G 6J1, faxed to 905-726-4736, or emailed to [planning@aurora.ca](mailto:planning@aurora.ca) prior to the meeting. Please quote the File Name and Number.

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Council of the Town of Aurora on the proposed Official Plan amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment application, you must make a written request to the Town to the attention of the Director of Planning and Development Services.

PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTION NOTICE:

The Town of Aurora collects personal information in communications or presentations made to Town Council and/or its Committees under the legal authority of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter c.P.13, as amended. Pursuant to Section 27 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56, as amended, (the “Act”) public feedback to planning proposals is considered to be public record and may be disclosed to any individual upon request in accordance with the Act. If you are submitting letters, faxes, emails, presentations or other communications to the Town, you should be aware that your name and the fact that you communicated with the Town will become part of the public record and will appear on the Town’s website. The Town will also make your communication and any personal information in it, such as your address and postal code or email address available to the public unless you expressly request the Town to remove it. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Town Clerk, Town of Aurora, 100 John West Way, Box 1000, Aurora, ON L4G 6J1 905-727-3123.

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

The Town audio and/or video records Public Planning Meetings. If you make a presentation to Town Council or its Committees, you may be audio or video recorded. Pursuant to Section 27 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56, as amended, (the “Act”) public feedback to planning proposals is considered to be a public record and may be disclosed to any individual upon request in accordance with the Act.

DATED at the Town of Aurora, this 30th day of October, 2025

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### Community members “asked for patience” as local hospitals upgrade record systems

On October 28, 2025, Oak Valley Health, Southlake Health, and Stevenson Memorial Hospital will go live with an upgraded electronic medical record system. Community members are asked to please be patient as teams adjust to the upgraded system that integrates new digital care processes, significantly reducing paper-based protocols. All three health care organizations will continue to deliver safe, high-quality care throughout this important transition.

The three health care organizations are partners in the Shared Health Information Network Exchange (SHINE) which helps connect care across York Region, Durham Region, and Simcoe County. Over the past year and a half, they have worked closely with their technology vendor MEDITECH to strengthen their shared electronic medical record system. The upgraded system will transition from mostly paper-based processes to a more electronic system for clinicians and staff, supporting more streamlined, coordinated care. Patients will benefit from improved communication between care teams and enhanced safeguards designed to support patient safety at every step.

While the upgraded system will deliver long-term benefits, its implementation will involve important workflow changes that will require teams to adjust.

All emergency departments (EDs) will remain open during the transition. However, patients, families, and visitors may experience longer wait times as hospital teams adapt to the changes.

In Ontario, patients can also receive care in several other settings. Patients who are not experiencing life-threatening or serious conditions can visit an urgent care centre, a walk-in clinic, or their primary care provider depending on their symptoms. Some communities may also have access to virtual care options and community health clinics.

While hospital emergency departments are open 24/7 and always here to support patients when needed, they are best for life-threatening or serious conditions such as chest pain, stroke symptoms, difficulty breathing, severe trauma, and high fever in infants under three months old. Choosing the right option can help reduce wait times and ensure the emergency department is available for those who need it most.

For 100 years and counting, Southlake Health has built healthy communities through leading edge care with an unwavering pride for people, place and performance. Over the years, Southlake Health has evolved into one of Canada’s top healthcare organizations. It is more than a single centre. Southlake Health is a network of expertise, compassion and excellence that delivers health and wellness, close to home.

With 6,000 staff, medical staff, volunteers and learners, as well as an operating budget in excess of \$600 million, Southlake Health operates several sites to deliver care to patients across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County. It also provides specialized cardiac and cancer care to patients as far north as Muskoka and as far south as North York through its regional programs.

Southlake Health is committed to growing alongside the communities it serves. State-of-the-art technologies, advanced research and the latest techniques help patients in every stage of life. In a recognition of its commitment to quality and patient safety, Southlake Health has received the highest distinction of Exemplary Standing from Accreditation Canada for the past 16 years. Known as a pioneer in innovative integrated care initiatives, the Southlake@home program has spread across Ontario to ensure care is always within reach.

With support from its communities, Southlake Health will continue to save lives, push boundaries and bring care closer to home for people today and for generations to come. Help us do more by donating at southlake.ca/foundation.

Southlake Health

### Machell's Corners



### “Can you believe it?” Not really.

“Can you believe it?”

I don’t know about the rest of you, but when I hear that question pointed in my general direction, I usually think I’m about to be on the receiving end of a real fast one – or, at the very least, the attempted fast one zipped by so quickly I didn’t even see it.

It’s a phrase that’s often used to express some sort of incredulity, underscoring the ridiculousness of whatever they’ve relayed. If they call attention to said ridiculousness, is it a question of looking for affirmation of their perspective or affirmation that whatever they’re saying has more basis in reality than it actually does?

On Friday night, Canadians took a momentary break from baseball fever to react to the news that the U.S. President had abruptly ceased trade negotiations with our country. The reason? Offence at a commercial produced by the Provincial Government to challenge the very idea of tariffs in the country – using the words of the oft-lionized Republican President Ronald Reagan to make their point.

Ontarians, whether they wanted to or not, paid an eye-watering \$75 million for this message to reach its intended audience and, regardless of the price tag, it seems to have hit its target sometime over the course of the week that was.

“They cheated on a commercial,” said the President in a scrum. “Ronald Reagan loved tariffs and they said he didn’t. And I guess it was AI or something. They cheated badly. Canada got caught cheating on a commercial. Can you believe it?”

What is it going to take for just one person he’s addressing to answer one of his favourite queries with firm and resounding no?

But, wait, there’s more.

Amid the manufactured furore, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, which is, at the end of the day, run under the auspices of the U.S. Federal Government, released a statement, trumpeted out by the President, of course, that they’re reviewing their legal options. On a commercial. Directly using the words of the man in question.

“The ad misinterprets the Presidential Radio Address [where Reagan’s words originated], and the Government of Ontario did not seek nor receive permission to use and edit the remarks,” they said. “The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute is reviewing its legal options in this matter. We encourage you to watch President Reagan’s unedited video on your YouTube channel.”

On the one hand, hopefully more people took to the ‘tubes to watch the video from start to finish, even just to see how ridiculous these complaints are. But, on the other, for some members of



### BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

their intended audience, they might have encountered some inconvenient truths... which may or may not inspire more “nos” to join the chorus against the “Can you believe it?” crowd.

Yes, the speech was made to justify Reagan’s imposing tariffs on Japan, an action he said he was “loath to take,” but at the heart of the message was trade barriers like tariffs “hurt every American worker and consumer.”

“For those of us who lived through the Great Depression, the memory of the suffering it caused is deep and searing,” he said. “And today, many economic analysts and historians argue that high tariff legislation passed back in that period, called the Smoot-Hawley tariff, greatly deepened the Depression and prevented economic recovery.

“You see, at first, when someone says, ‘let’s impose tariffs on foreign imports,’ it looks like they’re doing the patriotic thing by protecting American products and jobs. And sometimes, for a short while, it works. But only for a short time. What eventually occurs is: first, homegrown industries start relying on government protection in the form of high tariffs; they stop competing and stop making the innovative management and technological changes they need to succeed in world markets. And then, while all this is going on, something even worse occurs. High tariffs inevitably lead to retaliation by foreign countries and the triggering of fierce trade wars. The result is more and more tariffs, higher and higher trade barriers, and less and less competition.

“So soon, because the prices made artificially high by tariffs that subsidize inefficiency and poor management, people stop buying. Then the worst happens. Markets shrink and collapse. Businesses and industries shut down. And millions of people lose their jobs. The memory of all this occurring back in the ‘30s made me determined when I came to Washington to spare the American

people the protectionist legislation that destroys prosperity.”

Did Ontario somehow cheat?

No; not only were the words in context, but the footage and audio in question is public domain, by design, and free to use.

Did Ronald Reagan love tariffs? To hear him tell it, absolutely not.

Did “they” (Ontario) say he didn’t? No, Reagan said it himself.

Did Canada cheat badly? First of all, it’s an Ontario matter, and unless there was an unspoken agreement between any of the players in this drama that we would not defend our perspective, then, once again, that answer is no.

Can we believe it?

No – for the aforementioned reasons and so much more.

Amid the ongoing trade battle between the two countries, I have to hand it to the Federal and Ontario governments for continuing to act and negotiate in good faith – because it’s clear that these acts of good faith are exclusively travelling down a one-way street.

For every one step forward we, as Canadians are knocked back at least two more, due to the increasingly frivolous and ridiculous whims of one man, which makes any negotiation impossibly unpredictable.

If we ever get close to a deal in the next three years of the current administration, will it be scuttled at the eleventh hour for some absurd perceived slight?

If we actually go as far as inking a deal that works for both countries, would it be unilaterally nullified because he didn’t like the outcome of the latest Great Canadian Baking Show, or singer Katy Perry’s relationship with Justin Trudeau? It sounds ridiculous, but it doesn’t seem all that far removed from the world we’re living in today.

It is impossible to work towards a deal when one party keeps moving the goal posts and, as apparently he’s a “builder at heart”, it’s no sweat on his brow to dig them up and plant them again.

“Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant,” said Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, addressing the Nixon government. “No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.”

That oft-repeated quote is more relevant now than ever before as the twitches and grunts make way for kicks and falsehoods.

As important as these relationships are, will there come a point where our leaders simply throw up their hands and decide to take our business elsewhere rather than stepping up time and time again, hoping for the best, only to get kicked in the teeth?

We probably can’t afford to lay off being gluttons for punishment, but it’s nice to dream.

THE AURORAN

Aurora’s Community Newspaper

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is...

# Harvesting & Haunting!

Step into autumn with our cozy and colorful Fall Faves exhibit, located in the Performance Hall lobby of Aurora Town Square. Explore the tools and traditions of harvest time, from scythes and sickles to stories that helped shape our community's past. Don't miss the whimsical Halloween corner, where postcards, decorations, and archival items dating back to the early 1800s bring the season's spirit to life. These artifacts help tell the story of how farming, folklore, and history came together to create the many traditions we're familiar with today. Whether you're feeling festive or nostalgic, this exhibit offers something for everyone.



## Time Travellers Diary

By Jeremy Hood  
Museum Collections Technician

### A Trick too Far

This year’s warmer weather has me longing for one of those crisp autumn mornings, where your breath precedes you with a cloud, the morning sunlight makes a church window of the maples, and there’s a spring (rather than a fall!) in your step.

Fortunately, exactly 100 years ago, the weather was perfect for me, vacillating between overnight frosts and brisk but comfortable days. I defrosted the porthole on my time machine and peered out into the night. It was Hallowe’en evening, and even in 1925, so many familiar traditions were well-established. Young people were marching door-to-door, crunching through fallen leaves, past jack-o-lanterns, and entreating homeowners to satiate their sugary appetites.

A few parties were being held, open windows pumping steam and the screams of well-spooked partygoers into the night. In some ways, I thought, things have barely changed: much of the way we celebrate Hallowe’en remains analogue and full of natural materials. Our propensity to startle and scare, as well as our desire to experience those fleeing feelings, seem ingrained and an enduring element of human nature.

After quietly infiltrating a dwindling party to abscond with a candy apple, I returned at the end of the night to my time machine, which I had left hidden behind the United Church.

I materialized the stairs and climbed in. I settled for the night, letting the frost creep over the machine, and slept rather well.

I awoke to a loud clatter, the sound of metal and wood, the whinny of a horse and the cry of a young man in pain!

I quickly sneaked out of my machine, and in short order I was part of a small crowd on Temperance Street gathering around a tangled pile of wheelbarrows and young Kenneth McClenney, who had been thrown from his horse and was clearly suffering from a broken leg.

“What happened?” was the question floating through the group.

Kenneth was able, between laboured breaths, to describe his horse being spooked by the pile of wheelbarrows that had been left in the street, throwing him to the ground.

“Is Ranger ok? The deliveries?” he inquired.

Someone was, at that moment, walking the horse and carriage back to the scene, they described seeing “wheelbarrow tracks from yards all along this street. Must have been hooligans doing their Hallowe’en best to cause trouble”.

A murmur of discontent swelled in the crowd. Harmless pranks were one thing, but this kind of scare was unacceptable.

Once Kenneth had been taken to a doctor, I returned to my machine and took it a few hundred metres up. From there, I was shocked to see the other side of Hallowe’en in 1925 – down Yonge Street, especially just south of Aurora, there was an abundant amount of outdoor furniture that had been somehow hung on power lines across the road! Numerous farm gates were torn down, and I saw a police car investigating a home with broken windows.

A rural Hallowe’en was in fact quite different from what I am used to – I prefer the treats to the tricks, and parties over pranks. Stay spooky but safe this Hallowe’en!



## PARSA’S PERSPECTIVE

Michael Parsa, MPP  
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

Each year, Remembrance Day offers us more than a moment of silence. It offers a moment of perspective. In a world that often moves too fast, November 11th asks us to pause and reflect on what it truly means to live in peace and freedom.

The red poppy we wear is not just a symbol—it is a reminder of real people, real stories, and real sacrifice. Every name on a memorial is a testament to the life of a valorous individual who lived with courage and the unwavering spirit of service.

And this courage was born by the belief that some values are worth defending, even at great cost.

As we remember those who served, we are also called to carry forward the values they defended. In our daily lives, that might mean showing kindness where there is division, courage where there is fear, and compassion where there is need. Remembrance, after all, is not only about the past—it’s about how we choose to live in the present.

To our veterans, your service

continues to inspire us. The Ontario Soldiers’ Aid Commission is here to support you and your families, offering financial assistance for health, housing, and well-being needs. This program ensures that those who served Canada with honour continue to receive the care they deserve.

I encourage everyone to take a moment to honour these brave individuals and to reflect on the weight of their sacrifices.

Lest We Forget.

### COMMUNITY

## Shelters Under Pressure: Yellow Brick House’s Urgent Call for Community Support as Gender-Based Violence Surges

### Break the Silence, Step in My Shoes Walk set for November 2

BY MONA S  
Summer Student  
Yellow Brick House

In the face of growing violence against women and children, Yellow Brick House, a non-profit organization based in York Region is calling for urgent community support to help us deliver safety, shelter, and counselling services to women and children fleeing violent and potentially deadly homes.

According to the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 62 women and children were tragically killed in Ontario in 2024 as a result of gender-based violence. These deaths represent more than just statistics; they reflect families being torn apart, lives cut short, and a societal failure to protect some of the most vulnerable among us.

Yellow Brick House has provided essential safety and support for survivors fleeing domestic violence and abuse for 47 years. Every year, thousands of crisis calls are answered, and women and children fleeing domestic violence receive emergency shelter, trauma-informed counselling, legal and immigration support, and other lifesaving services.

Yet despite this incredible impact, the demand for services continues to rise in combination with a non-

reciprocal increase in support. The ongoing housing crisis and lack of safe, affordable options has led to an increase in shelter stays—on average, women and children are remaining at Yellow Brick House shelters four to six weeks longer than in previous years. While the organization operates two emergency shelters in York Region, only 25 out of 41 beds and 10 cribs are currently funded by the province. This funding gap places tremendous pressure on the organization to fundraise in order to provide life-saving services.

“Gender-based violence does not discriminate. It can happen to any woman and impacts every community” says Lorris Herenda, CEO Yellow Brick House. “We need help to keep our services available so every donation, every volunteer hour, and every partnership help provide the foundation for a life free from violence. We cannot do this without our community.”

Yellow Brick House is encouraging residents, businesses, and local leaders to get involved whether through monetary donations sponsoring unfunded shelter beds, or participation in public events like the upcoming Break the Silence, Step in My Shoes Walk in Aurora this November.

To learn more about how to support Yellow Brick House’s mission or to make a contribution, visit [yellowbrickhouse.org](http://yellowbrickhouse.org) or email [supporter@yellowbrickhouse.org](mailto:supporter@yellowbrickhouse.org).

As Canada’s housing crisis deepens, survivors of domestic violence are facing unprecedented barriers to rebuilding their lives. Lack of affordable housing and growing waitlists mean that women and children fleeing domestic violence are staying in emergency shelters for months longer than ever before—often up to six additional months.

In response to this urgent need, Yellow Brick House is calling on the community to join the Break the Silence, Step in My Shoes Walk on Sunday, November 2, 2025, at St. Andrew’s College in Aurora.

The annual walk raises essential funds for the Nights of Safety program, which provides emergency shelter and life-saving services to women and children fleeing domestic violence and abuse.

The event brings together participants, local leaders, and partner organizations for a powerful walk that honours the lives lost to gender-based violence and fuels action for a safer future. To register or support the event, visit [yellowbrickhouse.org](http://yellowbrickhouse.org).

# Hockey Coach, Skills Instructor, Administrator, and “Never Too Late” Program Co-Founder Heather Morning to be enshrined next month in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame

**BY JIM STEWART**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Heather Morning is regarded by the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame nomination panel as “a driving force behind the growth of women’s hockey” and she takes these earned compliments in stride as we chat about her exemplary coaching, instructional, and administrative career.

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Morning, a resident of Aurora for over twenty years, has served as an Aurora Panthers coach, clinic instructor, and on the Central York Panthers’ Board of Directors, as well as a skills development coach with the Aurora Junior A Tigers, and she co-founded the “Never Too Late” hockey program for women who want to embrace hockey later in life.

The “Never Too Late” initiative is one of Morning’s fondest accomplishments and her excited tone permeates her anecdotes, especially when discussing the number of moms and grandmothers who have embraced hockey in the later stages of life.

“There were a lot of women who grew up in an era where hockey was for boys. I just got back from a 60+ tournament where the ladies will be able to tell their grandchildren that they spent the weekend playing in a hockey tournament. Most of them started when they were 40 or 50 or 60 and it’s so inspiring to see mid-life women taking this kind of risk and being vulnerable. It’s also been cool to see them take their tentative steps on the ice. They have an incredible thirst to understand the game and get more skilled. Then they share their experiences with their own children and grandchildren, which is especially useful when their own kids or grandkids face similar challenges when tackling something new.”

In addition to encouraging a multitude of Canadian women to embrace the game of hockey, Morning discusses the satisfaction of seeing the connections that form between the new players: “It’s made a community—they’ve found a bond and they bake sourdough bread together.”

Coach Morning shares her feelings of pride regarding the success of the Central York Panthers program, especially given the Junior Tigers’ excellent 11-1-0-1 start to the 2025-26 season.

“The Central York coaching staff—Steve Dempsey and his team at the U22 level – does such a great job teaching the game.”

When I mention the shooting skill that is demonstrated throughout the Junior Panthers lineup, the skills instructor’s voice lights up: “Shooting the puck—lots of technical skill goes into it. Guys can get away with muscle and strength. Women don’t have the same muscle mass so they

have to be technically better. The Panthers have to trust their bodies and not think about mechanics. At Central York, it’s always been skills-focused. I know the girls love playing for Steve and they work hard for the coaching staff. I ran the hockey camp that Central York uses to this day. They’ve done a really good job at bringing their scholarship players back to the skills camps as models for the younger players. Passion breeds more passion for the sport.”

Seeing the authentic mentoring that goes on in the Panthers’ organization is also pleasing for Coach Morning to see.

“There is a steady building up of the organization—it’s great to see how Mark [Dubeau] and his team encourage the older Panthers to look after the younger Panthers. Sports are so important for life skills—learning about resilience and dealing with what life throws at you. What they accomplish on the ice and how they’re also excellent students dedicated to their schoolwork shows what kind of student-athlete is being developed. It’s so nice to see the Panther players coming back to coach and mentor at this point in their lives. It’s a cyclical process that’s great to see. I think it extends the players’ joy for the game when they come back and instruct and coach-- and it’s super-satisfying for them.”

Morning adds, “I had the pleasure of seeing authentic mentoring at the training camp I ran for fifteen years. As it grew, when we moved it to SARC, I wanted it populated by all-female instruction. My daughter enjoyed the camp and, years later, she helped run the camp. Players who are now USports athletes in Canada or at Ivy League hockey schools in the States were in these camps as seven-year-olds. They’re such amazing role models—really.”

The veteran hockey coach reflected on the most enjoyable part of being a bench boss and Morning’s affection for the sport is evident: “I always loved the game, loved being at the rink, loved the people at the rink. Athletes are a special breed of people. Helping hockey players with a skill set and to see them enjoy the game more—nothing was more satisfying.”

Also satisfying for Morning is the success and expansion of the PWHL.



**AURORA SPORTS  
HALL of FAME**  
**Heather Morning**  
  
Glenn Rodger Photography  
Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Photo

She shared her feelings when the league opened for its first season of business.

“At first, I had trouble believing that it was actually happening and I was amazed that we’ve gotten to this point. It’s been a long road, but it’s happened. The game is so fast and physical and the PWHL is so accessible with its prices and it is thrilling to watch. There is a super infectious feeling at the games and the league has shown itself to be a much different product than the NHL. The stadiums, being filled with adult men and women and young boys and girls, is so incredibly impressive. Also impressive is how it’s been embraced. In the last Olympics, when the games were going on, the women embraced the moment. There was a lot of joy—even in the stressful moments. It was fun to watch these women play. Sports are supposed to be fun and a source of joy.”

Another recent development in Coach Morning’s life that has generated fun and joy was the call she received from Aurora Sports Hall of Fame staff regarding her enshrinement: “It was very surreal for sure—you never really think that it’s going to be you. You just get so much satisfaction from coaching and teaching the game and that’s enough, but getting the call has helped me reflect on all the years. It’s an incredible honor.”

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# Construct anniversary is milestone for “collective hope and determination”

Aurora-based social enterprise was founded five years ago



Members of the Construct Team gathered together last Tuesday to celebrate the Aurora-based social enterprise’s fifth anniversary. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The fifth anniversary of Construct, a social enterprise of Blue Door, last week was not just a celebration of staying power, but recognition for the “collective hope and determination that made it possible.”

So said Emmy Kelly, Interim CEO of Blue Door, as she welcomed dignitaries to their base on Earl Stewart Drive to celebrate both the anniversary of Construct itself, and the announcement that the initiative is now set to spread across the country.

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 Kelly 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.”

“Construct was born from the recognition of three urgent challenges: Rising homelessness, a shortage of skilled tradespeople, and a housing market that leaves too many people behind,” she told clients, community members and dignitaries – including Aurora Councillors John Gallo, Rachel Gilliland, and Ron Weese – at last week’s ceremony. “At Blue Door, we believed we could not only address these issues, but also prove a model that could ripple far beyond York Region. Five years later, that belief has become reality.

“The story of Construct began, like many good ideas do, with a cup of coffee and a difficult question: How do we truly break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, not with temporary fixings, but with pathways to lasting housing stability? And that question has set us on a journey. Out of conversations with brilliant peers, and a deep determination

to create meaningful, well-paid opportunities for those who have been shut out, Construct was born, not as a program, but as a promise.”

Since the program was established in 2020, Kelly says more than 750 people have walked through Construct’s doors, with 85 per cent of those individuals leaving not just with training in the trades, but “with jobs, stability and hope.”

Addressing the range of supporters in the audience, from all three levels of government, to foundations that provided funding, Kelly said “you didn’t just fund a program, you fuelled possibility.”

As The Auroran reported last week, following pilot programs in Niagara Falls, ON, and Halifax, NS, Construct is now ready to spread its program nation-wide, creating a template for community partners to follow.

Kelly said the new “Construct Canada” offers two ways for organizations to either add to their existing program, or replicate their model from the ground up, and Paul Robertson, Executive Director of their Niagara Falls partner, the West Niagara Employment Help Centre, outlined why his community jumped at the chance to pilot Construct’s expansion.

“When I first heard about Construct Canada, I immediately knew it was something we needed to bring to West Niagara. This partnership has opened doors for job seekers across the region, offering not just hands-on training in trades, but also mentorship and wraparound supports that help people truly thrive. Working with Construct Canada has shown us how impactful collaboration can be,” he said. “From recruitment to curriculum to participant support, this program leaves nothing to chance. In just a year since first meeting

with (former Blue Door CEO) Michael Braithwaite, we’ve turned a vision into reality. Delivering a skilled training program to 16 participants, with our most recent cohort completing last month.

“Beyond the numbers, it’s the stories that matter most. Individuals who came in uncertain of the future and are now proud, confident in their practices, earning good wages, and building meaningful lives. On behalf of the entire team, I want to extend our gratitude to Construct Canada, to our funders, and to every partner in the room who continues to collaborate, innovate, and invest in people. Together, we’re not just constructing careers, we’re constructing stronger communities and a brighter future for everyone.”

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# BUSINESS & FINANCE



## Councillor calls for new rules on dust mitigation, citing health concerns

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora is a growing community and construction is happening all around us, but one local Councillor is calling for greater awareness of the health impacts that cutting stones and pavers can have on health.

This week, Council is poised to sign off on a motion from Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim calling on Aurora to undertake an education campaign on the risks of cutting stones and pavers without proper precautions, and look at ways to mitigate dust from these construction projects and builds.

“The cutting of stones and concrete pavers for interlock patios, driveways and other landscaping projects can release respirable crystalline silica into the air,” said Councillor Kim in his motion, which was first introduced at the October 14 Committee of the Whole meeting. “Prolonged or repeated exposure to silica dust is known to pose serious health risks to workers and the general public, including respiratory illnesses such as silicosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

“The Town of Aurora, while not a regulatory authority or subject matter expert on silica dust mitigation, recognizes its responsibility to promote public health and safety through education and awareness. The Town’s Bylaw Services team has acknowledged

the importance of informing tradespeople, contractors, and residents about the risks associated with silica dust and the availability of safer cutting practices and protective equipment.”

When the matter was discussed earlier this month, the motion received the broad support of Council, but Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland said she didn’t want staff to “reinvent the wheel” on an education campaign, but draw upon existing resources to impart information to residents.

Marco Ramunno, Aurora’s Director of Planning, told Council that the current Building Code doesn’t regulate dust created by cutting concrete or performing masonry work but is covered through the Occupational Health and Safety Act under the Ministry of Labour.

He said, however, that his department “occasionally receives complaints from residents who are complaining about another neighbour or builder cutting stone and creating dust,” and when such complaints are received, the Town “typically” sends out inspectors or bylaw enforcement out there to investigate and advise them “to perhaps use some water to keep the dust under control.”

One such complaint that came her way, noted Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, was addressed by Bylaw, but she said an education initiative would be a “good idea.”

“People don’t understand how this

can really damage their lungs and that includes people who are cutting, working for developers or contractors and...they’re hurting themselves and they don’t even know it,” she said.

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo said that he too had a resident reach out to him with concerns over cutting.

“No matter where the good information comes from, whichever level of government, this is an exercise in educating the public and companies on the appropriate use and the dangers of silica and its effects,” he said. “This is something that we should definitely be doing and I’ll be supporting [the motion].”

Councillor Kim said his motion was born out of concerns voiced to him by residents as well.

“You’ll see half a block that’s inundated with dust and silica materials...and that’s the purpose of this motion,” he said. “This motion addresses a significant occupational and public health concern in our community.

The risks associated with silica dust exposure during the cutting of stones and concrete pavers for interlock patios driveways and landscaping projects, a resident who has serious health concerns brought this to my attention earlier this year and many residents have commented on all the dust that floats in the air when spring summer rolls in and people do their interlock driveways.

“This motion calls for the development and implementation of a public awareness campaign, collaboration with experts and organizations, and outreach to both professionals and residents undertaking DIY projects. It also asks staff to review our Clean Communities Bylaw for potential amendments regarding dust mitigation. By supporting this initiative, we can help ensure that those working in our community whether professionally or as homeowners or as bystanders are equipped with the knowledge and resources to protect themselves and others in the risk of silica dust exposure.”

## Task force should be struck to look at local impact of cannabis retail, says Councillor

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

bylaw enforcement, public education and advocacy to higher levels of government.”

It is in the Town’s interest, he said, to review the impacts of these stores in a social, economic and community context and “identify potential strategies or advocacy opportunities to address any issues that have arisen.”

Should Council vote this week to strike the task force, he proposes it look into these concerns related to public safety, land use, business clustering, signage, community perception, and economic development, while also exploring best practices from other municipalities.

The two appointed Council members, up to seven resident representatives, and two staff members, along with a representative from the York Regional Police would be tasked with providing Council with recommendations to “address identified challenges and support balanced community outcomes” within six months of their first meeting in 2026.

While the motion was approved at the committee level, it was given the tentative green light in the fourth hour of the October 14 Committee of the Whole meeting and discussion was limited.

Councillor Gallo, however, said “it’s about time we do something to deal with some of the serious concerns that many public members are experiencing.”

The Town should strike a task force to examine the local impacts of cannabis retail, according to Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo.

In a motion that was approved at the Committee level earlier this month and is set to be ratified this week, Councillor Gallo said Council has received feedback from residents – both positive and negative – surrounding retail cannabis sales, and a local task force of residents, Council members, and municipal staff should “review” Aurora’s experience as a municipality that opted in to such sales.

“The Town of Aurora opted in to the licensing and operation of retail cannabis stores within the municipality following the introduction of the provincial cannabis retail framework,” said Councillor Gallo in his motion. “Several retail cannabis locations have since opened within the Town, providing legal access to cannabis products for residents and contributing to local economic activity.

“Council has received feedback from residents expressing both support and concern regarding the number, location, and community impacts of cannabis retail stores. Municipalities have limited authority under the Provincial regulatory framework to influence the siting and density of cannabis retail stores, but continue to play an important role in community engagement,

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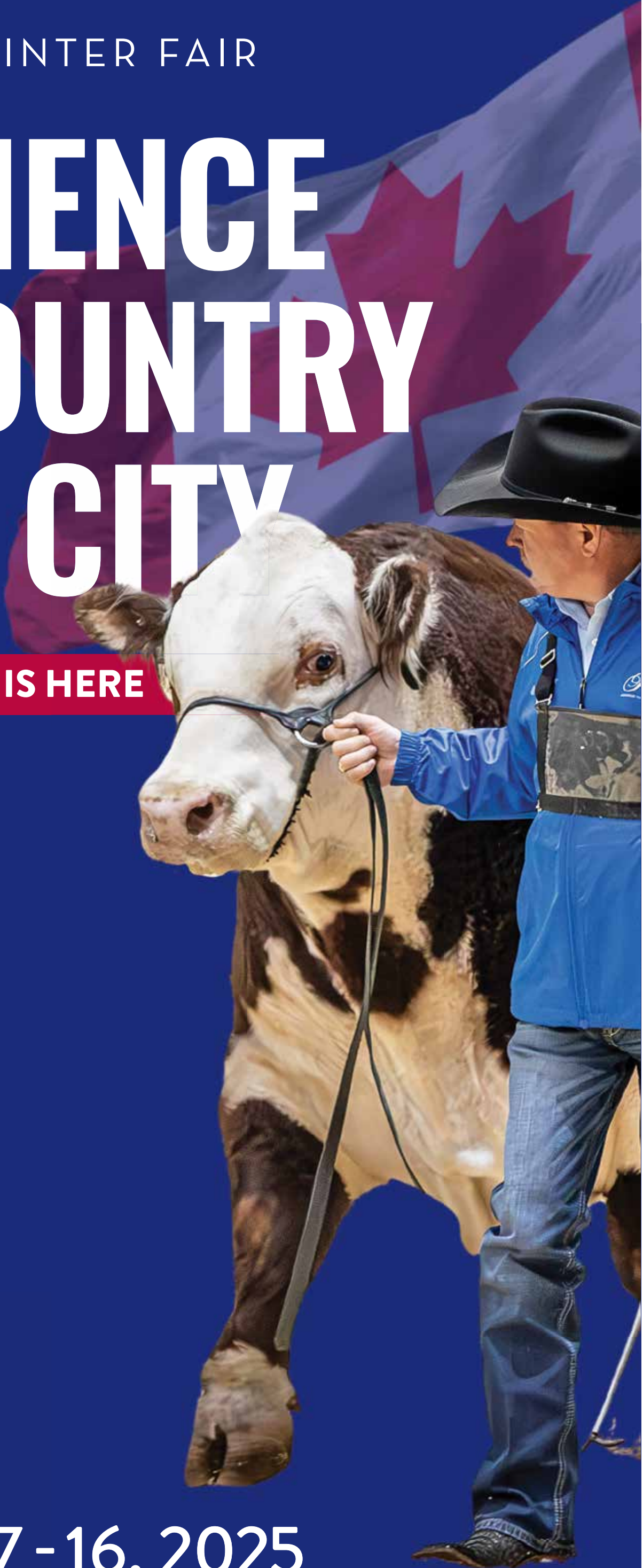
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# Rocky Horror Picture Show fans merge with Blue Jays supporters at wildly enjoyable World Series Watch Party at Aurora Town Square



It was a tale of two parties at Aurora Town Square on Friday night as the Performance Hall played host to an event celebrating the Rocky Horror Picture Show, brought to life by Marquee Theatrical Productions’ Lisa, Anne, Naomi, and Patrick. (RIGHT) Across the atrium at Brevik Hall, Jas, Andrew, Ed, and Alex got ready to celebrate the Jays in style. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY JIM STEWART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora Town Square featured a jarring juxtaposition of fan bases on Friday night.

Dozens of guests were in their full cult film regalia to enjoy The Rocky Horror Picture Show in the main auditorium. The other bank of guests—bedecked in Blue Jays gear—gathered in the Aurora Cultural Centre’s Brevik Hall to enjoy the Town-sponsored World Series Watch Party.

In both settings, the lyrics “Let’s Do the Time Warp Again” had deep meaning.

The show stopper hit was belted out by the Rocky Horror Picture Show celebrants in the main auditorium as a timeless and subversive counterculture anthem. Meanwhile, the Blue Jays fans across the lobby were hoping for a trip back in time and a repeat of 1993—the last time the local nine won the October

Classic.

As it turned out, the two groups of celebrants merged when the Rocky Horror fans joined the World Series Watch Party and viewers experienced a Time Warp, indeed.

Toronto’s Big Bats of 2025 looked very much like Toronto’s Big Bats of 1993 in an 11-4 beatdown of the heavily-favored Dodgers.

A nine-run sixth inning put the group, ranging from four-year-olds to seventy-four-year-olds, into a state of collective euphoria when Bam Bam Barger launched a pinch hit Grand Slam—the first such hit in World Series history.

When Captain Kirk put the punctuation mark on the inning with a two-run shot of his own, many of the old-timers present asserted that this wrecking crew resembled the potent 1993 Jays WAMCO lineup: White, Alomar, Molitor, Carter, and Olerud.

For younger Jays fans assembled, and they were there by the dozens

with parents or in celebratory tween groups, it was a great game to store in their memory banks. Many were still buzzing from George Springer’s momentous Game 7 ALCS-clinching dinger—a home run enjoyed by millions and the second-most important round tripper in Jays’ playoff history.

Home runs were the highlights of the Watch Party, but early in the game, the Jays tried the patience of the assembly by falling behind 2-0 heading to the bottom of the fourth.

However, like the “dark and stormy night” at the heart of The Rocky Horror Picture Show, lightning struck twice to tie the game. Kirk banged a line drive off the right field wall to lead off the bottom of the fourth and Varsho hammered the next pitch over the centre field fence to send the audience into a triumphant tizzy—kids, teens, parents, grandparents, costumed Rocky Horror fans, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Town staff leapt from their seats in unison as Varsho won the lefty-lefty matchup with Snell.

When Fluharty entered the fray in the fifth, in relief of valiant rookie starter Yesavage, and struck out Ohtani, the hall was filled even more joy. Fluharty set down the heart of the Dodgers’ order and Domingues’s ensuing three-up, three down relief performance at the top of the sixth injected the room with lively banter and set up one of the greatest innings in Jays’ playoff history.

It was pure communal joy—fueled a wee bit by a few adult beverages that are readily available at Town Square and, of course, the tasty free popcorn served by the congenial Town staff.

Here’s a recap of the climactic moment of the Watch Party:

Bichette’s lead-off walk worked Snell to his 85th pitch and the lefty was clearly tiring. On the big screen, Snell looked like he hadn’t slept for six nights. After Kiner-Falefa is inserted to run for Bo, Kirk drives the first pitch he sees into right field to bring Varsho to the dish. Varsho’s loud foul ball brought the Watch Party faithful to their feet, but on the ensuing pitch, Snell beans the Jays lefty to create a bases-loaded, nobody-out dream scenario for Jays-Rocky Horror fans.

Lefty Snell is lifted and replaced by righty reliever Emmett Sheahan—as if LA Manager Roberts is following the Rocky Horror Picture Show playbook: “It’s just a jump to the left/And a step to the right.”

On cue, the invaluable Clement makes the room erupt with his shot through the left side of the Dodgers’ infield off Sheahan to plate IKF and give the Jays a 3-2 lead. Bases still loaded and still nobody out.

Jays Manager Schneider pulls another masterful switch when he pinch hits left-handed-hitting Lukes

for right-handed-hitting Straw. Dare we say— “A jump to the left” by John.

Lukes performs brilliantly in the pressure cooker—drawing a bases-loaded walk and earning an RBI when Kirk crosses the dish. 4-2 Jays.

More Rocky Horror fans enter the Watch Party—providing additional layers of color and joy to the event.

Nine-spot hitter Gimenez promptly rockets a Sheahan pitch through the right side of the Dodgers’ infield to drive in two. 5-2 Jays.

After Game 7 hero Springer delivers a disappointing GO5-2 Fielder’s Choice that leaves the bases loaded with one out, Sheahan is driven from the game after left-handed hitter Bam Bam Barger is announced as a pinch hitter.

Roberts counters by inserting lefty Banda on the mound. It’s pure pandemonium and joy when Barger belts his Grand Slam—costumed Rocky Horror fans leaping out of their chairs and the folks in Blue Jays gear shrieking their approval of the rookie hitter’s heroics. 9-2 Jays.

Vladdy follows up with a bleeder into CF to keep the line moving and Kirk smashes a round tripper off Banda to deep centre for his third hit of the game. 11-2 Jays.

A nine-run bottom of the sixth unites the seemingly disparate groups and there is much joy in downtown Aurora. Everyone in attendance was unanimous regarding what they enjoyed most about the Game 1 World Series Watch Party at Aurora Town Square.

Hailey Jones, Specialist in Sports and Community Development for the Town of Aurora and chief organizer of the Watch Party, loved “seeing the people.”

“It’s all about people. Bringing people together that wouldn’t normally share the same space. It’s all about community tonight.”

Jays’ fan Rick Lewis, his partner Ali Bouharevich, and their two children Teo and Makea traveled from Bradford to enjoy the evening. Rick noted that the best part was “just being part of the community. I grew up in Aurora and there’s a great feeling of community here tonight.”

Heather Northcott, Kristina Illes, Lesley Theriault, and Sheilagh Henry—bedecked in their Rocky Horror Picture Show costumes—“made a smooth transition,” according to Sheilagh, when they joined the equally-joyous event. She noted that it was “just a jump to the left and a step to the right” into the Watch Party.

World Series Watch Parties sponsored by the Town of Aurora were set to continue Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at the Aurora Town Square’s Main Auditorium as the October Classic moves to LA for Games 3, 4, and 5.

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Al Wilson, centre, joined by Aurora Chamber of Commerce Past President Sandra Ferri and incumbent Interim President Debra Wilson, was one of two Chamber Champions recognized on Thursday evening. Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

# Aurora Chamber of Commerce celebrates 45th anniversary honouring businesses it serves

From page 1  
lot. Everyone knew everyone, and while the spirit of collaboration was there, the resources were not. It took perseverance, passion, and a shared belief that small businesses deserve to have a strong, organized presence,” he said. “In my early years in the business, I’ll have to admit that I didn’t understand the importance of working with the Chamber and what the Chamber could do to help business thrive. But as time went on and I got a little wiser, I realized that the Chamber is more than just an organization. It’s a lifeline.

“It’s a place where relationships are built, where business owners can come together to share knowledge, solve problems, and support each other. The value of that connection became especially clear to me during one of the hardest times for small business, and that was the COVID-19 pandemic. So, when the pandemic hit, thank God for the Chamber, because the Chamber...became our steady anchor in this sea of uncertainty.”

Outlining Omars Shoes evolution from children’s clothing store Fashion Flair in 1968 to the Omars of today, he said the business was built on the “foundation of quality, service and community.

“We originally came from South Africa [where] you didn’t have the liberty of doing things like that,” he said of opening a business like theirs. “My dad was so proud. Aurora was home, and Aurora embraced him and welcomed all of us. From those humble beginnings, we’ve had the joy of serving generations of families, watching Aurora grow from a small town into this beautiful, bustling community that we see today.”

This joy was evident in the room as the Chamber not only reflected on serving a rapidly growing community but celebrated “Chamber Champions” who have helped them along this mission.

The first such Chamber Champion recognized during the celebration was Steve Falk, who was honoured for “going above and beyond” helping the Aurora Chamber’s annual Street Festival become the resounding success it is today.

“The Aurora Chamber Street Festival has been a significant community event each June for over 30 years [and] a big part of the success of this event is the calibre of entertainment, and this individual has taken it upon himself to curate a line-up of entertainers for the last three years that has exceeded expectations,” said Debra Wilson, Interim President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. “Steve Falk, we cannot thank you enough for the time you dedicated to orchestrating the musicians on that first Sunday in June. Everything from scheduling, equipment rental, setting up the stage to your own band’s performances was executed seamlessly and came together perfectly.”

The second Chamber Champion was past Chamber Board Chair Al Wilson, who served on Aurora Council from 2006-2010.

“When I was the President of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, a big part of that job was reporting to and working with the Board of Directors. I was very fortunate to

have great Boards throughout my tenure with the Chamber. Their dedication to the members, thoughtfulness in supporting the development of programs, and helping to steer the Chamber through difficult times was unwavering,” said Sandra Ferri, Past President & CEO of the Chamber, who said Wilson was “one individual that stood out in terms of dedication.”

“We went through some very interesting times together,” she said, reflecting on working with Wilson through the Global Pandemic. “Board positions are volunteer, and they’re meant to take up a few hours a month, but throughout the pandemic, I spoke daily to this individual on what was happening with our businesses and how we could best support them. He was always available and always engaged. Post-pandemic, this individual was still always just a phone call away.

“What I valued most was the consistency with which he showed up, always a reliable sounding board who would give me a thoughtful response. Beyond what he did on the Board, he volunteered at the Street Festival and the Home Show every year. He left the Board last year, but to this day, he cares deeply about the Chamber and for our local businesses. We laughed together, we worked together, and we had some soul-searching moments.”

Over the course of the evening, the work of the Chamber was lauded – and helping to underscore the importance of the Chamber was Mayor Tom Mrakas, who said the community was “fortunate to have a Chamber that works tirelessly to support business success, drive investment, and strengthen our community all year round.”

Opening the Celebration was David Olson, Chair of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

In an evening reflecting the Chamber’s history, Olson outlined a number of forward-thinking initiatives currently being undertaken by the organization, including: start-up grants; the development of the Women’s Mastermind program, which supports women in the local business community through professional development and mentorship; and a new Young Professionals Group, which is “designed to become a key tool for businesspeople under 40.”

“It’s an area for them to expand their networks, create community connections and learn from each other; talk about mentorship, talk about the people that are mentoring them, and then help the people in the room create successful businesses and grow those businesses.”

“I think that reflects the value that people are seeing in the Chamber of Commerce in our community, and we’re very proud that we’re able to drive that feeling of value, that we play a role in helping companies and businesses in our community thrive, and sometimes, like recently, survive,” he said. “We’re always looking for innovative ways to support our business members and our community as a whole. We’re always looking for feedback, and we very much welcome everybody’s thoughts and their comments on things that we may do better and that we may be able to initiate.”

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# Chamber’s Excellence Awards celebrate



Among the community organizations and businesses recognized at last week’s Business Excellence Awards were (left) CHATS – Community and Home Assistance to Seniors, and (right) Clean River Recycling Solutions.  
**Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

**BY BROCK WEIR**  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora’s business community came together for an evening of celebration on Thursday night as the Aurora Chamber of Commerce held their annual Business Excellence Awards.

One of the highlights on the local business community’s annual calendar, this year’s Business Excellence Awards had an extra-special resonance as the Chamber celebrated its 45th anniversary.

The ceremony, which was held at the Royal Venetian Mansion, recognized long-standing and new leaders in the fields of Non-Profits; Community Participation; Manufacturing & Export; IT, Media and Professional Services; and Children, Youth & Education. Additional awards included the Young Entrepreneur Award and the People’s Choice Award, the latter of which brought in more than 3,000 online votes.

“This is honestly one of my favourite events of the year – a night where we celebrate what makes Aurora thrive: our incredible business community,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas, who likened this community to a family. “From our small, family-run shops and our local restaurants that give our downtown its character, to our manufacturers, tech innovators, and professional services that are leading in their fields, you’re all building something special right here in Aurora. You’re not just creating jobs, you’re creating opportunities; you’re shaping the kind of Town people want to live in, raise a family in, and invest in. You bring energy, life and purpose to our community and that’s something we’re celebrating.

“I often say Aurora’s greatest strength is its people and nights like this prove it.

When I talk to entrepreneurs looking to set up shop here, they tell me again and again Aurora has something different – a sense of community, collaboration, and pride. And they’re right – you’ve built that reputation. You’ve made Aurora a place where business owners want to be, not just because it’s a great location, but because it’s a great community. That’s why investment continues to grow here, it’s why our downtown is evolving, and it’s why more and more people are choosing to live and do business here in Aurora.”

**NON-PROFIT OF THE YEAR**

- **CHATS (COMMUNITY & HOME ASSISTANCE TO SENIORS)**
- Aurora Cultural Centre
- Community Living Central York
- Windfall Ecology Centre

The Non-Profit of the Year award recognizes the “valuable contributions non-profit organizations make to the community of Aurora and recognizes community services and relationships.”

CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors) took home top honours in this category. In a video shared with the audience, CHATS CEO Christina Bisanz shared the organization took great pride in being nominated.

“CHATS is an organization that serves some 8,000 older adults and their family members in the York Region and South Simcoe,” she said. “We’re actually the largest senior-serving organization throughout the two regions that we’re involved with. We’re also a multicultural organization, so a number of our programs are offered in culturally specific programs in the language of the individual’s origin,

and that really helps people to feel safe and able to participate socially with people that they can speak in the same language with, that can share the same cultural foods and cultural activities.

“We have a number of programs that support people to live in their own homes, and in fact, that’s the mission of CHATS: to help older adults and their caregivers be able to live in their own homes and communities as long as possible. We try to ensure that our clients are well and safe in their communities so that they can avoid hospitalization and potentially long-term care placement, because we all know that the majority of people want to be able to age in their own homes and age well where they live in their communities.”

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPTION AWARD**

- **NEIGHBOUR MEDIA**
- Aurora Orthodontics
- Flow Natural Spring Water
- NewRoads Automotive Group

Neighbour Media took home top honours in the Community Participation Category, which recognizes a “business or an employee that shows strong commitment to giving back through participation in business, community organizations, and/or charitable events.”

“Neighbour Media was founded on community. It was our priority to ensure that all the amazing people, organizations and events were highlighted in the spotlight,” said Neighbour Media founder Lynette Lanning in her video message.

Accepting the award was Neighbour’s Myles Doak who reiterated community participation “is at the core” of what they do.”

“We love being involved in the community, working with charities, businesses, the municipality, the Chamber, everyone,” he said. “Myself personally, this business has really changed my perspective of getting involved in the community, whether you’re volunteering or going to events, raising money. So, thank you so much for the award, and we’ll continue to see you around the neighborhood.”

**LEADER IN MANUFACTURING EXPORT**

- **CLEAN RIVER RECYCLING SOLUTIONS**
- Treasure Mills School Safe Snack Company

Clean River Recycling Solutions was the winner in this category, where they were recognized for their innovative products designed to make recycling as easy and efficient as possible.

“A few things that set us apart that differentiates us from our competition is our bins are designed to be future-ready,” said Clean River CEO Hugh Caines in his nomination video. “The other thing that sets us apart is about 35 years of experience. We work with clients to understand what problems we are trying to solve.”

Accepting the honour on stage, he added that the award belongs to the entire Clean River team.

“Our mission is to make the planet a better place and we do that one recycling bin at a time,” he said, noting that in the current business climate it’s especially rewarding to accept an honour recognizing exports. “We ship product all over North America and the world, but our roots are right here in Aurora. We’re proud to say we’ve been in Aurora all these years. We’re

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# the best in Aurora’s business “family”



Among the honourees were (left) Aizadfood, which took home the People’s Choice Award, presented by Mayor Tom Mrakas, while (right) Flagship Software Ltd took home top honours in the I.T. & Media Professional Services Category. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

From page 12  
committed to the community for what it does and the support it gives us.”

### I.T. & MEDIA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- **FLAGSHIP SOFTWARE LTD.**
- Addison Marketing Solutions
- Foundation BTS Business Technology Solutions
- Neighbour Media

This award, which recognized Flagship Software, a local company celebrating its own milestone this year honours “professional services providers specifically in the fields of I.T., marketing, digital support services, website design, graphic design, and video production that exhibit extraordinary professional services and support to the community and the business community itself.”

“This is our 30th anniversary,” said Flagship General Manager Kristi Kanitz of the Vata Court-based business in their video. “This [nomination] is pretty exciting for us. Usually, we’re in the background doing our custom development behind other companies. We’re known for the problem-solving that we do with software development. We’re known for customer service, but usually just among our customers and in our industry, so it’s really nice to be recognized outside of that.”

Accepting the award on stage, she added: “We love being in Aurora. We love being part of the Chamber. I have to say that this has been the most welcoming community. We moved here in 2020 [from

Richmond Hill] and one of the reasons we moved to Aurora was so I could join the Chamber.”

### YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

- **RISE EVENT PLANNING – JULIA LIVIA AND SAMANTHA KOSTOPOULOS**
- Key Advantage Team – Lindsay Strom
- Socials & Stilettos – Brittney Jones
- Studio 95 Training & Athletics – Yehya Chehade

Recognizing entrepreneurs under the age of 40, this year’s Young Entrepreneur Award went to Julia Livia and Samantha Kostopoulos, founders of Rise Event Planning.

Rise Event Planning was established by its founders – high school friends – in 2018 when they were just 22.

“We focus on delivering five-star experiences...from brand experiences to corporate retreats, as well as weddings to showers. We curate unforgettable experiences that guests will remember for years to come,” they said. “We were two high school friends with a dream, and now that dream has turned into a successful, thriving business and we now have a team of six.

“It’s not easy starting a business at 22, but it’s also not easy doing an event planning business through COVID. We’re very proud of what we’ve done, our team behind us, and our family who supports us.”

### CHILDREN & YOUTH RECREATION & EDUCATION

- **STEM MINDS**
- Aurora Family Martial Arts
- Aurora Music Academy
- Socialskilled

This year’s Children & Youth Recreation & Education Award went to STEM Minds, an Aurora-based company that not only serves students between the ages of four and high school in the fields of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – but has recently branched out to show students how to apply these learnings in diverse fields, including agriculture.

“At STEM Minds, our mission has always been to empower youth through education that inspires creativity, critical thinking, and confidence – preparing the next generation [with] skills to not only adapt to the future but to shape it,” they said. “This award is a reflection of the dedication of our educators and the parents, the curiosity of the students, and the unwavering support of our community here in Aurora.

“Together we have built a space where innovation and imagination can thrive. We are deeply grateful to the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for this recognition. And to all of our parents...and the families who believe in what we have done and what we do, their trust truly continues to inspire us and help us to reach higher and dream bigger....This award is for every student who we have met, for every parent who has supported us, to every robot that we

have in our STEM education, for every coding program that we have written and that we have made available to the students to inspire them to go farther.”

### PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD

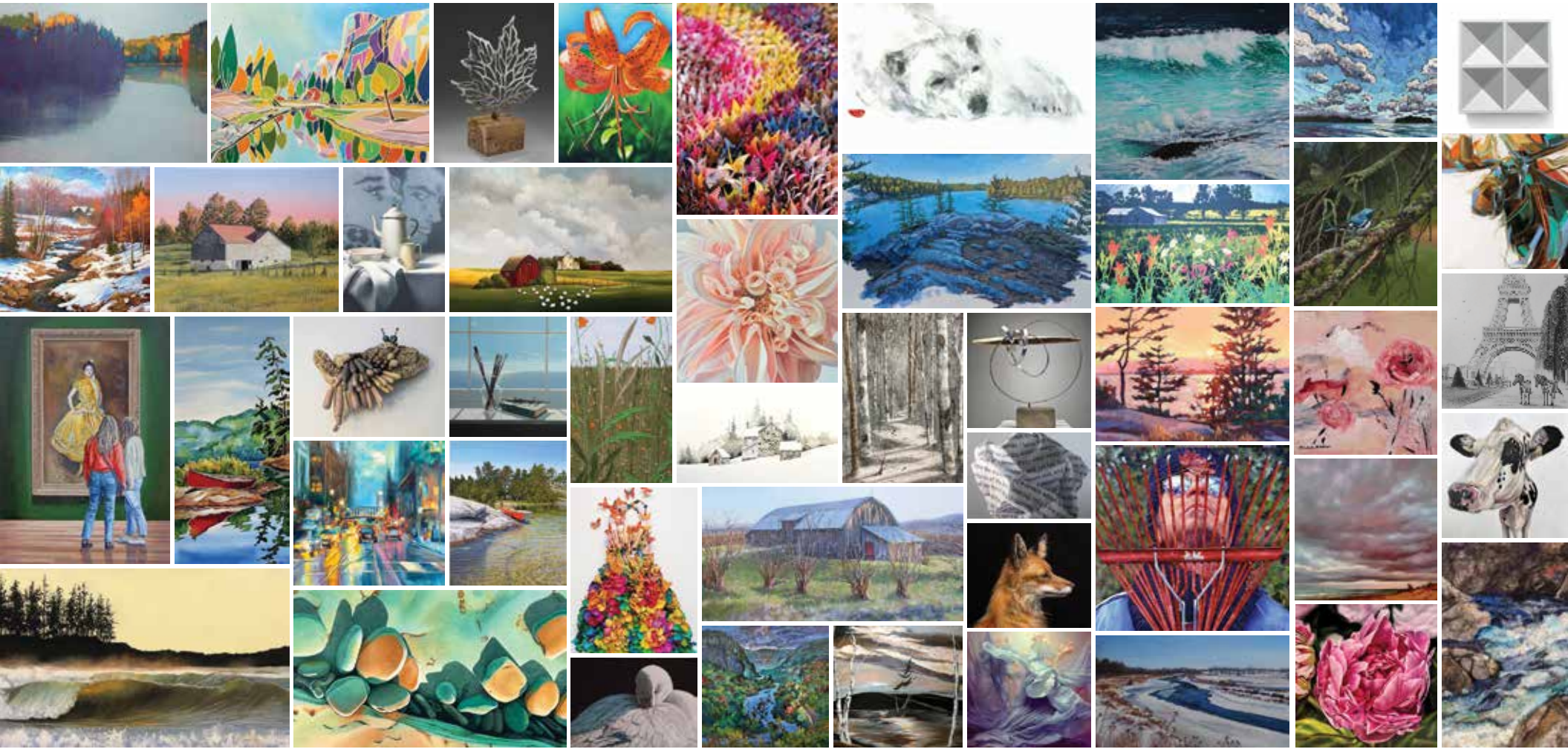
- **AIZAD FOOD**
- Allegra Marketing
- Chocolate & Company
- Flow Mineral Spring Water
- LD Human Resources
- Maverik
- Midas
- Monaco Interiors
- Mondo Del Café
- Neighbour Media
- Omars Shoes
- Rosehold Health
- Sunrise Senior Living
- The Aurora Skin Clinic
- Thrive Gymnastics

The People’s Choice Award is presented to an Aurora-based business in any industry that “exemplifies excellence in the following: outstanding customer experience; commitment to the community; positive impact and connection; and accessibility and inclusivity.”

This year the people chose Aizadfood, a company specializing in a diverse array of dried fruits and spices, that prides itself with the philosophy “that food is not just about nourishing the body, but also the soul” with an eye of promoting sustainability to minimize their environmental impact.

“Thank you to all supporters, customers, and thank you from the bottom of my heart,” they said.

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# Halloween Fun at the Market Finale



The Aurora Farmers' Market brought the curtain down on its outdoor season on Saturday, October 25, with a full program of Halloween activities, including entertainment at the band shell and the inaugural No Tricks, Just Treats initiative which created full-accessible Halloween Fun. (First Row) Megan, Kevin, Isla met up with the Aurora Stormtrooper, a perennial favourite at the Halloween market; the Stormtrooper also met up with Amanda, Lily and Paddy. (Second Row) Dylan, Ruston and Alison; Dexter and Shelby offered a Super costume effort. (Third Row) The costume parade was a popular attraction for families.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



## Senior Scape

BY CHRISTINA DOYLE

As we approached Thanksgiving this month, we all were prompted to remember the things we are thankful for. Families, friends, and food fill our thoughts as we prepare for this glorious day to celebrate and give thanks.

The day comes and goes, and we are quickly thrust into the hustle and bustle of Christmas without even thinking twice. Have you ever thought about how crazy it all seems? Just one day a year is dedicated to giving thanks. Just one. Are we missing the point all together? Is this how it is supposed to be?

We all have challenges in our life; even as some of you are reading this, you are faced with the unimaginable or you have been mesmerized by the news unfolding on your tv screen. Now is the best time to look up and thank God for what you have already. Being thankful cannot be confined to one day in a year. Thankfulness is a way of life. Thanksgiving is a lifestyle. When the hype of the holiday season fades, and we find ourselves in the middle of a dreary day in late January, do we give thanks even then? When our patience runs thin in the heat of a long, hard summer, do we give thanks even then? When the pressures of life, weigh heavily upon us, do we give thanks even then?

Thanksgiving is a great reminder that we need to be thankful for what we have in our life right now and if you are of faith, then think about what God has done for you in your life and that includes the good, the bad and the ugly.

We need to be grateful for all of it, but not just one day a year, 365 days a year, we need gratitude because people are always like, "well, I'm not joyful."

We need to stop focusing on the negative – they say you are what you eat, but whatever your mind goes to, think about what you

are feeding it day and day out.

Yes, there is bad news everywhere, the world is in chaos but you yourself need to look inward and say to yourself, how can I make the world better? So, you must start from within – yes you need to look at one another as yourself.

We all have a choice every morning when we wake up from bed, a choice to be happy and grateful or to be miserable and think you deserve better. Remember everything is a gift, and you are a gift, and you can be a blessing to another.

Thanksgiving is not about what you have or don't have, it is living in this moment and being grateful- that you have been blessed another day on this earth to be the kind, gentle and compassionate soul you were meant to be. Be a blessing to another dear friends and believe me your problems will be a lot smaller than you think.

God bless you all as you spend your day making someone else's day a little brighter, you will feel amazing. Spread some joy today especially to those who have none. A blessed Thanksgiving to all.

### So proud of Erlinda!

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Erlinda's outstanding contributions and accomplishments have left a lasting impact, and now it's time for us to show our support. Join fellow members, friends, and the community in honouring this special moment. Let's fill the room with pride and applause as we cheer on Erlinda's induction and celebrate her remarkable achievements.

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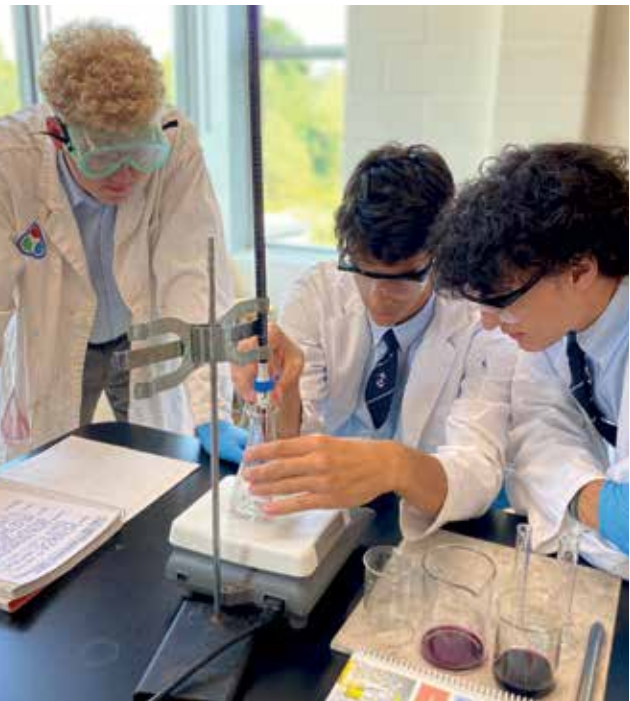
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## Hundreds attend the Toronto Mets’ Grand Opening of its spacious baseball facility in Aurora

BY JIM STEWART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Hundreds of players, parents, coaches, and dignitaries attended the Grand Opening of the Toronto Mets Performance Centre in Aurora on Sunday afternoon.

Mets’ owner Lawrence Vera acknowledged the satisfaction inherent in seeing the 29,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art baseball facility opened officially.

“For me, the best part was seeing our vision come to life—creating a space where players of all ages can train, develop, and dream big. It’s not just about the building; it’s about building the future of baseball in Ontario.”

After welcoming the hundreds of attendees who stood on the new turf field, Vera introduced emcee Rod Black whose son Tyler is a graduate of the Mets program and is currently an infielder for the Milwaukee Brewers.

Black, the long-time host of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony, recognized the superior nature of the CPBL franchise’s program by noting “The Toronto Mets had more pros playing this year than any other baseball program in Canada.”

He extolled the program’s excellent record with post-secondary placement and the resident of Stouffville wished the facility had been opened in Aurora when his sons played for the Mets.

The amiable host and baseball dad introduced Mayor Tom Mrakas who expressed his civic pride about “the opening of a first-rate baseball facility in Aurora” and complimented the Mets program.

“The Toronto Mets are known across the country and this shows their commitment to help young athletes to reach their goals. Congratulations to Lawrence, Ryan, and Rich for creating a first-class centre for local athletes to pursue their dream.”

Mayor Mrakas presented a congratulatory certificate from the Town of Aurora to Vera and McBride to mark the Mets’ Grand Opening of their facility at 24 Desjardins Way.

MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy followed suit and presented a congratulatory certificate from the Province of Ontario.

MPP Gallagher Murphy referred to the Mets Performance Centre as “a true Field of Dreams, an incredible facility that shows the power of community partnership.”

She acknowledged that “many of the Mets have gone on to play Major League Baseball” and she congratulated the Mets management “for their leadership and vision.”

After the MPP’s presentation, Rod Black welcomed Mets President Ryan McBride to the microphone.

McBride praised Black’s broadcasting



Mayor Tom Mrakas presented the Toronto Mets team with a congratulatory certificate following the opening of their new facility in Aurora’s northeast. **Aurora photo by Jim Stewart**

acumen— “Let’s get this guy into the Sportscasters Hall of Fame” which was received with much warm applause. McBride thanked Black for emceeing the event and for entrusting “the Mets with two kids who went through the program.”

The Mets’ President alluded to a recent discussion he’d had with Jays President Mark Shapiro who advised him to “surround yourself with great people to create a great team culture.”

McBride thanked his coaching staff for creating the winning Mets culture and “for being the difference makers in what we do.”

“Skip”, as he’s known as to hundreds in the facility based on his decades of baseball coaching, also made reference to the Mets motto emblazoned across the upper deck facing of the facility.

“Respect the legacy, create your own.”

All players and coaches present were encouraged by the long-time CPBL coach and instructor to “enjoy the hell out of this tremendous facility. Once a Met—always a Met.”

Following his address to attendees, Coach McBride secured his catcher’s mitt and received the Official Opening Pitch from long-time Mets administrator, lead instructor, coaching partner, and NCAA teammate Rich Leitch who fired a strike—as the Mets tend to do more often than not.

## Third Annual “Hockey Ends Hunger” fundraiser for Aurora Food Pantry slated for November 29 at SARC

BY JIM STEWART  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Third Annual “Hockey Ends Hunger” Charity Game is ready to help tackle food insecurity in the Aurora/Newmarket area, according to organizers Julian Antonini and Patrick Servideo.

“We’re all set to run the game at SARC for the third year in a row,” said Antonini. “Last year, we took in 550 pounds of donated non-perishables and raised \$2,200. Our goal this year is to secure over 700 pounds of non-perishables and raise over \$4,000 for the Aurora Food Pantry.”

“We both played hockey in the area—Patrick played for Aurora and I played for Newmarket. We wanted to give back to the community and we thought raising funds for the local food bank would be the best way to help out. We got our ‘Hockey Ends Hunger’ charity registered and now we can give back to the community.”

Servideo and Antonini both played high school hockey for the St. Maximilian Kolbe Mustangs and graduated from the Aurora high

school in 2016. They’ve invited former rep teammates from the Newmarket Redmen and Aurora Tigers to face off at SARC on Saturday, November 29.

Puck drop by a series of dignitaries, including Mayor Tom Mrakas, will be at 7 p.m.

Antonini praised the level of play and competition over the last two charity games: “Both games have gone into double overtime. We’ve had evenly-matched teams on the ice and they’ve been good hockey games. We’re asking people who are attending the game to bring at least one item of nonperishable food or they could also make a monetary donation to Hockey Ends Hunger at the rink.

“All proceeds will be given to the Aurora Food Bank. It will be an all-day collection on November 29. Volunteers will be at the rink and ready to receive items at the main entrance to SARC from 9 a.m. on Saturday morning right up to game time at 7 p.m. Donors who attend the game will be eligible for a post-game raffle. We’ll have a table of raffle prizes for the fans.”

If you’d like to donate to “Hockey

Ends Hunger”, visit the charity’s website at [www.hockeyendshunger.com](http://www.hockeyendshunger.com) or contact the organizers: Julian Antonini at 905-954-5404, or Patrick Servideo at [hockeyendshunger@gmail.com](mailto:hockeyendshunger@gmail.com).



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# First-place Etobicoke Dolphins end Panthers' nine-game winning streak with emphatic 7-1 win at SARC

BY JIM STEWART

Panthers' rookie Lily Paisley extended her goal-scoring streak to five games with a second period marker, but Central York

succumbed to the first-place Etobicoke Dolphins 7-1 on Saturday afternoon at SARC. It was the Junior Panthers' first loss since September 21 and ended the club's

nine-game heater during which they had outscored their OWHU U22 Elite opponents 57-19.

Paisley, gracious in defeat, took the one-sided loss to the Dolphins in stride.

"We got down after the first goal and we weren't strong mentally today."

Instead of dwelling on the negative aspects of the game, the speedy left winger complimented her goaltender Claire Hicks on a 44-save performance.

"Claire had quite the game. She's been such a large factor for us—she's backed us up all season. She did all she could out there."

Hicks faced a barrage of vulcanized rubber all afternoon as the Dolphins' high-octane offence outshot the Panthers 51-17.

The stellar goaltender was called upon early and often to fend off numerous scoring opportunities in the first period as the Panthers were outshot 16-5. Etobicoke's Renee Bishop opened the scoring with 11 seconds left on the power play while Paisley served a rare penalty.

After the Dolphins pinned the Panthers in their own end for over a minute, Madeline McCullough—ranked second in league scoring—feathered a pass to Bishop who fired the puck from the left circle and beat Hicks high glove side at 8:02.

Notably, Hicks made a big breakaway save at 3:55 and flashed the leather at 2:19 to keep the Panthers in the game.

However, Hicks's heroics could only carry the Panthers for so long. The Dolphins' lineup features the top five scorers in the OWHU U22 Elite Division and a host of Top 25 point-getters.

Sofia Ismael—ranked fifth in league scoring—showed off her shooting prowess with 32 seconds left in the opening period. She snapped a shot from between the circles that beat Hicks high glove side to give the visitors a 2-0 lead.

The Dolphins picked up where they left off at the end of the opening frame by scoring eighteen seconds into the second period.

Haley Box, ranked third in league scoring, broke through the Panthers' defense, deked Hicks to the right, and slid the puck five-hole into the back of the cage to give Etobicoke a three-goal cushion.

Seventy-seven seconds later, Mia Venusio's shot from the left point was tipped by Grace Van Volsen in the slot and past Hicks to make it 4-0.

Panthers' Head Coach Steve Dempsey pressed the re-set button for his laboring hockey club at 13:44 of the second period when he called timeout prior to an important offensive zone faceoff. The timeout allowed Central York to recalibrate and the Panthers pressed the visitors into the waning minutes of the middle frame.

After Annabella Van Berkel's wrist shot was stopped by Dolphins' netminder Maija St. Pierre, Paisley fired her eighth of the season into the back of the cage to get the Panthers on the board at 4:41. Paisley described her marker that cut the Panthers' deficit to three.

"It was at the end of the shift. I saw Berkie taking the shot and I got the rebound. I got to the net and slid it in five-hole."

Paisley deflected praise about extending her goal-scoring streak to five games and offered a secret to her recent success: "It's nice to keep the scoring streak going, but it's a team goal-scoring streak. I have a superstition about keeping the streak going. Mackenzie Cote kisses my stick before every game."

The post-game levity was a much-needed antidote after a rough day at the rink for the Panthers. The Dolphins poured in goals by Rachel Bishop at 15:53, Renee Bishop fired her second of the contest at 9:42, and Van Volsen tallied her second with 2:27 left on the clock to provide the six-goal margin of victory.

The third-place Panthers (11-0-0-1) will host the nineteenth-place London Devilettes (3-6-0-3) on Saturday, November 1. Puck drop at SARC will be 1.55 p.m.



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# Haunted Forest Celebrates 20 Spooktacular Years



Sheppard's Bush was once again a Halloween destination on Saturday evening as the Town of Aurora hosted its 20th annual Haunted Forest Event. Featuring dozens of volunteers, the event featured options for scare-seekers and the more faint of heart, haunted cabins, fresh food grilled up by the Optimist Club of Aurora, and plenty of themed activities back at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. (FIRST ROW) Young volunteers and actors gathered for a group photo before taking their places in the woods. Among the Optimists who were keeping tummies full at the barbecue were Jean, Sandy, and Maggie. (SECOND ROW) A harlequin stands watch. Julianne, Cealia, Sebastian, Sasha, and Siena. (THIRD ROW) Checking on the props. Some of the routes were chillingly interactive! (FOURTH ROW) Visitors had the chance to meet jailbird pirates and some of the chillier moments from literature – as evidenced by Ebenezer Scrooge. (FIFTH ROW) Mayor Tom Mrakas met up with Liam. Daniel offered some holiday cheer as Buddy the Elf. (SIXTH ROW) Taran; Ilsa and James.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

# Touch of Art highlight benefits of creativity through Addiction Services Central Ontario

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Having a creative outlet can be a powerful factor in maintaining body, mind, and soul – and the importance of art to mental health and addictions was underscored last week through A Touch of Art, an event hosted by the Aurora-based Addiction Services of Central Ontario.

Addiction Services of Central Ontario (ASCO), which provides more than 10 community-based programs in York Region, South Simcoe, and North York, hosted the event at Richmond Hill’s Boynton House.

The brainchild of ASCO staff member Audry Barton, who is also an area artist, the event was envisioned as “a new way to build community and make a tangible difference for individuals, their loved ones, and communities affected by addictions.”

The event, which was based around the theme of “Trees and Seas” as a symbol of resilience and renewal, featured works by Barton and five other local artists, hands-on workshops and more, with all proceeds going to support ASCO clients.

“For many years, I have been thinking about what could be done to support ASCO, knowing that the programs and



Colette was among the participating artists who hosted a painting demonstration.  
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

services have been critically important for individuals, their loved ones, and the community more broadly,” said Barton. “Art is very important to me, personally, and it creates connections and has a healing power. We have seen the benefits of art with ASCO clients. I’m thrilled that local artists have agreed to come together to support ASCO by donating works of art.”

The healing power of art was underscored by Penny Marrett, ASCO’s Executive Director, who said one key piece of feedback they received from clients on the impact of art dovetailed perfectly with the show’s “Trees and Seas” theme.

This client, who painted a picture of a wave, shared: “Life to me is like water; it sustains your life, but it can also take your life – and just like water, life can be calm and soothing, or turbulent or stormy. Lately my life has been very stormy, but one thing I know about waves is you have to move with them and ride the wave. If you try to fight it, it will take you under and pummel you. You have to catch it at the beginning and move with it, and there’s always that terrifying moment when you’re not quite sure that you’ll make it, but then you go over the crest, and with the wave of your back, you go forward.”

“Interestingly enough, a few years ago, we actually started to offer a sort of art workshop and Audry led them,” said Marrett. “You can imagine that many individuals feel, ‘Well, I’m not an artist, I can’t paint, I can’t do this,’ and miracle of all miracles, everybody can do it in some way, shape or form. Now we have clients who always ask us, ‘When’s the next art workshop?’

“There are all sorts of different ways in which they do art and it is one of the ways in which individuals affected by addictions can actually relax, have a cup of coffee or a cup of tea, and leave having produced something that’s theirs and theirs only – and that they’re proud of.

“This art exhibition an extension

of how art can actually be one of the healing powers for the individuals.”

Among the community leaders lending their support to the show, which also featured food created by those taking part in culinary programs led by 360 Kids, was Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa.

“The Touch of Art exhibit serves as reminder that healing is not just found in clinics or counselling rooms – it is also found in creative community engagement,” he said. “By converting art into action through the commitment to donate all artwork sale proceeds to ASCO programs, Addiction Services Central Ontario has turned artistry into meaningful support for mental health and addictions care in the community.”

For more information about Addiction Services Central Ontario, visit [helpwithaddictions.ca](http://helpwithaddictions.ca).



Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

## More money coming into Region to connect residents with emergency care faster

BY BROCK WEIR  
EDITOR  
LOCAL JOURNALISM  
INITIATIVE REPORTER

More money is coming into York Region to help connect more residents with emergency care.

On Friday, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy announced an increase in Provincial bringing a total of \$63,003,377 in the Region of York to address service gaps.

“In York Region, Ontario is increasing land ambulance funding by seven per cent, bringing the Province’s total investment in the Region to \$61,181,585 this year,” said MPP Gallagher Murphy in a statement. “This increase in base funding helps ensure municipalities address increased costs so they can continue to deliver high-quality emergency care. This investment is part of the almost \$1 billion in land ambulance funding Ontario is providing municipalities across the Province this year, representing an increase of 8.7 per cent from 2024.

headquarters on Friday morning and was warmly greeted by York Region Chair Eric Jolliffe, who, in his former life as the Region’s Police Chief, knows the importance of a fast community response.

“The Regional Municipality of York is grateful to the Government of Ontario for their continued partnership and investment in the health and wellbeing of our residents,” he said in a statement. “These investments directly support the critical work of our Paramedic and Senior Services teams, ensuring residents receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time. By working together, we are strengthening emergency response, improving patient outcomes, and building a more connected and resilient health system for our growing communities.”

The investment was also supported by Health Minister Sylvia Jones and Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Ontario’s Minister of Long-Term Care.

“Our government is making record investments to protect Ontario’s health care system and connect people to the care they need, when they need it,” said Jones. “Through these additional investments, we are providing paramedics and emergency departments with the tools they need to connect more people across the Province to high-quality emergency care, faster, and closer to home.”

“To further reduce delays paramedics encounter when dropping patients off at a hospital, Ontario is investing \$2,779,840 in York Region through the Dedicated Offload Nurses Program to hire more nurses and other eligible health professionals dedicated to offloading ambulance patients in hospital emergency departments.”

In addition, a further \$41,952 was announced for York Region Newmarket Healthcare for 2024-2025.

The program, says the Province, allows paramedics to quickly get back to responding to the next 9-11 call.

The significant funding announcement took place at the Region of York’s Newmarket

Added Kusendova-Bashta: “Our government is protecting our long-term care system by investing in the tools and training to ensure residents can get the right care in the right place. This funding will expand the specialized equipment and innovative services available at long-term care homes across our province, so those with complex needs get the support they deserve.”



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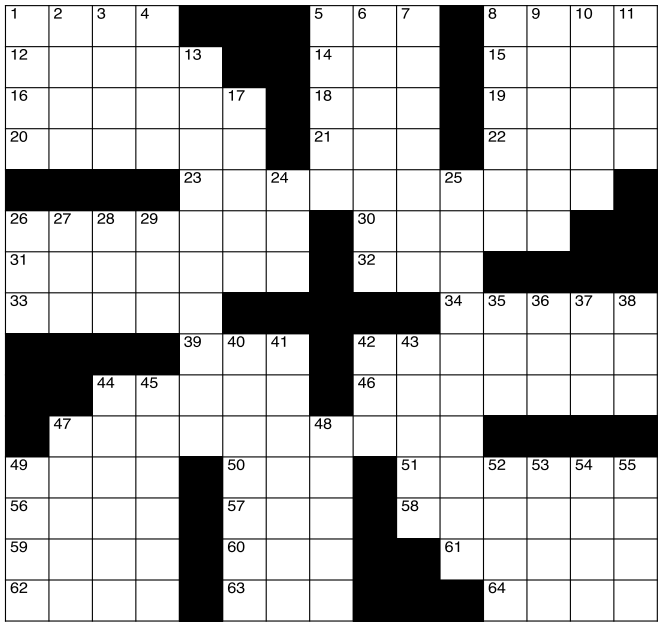
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- El \_\_, Texas town
- Rocker's tool
- A lot
- Traveling by ground
- Spelling competition
- Two-toed sloth
- Small perfumed bag
- "Much \_\_ about nothing"
- Tough-skinned mollusk
- Removes from record
- It warms the planet
- Leafy green
- Quality of arriving favorably
- Living thing
- "Six of Crows" author Bardugo
- Got around a rule
- Resin from burned substance
- Iraq seaport
- Religious leaders

- Fugitives are on it
- Samson's influencer
- Italian city
- A quality of lacking interest
- Predatory tropical fishes
- Nobel physician Isodor
- Luck
- Stationary part of a motor or generator
- Orthopedic professional group (abbr.)
- One point south of due east
- It follows 79
- Paper currency
- Anger
- Spanish seaport
- Sleep in a rough place
- Famous museum
- Selfs

### CLUES DOWN

- Bullfighting maneuver
- From a distance
- Soul and calypso song
- Expressions of delight
- Lower in esteem
- Inner region of an organ
- Flowers
- A bog
- Remove a fastening
- Membranes
- Enormous
- One who abstains from drink
- Malayan wild ox
- Type of student
- Rejecting all moral principles
- Sino-Soviet block
- Egyptian unit of weight
- Wrong
- Make a mistake
- Indicates location
- Boxing's "GOAT"
- Where wrestlers compete
- Timid
- Disney town
- Suggesting the horror of death and decay
- Male parent
- Remove for good
- Simple shoes
- Flowers
- Hindi courtesy title for a man
- Not pleased
- "Atlas Shrugged" author
- CIA officer and writer
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THINGS... you ought to know

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30**  
The Aurora Cultural Centre hosts an opening night gala and artist Q&A this evening for the new exhibition, Shifting Realities. Celebrate the opening of Shifting Realities: Adventures in Portraiture on October 30 from 6-8pm in our exciting, pre-Halloween Evening Gala. All are welcome to attend, and costumed attire encouraged! Refreshments provided, and remarks commence at 6:30 p.m.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2**  
The Aurora Seniors Association will host its annual Holiday Marketplace at the Aurora Seniors' Centre on John West Way. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with free entry.

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

**\*\*\*\***  
Support AbuseHurts' Delivering Hope Full Circle Program textile recycling and donation program. A greater number of people are wanting to donate or get rid of unwanted items, increasing the need for more outlets being available to receive the items. This program will provide a convenient way for people to

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

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**NOTICE OF PASSING**  
**John Sanders**  
September 27, 1945 – October 14, 2025  
Peacefully at Margaret Bahen Hospice. Beloved husband of Rhonda for 55 years and loving father of Robb. John was predeceased by his eight siblings Al, Winnie, Harry, Bill, Eric, Louise, Paula, and Peter. Born in Mariahaut, Netherlands, his family immigrated to Kapuskasing in 1953 and moved to Aurora in 1957. He worked in aluminum extrusions & designs at Alcan, BonL, and Apolo. In lieu of a service, memorial donations may be made to Epilepsy Canada or the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust.  
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