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Aurora's Community Newspaper

TheAuroran.com

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WEEK OF DECEMBER 11, 2025



DECKING DOWNTOWN IN BOUGHS OF HOLLY – Amica Aurora Promenade, one of the newest anchors of Aurora’s historic downtown core, held a Holiday Market last week which was a great opportunity to introduce the public to the new seniors’ residence. Here, Thomas, James, Evie, and Laurie served up some festive cookies. For more, see Page 21.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Aurora’s 2026 Budget formally adopted after amendments, vetoes

York Region approves \$5.2 billion budget

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Average Aurora homeowners can expect to see the municipal portion of their 2026 tax bill rise \$56.94 and the Regional portion by \$129 after both financial plans moved forward last week

The Town’s portion of the tax bill

will rise 2.2 per cent, a figure originally brought forward this fall by Mayor Tom Mrakas, after Council had the opportunity to weigh in on the Budget.

While local lawmakers brought forward a number of amendments at the table, several of them were ultimately vetoed by Mayor Mrakas, keeping the 2.2 figure in place.

“The approved tax-levy increase for 2026 is 2.2 per cent, which includes 0.6 per cent for Town operations, 0.6 per cent for Central York Fire Services, and a one per cent contribution to capital reserves that helps fund long-term projects,” said the Town of Aurora in a statement. “The 2026 tax levy increase

Continued on page 12

Community pens record-setting number of Christmas cards for service personnel

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It was all hands on deck throughout the community to make the holiday season that much brighter for the men and women serving in the Canadian Armed Forces – and Aurora’s Dianne and Brian Harrison not only handily achieved their goals, but set a new record in a milestone year.

Continued on page 14



Dianne and Brian Harrison are pictured with this year's bounty of Christmas and Holiday cards created by the community for serving Canadian servicepersons stationed abroad.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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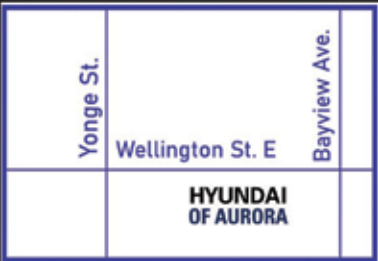
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Deadline for “Letters to Santa Claus” is December 15 in special Red Mailbox at Yours Conveniently

Responses from St. Nick will be available at YC from December 17-24



Rianna Lynn, Tony Holley, and Riley Nichols have been collecting Letters for Santa in their customized mailbox at Yours Conveniently in northwest Aurora. The deadline for letters to St. Nick is December 15. **Auroran photo by Jim Stewart**

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Toni Holley, Riley Nichols, and Rianna Lynn are poised for the last-minute rush. For two years, the friendly staff at Yours Conveniently have collected letters to Santa Claus as a service to both Aurora families and the Jolly Old Elf.

Last Christmas, the intrepid baristas stepped into the void caused by a disruptive national postal strike. Their stellar performance in 2024 was rewarded when they got word from the North Pole that their service was needed again this year. Toni Holley, the congenial co-owner of Yours Conveniently who serves the best London Fog in Christendom,

acknowledged the call to action on behalf of the kids in Aurora. “Santa asked us to collect letters for kids on his behalf. We did such a good job last year that he asked us to collect letters again from the neighborhood children. We’re getting phone calls from parents and we’re reminding everyone that the deadline for getting letters to Santa into our red mailbox at Yours Conveniently is Monday, December 15. Santa’s responses will be available for pickup at the store from December 17 to December 24.” Holley cherishes the annual project. “We love being involved because we don’t want to let the community down. We’re happy to take on the role again this year and help Santa.” The business owner is not alone in the task of collecting letters for Santa. The reception crew on Tuesday afternoon included Rianna—who has been working at the specialty coffee and tea shop for six months—and Riley who has been an employee for over two years at the community hub located at McLeod Drive and Aurora Heights Drive. Toni noted, “They’re going to help out even more this year with our special

letters collection. We’re all being Santa’s little helpers.” All three agreed that the most satisfying element to collecting letters for Santa is “seeing the joy on the kids’ faces—and on the parents’ faces, too—especially when we deliver the letters back to the kids. They’re so excited,” Holley added on behalf of the team. For the fifth year in a row, Yours Conveniently is also collecting unwrapped, new toys in partnership with the Salvation Army and the Central York Firefighters. The deadline for donating a new toy is Monday, December 15. There’s a special kind of satisfaction for the store staff that is derived from these kinds of Yuletide activities. Holley elaborated: “We love giving back to the community through our Toy Drive. We also like collecting letters because it’s a bit different. Seeing the reactions of the kids at Christmas time makes it all worth it. We’ve been doing the Toy Drive since we opened. It’s our fifth year. We feel it’s important for all children to unwrap a present on Christmas morning.” Yours Conveniently is located at 69 McLeod Drive in northwest Aurora.

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Parents will continue to “continue to seek truth with the power of love”

(Re: Parents of teen killed in police incident “disappointed” by communications, November 20)

We wanted to extend our heartfelt thanks to you for the thoughtful and compassionate way you published our son’s story in The Auroran. Your sensitivity in telling our story, and in honouring our son Mika’il’s memory, means more to us than words can convey.

This past year has been filled with immense pain, confusion, and a deep longing for clarity. Seeing our letter presented with such care — and surrounded by your respectful reporting — brought us a sense of comfort and dignity. You captured our message with accuracy and empathy, and you helped ensure that the truth about Mika’il was shared with the community in a way that reflects who he truly was.

Thank you for giving space to our voice, for recognizing the importance of truth and compassion, and for helping us honour our son. Please know that your work has touched our hearts, and the hearts of many who loved Mika’il.

We will continue to seek truth with the power of love, and your support in sharing Mika’il’s story helped strengthen that path.

Lalarukh & Jamil Rashid
Aurora

Lowering the Bar on Mental Health: Why Ontarians should be concerned

Becoming a psychologist in Ontario has always been a long, rigorous, and carefully regulated process—and that is intentional. Psychologists work in areas that directly affect people’s safety, mental health, learning, legal outcomes, and long-term wellbeing. The high standards exist to protect the public.

Psychologists do far more than provide therapy. They are among the few regulated professionals with the legal authority to diagnose. They diagnose learning disabilities, autism, and psychiatric disorders. They conduct assessments that influence school accommodations, disability supports, court decisions, public safety planning, treatment access, and more.

In my own practice as a clinical forensic psychologist, I conduct specialized assessments that help determine whether someone poses a risk of violence, whether they are fit to stand trial, or whether they are ready to be released from custody. These are high-stakes decisions that shape lives and affect public safety.

These responsibilities cannot be done safely with shortcuts.

- What the College Is Proposing**
- The College has proposed sweeping changes that would reduce psychologist training by up to 75%. These include:
 - Cutting supervised hours by up to 75%
 - Removing accredited training requirements
 - Eliminating specialty areas such as school, clinical, forensic, or neuropsychology
 - Replacing ethics exams with a no-fail module
 - Removing the final oral exam

Continued on page 23

Macell’s Corners



Don’t be a d--- this holiday season. On second thought...

The holiday rush is in full swing. For some people, it can be a time of rush about to get everything checked off your Christmas buying list before the crowds in the stores get too bad.

For others, it’s an early rush to get your turkey, ham, all the associated trimmings, or whatever your traditional holiday fare might be, before our stores are overwhelmed and their shelves understocked.

For others still, it’s a time of doing some mental gymnastics trying to figure out how to get everywhere you need to be this holiday season, celebrating with the people you need to celebrate with, all without making it seem like...well, a rush.

In short, it’s the rushing season – and it’s important to make the most out of the eyes of the storm when you find them; otherwise, you risk the stressors overtaking you and becoming a d--- to all those around you. And who wants that?

You have to find our oases of calm wherever you can at this time of year and, for me, finding those pockets of serenity amid the sometimes-manufactured mayhem is one of the very things that puts me in the spirit of the season. More often than not, those quiet corners can often be found in a favourite holiday movie.

I know, this is hardly a ground-breaking observation, but we don’t always need to break new ground in December; in fact, it’s so often a matter of the tried, true, and indeed loved.

We all have our favourite films that put us in the yuletide mood, whether they’re traditionally thought of as “seasonal” or not.

“Meet Me in St. Louis”, for instance, is considered a Christmas classic for many reasons, not the least of which is Judy Garland’s iconic rendition of “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas”, but that’s only one small scene in a much longer slice-of-life movie that covers several seasons.

Our own favourites these days are probably most often watched at home with our loved ones, or even by ourselves, and we all derive some degree of comfort from it. At the same time, how wonderful it is to have the chance to watch a classic or two with others, even strangers, in a communal atmosphere?

As Christmas activities abound in our respective communities, I’ve been heartened to see a rise in the number of film screenings that have been included in the festivities.

Aurora, for instance, just wrapped its two-weekend Christmas market at Aurora Town Square and, as part of the action,



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

market-goers had the opportunity to enjoy not one but two holiday classics with their neighbours: “Home Alone” and “Elf.”

As someone who saw “Home Alone” in theatres when it was first released, it was clear at the time it was destined to be a classic, and it now has nostalgia on its side. How lucky for those of my generation to be able to share the big screen experience with the up-and-coming generation, particularly those for whom it will be a first viewing.

A lot of memories were made and I’d wager those kids who saw it for the first time this month will jump at the chance to do the same thing with their own kids when the time comes.

Here’s to holiday traditions old and new!

Another favourite around this time of year is “The Sound of Music” which, despite how often we continue to sing about Maria’s favourite things at this time of year, whether or not we share her own Top 10 List, is a Christmas-free movie that has become inextricably linked with season.

I’m not going to object. In fact, one of my favourite Christmas memories of the last decade was a gathering of university friends at a traditional British-style pub in Toronto’s east end, organized with the expressed purpose of attending a “Sound of Music” sing-a-long over a nice roast beef dinner.

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes would have blanched at the very idea of singing at full tilt, between mouthfuls of mashed potatoes and Yorkshire pudding, but a good time was had by all!

And we’re set to have a good time again this weekend, albeit without a roast to enjoy, taking in another non-holiday Holiday Classic: a sing-a-long “Mary Poppins”.

Again, this is not something I’m going to object to; there’s a very good reason for us to make the trek to the TIFF Bell

Lightbox – to celebrate the 100th birthday of the film’s star, Dick Van Dyke.

Now, I’ve never met the man personally, but I see that as no barrier to making the most of the occasion – he’s a man in which we can all find inspiration.

While I’ve never met him, I did catch an extended glimpse of him a couple of years ago in Los Angeles when he was a tender 98-year-old. The occasion was to celebrate the opening of a photography exhibition of a dear friend of mine who, in the last decade or so, has happened to be Van Dyke’s official photographer.

She has a unique knack for capturing all that is magical about this centenarian and that was evident for all to see – including the subject, who attended the opening and spent nearly an hour on stage answering questions about his career, as well as their collaborative relationship.

The images were certainly striking, but every photo was underscored by the joy and vitality that was up there on the stage, a joy and vitality that was fuelled by curiosity, love, and even his complete inability to stay still.

In the lead up to his remarkable milestone, which will take place on Saturday, he shared a few words of wisdom with People Magazine.

“People say, ‘What did you do right?’ I don’t know. I’m rather lazy. I’ve always thought that anger is one thing that eats up a person’s insides – and hate. And I never really was able to work up a feeling of hate. I think that is one of the chief things that kept me going. There were things I didn’t like, people I don’t like and disapprove of, but I never really was able to do a white heat kind of hate.

“What I left in the way of children’s entertainment and children’s music – that’s my legacy. I don’t think remembering me is all that important. But it’s the music, the music we leave behind. For as long as children are proudly belting out their new word, ‘Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious’ or skipping along to ‘Chim Chim Cher-ee,’ the most important part of me will always be alive.”

Dick Van Dyke might not have all that much to do with the Christmas season – Halloween, by his own admission, is much more his holiday of choice – but, as the stressors that come along with the season come at us fast and furious, we would all do well to consider the words he’s given us in the lead-up to his milestone and embrace the fact that, inspired by him, sometimes it’s okay to be a Dick!

Here’s to Mr. Van Dyke, everything he represents, and the season of our lives he’s inextricably become a part of!



THE AURORA MUSEUM & ARCHIVES is...



Camping at the Museum

Last P.A. Day, the Aurora Museum & Archives hosted a Museum Camp program where students chose artefacts from our collections. They learned the artefacts' histories and wrote their own labels through their own research. These artefacts were mounted into a display that is currently on view at Aurora Town Square. Some of the pieces our Junior Curators selected include a hen-shaped glass egg-warmer and an early portable HP-75D computer. So, which came first, the chicken or the computer? I believe they both arrived on the same day! Congrats to our Junior Curators on a job well done!



Time Travellers Diary

By Jeremy Hood
Museum Collections Technician
Aurora Museum & Archives

COAT
(Comfiest of all Time)

A bright horizontal light seared across my field of view, then it was dark again. I wiped my forehead, no blood, and I was still strapped into my chair. Ok, a temporal hiccup of sorts, that's all – my readout said the year 1895, but where was I? The light re-appeared, as if a huge flap was lifted, and an enormous hand reached in my direction. My time machine shuddered as an impossibly huge pocket watch and chain scraped past me. My mind raced. "I'm the size of a flea, and in someone's... watch pocket?"

I heard, very muffled, two men speaking.

"...and I used only the finest felted wool, George, this is the highest fashion, new variant on the Ulster overcoat – single-breasted and fly-fronted, the brown is not too ostentatious..."

The man's voice was beaming with pride.

"Excellent! This is the very reason I came to you, Duncan: for the quality and warmth you are worth twice what Eaton's would charge for something similar!" The flap opened again, George's voice becoming clear, "Now, can this be ready the first week of November? The wedding bells ring on the 13th!" The watch slipped past again, settling into the bottom of the silk-lined pocket. With that date in my mind, I set my time machine ahead and hit the button.

It was dark. The jump hadn't remedied my diminutive predicament.

"George, do you feel ready?" A new voice. I could feel jostling as George received a few playful punches on the arm. "Here she comes!"

"You see them, Tom?" I heard George exclaim, as a burst of light and cold air hit me, the pocket opened. Activating my magnetic claw, I affixed myself to the watch chain as it was drawn out of the pocket. I found myself dangling upside down, but could clearly read "Stouffville Methodist" on the red brick building just behind the men. "Of course she's right on time, that's Jessie!" I heard in his voice the unmistakable nervous pride of the bridegroom. I needed to jump back to full-size, so I selected a new, distant, date, and hit the button.

The readout said "1961". Still dark. Doubly muffled, I was able to hear a song, unmistakably Happy Birthday, a huge group chanted, "Dear Geoooooorge..." Slightly incredulous, I quickly checked the dossier – yes, George was celebrating his 90th birthday in Aurora with his large family! I was pleased, but still stuck in the coat, which seemed lovingly stowed, as the pocket had avoided noticeable deterioration. They were reciting, "...are you 66, are you 67..." The old man was laughing, "Nope, higher!" Oh, George! Another date: 2025. I hit the button.

Lights! But I wasn't out. Immediately a black-gloved hand was gently feeling into the pocket. A woman's voice proclaimed, "I was right, no watch!" The flap closed as the voice faded, "...really does look like it was just made!" I detected the air pressure of the large glass museum display doors closing. I'll have to tell you how I escaped – with the help of Museum staff – some other time, but for now, come see George's wedding overcoat and its 1895 bill of sale on display at Aurora Town Square!



COSTAS' CORNER

MP Costas Menegakis
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

As the year draws to a close, I am filled with gratitude for the privilege of serving the remarkable communities of Aurora, Oak Ridges, and Richmond Hill. This season offers us a moment to pause, reflect, and appreciate the people and places that make our riding such an inspiring part of Canada. It is a time when our shared values—kindness, generosity, and community spirit—come into sharper focus, reminding us of what truly brings us together.

Over the past several weeks, I have had the pleasure of attending many holiday events across the riding, each one offering its own unique reminder of the strength and warmth of our community. One of the most cherished highlights was the Aurora Santa Under the Stars Parade. Standing along the parade route, watching families bundled up against the crisp evening air, I was struck by the joy and anticipation on every face. Children waved excitedly at passing floats, neighbours greeted one another with smiles, and volunteers worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this beloved tradition to life. It was a beautiful display of what community looks like when we gather together, hopeful, festive, and united.

In Richmond Hill, the Merry Marketplace offered a different but equally meaningful celebration. The creativity and dedication of our local artisans, small businesses, and community groups were on full display. Each vendor, each handcrafted item, and each interaction reflected the

entrepreneurial spirit and cultural richness that make our riding so vibrant. Walking through the marketplace, I was reminded of the importance of supporting local businesses and of the powerful connections that form when we come together to celebrate each other's hard work and talent.

I was also deeply moved to attend the Holiday Disability Market, hosted by the York South Family Network in partnership with L'Arche Daybreak. This event stands out as a heartfelt celebration of inclusion, creativity, and the many contributions of individuals of all abilities. The pride and joy on the faces of participants and their families spoke volumes. Events like this remind us of the importance of building a community where everyone belongs, where every person's unique gifts are recognized, and where opportunities to participate and contribute are open to all.

Another meaningful experience this season was the Central York Fire Services Awards Ceremony, where we came together to honour the courage, professionalism, and dedication of the firefighters who protect our community year-round. Their service—often

carried out in moments of crisis—embodies the very best of our Canadian spirit. Recognizing their achievements and sacrifices was a powerful reminder of how fortunate we are to have such committed individuals safeguarding our towns and families.

These events, though diverse in character, share a common thread: they reflect the compassion, generosity, and unity that define Aurora, Oak Ridges, and Richmond Hill. They remind us that community is built not only through grand gestures, but through the everyday acts of kindness carried out by volunteers, caregivers, small business owners, frontline workers, and neighbours who simply show up for one another.

As we celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, the holiday season more broadly, or the beginning of a new year, I hope each of you finds time to rest, reflect, and reconnect with the people who matter most. May you find comfort in your traditions, joy in your gatherings, and peace in quiet moments shared with family and friends.

Looking ahead to 2026, I remain profoundly grateful for the trust you have placed in me and deeply proud to represent such a caring, diverse, and resilient community. May the coming year bring health, happiness, opportunity, and renewed hope to you and your loved ones.

From my family to yours, Merry Christmas and a Very Happy New Year!



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

With the statutory period concluded, the 2026 People's Budget is now officially adopted — marking an important moment for our community.

At 2.2%, this budget delivers exactly what it set out to: responsible, stable, forward-looking, and structured to protect Aurora's long-term success.

From day one, my priority through this budget process has been clear: to put forward a budget that truly belongs to people of Aurora. A budget focused on: protecting taxpayers, strengthening our financial position, investing in what matters, leading with transparency and accountability

And this budget delivers on all of it. This is a budget shaped by residents, supported by staff, and guided by strong, steady leadership. It safeguards

our reserves, maintains essential infrastructure funding, supports our community partners, and rejects short-term gimmicks that would have harmed our Town down the road.

Most importantly, it reflects what Aurora expects and deserves: A Mayor who will always stand up for responsible budgeting, long-term planning, and

decisions that put people first.

I want to thank every resident who engaged in this process — your feedback, your questions, and your advocacy helped shape a budget that truly represents our community's priorities and values.

Aurora is strong, it is growing, and it is well-positioned for the future. And as your Mayor, I will continue to work every day to keep our Town moving forward with vision, responsibility, and leadership that gets things done.

We are building an Aurora that works — not just for today, but for the generations to come.

Let's keep moving forward.

Let's keep leading with purpose.

And let's keep building a community we are all proud to call home.

Groomed for Greatness help men in need rebuild their lives

New initiative launched by Abuse Hurts

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local men in need will have the chance to get a fresh start through a new program launched by Abuse Hurts and long-time volunteer Liz Livingstone.

Groomed for Greatness: Empowering Men to Rebuild Their Confidence, One Fresh Start at a Time, was launched last week with two men from a York Region shelter being selected as the first beneficiaries of the new initiative.

The initiative takes a holistic approach to getting men in need back on their feet and includes a makeover, complete with new clothing, and skills training as well, which they hope will lead men to new opportunities.

Taking its cues from similar programs they offer for women, Livingstone saw her initiative as being particularly focused on men who have experienced homelessness or live in shelters as they look to re-enter the workforce.

“I have been working with Abuse Hurts for a number of years now and was really involved with the fashion show for the last three years, which was wonderful... Most of the programs are geared towards women and children, which is wonderful, and obviously, that is necessary, but there really isn’t much for men,” explains Livingstone, who was previously involved in the Dress for Success initiative spearheaded by Moore’s Clothing for Men, and

thought there was room to take things “a little further and actually help people get back into the workforce.”

“I have a recruitment agency called Trevor Frances Recruitment and part of what I do is help people with resumes, help them with their job search and interview coaching and things like that. [I thought] if we can incorporate both of those and create something that not only makes them feel good and look good, and give them some new clothing, etc., but also take it a step further and say, ‘Okay, let’s help you actually get a job.’

“Financial insecurity is happening for a lot of people, but the scariest thing in the world is not knowing where you’re getting any money from. If we can help them get back into the workforce, get paycheques, and [help them] step into the next phase of their life, I thought that would be a great program to offer.”

Coming together to help make Groomed for Greatness a success were sponsors B. Quail Ironworks, Main Street Realty Ltd., Ontario Barbershops, and Trevor Frances Recruitment.

Ontario Barbershops, located in Newmarket, played host to the first Groomed for Greatness event last week where one of the gentlemen in question came in for a fresh haircut and a hot shave, all of which was paid for.

Donations from the other sponsors helped organizers secure many necessities for the next step.

They hope to hold future sessions quarterly.

Watching this all unfold was Abuse Hurts founder Ellen Campbell who was able to spend time with the first recipient after the barber visit. The happiness that radiated off him afterwards was palpable, she said.

“You should have seen the difference in this man – it was unbelievable,” she says. “He got \$500-worth of brand-new clothes, a whole supply of men’s toiletries, and then Liz is going to work with him on a resume and help him find a job. I think it’s really going to change this man’s life. This was just one day, but now he has the tools to go out and find a job, and he’s got the confidence now because he looks amazing. The difference between when he came in and when he left, even just his attitude, we see that with the women a lot, too. I could tell he really felt there was some hope now.”

At the end of the day, that’s what it’s all about.

“Ideally, the goal is to really help people get into the next chapter of their lives – that’s the number-one goal,” says Livingstone. “We’re just trying to create some awareness around the fact that there aren’t a lot of programs for men. We need to continue doing all of the programs for women that we have, but it’s important that we start to introduce some initiatives for men as well because there’s abuse that happens and hard times that happen to men as well and they don’t get the same level of support necessarily as women.

“I would never want to take anything away from the women’s programs, because they’re absolutely necessary, but I think we just need to start thinking, in addition to those, what can we do to support men in the community as well?”

Keep vaccines up to date this holiday season, says Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health

By Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Province of Ontario

With the holiday season fast approaching, it’s important to take all necessary precautions to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy, including by ensuring your vaccines are up to date. Respiratory illness season typically begins in the fall and lasts through the winter months, when colder weather and indoor gatherings make it easier for viruses to spread. This includes several common viruses such as influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19.

Currently, COVID-19 and RSV activity remain low in Ontario, but flu season is officially here, and cases are steadily increasing. The flu shot remains one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves from influenza. Each year, the vaccine is designed to cover multiple strains. Getting vaccinated reduces your risk of catching the flu and, most importantly, lowers the chance of severe illness, hospitalization and serious complications.

Flu and COVID-19 shots

are already available across Ontario for people 6 months and older at participating pharmacies, doctor and nurse practitioner offices or public health units. RSV immunization is also available for eligible groups, including adults aged 75 and older, infants and pregnant women. Those at higher risk of severe illness are especially encouraged to get vaccinated early.

Influenza activity is expected to peak as early as mid-December in some regions. As the vaccine takes about two weeks to reach full effectiveness, getting vaccinated now will help ensure you are protected when virus circulation is at its highest, while also reducing the spread of illness and protecting those most at risk. If you or a loved one are at higher risk for severe illness, you should talk to your health-care provider now to plan for testing and treatment.

As the holidays approach, let’s all remember the simple steps that make a big difference: wash your hands, cover coughs and sneezes, clean shared surfaces regularly, and stay home if you are sick.

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HOLIDAY SMILES – There are plenty of smiles to go around at the Aurora Food Pantry as they accepted a \$22,505.80 cheque from local Tim Hortons stores last week. The Food Pantry was the local recipient of proceeds from the annual Holiday Smile Cookie campaign, and the money will be put to good use as the organization is particularly stretched amid rising food insecurity. On hand last week for the cheque presentation at the Wellington and John West Way store were Sandra, Miranda, Amit, Kanda, Navjot, Sandra, Drew, and Rachana. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

Grilled cheese battle could help Aurora sizzle, says Councillor

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Can the humble grilled cheese sandwich help Aurora become a tourism destination? Maybe, suggests Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland.

An Ultimate Grilled Cheese Sandwich Challenge, involving local restaurants, has been floated by the Councillor through a Motion that will come before Council this week.

Discussed at last week’s Committee of the Whole, Gilliland’s motion says culinary events in other municipalities have “proven successful in engaging residents” and supported local businesses at the same time – citing Midland’s Ontario’s Best Butter Tart Festival as a prime example.

“An Ultimate Grilled Cheese Challenge in Aurora would provide a creative and enjoyable platform for local restaurants, regardless of their usual specialties, to showcase unique and inventive takes on a classic comfort food,” said Gilliland in her motion “Such an event can stimulate economic development by encouraging residents and visitors alike to explore Aurora’s dining scene, thus supporting local businesses and fostering a sense of community pride.

“The proposed Ultimate Grilled Cheese Challenge is a relatively low-cost event to organize, requiring only minimal resources such as the printing of tasting passports and the coordination of participating restaurants, making it an accessible and financially feasible initiative for the Town.”

Any such event will involve both the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and Aurora Economic Development Board, should the Motion be approved this week, and staff will report back with their recommendations.

Council was generally supportive of the suggestion at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting, but some didn’t want to limit the challenge to grilled cheese sandwiches – at least not yet.

“I think it’s a wonderful concept,” said Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim, adding, “no two things bring people together more than sports and food.”

“I’m just wondering whether instead of dictating or just unilaterally telling residents and restaurants and business owners that we’re going to do grilled cheese, would it be recommended to go to residents and ask them if grilled cheese is the food that we want to base this... concept on, or [are] there other foods like burgers or something else that we can apply that would be equally or of greater value in this concept?”

Councillor Gilliland said municipal staff had the same question when she first discussed the issue and she didn’t disagree that “maybe there’s another food selection” that would be appropriate. She said, however, she want to “overcomplicate” things and “make it really simple and focus on the grilled cheese because it seems to be a Canadian favourite.”

“I wanted to have a real fun way, which is very low-cost, to bring people into our amazing Town and try the culinary experiences of various restaurants,” she said, speaking to the Motion itself. “The concept is you could be of [a] different culture and create your own version of your grilled cheese and patrons can come within a certain period of time and try this grilled cheese based on whatever flair, but obviously it doesn’t have to be a permanent menu...just something to attract people to come into the Town and try the other restaurants we have.

“Talking about the events we have currently, this is a very low-cost, easy thing to facilitate. Essentially you could have a passport with a bunch of restaurants who want to participate, put in a QR code, and people can vote. I’m not saying we have to do the exact same thing [as other municipalities] but I’m trying to think of a very innovative and creative way to where we can get the community involved in supporting our local restaurants.”

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Winter musings, thought-provoking pop art on show at Aurora Cultural Centre

New exhibitions celebrated Thursday at Centre



Julia Mobbs, left, and Helen Walter speak to their respective work, which were at the heart of two gallery openings at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Thursday evening.
Auroran photos by Brock Weir



BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Aurora Cultural Centre marked something of a homecoming on Thursday evening as the works of several artists, many of whom got their start in the historic Church Street School, came together for musings on women and winter.

The Centre celebrated the openings of “Forever-22”, an exhibition by up-and-coming local artist Julia Mobbs, who was the Centre’s artist-in-residence this past fall, and “What Does a Winter’s Night Hold?” showcasing the work of the Centre’s artist-instructors, with an evening putting these creators firmly in the spotlight.

Mobbs, whose work first graced the walls of the Aurora Cultural Centre when she was a high school student participating in the Centre’s annual Mayor’s Celebration of Youth Arts, is a graduate of Concordia University, and uses her paintbrush to focus on images from popular media, archived magazines, leisure culture, and more, as a way to “challenge the human form and consumer processes.”

As the Centre’s Fall Artist in Residence, she created the entirety of her exhibition while participating in the program, and her work can be found throughout their ground floor gallery space.

Speaking to how her work evolved through the residency program, she said the concept of how women are depicted in advertising has always captured her imagination.

“I’ve always been interested in advertising and consumerism and especially the role that the imagery of women plays in advertising,” she said, when asked how her work evolved during the residency program. “I’m trying to marry those concepts together because sometimes, at least before I was approaching them from just pictures of women or just pictures of advertising imagery.”

“All of my paintings start with some sort of imagery that’s already been produced,” she continued, outlining her non-traditional take on collage work where she brings images together through her brush rather than a more traditional cut-and-paste approach. “I do collage, but it’s not the traditional way of pasting I do that too, but sometimes in my head I just put together imagery and end up painting it, so I think of collage as just any sort of found imagery and I like to reinterpret that in painting and see how that image gets transformed. I find that’s the beauty because replicating imagery...I don’t really see why if it’s already been produced, why should I repaint it again? I guess my perspective is to try to transform it through painting.” Mobbs’ vision for her exhibition, she said,

was guided in part by being “immersed” in Montreal’s arts scene. At the time of the opening, titles of each work had not yet been added to the walls beside each painting – a practice that is more conventional there than at the Centre.

“It’s good to have a title sometimes, it adds to the beauty of the piece, but sometimes I find it can take away if people are overly interested in finding a reason why this painting was made, or it can take away from the audience experience of the work,” she explained. “I do really enjoy making titles for my pieces, but sometimes I find the descriptions and such can take away from the reading.”

If the Aurora Cultural Centre provided Mobbs one of the first opportunities to display her art as a student, it also provided new avenues for local artists looking to share their craft with others.

These artists are at the heart of “What Does a Winter Night Hold?” showcasing the works of Centre instructors Katie Argyle, Annwin Arts, Alex Bhatia, Anni Bretschneider, Jessie Chui, Eva Folks, Karin Foulds, Jing Fu, Golbahar H., Arnold Koch, Karen Levert, Liana Marinelli, Michelle Richards-Clermont, Judy Sherman, and Helen Walter.

Curated by Anna Vander Heide, the Aurora Cultural Centre’s Interim Education Manager, the show “captures the spirit of the winter; reflecting family gatherings, holiday traditions, and the warmth that carries us through the season.”

Last week’s opening provided several of the artists an opportunity to speak to their work, and Helen Walter said becoming an instructor when the Centre first opened in 2010 helped her develop her own approaches and practices.

“I’ve been drawing since I was four-years-old but that doesn’t count,” she joked. “When it came to painting [with young students] what I found was better than painting myself, and this moves into painting with adults, and that’s being part of the discovery, being part of what makes a painting. I had a woman come to me one day at a show and she said, ‘Oh, I’d love to paint. It must be so relaxing.’ No, no, no, it’s decision-making. It’s, pardon me, f---ing up and not knowing how to fix it and...it’s finding your own answer.”

“The kids find their own answers. The students find their own answers, and you’ve been an agent, an observer.... it’s like being a producer and the best movie just played. Yes, your credit isn’t there, but they did it and, in some small way, so did you – and it’s thrilling. It’s more thrilling to see other people’s work than it is to see mine.”

To see the works on show now at the Aurora Cultural Centre, both shows run until January 25. For more information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

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Allison Lupton brings Celtic Christmas to Centre in Aurora debut



Contributed photo

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Fresh off her United Kingdom tour, acclaimed musician Allison Lupton will bring her Celtic sounds to the Aurora Cultural Centre this Saturday, December 13, just in time for Christmas.

Allison Lupton’s Celtic Christmas is billed as a “cozy night of storytelling, music, and holiday magic.”

“This heartwarming concert features festive favourites, traditional Celtic tunes, and dazzling step dancing,” says the Aurora Cultural Centre. “Enjoy toe-tapping medleys like Jingle Bells, Frosty the Snowman, and Ding Dong Merrily On High, alongside the stirring Wexford Carol and iconic Canadian fiddle tunes like Maple Sugar. A moving instrumental of Joy to the World leads into Allison’s original Bonnie and May – a touching true story from her family’s past.

“Highlights also include Hockey

Night, a tribute to Canada’s national pastime, and The Eve of Christmas Day, paired with classic reels by Big John MacNeil and Reel de Montebello, featuring the brilliant Faria sisters. Backed by internationally acclaimed musicians and dancers, Allison’s heartfelt vocals and storytelling make this concert a joyful way to welcome the holiday season.”

Lupton tells The Auroran she has a passion for telling stories with her song-writing and many of her stories focus on Canadian people and events.

“When I put together a show, I like to think of taking the audience along with me on a little journey,” she says. “I like to program songs that are thoughtful, songs that are fun and goofy and silly. I love to have toe-tapping fiddle tunes, lots of movement in the dance, and also showcasing the band members.

“I think my vision of a holiday show is just because it’s such a busy time of year to just take a moment

where you can sit down, relax, and just be charmed by beautiful music and fun stories, have a laugh, be dazzled by dance, and send you on your way feeling lighter and happy, embracing the beauty of the season.”

Joining Lupton on stage to dazzle audiences at Saturday evening’s performance are Tony McManus, who she says is an “absolute legend on Celtic guitar.”

“He’s from Scotland and is considered one of the best Celtic guitar artists in the world, and I’m certain that is quite true,” says Lupton, adding Canadian fiddle champ Shane Cook and five-time Juno-nominee Andrew Collins on mandolin, award-winning multi-instrumentalist Tom Leighton, and James McElhinney on bass are also on the bill.

Adding an extra flair to the show will be The Faria Sisters, a step

dancing trio from Brampton.

“There’s something universal, I think, about the rhythms of the tunes and the stories in the songs that connect with people on so many levels, and it’s just really hard to sit still when there’s a great fiddle tune happening,” says Lupton of why Celtic music resonates with so many across Canada and around the world. “There will be an evening of blazing fiddle tunes and story songs, and some lively step dance as well just to charm everybody to pieces. There’ll be some sing-alongs as well with holiday favourites that people will certainly want to join along with us as well.”

For tickets and further information about Saturday night’s Allison Lupton’s Celtic Christmas at the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/allison-lupton-christmas-show-2526.



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- Expand Your Horizons in Acrylics Level 2 (16+)**
January 13, 2026 - March 3, 2026
- Drawing Club Intermediate (16+)**
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- Guitar Beginner (16+)**
January 14, 2026 - March 4, 2026
- Guitar Intermediate (16+)**
January 14, 2026 - March 4, 2026
- Watercolour II: Intermediate & Advanced (16+)**
January 14, 2026 - March 4, 2026
- Watercolour I: Intro to Basics (16+)**
January 15, 2026 - March 12, 2026
- Wood Photo Transfers & Mediums (16+)**
February 5, 2026 - March 5, 2026

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- Watercolour Level 1 (55+)**
January 13, 2026 - March 24, 2026
- Watercolour Level 2 (55+)**
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- Drawing Fundamentals (55+) – Session A**
January 14, 2026 - March 25, 2026
- Drawing Fundamentals (55+) – Session B**
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- Acrylic Painting (55+): Beginner**
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January 30, 2026
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January 30, 2026

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Committee set to be struck to formally review Council pay

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The thorny issue of how much Aurora Councillors should be paid could be resolved ahead of the inauguration of the 2026-2030 Council term.

The current Council this week is poised to strike a Council Compensation Committee to review salaries as an outside consultant is brought on to steer the review.

Should Council formally greenlight the move, Aurora will begin recruiting Committee members in January, with a focus on “ensuring a diverse and representative group of citizens is selected,” while the consultant begins the work of data gathering.

If all goes according to the proposed timeline, a final report bringing together the findings of the consultant and committee alike will be presented for Council’s review by the end of April.

The issue of Council’s salary has been a hot-button community issue in the second half of this term of Council, with the incumbent Council voting 4 – 3 to adopt the salary recommendations brought forward by a similar Committee struck by Council in 2023. This decision, however, was ultimately vetoed by Mayor Tom Mrakas using the then-

new Strong Mayor powers, given to dozens of Ontario municipalities by the Provincial government.

The recommendation to strike the Committee was tentatively approved by Council at the Committee level last week, but some lawmakers suggested doing so was simply reinventing the wheel.

“At this point, I really think the consultant can do its job and I have full faith that the consultant has the professionalism, the capability in order to come up with the right numbers that are appropriate for Council,” said Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland. “I don’t think there is a need for this Committee at this point. We’ve already gone through this process and that’s why we’re getting a third party.

“I certainly want to take the political side out of this, and I think the cleanest and best way of doing this is to just leave it clean and leave it to the consultant because that’s, I think, what we should be doing – just leave it to the professionals and they will guide us in a direction that makes the most sense.”

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson said he was supportive of the suggestion to just stick with the Consultant for now.

“We’re going to engage a consultant – let the consultant do the work and come back to Council

with a report,” he said. “If at that time Council is still not satisfied, then we can discuss the need for the formation of a Committee, but for now I would say let’s just go forward with the consultant and see what they have to say.”

A different perspective was offered by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, who said bringing on the consultant was “wasting” \$25,000. Instead, he said current municipal staff are capable of carrying out the work the consultant will be tasked with.

“I have no issues with a Committee being struck to help them out and get a sense of what the community feels regarding this,” he said. “I don’t agree with the scope [of the Committee] because the first line in its purpose is... to review and comment on the consultant’s recommendations on the

compensation level for the current elected members of Council.

“It doesn’t make any sense to me why the Committee would only comment on the current compensation for members of Council. This is designed for the next term. I think the decision has always been made to spend \$25,000 through the Mayor’s Budget and his decision to do that.... We’re not going to backtrack, I guess, although I don’t agree with it, and I think that could have easily been done in-house. But, if the will of Council is to move in this direction, I am fine with that.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas, in response, said as the RFP had just been issued for the consultant, Council could still make an amendment to cancel it.

No amendment was brought forward at the Committee level.

York Region approves \$5.2 billion budget

From page 1

is lower than the 2.9 per cent forecast in last year’s multi-year plan, achieved through reduced discretionary spending, a temporary hiring freeze, and a needs-based approach to major investments, ensuring funding went only to the most critical priorities for the community.

“During deliberations, Council passed four amendments to the Mayor’s budget, with the Mayor vetoing two of them: one proposing to pause funding for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame until they produce audited financial statements, and the other proposing a 0 per cent tax-levy increase for 2026. The Mayor noted that the amendment relating to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame sought to impose a requirement that does not exist in Town policy, and that any review of those policies should occur through proper, transparent process and apply fairly to all organizations.”

Added Mayor Mrakas in a statement: “When municipalities freeze taxes, it often means deferring maintenance or cancelling needed work. Residents end up paying a lot more to catch up. This budget avoids that, and instead makes forward-looking sustainable investments that benefit residents today and in the future.”

Among the budgeted projects coming up for the year ahead are road rehabilitations; playground and replacement upgrades at Atkinson Park, Fleury Park, and Optimist Park; the completion of six pickleball courts at Fleury Park; doubling the number of volleyball courts at Lambert Willson Park to four; trail expansions, including the completion of the Benjamin Pearson Parkette Boardwalk, and the Mattamy, DeGraff, and Shining Hill Trails; sediment removal and rehabilitation work at a number of stormwater management ponds to bolster flood protection; further modernization of municipal facilities; and continued work on the Yonge Streetscape project.

REGIONAL BUDGET APPROVED

York Regional Council has approved a \$5.2 Billion budget for 2026.

Regional Councillors signed off on the 2026 Budget at their December 4 Council meeting.

The Budget includes an overall Regional tax increase of 3.28 per cent, which translates into an increase

of approximately \$129 to the average residential property build.

The increase includes a 0.06 per cent increase to support a \$25 million funding commitment to support the York University School of Medicine, a 1 per cent increase to support rapid transit and infrastructure levy.

The commitment to York University dominated much of the discussion last week, with Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas not participating in talks after declaring a conflict due to a family member being employed by the school.

As The Auroran reported last week, the Budget also includes what the Region describes as a “landmark” investment in the York Regional police, providing for an increase of 150 new positions next year, including 98 sworn officers.

“York Regional Council is committed to delivering vital services that meet priority needs of our growing communities while ensuring residents and businesses receive value for tax dollars,” said York Regional Chair Eric Joliffe in a statement. “The 2026 Budget reflects long-term sustainability and fiscal responsibility to support strong, caring, safe communities, today and tomorrow.”

Added King Mayor Steve Pellegrini, Chair of Finance and Administration: “The 2026 Budget responds to current economic pressures with resilience and readiness through continued investments in priority areas of safer communities, enabling growth in our communities and keeping people, goods, and information moving. Through prudent management of the capital plan, reserves and use of debt, York Region ensures a balance between the needs of current and future taxpayers while maintaining Triple A credit ratings.”

In addition to the 98 sworn officers and 52 civilian staff at the YRP, emergency investments include 31 new paramedics and support staff, along with the building of seven paramedic response stations; building more than 580 new community housing units across four Housing York projects; 287 new emergency and transitional housing beds; 92,600 doses of vaccines, including 53,500 for school-aged children, and more.

Contributions to York Region Transit will see the fleet grow by 315 electric buses, and supporting the design of priority bus rapidways and the Yonge North Subway Extension.

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Councillors question bringing Procedural Bylaw in line with Strong Mayor Powers

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A recommendation for Council to adopt an updated Procedural Bylaw governing how meetings are run, bringing it in line with Strong Mayor powers, sparked a debate at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting.

Supporters of the recommended changes before lawmakers last week stated Council does not currently have a Procedural Bylaw in line with the most recent changes to Ontario’s Municipal Act, including the introduction of Strong Mayor powers. Those opposing the changes, however, argued that next year’s municipal elections might bring a change in how these powers are used locally.

The recommendations in front of Council – and rejected by the majority of members at the Committee level – outline the Mayor’s ability to create and dissolve committees comprised only of Council members, the Mayor’s responsibility to appoint Chairs to Council-comprised committees, processes related to the Mayor’s veto power and how it relates to specific bylaws, and how the Mayor can introduce an item for Council’s consideration without needing another member to move and second the motion in question.

Outside of changes related to Strong Mayor powers, recommendations include fleshing out the role of the Deputy Mayor

when the Mayor is absent, meeting schedules, and other “housekeeping” items.

“The proposed revisions ensure the Procedure Bylaw is clear and easily accessible for staff, the public, and Council,” said Staff in their report. “It presents relevant information in a concise format and ensures accurate information is presented publicly. Guided by the principles of openness, transparency, and accountability to the public, the proposed revisions to the Procedure Bylaw provide clarity in the decision-making process, provide access to information and opportunities for input by the public, and exercises and respects individual and collective roles and responsibilities provided for in the Procedure Bylaw and applicable legislation.”

Few of the “housekeeping” items generated discussion at last week’s meeting; instead, focus remained squarely on Strong Mayor powers and whether they should be enshrined into the Bylaw.

“I want to be very clear why I cannot support making changes to our Procedural Bylaw at this time,” said Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. “The governance environment is unstable and could change completely next year. Procedural Bylaws are meant to provide long-term stability for how a Council functions. Right now, Aurora is operating under a governance structure that was not chosen by Council and may not exist after the next election.

“This Council voted against accepting Strong Mayor powers. Despite that, the majority decision, the current Mayor unilaterally accepted those powers. In less than a year, Aurora will have a new Mayor and we have no idea whether the next Mayor will accept or decline those powers. It makes no sense to rewrite the rules of procedure based on a system that may disappear in a matter of months.”

Making the recommended changes at this point, he continued, “risks locking in” rules tied to Strong Mayor powers which may conflict if these powers are off the table in the years ahead.

“It is irresponsible to reshape our long-term procedural framework based on a temporary and contested governance model,” said Gallo. “The majority of council opposed strong mayor powers from the beginning. That matters. This Council, democratically elected, voted not to adopt Strong Mayor powers because members believed it undermines majority rule, collaboration, transparency, and balanced decision-making. Those concerns haven’t changed, and until the people of Aurora choose their next mayor, we cannot assume these powers will continue.

“Making major changes to how Council works, when we know the governance structure is likely to change, does not build trust. It creates confusion, instability, and unnecessary political tension.... Good governance requires predictability,

majority rule, and clear, stable rules. We do not have that right now.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas said he agreed there was confusion, but it was not for the above reasons – instead, he said, residents were “confused about the fact that our procedural bylaw does not align with legislation.”

“I will agree with, yeah, some people sitting at this table won’t be here next term, but I can guarantee you one thing; until the Provincial government changes Strong Mayor powers, Strong Mayor powers are here to stay, they are permanent. We can’t decide whether we want to change that or not. You can decide whether you want to use them as a tool, but they’re here. I’ll remind everyone, as I’ve reminded the last two times we’ve dealt with this, for over two years, we’ve had a Procedural Bylaw that is in conflict with legislation by the Provincial government and within the Municipal Act. By not changing it, you’re just saying is, ‘well, I’m going to ignore the Municipal Act, and I don’t care what the Municipal Act says, because we’re just going to do it this way....’ That’s not transparent. That leads to confusion. And that leads to unstable rules. If we want to have stable rules, we make the rules that follow the Municipal Act and the legislation that’s put forward and enacted by the provincial government that we need to adhere to.”

The next Municipal Election is slated for October 2026.

George Street School redevelopment reduced to six houses, park

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Plans to redevelop the site of the now-demolished George Street Public School site into a community park and seven residential properties are set to be reduced by one home.

Council this week is expected to approve an amendment given the thumbs-up at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting that will reduce the scope to include six rather than seven residential units.

The reduction in lot numbers was based in part on resident feedback, said Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, and, according to Marco Ramunno, Aurora’s Director of Planning, a slight reduction in the available frontage along George Street following a formal survey carried out after the demolition of the school building this past spring.

“The Town made a rather big investment with the purpose of having control over the type of development that we want to have there versus having this parcel of land be sold off to the highest bidder and putting in some high-density type of development that may not be suited to the area,” said Councillor Gilliland. “I know I have received quite a bit of feedback from people in the community about what’s being presented today, and I know while everything’s not set in stone and this is a zoning change, I do want to see a little bit of reduction in those lot sizes, just in keeping with the actual area in the

neighbourhood.”

Ramunno noted the survey resulted in a loss of 10 feet in frontage and while the seven proposed lots would be exactly 60-feet each, he didn’t have an issue with six lots each with a minimum of 70-feet.

Each lot would be approximately 200 feet deep, resulting in developments that would complement the character of the existing neighbourhood.

While Council accepted the amendment to reduce the number of lots at the Committee level, they did so after seeking assurances that reducing the number of homes wouldn’t result in a loss of projected revenue to the Town as Council hoped the sale of the lots would offset the costs paid to the York Region District School Board to secure the parkland for community use.

“I’m pretty confident at this point,” said Ramunno, responding to questions from Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson. “It’s always tough to try and project what the prices would be a year from now or two years from now. Ever since we started this process, I’ve heard from a number of small builders who are interested in these lots. I don’t think we’re going to have a problem selling these lots, but I think there’s definitely an interest and I don’t think we’re going to be losing much, if any, if we go from seven to six.”

Should Council approve the lot reduction this week, the next steps in the process will be a public consultation on how the parkland will be accessed.

“As for amenity space, we are somewhat

limited in the space needs there, but we’ve done a conceptual plan, which looks at our Parks and Recreation Master Plan and draws from it where there’s some deficiencies within the area,” said Sara Tienkamp, Director of Operations for the Town of Aurora. “Based on that, public playgrounds are deficient in that zone, so we’re proposing a playground, maybe

some courts of mixed use, potentially, and some open space – a gazebo, some shade structure, etc.

“We’re not moving too quickly on that immediately right now, only because we’re working on site servicing and we don’t know where exactly it’s going to run. It may impact some of the park design and the public consultation process timing.”



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Community pens record-setting number of Christmas cards for service personnel

From page 1

For the last 20 years, the Harrisons have been working tirelessly to mobilize the community to write Christmas cards and Holiday greetings for Canadian servicepersons. In this, a milestone year for their work, they're poised to send out a whopping 12,400 messages to soldiers stationed all around the world – a significant uptick from their 10,000 goal.

"It's an absolute record – we had counted 12,000 and then, in the last few days, we got another 400 in," Dianne tells The Auroran.

The Harrisons are expected to hand-deliver the bounty to CFB Trenton this week and are doing so with full hearts, with special gratitude going out to such organizations as the Optimist Club of Aurora, The Men's Shed at the Aurora Seniors' Centre, CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors), various retirement homes and churches, all of which contributed hundreds – or, in the case

of the Optimists – thousands of messages. "My heart is beating so fast and so warm right now because I just feel the love that is being sent with every card that these soldiers are getting," she says. "I hope – not hope, I know that every card will be received because, as I have said in the past, I believe both sender and receiver are truly blessed with this initiative."

While the hard work of the above-listed organizations, and so many more individuals, contributed to make this year a triumph in numbers, when Harrison was asked what factors motivated so many to set pen to card this year, she says people are more aware now than ever before about what soldiers are experiencing overseas – and here at home.

"People are concerned about their futures," she says. "People are striving, not thriving, these days, and I think that they've had more time to think about how fortunate we are to have the military that



The Harrisons have been spearheading the card-writing campaign for 20 years and in this milestone season, are thrilled to have set a new record. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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we do and the country that we live in. "We look around and see what's all around us, and we're a very prosperous country, and we're thankful for where we live. I know there are many complaints, but I think we've got more pluses than minuses in our country."

Contributions to this year's campaign from young writers, she adds, were "absolutely stunning" and Dianne says they "put more heart into them – more sparkles, more life."

"The cards were so caring and the children really thought about what they were saying before they wrote. I believe that so many of the cards were written from their hearts. I believe their families must talk about it at home. Sometimes I worry about our children knowing too much and with A.I. now, how much are they reading is the truth."

Cards from kids and teens were also organized and curated by the Aurora Public Library, while members of the public filled drop-off boxes at dozens

of locations around the community, including the Seniors' Centre, the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, and Chocolate & Co, to name just a few.

"What we found is when we put the boxes into some of the newer places, a lot of people were saying they didn't know about [the initiative] before, which surprised us because it has been going on for 20 years now – it's just that new people have come into the community," says Dianne. "We had more people join us this year and now they want to become a part and do the same thing next year."

But, will the Harrisons join them once again in leading this effort for a twenty-first year?

The couple answer in unison: "Absolutely!"

In that case, if you have Christmas Cards left over after checking everybody off your own lists this year, save them for 2026 and think about what you might want to say to a Canadian soldier at home or abroad.

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OPINION

Fossil fuel interests and petrostates dash hopes at COP30

BY DAVID SUZUKI

It's been 37 years since climate scientist James Hansen warned the United States Senate that human activity was warming the planet, which would lead to unstable weather.

Thirty years of international "conference of the parties" climate summits. Ten years since the world's nations signed the Paris Agreement to keep global average temperatures from rising more than 2 C (ideally 1.5 C) above pre-industrial levels. More than 200 years since French mathematician Joseph Fourier discovered that certain gases in the atmosphere trap solar radiation, potentially causing the planet to heat — now known as the "greenhouse effect."

After all those years, all that evidence, all the predicted impacts now descending on us, delegates to November's COP30 in Belém, Brazil, could not agree on the necessity to "transition away from fossil fuels" and whether wealthy countries responsible for most of the heating should pay to help poorer countries that bear the brunt of the impacts.

It's absurd, tragic and stupid.

Countries including Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, India and others lobbied to remove any mention of fossil fuels from the final agreement. The U.S. government is now in full denial about the crisis and didn't even send representatives. Canada appears to be giving up, moving full steam ahead on liquefied "natural" gas expansion and more pipelines.

Does our species care so little about our children and those yet to be born that we would sacrifice their futures for some illusory short-term gain and massive profits for oil industry executives and shareholders?

It shouldn't need to be repeated, but even if we stopped burning coal, oil and gas immediately and protected natural systems that store carbon — such as forests, wetlands and the ocean — Earth would continue to heat as these gases remain in the atmosphere for a long time.

There's no justification for it. We use excessive amounts of energy and consume too many goods, especially in countries such as Canada and the U.S. We could reduce emissions and other environmental damages if we just

stopped using so much.

Renewable energy is far more efficient, less expensive and more secure than fossil fuels. Shifting from coal, gas and oil to renewables would create far more good jobs, economic benefits and cleaner air, water and land.

It's good that all the world's countries are meeting regularly to discuss these issues, but acting as if we still have time to deal with them is folly. That fossil fuel lobbyists and industry representatives outnumber delegates from many of the countries most affected is also a recipe for failure.

What will it take for us to address the climate crisis with the urgency and seriousness it demands? How much more evidence do we need? All credible scientists who study climate-related topics, from oceanography to atmospheric physics, agree that our actions are rapidly heating our only home to dangerous levels, that we're teetering over disastrous tipping points, that the impacts are accelerating at alarming rates.

Almost all agree on the overall solutions: We must stop exploiting and burning fossil fuels and protect and restore ecosystems that sequester carbon and keep it from entering the atmosphere.

But we're up against a sector that puts

massive amounts of money and resources into spreading disinformation, creating organizations that mislead the public about the crisis, controlling news media that downplay or reject the evidence and sponsoring politicians to look out for industry interests at the expense of the people they were elected to represent.

It's bewildering and appalling. We have a relatively recent consumerist economic system — fuelled by oil, gas and coal — that we now know is causing great harm and putting all life at risk. But we refuse to change our ways. Even incremental change — already too little, too late — seems out of the question.

Politicians can't seem to think of any ways to govern, to deal with the issues of production and distribution, than pillaging raw resources and selling them off as quickly as possible. So we burn more polluting fossil fuels, cut down more forests, pave over more wetlands, create more weapons...

When will it end?

COP30 shows the failure of our governance and economic systems to confront the greatest threat humanity has ever faced. We need a mass movement to demand change.

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with David Suzuki Foundation Senior Writer and Editor Ian Hanington.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Aurora's Flo Connolly recently celebrated her 100th birthday. Connolly moved to Aurora from Toronto 67 years ago and was one of the first families in the Regency Acres community where she still resides. She has been an active participant in the Aurora Seniors' Centre's exercise program for many years.

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New Tigers tally four goals but five-goal rally in third period propels Golden Hawks to 8-5 win



Newly-arrived former Toronto Patriot Javian Nei (39) tallied two goals for the Tigers and was selected Third Star of the Game in Aurora's 8 – 5 loss to Trenton at the ACC on Saturday night.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

Aurora's Junior A hockey team dropped an 8-5 decision to the nationally-ranked Trenton Golden Hawks on Saturday night at the ACC, but the final score did not reflect how close the home side came to a major upset.

The Tigers held leads of 2-0 after the first period, 4-3 after the second period, and 5-4 at the 2:33 mark of the third period, but the Trenton tandem of Jamie Darlison and Tao Artichuk served as a relentless wrecking ball to foil the home side's plans.

Remarkably, Darlison scored four goals during the final frame to avert a Trenton loss in Aurora.

Artichuk—the OJHL's leading scorer—earned an assist on each of his team's five third-period goals to boost his points total to 60 in 28 games.

The Moncton, NB, native ran roughshod over the Tigers in the final twenty minutes of play, setting up all four goals by Darlison and Jack Ziliotto's marker for good measure.

Darlison earned First Star of the Game honors with his four-goal and two-assist performance. Artichuk's six-assist outburst earned him Second Star of the Game.

The Golden Hawks' five-goal third period surge ruined a valiant effort by the revamped Tigers whose roster was shaken to its core by the December 2 blockbuster trade.

Aurora's Captain and leading scorer Simon Howard and NCAA commit defenseman and Assistant Captain Luke Howard were sent to the first-place Toronto Patriots in exchange for forwards Javian Nei and Lucas Marshall, as well as defender Tommy Kut. The five-player deal had been preceded by a swap of defensemen on November 22 with Bode Pearson being sent to the Collingwood Blues for Quinlan Clair.

The terrific triumvirate of Nei,

Marshall, and Clair tallied four of the Tigers' five goals versus the second-place Golden Hawks.

Kut made the scoresheet, too, by earning an assist on Nei's first goal of the game late in the middle frame which gave Aurora a 4-3 lead. Nei—who tallied two goals—discussed the connections being developed: "Marshall and I are from the Patriots so we have chemistry on the ice. Our team is building intensity. Hopefully, we'll create some momentum in our upcoming games."

The most recent additions to Aurora's roster contributed immediately on Saturday. Fifty seconds into the contest, the new-look Tigers took a 1-0 lead when Clair—set up by Charlie Holes and Clayden Smith—fired a power play goal past Trenton goaltender Dylan Lee-Stack.

Less than nine minutes later, Marshall chipped a loose puck past the Trenton defender on the left point, generated a breakaway off the right wing, drew Lee-Stack to the right, and deftly slid the puck between the pads of the sprawled netminder for an electrifying shortie. Marshall's first goal as a Tiger gave the home side a 2-0 lead.

An ensuing penalty kill didn't feature another shortie by Aurora, but it did show the Tigers' toughness as the fearless four blocked six shots during a ninety-second sequence. The frustrated Golden Hawks looked on in disbelief as their slapshots made resounding thuds off the white-clad defenders instead of finding the back of the net.

The Tigers kept Trenton's high-octane offence off the scoresheet until the start of the second period. Forty-nine seconds into the middle frame, Beckett Ewart wheeled to the net and snapped one past Owen Byers to narrow Aurora's lead to 2-1.

At 2:46, Jack Ziliotto one-timed a rebound from the edge of the crease to pull the Trenton crew into a tie. Thirty-three seconds later, Andrew Wycisk stormed

down the right wing, rifled a wrist shot that bulged the twine behind Byers, and—presto—the visitors held their first lead of the game by tallying three goals in less than three minutes.

Aurora Head Coach Darcy Roy called a time out after Wycisk's go-ahead goal to settle his shocked troops.

Nei noted the content of the "one-sided conversation."

"Coach told us to get back to our game plan. We were off the plan to start the period. The timeout got us back in the proper mindset."

Indeed, Coach Roy's words of wisdom worked as the down time slowed the whirling dervishes clad in black and gold.

The re-set also helped the home side's offense. At 10:29, Jamie Buscarini created space on the left wing off a perfect pass from Clair and ripped a shot that banged under the crossbar and ricocheted downward over the goal-line to tie the game 3-3.

Seventy-eight seconds later, the Tigers made it 4-3 when Nei made a slick move off the left wing, dragged the puck through one more defender, and calmly slid the puck past a sprawled Lee-Stack who had bitten on the deceptive centre's first deke.

Nie described his first goal as a Tiger: "It was created by playing with two good teammates. We've only had two practices together, but it felt good to contribute and

Continued on page 23

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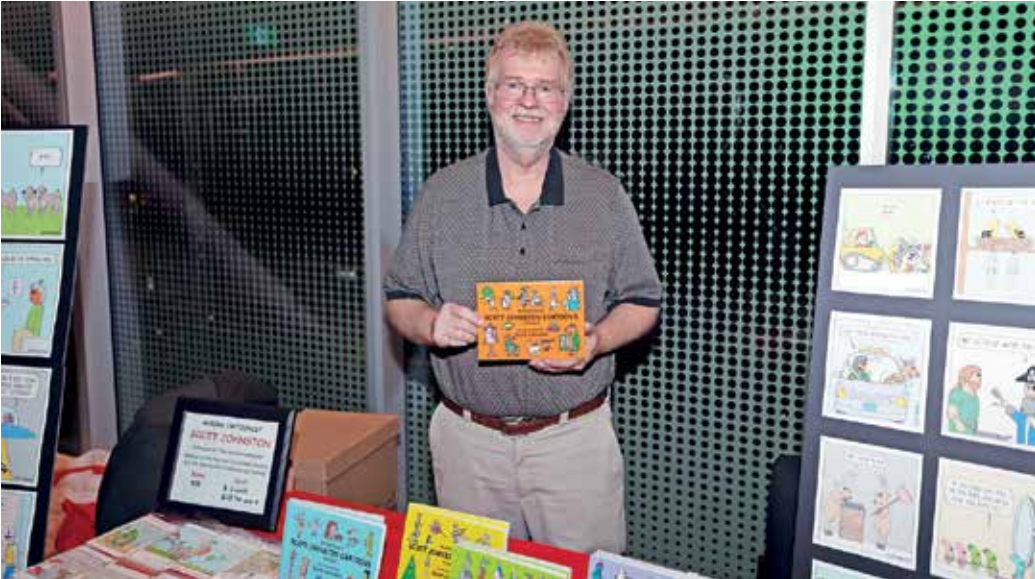
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Aurora Christmas Market “wraps” holiday tradition



It was a wrap on the Aurora Christmas Market as the Town hosted the second of its two weekends at Aurora Town Square. (Top Row) Natalie, Tony, Austin, Lilly, Freddy, and Lyanna enjoyed the outdoor square while, inside, George St. Kitts and his band performed Motown Soul Music in the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall. (Middle Row) Inside, vendors included Aakanksha and Sabrina. (Third Row) Fire dancers lit up the night sky. Auroran cartoonist Scott Johnston featured his latest volume of collected works on the Treasure Hill Bridge. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**



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ASHoF’s Annual Christmas Party enjoyed by over 100 attendees at Slabtown Aurora Armoury



ASHoF President Javed Khan, ASHoF Inductee and retired New York Rangers star Steve Vickers, and Major (Retired) Steve Boyne CD, Vice President of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, flashed their festive colours at the annual Christmas Party at Slabtown Armoury.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

More than 100 attendees enjoyed the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s Annual Christmas Party at Slabtown Aurora Armoury on Thursday night.

ASHoF President Javed Khan reflected on the moment in the warm reception area: “It’s all about celebration tonight. We’re here at a historical site and I love that a military building has been preserved by the new owners in such a beautiful way. It’s great to see the Hall of Famers come in. It’s all about getting together. I love celebrating as much as we can with our dedicated staff. The majority of the staff are volunteers. We have 54 volunteers and it’s that time of year to reflect and celebrate. That’s the #1 thing I love about this event.”

Resplendent in a red velvet jacket and matching Merry Christmas bow tie, Khan greeted dozens of guests who were dressed in “their best festive attire to add to the holiday cheer.”

They quaffed an array of Christmas cheer available at Slabtown’s well-staffed bar and enjoyed a steady supply of delectable

appetizers—sliders, pizza, shrimp, and sandwiches—followed by a range of desserts. The sliders were, in a word, addictive in a lovely sort of way.

Attendees enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere generated by the dulcet tones of Andre Soares and Lawrence Moule who as Take Two delivered the kind of music that melts seamlessly into the guests in the background and your drink in the foreground.

Bartender Jay Broer, who’s been with Slabtown since it opened at its Town Park location, presented me with my drink of choice on a cold snowy evening. “Cider House Rules” is a cheeky concoction that connects to the literary genius of John Irving. Broer described the hot cider he was serving: “It’s our Apple Cider with notes of cinnamon, cloves, and orange peel. It’s real Christmas stuff. Served with brown sugar around the rim of the heated glass and an orange slice.”

A warm drink on an unseasonably cold December night was a key strategy to prepare for coverage of an OJHL game in Caledon with a 7:30 puck drop in the coldest arena in Christendom.

A significant attendee who was

soaking in the warm seasonal ambiance was Mayor Tom Mrakas.

A long-time advocate for sports in Aurora, Mayor Mrakas praised the ASHoF and the quality of the event at Slabtown.

“I’m here to have a great time and wish everyone well—to have a Merry Christmas. It’s great to be here and to get together with the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductees and volunteers. Anytime you get to interact with this community, it’s always a great night.”

As the Mayor suggested, it’s all about the company you keep at such a function. Indeed, It was fun to chat with Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee and former New York Rangers star forward Steve Vickers, Silver Screammers documentary star and Auroran staffer Diane Buchanan, fellow Aurora Optimist Club member, ASHoF volunteer extraordinaire, and UW political science graduate Connor Logan, and Aurora Legion President

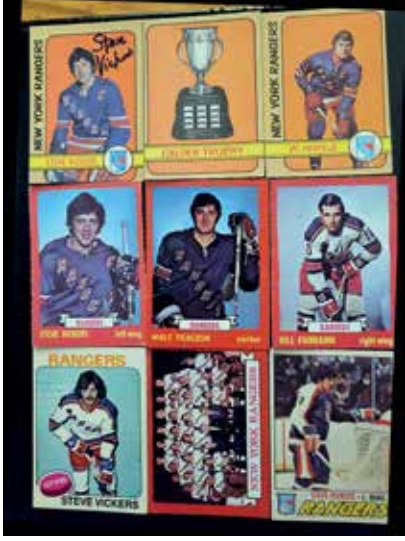
Bonnie Robertson with whom I share a fondness for warm winter drinks featuring just the right amount of cinnamon.

In addition to sharing the conviviality of Christmas with that great crew, one of the features of the evening captured the Season of Giving.

Guests had the opportunity to contribute to “Hockey Ends Hunger” with all proceeds going to the Aurora Food Pantry.

Co-founded by Julian Antonini, the registered charity—now aligned with the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame—raised over \$4,200 at its annual Hockey Game at SARC last Saturday afternoon and is only \$800 short of its \$5K goal.

All funds raised by this dynamic local organization are used to battle food insecurity—a societal crisis that is magnified at this time of year.



Featured here in the top row of the Steve Vickers card collage is his rookie card, the Calder Trophy he won in 1973, and Rangers captain Vic Hadfield. The middle row features The Bulldog Line of Vickers, Tkaczuk, and Fairbairn. The bottom row features Vickers in the latter half of his 10-year career, and includes a photo of the Rangers team from 50 seasons ago in 1974-1975. The collage represents the scope of his colourful career as a New York Ranger

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Margaret Bahen Hospice

- Bean bag heating pads (magic bag)
- 9x13 baking dishes (glass)
- Soft, extra plush blankets and throws
- Grip socks men and women (all sizes)
- Short sleeve t-shirts for men (all sizes and any colour)
- Short sleeve nightgowns for women (all sizes and any colour)
- Combs and brushes
- Aveeno lotion
- Travel-size body wash, shampoo/conditioner, toothpaste
- Good quality disposable razors
- Virtual goggles
- Adult colouring books
- Gift cards from major retailers to make purchases for household items such as towels, sheets, grocery items, kitchen supplies, etc.

Doane House Hospice

- Amazon or Chapters gift cards to purchase supplies such as grief books
- Play-Doh
- Colored sand
- Medium and large watercolor paper pads and large sketch pads
- Small canvases
- Small art journal books
- Gift cards for major retailers to purchase art supplies, garden materials, etc.
- Scrapbooking materials
- Colored, construction paper
- Paint in small containers
- Paint brushes

If you would like to donate any of the items on our wish list,
please drop them off at our locations Monday through Friday
between the hours of 9:00am and 4:00pm.

For more information, please phone us at 905-967-1500.



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Amica hosts Festive Gathering in new building



Many members of the public had their first look inside Amica Aurora Promenade, the new seniors' residence on Yonge Street, just north of Tyler Street, this past week as they hosted their inaugural Christmas Market. (Top Row) Jules, centre, is joined by CHATS CEO Christina Bisanz and Sandra Watson of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. Jody and Emily. (Centre Row) Maryana, Vivian, Marie-Joy, and Pawaan. Sharon, Liana, Juliette, and Shelia. (Left) John, Gerald, Laurane, Mireille and Fred.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

THINGS... you ought to know

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

A Family Christmas at Hillary House National Historic Site – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Hillary House is decorated for the Holidays! Bring the whole family to enjoy some festive treats, holiday crafts, and take a picture with Santa Claus. Tickets can be purchased through the Aurora Historical Society at aurorahs.com.

The Town of Aurora and Chabad Aurora will host the annual Menorah Lighting Ceremony today at Aurora Town Square. The Town of Aurora, in partnership with Chabad Aurora, is delighted to invite the community to this year's Menorah Lighting Ceremony. Join us in celebrating the Festival of Light with the local Jewish community in lighting the 1st candle. Enjoy family activities starting at 3:30 p.m., such as face painting, crafts, music and more. The official lighting ceremony will be at 4:30 p.m. Following the ceremony enjoy latkes and jelly donuts. For more information, visit aurora.ca/menorahlighting.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

York Symphony Orchestra Presents: Christmas at the Symphony. An Aurora tradition, the YSO holiday concert returns with two performances at Trinity Anglican Church. This year's concert features a blend of holiday music performed by the full orchestra – traditional carols, popular songs, movie music, a touch of the classics, and of course, the annual carol sing-a-long. Two performances at 3pm and 7:30pm

Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria St, Aurora. Tickets at Eventbrite.ca or at the door.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31

Ring in the New Year at Aurora's Family First Night, which will take place at Aurora Town Square tonight from 6 – 9 p.m. There will be a variety of free activities including magic shows, reptile shows and a silent dance party – in addition to outdoor fire performances, Mad Science, face painting and so much more! For a full schedule of the evening's activities, visit aurora.ca/familyfirstnight.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

The White Heather Pipes and Drums invites you to attend their Robbie Burns Night, an evening of bagpipes, Scottish music and dancing. Enjoy a delicious meal of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Cocktails at 5 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Parkway North. Tickets are \$70 and are available at the Legion or from band members. We hope you will join us for a great night of entertainment and fun.

ONGOING

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

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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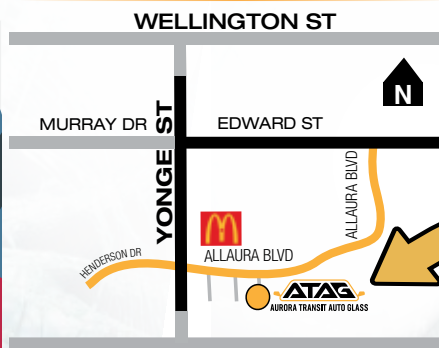
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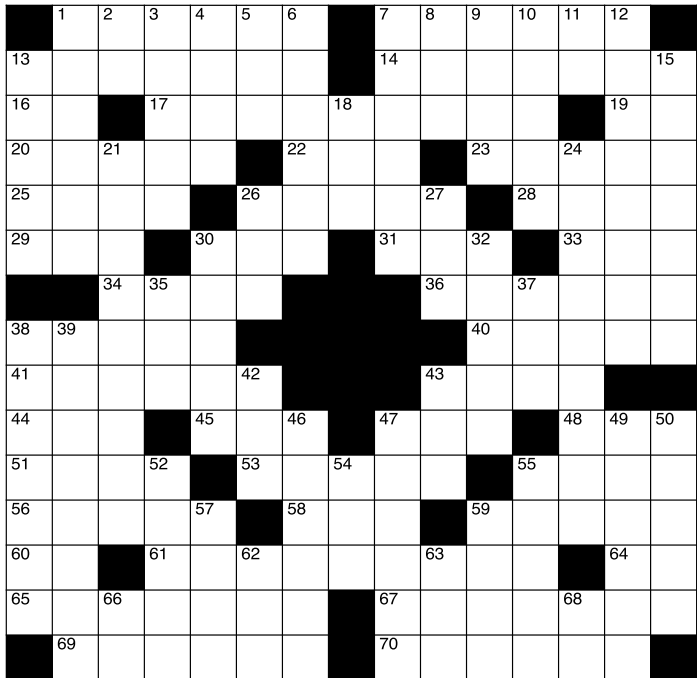
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- A type of solution
- Fortified wine
- Edible mollusk
- They precede C
- A way to compare
- Government lawyer
- "Game of Thrones" actor Ciaran
- The eighth month (abbr.)
- Very willing
- __ ex Machina
- Makes happy
- Type of berry
- A doctrine
- Popular Dodge truck model
- Dekagram
- Naturally occurring solid
- Company officer
- Villains
- Cricket frogs

- Influential German psychologist
- Endured
- A female domestic
- You can get stuck in one
- Cigarette (slang)
- Fiber optics network
- Group of blood disorders (abbr.)
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Belonging to the bottom layer
- Sound
- MLB legend Hank
- Very attractive person
- Late beloved sportscaster Craig
- South Dakota
- Mocking
- Symbol for gold
- Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
- Humor
- Shawl
- Preliminary patient assessment

CLUES DOWN

- Animal disease
- Commercial
- Necklace material
- Containers
- A way to save for your future
- Colorado Heisman winner Rashaan
- Dipped down
- Head injury (abbr.)
- Lay about
- Intestinal
- Opposite of yes
- Caused to be loved
- Spiritual leader of Islam
- Businesslike
- Not in
- Number above the line in a fraction
- An animal with its own day
- Pouch
- Swedish krona
- Start over
- Field flowers
- Fourteen
- A visual way to interact with a computer
- Up-to-date
- Campaigns
- Touch lightly
- "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
- Violent seizure of property
- Supporter of the Pope
- Anxiety
- Body fluid
- One who's faking it
- Title of respect
- Chilean city
- City in central Japan
- Silk garment
- A form of dance
- Automobile
- The man
- Justice Dept. head honcho

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

that confirms a candidate is competent and safe

Under this model, I—trained in forensic psychology—would technically be permitted to conduct neuropsychological assessments for brain injury or early dementia. I have zero training in neuropsychology, and ethically I never would. But candidates trained under a drastically reduced model may not fully understand their limits or may be pressured to “do everything.”

The implication is clear: Ontario could soon have large numbers of professionals legally allowed to diagnose, but without the training to do so.

This is how people get misdiagnosed. This is how children lose access to essential school supports. This is how important safety risks get missed.

Why This Matters for Ontarians

- Lower training standards will have real consequences. Even small increases in misdiagnosis or inadequate care carry significant financial and human costs. Research and provincial data show:
- A 10% rise in misdiagnosis of bipolar disorder could cost taxpayers roughly \$244 million annually.
 - A 10% increase in misdiagnosis among youth with complex mental health needs adds an estimated \$15 million per year.
 - A conservative 3% rise in suicide attempts linked to inadequate or non-evidence-based care could cost Ontario an additional \$40 million annually.
 - Lowering standards does not save money. It increases suffering, increases demand for services, and increases long-term costs.

But Isn’t This About Access?

The College argues that lowering training standards will increase access to care. But access to what? Faster appointments with less qualified clinicians?

Ontario would never improve access to family doctors by cutting medical school or replacing exams with no-fail modules. Yet psychology—the profession responsible for diagnosing mental health and learning conditions—is being asked to accept dramatically reduced standards.

There Is a Better Way to Improve Access

Access challenges stem from chronic underfunding, high private-sector costs, and a long-standing shortage of psychologists in public settings—not from current licensing standards. Ontario has significantly more psychologists than psychiatrists, yet, only 12% of psychologists work in hospital, government funded positions. Reducing training will not fix these systemic issues.

We already have a proven model that expands access without lowering standards: the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) Program. OSP expanded access to free, evidence-based care. Psychologists as systems leaders, led the design, developed training, supervised teams, ensure quality, and evaluate outcomes—while social workers, psychotherapists, and other trained providers deliver high-quality care at scale.

This is how you increase access: through strong systems, not lowered qualifications.

Why This Matters for You and Your Family

Think of your child struggling to learn. A teen having suicidal thoughts. An aging parent with early memory loss. A young person in the justice system needing a fair assessment.

Would you want their diagnosis made by someone trained under a drastically reduced model?

If not, your voice matters—now.

For more information and resources, visit the Psychology Advocacy Network (PAN): www.psychadvocacy.ca

Dr. Helen Chagigiorgis, Ph.D., C. Psych CHMA

Golden Hawks' five-goal rally secures 8-5 win

From page 17

help the team.”

Trailing by a goal, Trenton opened the third period as they started the second. Darlison tallied the first of his four goals thirty-seven seconds into the final frame to tie it 4-4.

Undaunted, the Tigers fought back when Nei tapped the puck past Lee-Stack for his second of the game. The articulate Markham resident described the go-ahead goal: “We had a face-off play set up. The bounces went my way and I was able to bury it in the empty net.” For his two-goal effort, Nei was selected as the Third Star of the Game by QJHL staff.

High Points of the Game

With the Tigers leading 2-0, the ACC popcorn and tube steak—purchased for

the reasonable price of \$10—tasted even better during the first intermission. On top of the gustatory delights served up by Yan, the PA crew played traditional Christmas music to create a festive mood. Dreams of a major QJHL upset danced in our heads. That prospective “Upset of the Season” still seemed possible with the nifty Nei put the Tigers up 5-4 less than three minutes into the third, but Darlison and Artichuk were the Grinches who stole the Christmas Miracle in Aurora with their breath-taking offensive surge in the final frame.

Two-game weekend at the ACC

The gritty Tigers host the Haliburton Huskies on Friday night and the Lindsey Muskies on Saturday night. Puck drop will be 7 p.m.

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Stan Douglas (b. 1960), *Masonic Lodge, Barkerville* (detail), 2006, laserchrome print, 127 x 145 cm, courtesy of the artist, Victoria Miro, and David Zwirner © Stan Douglas

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