

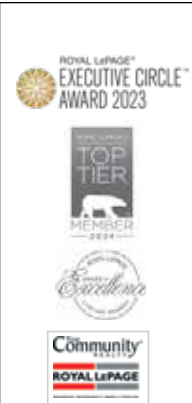


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FINDING HER ROOTS – York Region artist Ava Dedier was among the artists celebrated Friday evening as Aurora’s Royal Rose Gallery and Revolution Now came together for Rise Together, a celebration of Revolution Now’s artistic team and scholarship winners like Ava, who used her scholarship to explore her roots through an artistic lens. For more, see Page 10.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Hope House to open Wellness, Grief & Caregiving Hub in community

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Grief can be a complex journey, but it’s not a journey you need to travel alone.

This is a philosophy that has driven Hope House Community Hospice since it was founded as Hospice King-Aurora-Richmond

Hill in 1983, and it is one that continues to push them forward as they prepare to open up their new Wellness, Grief & Caregiver Hub in the local community.

Hope House recently moved from their long-time home on Industrial Parkway South, a facility that was shared with other non-profits, and has planted new roots on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of

Church Street.

With the new digs, comes a new approach and a new umbrella name for their community programs.

The Wellness, Grief and Caregiving Hub is a unique name for what Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House Community Hospice, calls a “unique purpose.”

“I think primarily when people

Continued on page 19



The Hope House Community Hospice team – from left: Executive Director Heidi Bonner, Intake/Admin Coordinator Tanja Shishkina, and Coordinator of Volunteers Kathy Powers – is excited to welcome the community to its new Community Hub next Friday, January 23.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

January 15, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Thursday, January 15	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
Wednesday, January 21	7 p.m.	School House Mtg Room	Aurora Cultural Centre Board
Thursday, January 22	10 a.m.	Video Conference	Aurora Appeal Tribunal/Property Standards Committee (if required)
Tuesday, January 27	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, January 27	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Council
Wednesday, January 28	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee
Week of February 2	No meetings		

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

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition

Featured Artists: Tom Wray - Journeys

This photography exhibition takes you on a visual journey through four unique and awe-inspiring destinations. The view through the lens captures the distinctive beauty, culture, and natural wonders that define these places. The journey begins in Canada - but there is so much more to discover - this is but a glimpse. In Iceland, otherworldly glaciers and volcanic landscapes create surreal atmospheric scenes. From Iceland to the romantic charm and historic grandeur of France, to the lush green hills and dramatic coastlines of Ireland, and finally to the vast, rugged wilderness of Canada, this exhibition invites viewers to explore a rich tapestry of natural and urban landscapes. Stark contrasts between fire and ice, where volcanic craters, cascading waterfalls, and the northern lights are immortalized in powerful imagery. This exhibition is a celebration of the diverse beauty found across continents, a testament to the power of photography to capture not just places, but the soul of the land itself. View in-person at Aurora Town Hall in the Skylight Gallery. View online at aurora.ca/SkylightGallery. All work is for sale. Please contact Sarah Reynolds at sreynolds@aurora.ca if you are interested in investing and owning a beautiful piece of art.

What's Happening

AURORA'S 2026 ARCTIC ADVENTURE

Celebrate Family Day Weekend
Free fun for everyone!

Saturday, February 14 | 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Aurora Town Square - 50 Victoria Street

Marquee Theatrical Productions Show

Speaking of Wildlife Show

Crafts, Pottery Demos & More!

Monday, February 16 | 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Aurora Town Park - 49 Wells Street

Winter Adventures- Inflatables, Ice Carvings, Activities

Speaking of Wildlife and Canadian Lumberjack Shows

Fire Buskers & more!

Details and schedules at
aurora.ca/ArcticAdventure

Some activities are weather dependent.

EGYPTIAN BELLY DANCE

Workshop 1: February 2, 6 to 8 p.m.

Workshop 2: March 2, 6 to 8 p.m.

Learn authentic belly dance techniques in a welcoming, inclusive environment.

A great workout perfect for beginners and experienced dancers, ages 10+.

Register:
aurora.ca/WhatsOn

OLD BLUE BOX DROP OFF

Drop off your old blue boxes at the following locations:



Joint Operation Centre
229 Industrial Parkway North

January 5 to 19, 2026
Monday to Friday

8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Georgina Waste Transfer Station
23068 Warden Ave., Keswick

January 5 to 30, 2026
Monday to Saturday

During regular business hours

aurora.ca/BlueBox



RENEW AND LICENSE YOUR PETS ONLINE



All dogs and cats in the Town of Aurora must be licensed under Animal Services By-law Number 6197-19.

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Winter 2026 Program Guide



The **Winter 2026 Program Guide** is available to view online at aurora.ca/ProgramGuide. Registration is open for Recreation and Aquatic programs. View the interactive guide and click on the code # to register online. Pay in-person at the A.F.L.C., S.A.R.C. or A.T.S.

2026 Aquatic Leadership Courses

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

Seniors Walking Club

Free Seniors Walking Club for older adults, every Tuesday at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. Visit our Older Adults webpage for details at aurora.ca/ActiveSeniors.

Club Aurora Wellness Series – Fun Guided Hikes

Join us this winter for our Fun Guided Hikes. Check out our Fitness and Health webpage for full details at aurora.ca/Fitness.

Town of Aurora Special Events

The Town of Aurora has many fun and exciting special events happening this season. Check out a list of upcoming special events at aurora.ca/SpecialEvents.

Download our 2026 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion CALENDAR

aurora.ca/DEI

We are proud to present our 2026 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Calendar. This resource highlights significant faith, cultural, and awareness dates that reflect the vibrant diversity of our community. Available now at: aurora.ca/DEI.

Wondering if your subdivision has been assumed by the Town?

aurora.ca/AssumptionMap

You can now check your subdivision's assumption status online! Try our new interactive map today: aurora.ca/AssumptionMap.



Offered on January 19 & February 23, 6:30 p.m.

MUSEUM MONDAYS

Discover the hidden stories and spaces of your community museum in this exclusive guided tour and Q&A, all ages welcome.

Registration (\$10):
aurora.ca/WhatsOn



AURORA



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Registration (\$10):
aurora.ca/WhatsOn



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Victims of Flight PS752 to have lasting memorial in Richmond Hill

Crash killed 176, including Aurora dentist and daughter



Photo courtesy of MP Costas Menegakis/Facebook

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

On the sixth anniversary of the downing of Ukraine International Airlines 752, a crash which claimed the lives of 176 people, including one Aurora dentist and her young daughter, the Province of Ontario announced support of a lasting memorial to the victims.

Contributions to the construction of a memorial was announced in Richmond Hill on Thursday by Ontario’s Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Graham McGregor, who noted the Province will transfer \$350,000 to the City of Richmond Hill for its completion.

“The Flight PS752 Memorial represents a collaboration between the City of Richmond Hill, provincial and federal governments. Construction is set to begin mid-2026 and is expected to be completed in 2027,” said the Province in a statement. “Designed by the City of Richmond Hill in partnership with families of the victims, the memorial will feature a series of steel panels and an engraved granite base listing all names, along with accessible pathways and integrated lighting. It will serve as a civic landmark in Richmond Hill’s Unity

Park, creating a public space that honours the lives lost.”

Flight 752, which was shot down over Iran by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard on January 8, 2020, claimed the lives of 176 people, including 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents – including Dr. Parisa Eghbalian and her daughter Reera Esmacilion. Dr. Eghbalian, who was born and raised in Iran, was co-owner of Aurora E&E Dentistry on Wellington Street East with her husband, Dr. Hamed Esmacilion.

The couple also ran practices in Caledon and Richmond Hill.

The lives of the victims were remembered in a special ceremony held Thursday at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts.

“We are deeply grateful for the Government of Ontario’s approval of permanent funding for the Flight PS752 memorial in Richmond Hill,” said Kourosh Doustshenas, Spokesperson and Chair of the Association of Families of Flight PS752 Victims. “Combined with the previously announced federal funding and the strong support of the City of Richmond Hill, this commitment allows us to move forward with a dignified, permanent space to honour the 176 innocent victims of this tragic crime. This memorial will be a place

of remembrance, reflection, and collective mourning—ensuring that the lives lost on Flight PS752 are never forgotten and that the pursuit of truth and justice remains alive in our community.”

Gratitude was also expressed by Richmond Hill Mayor David West, who said in a statement: “I’m so thankful for this provincial funding, which combined with the previously announced Federal funding and Richmond Hill’s own contribution, will enable our City to create a memorial for the victims of the tragic downing of Flight PS752 in 2020. This will give our community a dedicated space to collectively

mourn our families and friends, and ensure that we will never forget.”

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Ontario’s Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, himself of Iranian heritage, said he expressed his “deepest gratitude” to the Association for their efforts in making the memorial a reality.

“Our government is proud to stand with the victims’ families and to honour the memory of those we lost on that terrible day six years ago,” he said.

Added Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis, who attended the Richmond Hill Centre observance: “It was very emotional to hear from the family members who lost loved ones in this act of terror six years ago. Time may pass, but closure is not possible without accountability. I stand in solidarity with the families and all my friends in the Iranian community. I was so deeply moved by the heart-wrenching stories of the families of the victims. The front row of the theatre was occupied by the mothers whose children were killed in this tragic, senseless, and barbaric act against innocent people. To this day, justice has not been served on those responsible.”



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reader questions
MP's column

I read MP Costas Menegakis's recent New Year message on "choosing hope" in your January 8 edition of the Auroran.

Hope is a powerful and necessary idea, especially at a time when many Canadians are facing real economic and societal pressures, in a world growing increasing uncertain. And it is a theme that can unite communities across geography and political lines. However, while framed as a reflection on hope, the article quickly shifts into a critique of the current government and a promotion of the opposition's policy agenda – led by someone who is not known for his positive messaging or uplifting Canada. (I'm referring of course to Pierre Polievre).

I found it both hypocritical and offensive party promotion.

Public or community media intended to serve the whole community should prioritize information, reflection, and engagement that speaks to all readers, regardless of political affiliation. When those platforms are used primarily for partisan advocacy, it risks undermining public trust and blurring the line between community communication and political campaigning.

Canadians benefit from robust debate, and opposition voices play an essential role in our democracy. There are many appropriate venues for that debate. Publicly accessible community media, however, should strive to remain a forum that informs and unites, rather than one that advances a single party's platform under the banner of shared values.

This platform — and the concept of hope itself — should be used to bring communities together, not to divide them along petty political lines.

Norma McClinton
Received Online

Public Health launches
online dashboard

York Region Public Health has launched a new Population Health Assessment dashboard, providing residents and community partners with easy access to local health data and information. This interactive tool helps with understanding the health of people in York Region, offering a clear snapshot of health indicators across the Region and supports informed decision-making for healthier communities.

The dashboard features 57 indicators grouped into eight key topics:

Chronic Disease,
Oral Health and Injuries

- Health Behaviours
- Healthy Environments
- Mental Health and Substance Use

Social and Demographic
Information

- Early Childhood and Health in Pregnancy
- Overall Health
- Infectious Diseases

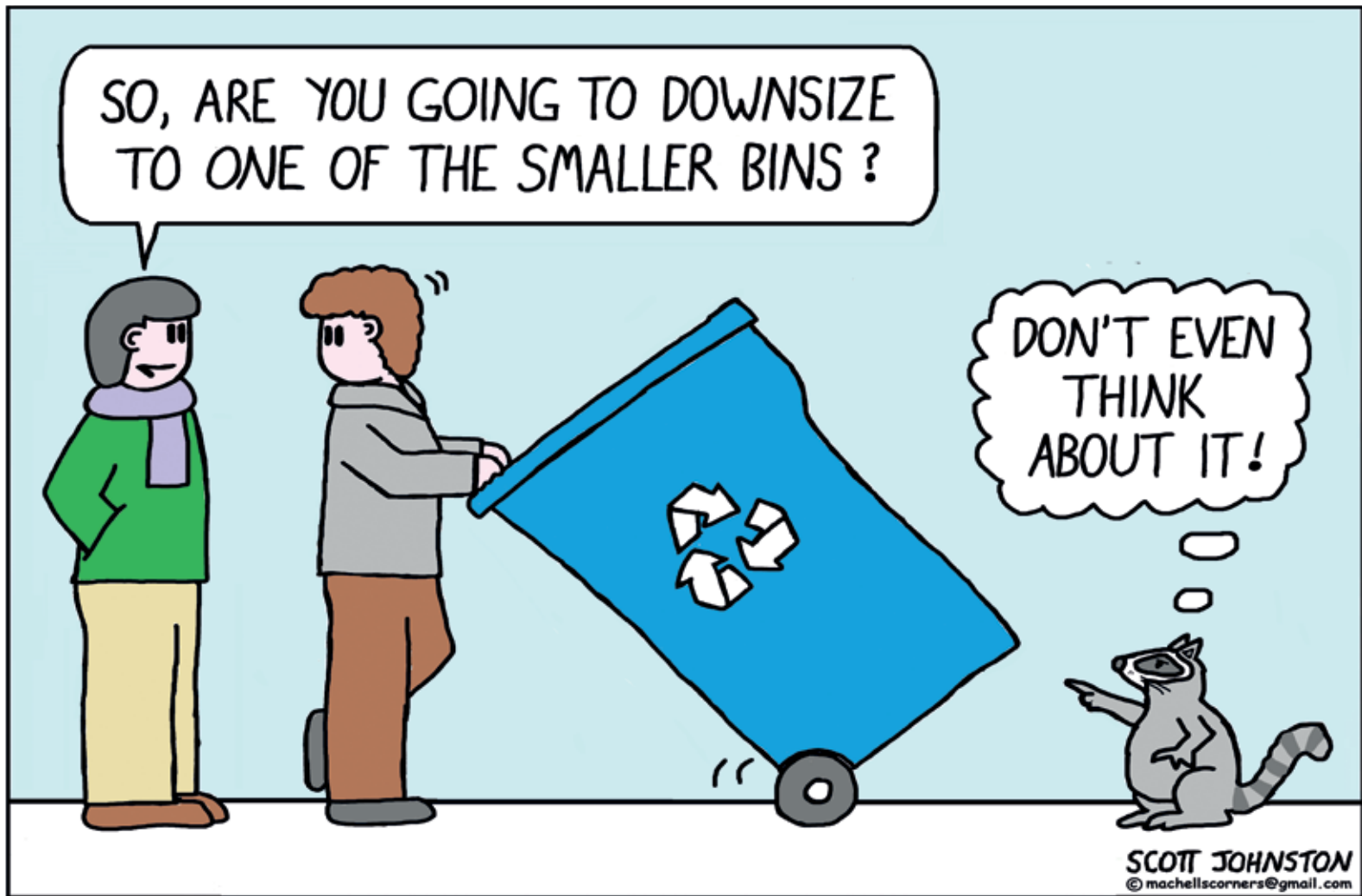
Users will be able to explore trends over time, compare local data to provincial rates and examine differences across population subgroups. The dashboard will be updated annually to reflect the most current data available.

Alongside the dashboard, Public Health has released the first Population Health Key Trends Report created from the dashboard. The report highlights important health trends across York Region.

For more information and to view the dashboard and report, visit york.ca/HealthData

York Region Public Health

Machell's Corners



Back to Work, Back To Reality



BROCK'S
BANTER

Brock Weir

per week will increase their attendance to four days per week as part of a gradual transition period to the full time in-office standard effective January 6, 2026. This transition is an important step that supports the government's ongoing efforts to build a more competitive, resilient, and self-reliant Ontario."

In the five odd months since this announcement was initially made, I'm yet to be convinced that any element of this shift will result on a more competitive, resilient, and self-reliant Province, outside, perhaps, when it comes to the bottom line of businesses that strategically positioned themselves around places of government, sure in the knowledge there would be a steady stream of employees to take advantage of their products or services. They have undoubtedly sustained a heavy blow since we began to re-think our work models out of sheer necessity in 2020.

That said, however, I can see – and have been on – both sides of the coin.

When our world was quite literally locked down in that dark year, I anticipated something of a slowdown when it came to my weekly output. That didn't happen in the slightest and, as I settled into the work from home routine, I saw my own efficiency hit new heights.

Until they didn't.

I lasted about a year-and-a-half in the home office, not because the work was getting to be any more difficult to complete in the domestic setting as such, but rather because I started to feel the four walls of my home office start to close in around me. I made the decision to come back into the office earlier than many simply to preserve my own mental health and to re-establish clear lines between work and home.

Of course, I was afforded the luxury to choose – an option that is no longer available to many government workers.

At the same time, for the people I manage, my own personal experience did nothing to influence my mindset that as long as the necessary work gets done, I

don't really care whether it's completed at the office, at home, or any other place where you can set down a laptop for a few hours at a time. Of course, this line of work requires reporters go out to attend various events, meetings, and conduct in-person interviews, but as long as the job gets done, that's the main thing.

The move back to the office is meeting some resistance with a January 5 report from the CBC noting that, according to OPSEU, nearly 10,000 requests for "alternative" work relations were still up for review.

"We should be asking who is this benefiting in the end?" OPSEU President JP Hornick told the CBC, adding the shift back doesn't make sense in today's work environment. "The return to work seems to be based on pressure from perhaps corporate landlords from other municipalities."

With myriad alternative options to keep employees engaged and productive, I'm inclined to agree with OPSEU that it "makes no sense in this day and age."

Yet, at the same time, one key benefit I see of going back into the office doesn't seem to be getting as much airplay – that is, the benefits of getting out of your own environment and having real face-to-face interactions once more.

As Artificial Intelligence grows at a rate previously unfathomable and increasingly becomes an inextricable part of our lives whether we like it or not, the value of true human interaction can't be understated, nor can the importance of getting out beyond the walls we've created for ourselves.

Over the holiday downtime, I have to admit I succumbed one or twice to so-called "doomscrolling," which is defined as "continually scrolling through and read depressing or worrying content on social media or a news site, especially on a phone." And while some of the news was depressing enough, what was especially worrisome to me were those who found themselves questioning so many elements of established reality, however mundane, unable to determine real from fake, even casting doubt on some elements that are part of our collective lived experience and things we were able to see and hear for ourselves.

Some say the antidote for this is getting out and "touching grass" – and, fair enough – but, at the end of the day, that all boils down to being a fully-fledged participant in our society, and this shift certainly couldn't hurt.

But efficiency? I still have my doubts.

Time will tell, but my one friend who is now anticipating a minimum 15 hours of commute time this week, will probably have something to say as well.

THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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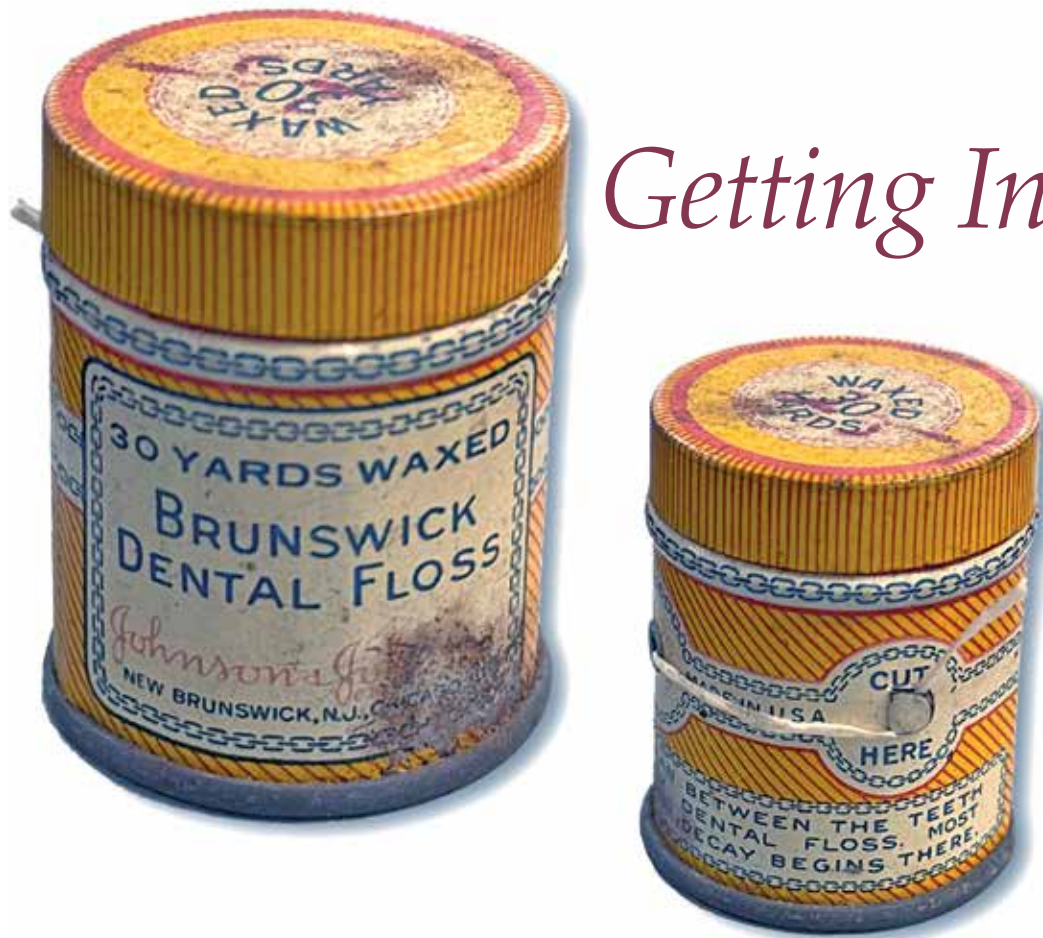
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THE AURORA MUSEUM
& ARCHIVES is...



Getting In Between

While our intrepid time traveler contends with 19th-century dental practices, we can offer a bit more of a modern solution. This tin of Johnson & Johnson Brunswick Dental Floss (2017.6.10) represents the peak of home dental technology in the 1940s. From the turn of the 20th century to World War II, silk fibres left over from the making of surgical sutures were turned into the earliest dental floss. When silk was required for the war effort, a new material called Nylon was used in its place. Even back then, they knew that using waxed floss may help one's teeth from waning!



Time Travellers
Diary

By Jeremy Hood
Museum Collections Technician
Aurora Museum & Archives

The King
of Pain

This year, I am resolving to try to get out to more social events, and to really participate rather than simply observe. Now, these will naturally be throughout time and mostly in Aurora, but I hope to bring you all along if I can.

After having been stuck in that coat pocket, I felt that the time around New Year's 1896 would be familiar enough for me to venture into, and maybe make some new auld acquaintances.

My time machine materialized behind Victoria Hall. It was late evening, and the winter-blanketed schoolyard was quiet; a half-melted snowman donning a left-behind woolen hat evinced the way that children have always relished the malleable and ballistic aspects of a snowfall.

I heard the tell-tale shuffle of boots moving through the snow, and looked over to see a young man and woman across the street, approaching Mechanics' Hall. They stopped to read a poster on its outer wall; their voices carried in the quiet street as I made my way over to them.

"...and his wife, Mrs. Ramsay, played each national air on piano while he spoke about his travels, and accompanied him as he sang the latest London bawdy tunes!" The young man did a little

vaudevillian gesture with his hands.

"I heard there were some rowdy kids there who wouldn't hush – I hope you weren't one of them!" The young woman pushed him playfully.

I summoned my best attempt at improvisation as I walked up.

"Well drat, did I miss the Ramsay event? Heard it was quite the show."

The young man nodded, "Yessir, he's moved on to other Towns. But we've still got KA-TO-NA for one more day tomorrow if you want to see something special." He pointed to the poster on the wall. "They've been here two weeks and do this all over Ontario!"

I couldn't fully make sense of what I was reading. The KA-TO-NA Medicine and Concert Co.? How could those two disparate concepts be brought together? It advertised "BIG FREE SHOWS"

and at the bottom reminded that it was to be a "REFINED SHOW – NO VULGARITY ALLOWED." So, no bawdy jokes here. But they were offering "advice regarding the Remedies" and, most strangely of all, "TEETH EXTRACTED FREE."

Is this what the kids were into these days?

From a bit more conversation, I determined that the KA-TO-NA company was really selling cure-all oils and balms in local stores, and one Professor Bailey was promoting that business town to town.

Whatever music his troupe was performing much have been striking enough to entice hordes of young people to attend, witness the supposed power of healing oils and balms, and of course, to have teeth extracted at no charge. One of the brand's slogans was "THE KING OF PAIN." I clenched my jaw, and thought, "The cause or the remedy?" and immediately felt that I may have stepped too boldly into my new resolution. I thanked my new acquaintances and assured them that I would see them tomorrow in time for the dentistry component. The breaking of resolutions is as sure a tradition as New Year's itself!



MP SANDRA
COBENA'S
UPDATE

Sandra Cobena, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

A new year represents a new opportunity to continue working on the things that matter the most to our community.

Throughout 2025, I spent countless hours listening to neighbours across our community: at the doorsteps while canvassing, through the thoughtful responses you shared in our mailers, and in the many messages sent directly to my office. These conversations were honest, personal, and often deeply concerned.

One issue came up more than any other: crime.

I heard from small business owners whose storefronts were vandalized, putting their employees at risk. I spoke with workers who were assaulted while simply doing their jobs. Parents shared their worries that the parks where their children play no longer feel as safe as they once did. These concerns are not imagined. They reflect real experiences happening in our community.

Public safety is not an abstract

concept. It is the confidence to walk down Main Street after dark, to open a business, and to let our children play freely in neighbourhood parks. When there are no meaningful consequences for criminal behaviour, that confidence disappears. A justice system that too often catches and releases repeat offenders has created a revolving door, and communities like ours are paying the price.

Safety requires clear laws, real enforcement, and accountability that restores public trust. That is why I will be joining my colleagues Arpan Khanna and Larry Brock on January 23 for a Stop the Crime Town Hall

in Newmarket-Aurora. This will be an opportunity to hear directly from community voices and to discuss responsible reforms that put victims, families, and neighbourhood safety first.

I hope you will join us.

Please use the QR code in the accompanying graphic to register. It's time to make public safety a priority again.



OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

The power of awe:
How nature can
transform our
perspective

A large swarm of anchovies recently swam into Semiahmoo Bay near White Rock, British Columbia, staying for about a week. The abundance of tiny fish attracted an explosion of biodiversity. Thousands of gulls, grebes, surf scoters and the occasional sea lion amassed for an anchovy feast.

As many as 100 harbour seals also congregated, seemingly hunting as a pack — an occurrence with little to no documentation in scientific literature. It was a wildlife spectacle akin to a scene from a David Attenborough documentary, on a scale that many people today rarely see first-hand.

It's one thing to learn about predator-prey relationships from a film or textbook, but seeing species interactions so viscerally offers a greater understanding of how everything is connected.

In this case, huge numbers of fish resulted in more birds and seals, each with its place in the web of life. Witnessing such an abundance of biodiversity is awe-inspiring.

Australian journalist and author Julia Baird describes "awe" as the sensation that makes one feel small but more connected — often found in nature, art or human goodness. "When you see the beauty, vastness and fragility of nature, you want to preserve it. You see what we share, and how we connect. You understand being small," she wrote in *Phosphorescence*.

Feeling awe from observing nature is not political. We can find commonality and unity in a shared sense of beauty, curiosity and amazement for the natural world.

If I could, I would roll out this spectacle on a cross-Canada tour to engage more people in the experience. Such an endeavour doesn't seem absurd given findings from a recent study that looked at human connectedness to nature. We know this affinity has been declining with each generation — dropping by 60 per cent over 200 years, according to a 2025 study by University of Derby science professor Miles Richardson.

Perhaps even more alarming, a 2025 study by Swedish and Japanese researchers found that a love of nature is not something innate (a long-held assumption called "biophilia," popularized by the great biologist E.O. Wilson). Rather, the study suggests a growing number of people feel fear, disgust or discomfort toward nature.

These researchers conducted a systematic global review of scientific articles from different disciplines (environmental sciences, social sciences, psychology). Their findings suggest that human emotions are shaped by our surroundings, including exposure to nature and media narratives.

Media can play a huge role, including vastly overrepresenting the risk wildlife poses to human life — often to the detriment of wilderness. The authors also found a trend of declining human-nature relationships over time. They attributed this to reduced contact with nature and limited knowledge about it reinforcing each other. These findings make sense given our increasingly urbanized and online global population.

How do we begin to build back biophilia? This question is critical to conservation. I'm worried that we're losing biodiversity at a rate so fast that many of us will never witness a scene like that in Semiahmoo Bay. If people don't care about the natural environment, and don't see ourselves as part of it, we won't fight to preserve it. We're already seeing this trend in Canada, as federal and provincial politicians push through legislation and projects that harm nature.

One solution is to actively increase our knowledge and contact with nature. I see some hope with community science (also referred to as "citizen science"). It's growing in significance every year, with millions of people contributing valuable data — including through the David

Community Planning Permit system reflects resident, business concerns

Plan designed to steer significant development in downtown core

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora’s Community Planning Permit System, a proposed plan which will help the Town steer future development in the historic downtown core is expected to move forward to the next level this month, reflecting concerns expressed by residents and business owners alike last year.

Council this month is poised to approve an Official Plan amendment allowing the Downtown Community Planning Permit system to take root, with the system itself subject to final approval at a future meeting of Council.

The Community Planning System is designed to streamline the planning process in the historic core along Yonge and Wellington Streets, bringing the zoning, site plan, and minor variance applications into one streamlined approval.

In addition to streamlining the process, it’s also intended to set out what the Town expects from developers at the outset, helping the Town to manage future growth in the area “responsibly.”

“Through the Downtown Community Planning Permit, the Town is proactively setting the criteria for development in the Downtown and positioning itself to responsibly manage future growth in the area,” says Policy Planner Dania Asahi Ogie in a report before Council at this week’s Committee of the Whole meeting. “The Downtown Urban Design Study prepared by Urban Strategies recommends several development standards for the Bylaw area.... The Bylaw area will see increased

step-backs, heights, and setbacks; the new standards are to make sure that the taller buildings introduced into the Downtown will have less impact on the pedestrian realm, the heritage building facades, and the street-wall of Yonge Street.”

When the proposed plan was last before residents at a Public Planning meeting in October, feedback was largely positive. While some area residents voiced concern on the impact infill developments might have on their nearby heritage homes, including structural, and the potential influx of traffic and parking issues, many said bringing more people into the area while preserving the heritage facades of existing buildings was the right way to go.

“Key comments on the project have included a desire to have the [plan] incorporate progressive growth-oriented policies by introducing greater densities based on current and future housing demands, support the protection of the downtown heritage facades through step-backs, and to promote mixed-use development and encourage walkability in the area as a means of revitalizing the Downtown,” says Asahi Ogie in the report. “All of these suggestions received from the public have become fundamental principles built into the Downtown CPPS.”

Parking could prove to be a bone of contention, however; as business owners have long expressed concerns about on-street parking and a perceived lack of parking in the general area.

Minimum parking rates have been lowered in the Plan to “encourage more walkability and decrease dependency on the private automobile.” But, should any

proposed development impact existing municipal parking spaces, the developer will be required to allocate public parking spaces within the proposed development.

“With the vision of creating a Downtown that is vibrant, the proposed reduction in the minimum residential parking rate for apartment buildings is a necessary change to achieve the vision laid out in the Official Plan for the Downtown as a place to live, shop, work, and play without reliance on the private automobile. The minimum parking rate policy in the bylaw is intended to increase pedestrian porosity in the area leading to higher foot traffic and pedestrian activity. In addition, this policy aligns with

the Province of Ontario’s direction on reduction of parking in strategic growth areas like the Major Transit Station Area.

“The proposed Downtown Community Planning Permit System positions the Town proactively in terms of setting the vision and framework for downtown growth and revitalization. The development and design standards in the proposed bylaw build off the alternative development concept from the Downtown Urban Design Study to create a public realm that is pedestrian friendly and sensitive to the heritage facades while introducing sensible growth in the area.”

Events calendar illustrates full tapestry of culture in Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora is a multicultural community, and the full tapestry of the people who call this community home is now illustrated in a refreshed events calendar launched by the Town.

The Town of Aurora welcomed the New Year with the launch of a revised and updated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion calendar. Now in its third edition, it’s intended to be a resource highlighting significant faith, cultural, and awareness dates “that reflect the vibrant diversity of our community.”

“Understanding and celebrating our differences brings us closer as a community,” said the Town in a statement.

And this is a sentiment shared by Cindy Shaver of the Town’s Communications Department.

“This is the third year we’ve done it and when we initially developed it, we looked at other calendars that have been developed within our community and within the GTA area,” she says. “Those were the initial ones that we looked to gather information and York Region has one, which is wonderful, but that reflects the community fabric of all nine municipalities, where Aurora, we think, is unique in that it may not necessarily have the same makeup as Vaughan or Richmond Hill do.”

A key step in developing the made-in-Aurora calendar was analysing StatsCan data from 2021, which illustrated the top three religious denomination represented in Aurora. From there, they examined the data to look at “different dimensions of diversity,” including the different ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, etc., represented in the population.

“We also looked at awareness days that the Town typically celebrates to help educate and celebrate diversity and inclusion,” says Shaver. “When we’re building the calendar in December for the coming year, we’re looking back to see if we’ve had any community engagement. Sometimes we get calls, on social media, and we get emails coming in that gives us a suggestion – ‘This is my faith and we’d really like to have this specific faith day recognized.’ In general, we’re happy to comply with that – if it’s important to our community, it’s important to us.

“We’re just trying to really reflect the diversity of the Town of Aurora specifically. It’s not exhaustive. It’s not the calendar that is going to have every single faith date, but reflects our population.”

Resident feedback, for instance, has led to the inclusion of the Islamic observance of Ashura making it into the calendar for the first time, as well as Disability Employment Awareness Month, a time that has historically recognized by Town Hall, but has previously missed being included in the calendar.

“People are being recognized and heard,” says Shaver. “It’s also an education tool. We’ve gotten great feedback that people didn’t necessarily know a specific Jewish holiday and what that meant for the community, and other faiths as well. It’s been eye-opening to sort of educate people and bridge understanding – and with that comes inclusion. You start to understand your community better and you become closer and more tight-knit.”

For more information on the Town of Aurora’s 2026 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar, visit aurora.ca/DEI.

If you don’t see a holiday or observance reflected in the calendar, residents are invited to reach out to communications@aurora.ca with their feedback.

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Motion could give potential homeowners, builders flexibility on Development Charges

Councillor urges re-think in bid to increase affordability

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A re-think on how Development Charges are collected by municipalities could help ease the affordability of local homes, according to Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo.

Local lawmakers this week will consider a motion from Councillor Gallo that could result in a significant departure from how Development Charges (DCs) – fees incoming builders pay to municipalities to support infrastructure in growing communities – are collected, as well as the sticker shock that is associated with the purchase of a new home today.

“Residential DCs are currently collected by the Town of Aurora from developers in full occupancy. The cost of DCs is typically embedded into the purchase price of new homes, effectively passing this cost directly to first-time and other homebuyers through higher purchase prices,” says the Councillor in his motion. “The current practice contributes to housing affordability challenges for new homebuyers in Aurora and alternative models for the collection of development charges may improve transparency,

enhance affordability, and provide more flexible options for new homeowners while ensuring the Town maintains the necessary revenue to fund growth-related infrastructure.”

The Town, he says, “has the capacity to issue bonds or other financing instruments to secure the full amount of DC revenues upfront, while amortizing repayment through the municipal tax system.”

Should Council approve the motion, municipal staff will be tasked with reporting back on the feasibility of implementing alternative DC collection models by the end of the second quarter of 2026.

The model outlined in his motion includes removing the cost of DCs from the purchase price of a new home, while giving new homeowners the option at the time of purchase to either pay the full DC amount upfront, or opt in to a DC repayment program amortized over 25 years.

Here, the amortized repayments would be collected through the property tax system and would be tied to the property, rather than the homeowner, until it is fully paid off.

Ahead of this week’s Committee of the Whole meeting, Councillor Gallo told

The Auroran his motion was inspired by models shared with him by American friends, which have shown to be effective.

“I started to investigate and try to get a better understanding of the concept, always with the concept of how do we make things somewhat more affordable for any new homebuyers,” he says. “DCs always, always come up both on the development side and we always talk about...how much we need them, and, developers, how much they don’t want them, so this seemed like a good opportunity to explore this concept of basically not charging the developer DCs, pulling them out of the purchase price, and having a separate tax bill if the homeowner chooses and amortize [that DC amount] over 25 years.

“The Town would issue a bond or some other type of financial instrument where we would put that in the open market [and] I have been told that most investors would buy that up easily and then have the homeowner amortize that over 25 years, and it would stay with the property, not the owner.”

Should this model move forward, he conceded there might be a “few bumps and probably some things to iron out” along the way, and cited the biggest challenge getting the Provincial government to “tweak” the relevant legislation to allow towns like Aurora to issue bonds and collect DCs in a different way.

As to how a DC fee being included as

part of a home’s resale, Councillor Gallo says it would not be unlike a condominium going on the market, with that extra condo fee to consider.

“I think it’s a win-win for everyone,” he says. “The municipality collects upfront like we normally would do. The homeowner gets to choose whether they want to pay for it in the purchase price or amortize that over 25 years and reduce the cost of the home, sometimes up to 10 per cent, depending on what the DCs are, and the developer doesn’t have to come up with that money upfront and we can move projects along a lot quicker, I think.”

The future of DCs has been clouded in uncertainty in recent years, leading to questions from Regional and Municipal levels of government.

Councillor Gallo describes DCs, as they currently stand, as a “moving target” and has resulted in “some instability in terms of long-term planning”

“I’m hopeful that this will somewhat even the playing field and provide another way of having homes a little bit more affordable,” he says. “There’s not a lot we can do outside of our taxes and our user fees to impact the cost of homes. There’s not a lot of tools in our toolbox.

“It’s going to take some time and some study, and some political will on multiple levels of government, but it’s a concept, it’s an idea, and let’s see how much traction it gets.”

New mapping service will make it easier for residents to know status of subdivisions

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

If you’re living in a newer subdivision, it can be tricky to know who to call for maintenance – especially if the development hasn’t yet been assumed by the municipality.

A new online tool launched by the Town of Aurora last week, however, is designed to help take away some of that guesswork.

The Town’s new interactive mapping service allows residents to access immediate and up-to-date information on the status of the subdivision, which the municipality says will “ensure greater transparency and convenience.”

“This user-friendly tool provides real-time information, eliminating the need for residents to contact Town staff for updates,” said the Town in a statement. “By simply accessing the map, residents can view whether their subdivision has been assumed by the Town, ensuring greater transparency and convenience.

“Assumption of the subdivision by the Town occurs when the municipality assumes responsibility for the maintenance of all municipal services. This usually occurs once the Town is satisfied that the subdivision developer’s obligations have been fulfilled and all defects have been addressed. Until assumption, the developer is responsible for all municipal services and the upkeep of the street, with the exception of snow clearing for some areas.”

The launch was also welcomed by Mayor Tom Mrakas.

“This new service is part of our ongoing commitment to improving accessibility and streamlining communication with our community,” he said. “Residents can now find the information they need quickly and efficiently.”

James Jurius, Program Manager for the

Town of Aurora, said subdivision status was one of the common questions fielded at Town Hall as it “impacts residents in various ways such as security deposit releases and usually some Town services.”

“Instead of residents having to follow up with staff to see if their subdivision has been assumed, because some developers will complete their subdivisions more quickly than others depending on deficiencies that have occurred or any sort of outstanding activities that are required to be completed, this way residents can look up what the status of their subdivision currently is,” he says.

“When [a homeowner] purchases these homes, it’s very typical for them to put down some sort of deposit to ensure that they won’t modify the grading while the subdivision is unassumed to ensure that everything has been properly put in place. They’ll often seek back that deposit after some time has passed because the subdivision is nearing completion. But the subdivision can still be [unassumed] by the Town if there’s any sort of outstanding deficiencies...because the Town obviously doesn’t want to take ownership of the subdivision that has any sorts of issues that have not been addressed by the developer. Once those issues are addressed and the subdivision assumed, people can typically proceed with getting their security deposits back from the builders.

“We’re always open to residents coming to us, and we’re happy to provide them any information that we have available... residents will be able to, on demand, look up what the status is without having to wait on Town staff to get back to them. It gives residents both options. The intention is to make it easier for residents to get this information.”

To access the map, visit aurora.ca/AssumptionMap.

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Societal change on full display at Revolution Now exhibit in Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The more Ava Dedier learns about her roots and her culture, the more complete she feels as a person.

The Markham-raised artist knew a fair bit about her family’s roots in Trinidad, but knew all too well that so much of their African heritage had been lost along the way. But it is through her art that she found a way to help fill in the blanks, and the results of this poignant journey are now on display at Aurora’s Royal Rose Gallery in Rise Together, a celebration of artists who have been impacted by Revolution Now.

Revolution Now, a social movement co-founded by Aurora teacher Megan Glanfield, aims to create visibility, opportunity and community for marginalized and racialized people. Since its inception, it has raised tens of thousands of dollars to support youth through scholarships and donations to non-profits.

The work of several youth who have been supported through these scholarships was in the spotlight on Friday evening when members of the community gathered at the Downtown Aurora gallery for Rise Together’s opening reception.

The reception was both a fundraiser for future scholarships as well as a way to showcase success stories coming out of the program to ticket-holders and



Among those joining the Revolution Now team at Friday’s Rise Together event were Newmarket-Aurora MP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Newmarket Councillor Christina Bisanz, and Royal Rose gallery owner Rosa Calabrese. Mayor Tom Mrakas was also in attendance. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

dignitaries, including Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas.

Dedier first became involved with Revolution Now as a Grade 12 student in Unionville when, as a budding artist,

she secured a scholarship through the program.

“It just kind of solidified all the hard work I’ve been doing throughout Grade 12 and all my life, and to know that there’s scholarships for Black youth and people like me, and young girls, it just felt very empowering because usually you don’t find organizations that support specific groups of people, but I felt very seen and very heard when I got it, and I was super-happy.”

As part of the show at Royal Rose, which runs through to the end of January, Dedier selected three works from her 17-piece collection called Trendsetters, with each piece representing a different African god or goddess.

“I used art as a way to reconnect with my lost heritage and research and learn and make art in turn,” she explains, pointing to the portrait-style works that incorporate vivid, traditional textiles. “My family is from Trinidad by way of Africa and I know a lot about the Trinidadian part, but lots about the African traditions and stories, folklore and stuff got really lost. I realized that was a big problem because I wanted to know where I came from originally.

“Through my art, I used the research to gain more insight into that culture and I actually learned how to sew from a Ghanaian seamstress. I felt as I was making the artworks it was more than just art; it was the people I was meeting with and connecting with and the stories I was learning to gain more information.”

Dedier’s father, Robert, says the opportunities Ava has had through Revolution Now, including this chance to explore their collective roots through their art has been “amazing.”

“It’s a breath of fresh air,” says Robert of Revolution Now’s commitment to racialized, marginalized, or otherwise under-represented populations. In the

art world itself, especially in Canada, racialized people make up a small percentage of the work that’s being shown. Initially, my daughter asked, ‘Do you think people will like my art because it’s Black-centred?’ I said, of course they’re going to like your art... What it did for her was kind of broke that mentality that she doesn’t have a voice and she realized she was being taken serious as an artist. This opportunity in itself changed a lot of her perspective.

“I’m a big advocate for knowing and remembering who we are, where we came from, and being proud of that. In teaching my daughter that aspect of herself, she was able to find herself and she was able to teach me things I never knew. We were able to discover and learn together.”

This is a sentiment very much shared by Ava.

“I really hope my art just sparks conversations,” says the University of Western Ontario student. “If there’s something that they didn’t know before, but they are interested in, I’m glad that I can be that source of knowledge for them because I feel most of the gaps in either representation or things of that nature just occur from lack of knowledge. I like being able to educate while I show my art at the same time.

“As a person, I am someone who loves to learn and I feel like the more I learn about myself, and my roots and my culture, the more I can really feel whole as a person. I feel like especially since I am very young, I’m still kind of finding myself, learning more about what I’m passionate about, like art and culture, and it just builds me as a person and the woman I’m becoming.”

For more information about Revolution Now, visit revolution-now.ca.

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Welcoming 2026 at Mayor & Council Levee



New Year's celebrations continued on Saturday, January 10, as Aurora Town Square provided the backdrop for Aurora's annual Mayor & Council Levee. Levees have their roots in New France in the 1600s and the traditional and historical purpose of a Levee was for the leaders (Kings or Queens of the time) to address their nation, providing a positive outlook at the year ahead. This past weekend's levee saw (Top Row) Mayor Tom Mrakas and Councillors Ron Weese and Michael Thompson, and volunteer Olivia cooking up a pancake breakfast for attendees like Eythan. (Middle Row) Among those enjoying the festivities were Isla, Beverly, Theodore, Meagan, and Kevin. (Third Row) Mayor and Council cut the cake in the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall before settling in for a "fireside chat" where residents could pose questions to their elected leaders. Mary enjoyed the celebration.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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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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Belly dancing and belly laughs in store for Aurora Town Square this winter

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora Town Square is hitting the ground running this year with winter activities tailored for belly dancing and belly laughs.

Programming kicked off in earnest this past Saturday with the annual Mayor & Council Levee, which was a chance for residents to get up close and personal with their municipal representatives, while having family-friendly fun at the same time, but took an exotic turn on Monday with their first Egyptian Belly Dance workshop of the year.

A quick sell-out, those who missed the January 12 workshop are now able to register for a two-hour session on Monday, February 2.

“We’ve been running this for almost a year now and it is so much fun,” says Nichole Campsall of Aurora Town Square (ATS). “The instructor is incredible and she’s one of the dancers who performs for our Multicultural Festival, so she has a lot of experience.”

Dancing gives way for laughter this Saturday, January 17, when ATS hosts its first of two Yuk Yuk’s Comedy on Tour Stand-Up Comedy shows featuring headliner Pete Johansson, MC Dylan Gott, and featuring Keesha Brownie.

These comedy showcases were popular attractions in the year that was, and the 2026 dates continue that trend with tickets going fast.

Laughter will continue in February with the launch of ATS’ Flashback Film Series, a chance to “revisit iconic films that have captured hearts and sparked conversations over the years.”

Patrons got an appetizer of the film series to come in the lead-up to the holidays when the Town of Aurora added two film screenings to its traditional

Christmas Market lineup: “Home Alone” and “Elf,” which proved to be immediate hits with audiences the second, third, or fourth time around.

“It was such a great experience to re-experience these films in a community setting on the big screen with other people laughing together at the jokes,” says Campsall of the holiday screenings. “I sat through Home Alone and I thought it was really neat because I’ve seen the movie like a million times, but there were still things I didn’t catch until seeing it on the big screen. It was such a unique experience and we’re really excited to launch this.”

The first in the Flashback Film Series on February 20 is 2006’s Night at the Museum, starring Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, and Dick Van Dyke. The movie will unspool at 7 p.m., but be sure to get there by 6 p.m. for museum-themed activities and interactive fun before the show.

“Night at the Museum” is a fitting choice to kick-start the series as Aurora Town Square is also home to the Aurora Museum & Archives.

While the chances of local history exhibits coming to life after hours are slim, the Museum is coming alive other ways this winter including a new series of workshops focused on Photo Digitization, which will run January 25 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, and on February 19 from 6 – 8 p.m.

“This hands-on workshop will guide participants through the process of scanning, organizing, and preserving old prints, slides, and photo albums,” say organizers. “Learn how to protect your family history, enhance image quality, and store your memories safely for future generations.”

No experience is necessary, they note – just bring your “photos and your passion for preserving the past.”

Museum Mondays will also return for the New Year, with new sessions scheduled for January 19 and February 23, each beginning at 6.30 p.m.

“This is an insider’s look into the museum,” says Campsall. “We do a little bit of an intro with them, then they take the guided tour with all the inside info from the Museum team. They get to look at the exhibition, they get to go into the collection spaces and be behind-the-scenes, and then we end with an Ask Me Anything session for any questions they might have, whether it be about what they saw or how they do the work they do – anything that might be of interest to them with regards to how the museum is run.

“The photo preservation program

came to us from a member of the community who had a suggestion, so we have two sessions coming up. Participants can come in and we will have members of our museum team [and] it’s a teaching session, a learning opportunity, and then the last portion of the workshop, participants will have access to our scanners and be able to work with some of the photos they might already have and get a few of them going. It’s a good way to try it out and learn from the experts.”

For a full roster of upcoming activities at Aurora Town Square, whether hosted by ATS, the Aurora Cultural Centre, or other community partners in the space, including how to register or secure your tickets, visit aurora.ca/whatson.



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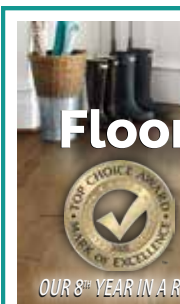
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Mississauga Hurricanes edge Central York Panthers 4-3 in entertaining U22 Elite tilt at SARC

BY JIM STEWART

All the elements were in place for a riveting Junior Panthers’ victory on Wednesday night.

Demi Lazarou, Catelyn Clark, and Elizabeth Janovski tallied highlight reel goals.

Leading scorer Annabella Van Berkel dished out three assists.

Claire Hicks turned in a solid 33-save performance between the pipes.

With five minutes left on the clock, their net empty, and trailing 3-2, the Junior Panthers executed a whiteboard play drawn up by the coaching staff when Janovski fired the tying goal ten seconds into the urgent power play.

However, the Mississauga Hurricanes’ Maria Mazi ruined that good vibe by scoring the game winner with 2:44 left in the third period to edge Central York 4-3 in OWHU U22 Elite action at SARC.

Janovski, a rugged veteran leader and tireless forechecker, described her game-tying goal at 4:53 after the gutsy Panthers’ coaching staff took their timeout trailing by a goal and pulled Hicks for an extra attacker with 5:03 left in the final frame.

“We had to capitalize in that situation. In our pre-game, we made it a focus to stay positive for the whole game. That kind of attitude brought us the tying goal. I decided to stay off to the side of the net away from the puck. I got lucky with a great pass and I was able to go short side.”

Janovski’s sixth of the season finished a fine passing play with Van Berkel and Abby Pak. The dramatic goal by the home side appeared to be a turning point in a battle between two Top Five U22 Elite Division teams.

However, the Hurricanes deflated the elation at SARC two minutes later when

Mazi barreled in off the right wing and ripped a backhand shot that handcuffed Hicks and restored the visitors’ lead.

Janovski attributed the disappointing defeat not so much to what the Hurricanes did, but what her team didn’t do: “We had a lot of good chances to capitalize. We needed to bear down and get this win by finishing our chances.”

The Panthers finished a scoring chance eight minutes into the game when Demi Lazarou lit the lamp.

The natural goal scorer with the lightning-fast release was back in the lineup after spending six weeks on the Injured List.

Janovski described the importance of Lazarou’s return and her first period goal that gave Central York a 1-0 lead: “It was great to have her back. It’s her first home game after playing for us on Sunday [in Waterloo]. When she scored early in the game, it set the tone for us. She really knows her way around a puck and knows how to score.”

Indeed, Lazarou’s scoring touch was on full display at 7:38. She converted a perfect pass on her tape from Ashley Minor by rifling a wrist shot from between the circles – high blocker side past Hurricanes’ netminder Kalina Pharand and into the back of the net.

The red-clad Panthers held their precarious 1-0 lead for almost 20 minutes due to Hicks’s goaltending heroics—especially during the second period when she blocked 18 of the 19 shots she faced. The only shot to elude the athletic netminder in the middle frame was a deflection by Hurricane forward Keira Owen whose deft tip of Sophia Fabro’s pass dramatically altered the puck’s direction. It flipped over Hicks’s shoulder and settled into the back of the net at 13:19.



Demi Lazarou (5), playing in her first home game after six weeks on the IL, scored the Panthers’ first goal in a 4 – 3 loss to Marisa Gloyns (88) and the Mississauga Hurricanes.
Aurora photo by Jim Stewart

Seven minutes into the third period, Panthers’ Captain Kiera Johnson was assessed a holding penalty and the visitors took advantage almost immediately. Eleven seconds into the Mississauga power play, Taia MacDonald fired a wrist shot just inside the left faceoff circle that beat Hicks high blocker side to give the Hurricanes their first lead of the game.

Seventy-six seconds later, Central York got the equalizer when Catelyn Clark crept in from the blue line and fired a wrist shot just above the circle that beat Pharand cleanly high glove side. Clark’s tying goal instigated a celebratory “Panther Pile” after the steady defender scored her second in as many games.

Janovski complimented her teammate’s mid-period marker: “It was an amazing shot. She scored her first Junior goal last

Sunday and she got another one tonight. We jumped up at the bench—we were so happy for her. It was a big goal.”

Alas, the Hurricanes’ power play clicked again less than two minutes after Clark’s goal. With Ellie Lewington in the box for the second time in the period, it took Mississauga only 10 seconds to score.

Olivia Aquino banged home a rebound on the left edge of the crease past Hicks to stake the visitors to a 3-2 lead—setting the table for the dramatic exchange of goals in the final five minutes of play.

The fifth-place Junior Panthers (22-7-1-2) will look to get back in the win column when they host the 15th-place Bluewater Hawks (13-14-2-1) on Sunday, January 18.

Puck drop at SARC will be 1:25 p.m.

Central York Panthers grads thriving in OUA

BY JIM STEWART

Three graduates of the Central York Panthers U22 Elite program have cracked the Top 20 in the OUA scoring race.

Mikayla Cranney—playing for the first-place Queen’s Golden Gaels—holds down fourth place with six goals and eight assists in fourteen games.

Abby Lunney is ranked eighth in the scoring race with eight goals

and three assists in 13 games with fourth-place Nipissing.

Erica Buckley—a rookie forward with last-place Carleton—has tallied six goals and two assists in fifteen games with the Ravens to hold down eighteenth place in scoring.

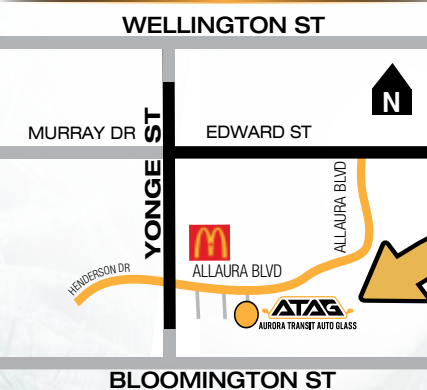
In the OUA goal-scoring race, the three former Panthers are in the Top Ten. Lunney (8) is third while Cranney (6) and Buckley (6) are tied for eighth.



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The SAC Saints celebrate their MacPherson championship in 2025.

Auroran file photo by Jim Stewart

The St. Andrew's College Saints will be aiming for a three-peat when they host Aurora's longest-running and most prestigious hockey tournament from Friday, January 30 to Sunday, February 1.

The 42nd Annual MacPherson Hockey Tournament—held at the La Brier Family Arena on SAC’s 126-acre campus in north Aurora – will feature eight teams.

Six hail from the United States: Culver Academies (Culver, Indiana), Pittsburgh Penguins Elite 18U (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), Victory Honda (Plymouth, Michigan), Bishop Kearney Selects (Rochester, New York), Brunswick School Bruins (Greenwich, Connecticut), and Northwood School (Lake Placid, New York). Two Canadian squads round out this international tourney: Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League U18 and SAC.

The Saints, who won the tournament in 2024 and 2025, will start their three-

game, round-robin schedule by hosting Victory Honda on Friday, January 30 at 9:30 a.m.

SAC Head Coach David Manning discussed the keys to beating the spirited Michigan squad: “They play on the edge. We’ll need to be disciplined and stay with our game. We want to play in the offensive zone. We beat them earlier in the season, but teams have evolved at this point after dozens of games.”

After taking on Victory Honda, Coach Manning's crew will take on another familiar foe on Friday at 7 PM.

“Northwood is well-coached and they like to get under our skin. They play a heavy style of hockey and have a physical team.”

Coach Manning reflected fondly on his team's annual trips to Northwood which is situated at the Olympic Training Centre in Lake Placid, New York.

“Our families love going there. It’s pretty idyllic and picturesque. We get there early before we play Northwood

and the players explore the village. The players also take in the history at the Olympic arena through the pictures and plaques. It's amazing to see the images from 'The Miracle on Ice' in 1980 and it's surreal that this little village has hosted two Olympic tournaments. The boys appreciate Lake Placid for what it is—a winter sports mecca."

The Saints will compete in Northwood's 46th annual invitational tournament as the team's final warm-up for the MacPherson tourney. SAC will face off against the host school on January 19 after preliminary games with Mount Saint Charles on January 17 and South Kent School on January 18 in Lake Placid.

Prior to the games at the Northwood tourney, the Saints (25-8-1 overall and 5-3-1 in the Prep Hockey Conference) will compete in a tournament on January 9, 10, and 11 in New Hampshire.

Coach Manning, who was on the team bus en route to New England when we spoke, mentioned that the Saints will use the opening game against

Frederick Gunn School (Washington, Connecticut) to shake off the cobwebs.

“We’ll be coming off the Christmas Break so we’ll be getting our feet under us. We’ve played them in the past. We’ll need to keep the game manageable from the start. We’ve played a lot of close games so far this year so that will be good preparation for us for these tournaments and the playoffs.”

The long-time Head Coach expressed his satisfaction with the Saints' results so far in the 2025-26 season. SAC has accrued a .750 winning percentage after 34 games and Coach Manning noted some reasons for his team's success: "We've been able to hang around in our games so far. We have a more balanced lineup this year and a solid 4-man D. The team has a comfort level with playing close games."

The Saints' comfort level will be tested further on Saturday, January 31 when they play their third round-robin game of the MacPherson tournament against last year's finalists, the Bishop Kearney Selects, at 11 a.m.

Semifinals for the 2026 MacPherson Tournament will commence on Saturday, January 31 at 6:30 p.m. and the championship Final will take place on Sunday, February 1 at 1:15 p.m.

SAC captured the 41st Annual MacPherson Tournament championship in 2025 with a thrilling 3-2 OT victory over Bishop Kearney.

SAC power forward Alex Carscadden fired the overtime winner, much to the delight of over 1,000 spectators in attendance at the La Brier Family Arena. It was the second consecutive year that the Saints hoisted the MacPherson trophy at centre ice.

By all accounts, SAC's powerhouse squad would be favored to make it a three-peat in 2026.



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Tigers mugged 5-2 by Muskies in Lindsay, but Nei tallies two in North York to cue 3-2 comeback win over Rangers

BY JIM STEWART

The Aurora Tigers’ playoff plans took a hard bodycheck on Friday night when the local Junior A squad lost 5-2 to the Muskies in Lindsay.

However, a glimmer of light reemerged on Sunday afternoon when Javian Nei’s two-goal performance cued a third period comeback and the Tigers edged the Rangers 3-2 in North York.

Nei’s three-goal weekend helped Aurora split a pair of road games and kept his team’s faint post-season hopes alive.

Entering the contest in Lindsay, ninth-place Aurora trailed the eighth-place Muskies by nine points with two games in hand. If there was a must-win game for the Tigers in early-January, it was versus the Muskies.

The recently-acquired Nei gave the visitors early hope at the Lindsay Rec Complex when the former Toronto Patriot opened the scoring at 2:03 of the first period. Ethan Kindree diminished that vibe when he finished Kaden Koutroulides’s feed on the power play at 10:53 to pull the home side even at 1-1.

The feisty Tigers responded with a power play goal of their own less than five minutes later when Anrijs Bundzenieks’s unassisted marker restored Aurora’s lead.

It was Bundzenieks’s 11th of the season.

However, red-hot Koutroulides—who lit up the Rebellion with a two-goal, three-point performance on Sunday afternoon in the Muskies’ 5-1 win in King—scored a short-handed goal fifteen seconds later to make it 2-2 heading into the first intermission.

Lindsay took over the game in the middle frame, outshooting Aurora 21-6. Koutroulides got the home side rolling when he earned the helper on Joaquin Gonzalez’s go-ahead goal at 5:13 and Kindree scored his second of the game with 1:10 left in the middle frame to give the Muskies at 4-2 lead.

Koutroulides earned his third assist of the game by setting up Kai Williams’s goal with five minutes remaining in the third period to provide the Muskies’ margin of victory.

Prior to the game in Lindsay, the Tigers confirmed the acquisition of goaltender Kian Hodgins from the Navan Grads of the CCJHL. On

January 3, the Tigers acquired another netminder, Noah Kraus, from the Muskies.

Kraus started Friday’s game against his old team, made 19 saves in a busy middle frame, and turned aside 31 of the 36 shots he faced in the tough loss in Lindsay.

The arrival of Hodgins and Kraus coincided with the departure of star goaltender Matthew Humphries after parts of two seasons with the Tigers. Humphries signed a contract with the Oshawa Generals after being called up numerous times this season by the OHL club. Humphries started on Sunday in his new home rink versus the Barrie Colts.

With two new goaltenders on the roster and sitting eleven points out of a playoff spot, the Tigers (12-23-0-2) travelled to North York to take on the 12th-place Rangers (2-33-1-3) on Sunday.

Hodgins’s 36-save performance and Nei’s pair of goals in the third period impelled the 3-2 comeback victory by the Tigers over the struggling Rangers.

Aurora power forward Charlie Hotles’s 8th of the season opened the scoring at 7:58 of the first period versus

his old club—completing a passing play by Quinlan Clair and Jamie Buscarini.

The Tigers held their slim 1-0 lead for almost 28 minutes until Timur Naurzbaev beat Hodgins at 15:07 of the second period.

Luca Spano’s early goal 1:24 into the third period gave the home side a 2-1 lead and spelled trouble for the Tigers. However, last Saturday’s scoring hero versus Wellington, Johnathan Cirone, set up Nei two minutes later to tie the game. The productive Cirone has registered six points in seven games since being acquired in December from the Pickering Panthers.

Nei’s game-winner—also assisted by Cirone—beat Rangers’ netminder Reid Thomas at 5:37 and Aurora held on for their third win of the season over North York. It was Nei’s 8th goal in 12 games for the Tigers since arriving in a blockbuster deal on December 2 with the first-place Patriots.

With the timely win at Herb Carnegie Arena, Aurora re-set their deficit to idle Lindsay to nine points for the final playoff spot in the OJHL East.

Hope springs eternal in Tiger Town.

Municipality could find additional ways to combat affordability through revised Food Charter

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A revised York Region Food Charter could provide the Town of Aurora with further opportunities to help combat food insecurity.

The updated York Region Food Charter is slated to be presented to local lawmakers in Council Chambers this week.

According to a report before Council by Phil Rose, Aurora’s Manager of Cultural Services, the Food Charter is a living document that is regularly refreshed to meet community needs. The revisions, he says, provide further opportunities for municipalities like Aurora to “collaborate” with stakeholders like the York Region Food Council and other levels of government to make a real difference.

“The Food Charter is a vision of thriving urban and rural communities where residents, organizations, businesses and governments work together to create a resilient food system that fosters healthy communities and values food sovereignty,” says Rose.

“The process of updating the Food Charter focused on ensuring it reflects the voices, needs, and priorities of diverse communities and the current challenges facing the agri-food sector,” says Rose. “Over 10 months, five rounds of community consultations were conducted using a mix of surveys, focus groups, and public events. Nearly 300 community members and sector representatives contributed their insights.”

Aurora Council has previously endorsed the principles of the Food Charter and initiatives reflecting this commitment have already rolled

out, particularly the installation of miniature food pantries in select municipal locations, including Town Hall, and the development of community gardens in Aurora’s northeast, the latest being at John Abel Park.

“The Action Document identifies aspirational initiatives that the Town can choose to advance in collaboration with other groups, such as the York Region Food Council, York Region, the business community, and other public-facing organizations,” says Rose. “The Town will seek meaningful partnerships that help create a resilient food system that fosters healthy communities. As new opportunities become available, staff will bring them forward during budget deliberations.”

Potential future opportunities outlined by the York Region Food Council in their Action Document are wide-ranging and are divided into six categories: Equity, Social Justice, and Food Security; Health & Wellbeing; Local Agri-Food Sector; Environmental Stewardship; Knowledge and Sharing; and Community and Culture.

Under Equity, Social Justice, and Food Insecurity, the document calls for support towards “partners with the creation of advocacy tools and training geared towards municipal, provincial and federal governments [and using] these tools to support the development of robust policies that ensure adequate incomes so that all York Region residents have equitable access to food,” and “empower people with lived experience of food insecurity and poverty to create systems change through peer advocacy while offering the appropriate support and infrastructure.”

The pillar of Health & Wellbeing calls for further coordination between different levels of government to support access to food, including affordable housing, employment and transit policies; the support of “dignified” food access, including fresh food vouchers, low-cost markets and more; and further funding to school food programs.

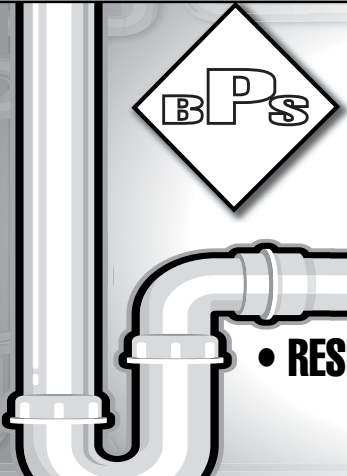
The Local Agri-Food Sector category advocates for underscoring how food is produced, the promotion of jobs within the agri-food sector as viable career paths; and community events to highlight agriculture. Here, the Action Plan also calls for increased access to land “for individuals, communities, new farmers, and especially equity-deserving groups who face additional barriers to land” through farm incubators, ways to match prospective growers with

available land, and more.

There are further calls for communities to invest more in “food-growing spaces close to where people live” under the Environmental Stewardship banner, as is the suggestion to further circular economy initiatives in a bid to support sustainability.

Food literacy is key under Knowledge & Sharing, as is the establishment of lending libraries for kitchen equipment and garden tools, a need the Aurora Public Library stepped up to help address last year through its new “Library of Things” program.

These themes spill over to Community & Culture where suggested actions include the creation of a knowledge hub and support network to share ideas, and support community organizations in “cooking and serving culturally-appropriate food or meals.”



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TOGETHER WE CARE



On Saturday, the Town of Aurora hosted a Dementia & Safety Awareness Fair: Together We Care at the Aurora Seniors' Centre. Featuring guest speaker Dr. Allen Power, the in-person and virtual event, featured a variety of experts who shared resources to empower and educate on dementia safety, and other activities on-site. Among the participants were (Top) Chantal, Carley, and Jaime; (Middle) Anita and Anna, and (Above) Amy and Connie. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

STEM Minds recognized for environmental contributions



The STEM Minds team accepted the 2025 Green Award from Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner. **Auroran file photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The principles of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math – help form a great foundation for the future, and Aurora’s STEM Minds is helping youth take this foundation to the next level.

This past year, the Earl Stewart Drive-based business was recognized by the Town of Aurora with its 2025 Green Award, recognizing their efforts to take STEM out of the classroom setting and into the field.

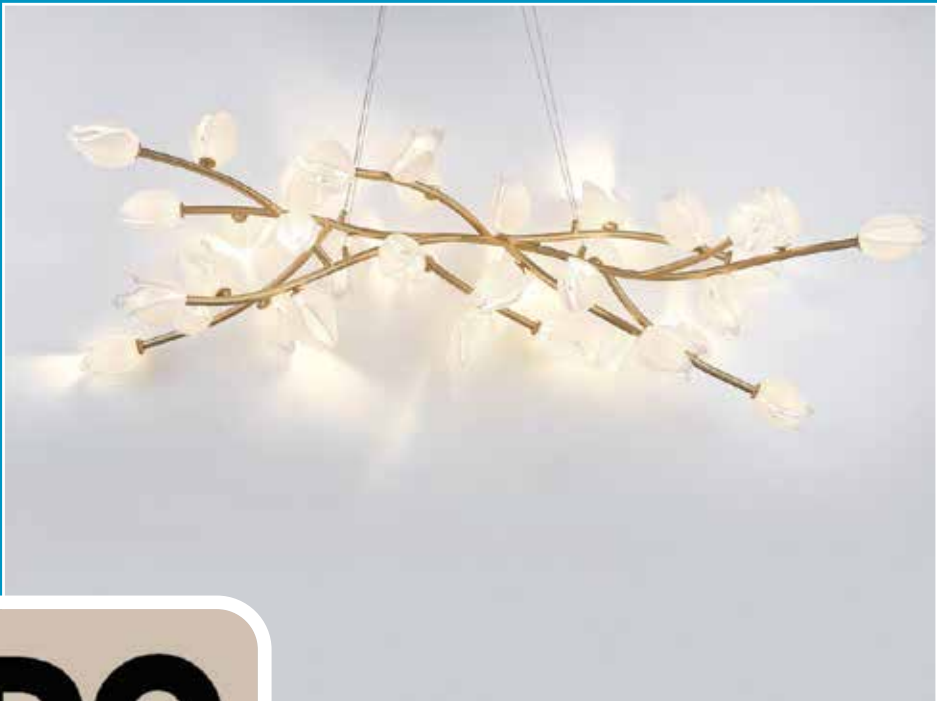
The Green Award, part of Aurora’s Community Recognition Award program, is awarded annually to an individual or organization “that supports the protection, preservation, sustainability, or conservation of our natural environment” while also celebrating “those who share Aurora’s commitment to creating a greener community.”

“STEM Minds is shaping a more sustainable future by actively integrating environmental education into their innovative STEM programs,” reads their citation. “They are not just teaching sustainability, they are inspiring a mindset shift where innovation and environmental

stewardship go hand in hand. By sparking curiosity, they empower young people with the knowledge and skills to understand and address environmental challenges through hands-on projects focused on agri-tech and sustainable practices.

“Their commitment to using eco-friendly materials and engaging the community in green initiatives is fostering a generation of environmentally-conscious leaders. Their dedication to a greener Aurora makes them an outstanding recipient of the Green Award.” Accepting the award via video link was STEM Minds’ Anu Bidani who said they work to “empower young people with tools, skills, and knowledge, to thrive in the world we live in.”

“Our agri-tech program brings the innovation of farming agriculture with technology and allows students to explore career pathways from high school to industry. For us, giving back is impact to our young people so they can have thriving careers as they move forward in their lives. We are grateful for the Town of Aurora for the for recognizing us for the Green Award as it continues to share our values of impact, growth, and a prosperous future for everyone.”



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Hope House to open Wellness, Grief & Caregiving Hub in community



LOOK FOR THE HEART – Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House Hospice, points to the heart above the door of their new Wellness, Grief, and Caregiving Hub on Yonge Street, just south of Church Street.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

From page 1

think of a hospice, they think of beds and they think of end-of-life care,” she says. “We do provide end-of-life care in people’s homes, but a big part of the work that we do with the community is helping people along their journey. We provide supports right from the time of diagnosis to either the palliative path or through to recovery. This space identifies who it is and the type of supports that we are providing.

“A big part of what we do is helping people from the time of diagnosis, helping caregivers, and then the bereavement side of things as well after the death of a loved one. Through our children’s, youth and family programs and the bereavement program, we’re helping kids and youth who are coping with the death of a loved one, or coping through a serious illness diagnosis, and helping along that journey as well.”

The new name, she says, helps foster a “welcoming, safe space” that serves the community.

The community can get their first look at the Wellness, Grief & Caregiving Hub on Friday, January 23 at 15105 Yonge Street, Unit 105.

Members of the community are invited to pop by between 2 and 4 p.m. to take in the space, learn more about programs, and stick around the formal part of the celebration where Mayor Tom Mrakas will be on hand for the formal ribbon cutting, while Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa is slated to stop by to celebrate Hope House’s receipt of a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

“We will have volunteers here who will be able to talk about their experiences being a volunteer, and each of our programs will have a display area to talk about the programming we provide as well,” says Bonner. “It’s going to be great to have the community come through our door, check us out, and learn a little bit about what we do.”

As they look ahead to their first full year in their new base, Bonner says it will be a busy several months for Hope House, whether working from

their Hub or in the homes of clients.

“We’re doing a lot of creativity programming this year,” she says. “It seems to be a way to wellness, where people are exploring their creativity. They’re coming into our space and we’re having Crafting for Wellbeing, which happens on Fridays. We’re going to do some Vision Board workshops as well. We have an art therapist that we’re working with, and we have meditation and chair yoga, but there seems to be this change in direction to creativity and art-based programming that seems to really appeal to people. We’ve had really, really good attendance at these opportunities.

“One of the [other] programs is called ‘Who Am I Now?’ After the death of a loved one, [sometimes there’s the question] of who am I?

‘I’m not a husband anymore. I’m not a wife anymore.’ It’s helping people sort of identify themselves and their new path, and it has been very powerful. We’re also trying to build the team program as we found that it’s difficult for youth and teens as they’re so busy with their school and activities. We’re starting to do monthly get-togethers and it’s been really successful getting teens who have gone through a similar experience to talk openly to each other about the things that they can’t necessarily to their friends – there will be more of that programming for teens this year.”

For more information about Hope House Programs, their Wellness, Grief, and Caregiving Hub, and much more, visit hopehousehospice.com.

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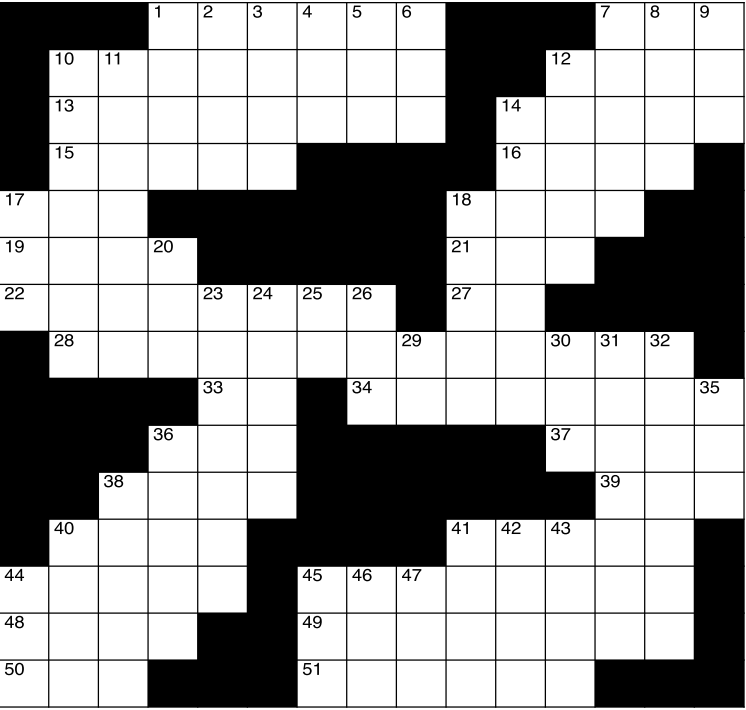
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Mechanical lever
7. Rocky peak
10. Leave a country
12. Discount
13. D.C. ballplayer
14. Partner to “oohed”
15. Engine sound
16. Japanese ornamental box
17. Fido is one
18. Amounts of time
19. DiFranco and Phyo are two
21. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
22. Make secret plans
27. “Tiny Bubbles” singer
28. “His Airness”
33. Morning
34. Perfected
36. Winger guitarist Beach
37. Abba __, Israeli politician
38. Self-immolation by fire ritual
39. A way to save money
40. Pulpit
41. Make ecstatically happy
44. Once more
45. Works on
48. Nocturnal S. American rodent
49. State again
50. Expression of disappointment
51. Type of door

CLUES DOWN

1. Yugoslavian communist leader
2. Exchange rate
3. High school dance
4. Peter’s last name
5. When you anticipate arriving
6. Israeli city __Aviv
7. Goat-like mammals
8. Margarine
9. End-of-the-spectrum color
10. Make poisonous
11. Popular beverage
12. Actress Lathan
14. Where planes land and depart
17. Political fundraising entity
18. The distinctive spirit of a people or an era
20. Buffer used in microbiology
23. Light, open carriage
24. Metrical feet
25. Email subject line feature
26. A street with lots of nightmares
29. Rapper Rule
30. River in Scotland
31. One who settles a dispute
32. Most chummy
35. We all have our own
36. Arab tribe
38. Slap
40. Ottoman military commanders
41. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language
42. Emit coherent radiation
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THINGS... *you ought to know*

OPINION

From page 5

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

AWAKEN AURORA: The Dawn Within: Aurora means dawn, the first light that rises after the dark. Awaken Aurora is a wellness event series designed to help you reconnect with the light within you. Join us in the soft glow of candlelight for a morning of inspiration and renewal. Featuring a heartfelt talk on self-nurturing, a yoga-inspired movement session, light bites and giveaways. Let this be your moment to recharge your mind, body and spirit. For more information visit aurora.ca/whatson.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

Celebrate the unforgettable sounds of the '60s as John Sheard, beloved pianist, producer, and long-time Music Director of The Vinyl Cafe, returns to the Aurora Cultural Centre with his hit concert The British Invasion! (Two Shows: 2 p.m. and 7.30 p.m., Aurora Town Square) Backed by an all-star 7-piece band - featuring Sheila Carabine of Dala (also playing at the Centre in June!) and David Celia; Sheard brings to life timeless hits by The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Petula Clark, Dusty Springfield, The Kinks, and more.

This high-energy, nostalgia-filled evening is a tribute to the artists who shaped a generation—and the soundtrack of a cultural revolution. Opening the night is rising R&B-pop sensation Charmie. Born in Haiti and raised in Toronto, Charmie is a powerhouse singer-songwriter whose soulful voice and magnetic stage presence have captivated audiences across Canada. A multi-instrumentalist and collaborator on Nelly Furtado's latest album 7, she brings fresh energy, heartfelt lyrics, and undeniable talent to the stage. For tickets, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

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.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Kick off Family Day weekend

at Aurora Town Square this morning as the Town of Aurora hosts the first of its two-part Arctic Adventure celebration. The fun runs today from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a variety of family-friendly activities. For more information, visit aurora.ca/arcticadventure.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Arctic Adventure returns to Aurora Town Park today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a whole host of winter fun for Family Day. For more information, visit aurora.ca/arcticadventure.

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.

Suzuki Foundation's Butterflyway Project and work with iNaturalist.

Importantly, much of the data are open and accessible to all. I've witnessed people growing more enthusiastic about nature simply through the power of observation and learning. Equally important for science, advances in computational power allow us to make the most of this huge volume of biodiversity data. Researchers are analyzing it to look for trends by studying, for example, changes in animal and plant abundance and distribution and gaining an understanding of the importance of species interactions. This is made possible through the simple act of paying attention to the world around us. Having a sense of awe for nature dwarfs one's own sense of importance and provides a critical catalyst for acting collectively to preserve something much bigger than ourselves.

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with David Suzuki Foundation Nature Director Erin Roger.

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