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WEEK OF FEBRUARY 26, 2026



STATE OF THE TOWN — Mayor Tom Mrakas delivered his annual State of the Town address on Wednesday, February 18, at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce's annual Mayor's Luncheon, hosted at the Royal Venetian Mansion. Mayor Mrakas is pictured here with the Chamber team — Shayla Lockhurst, Alison Mumford, and Sandra Watson.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Aurora doesn't “have the option to stand still,” says Mayor in State of Town address

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora doesn't “have the option to stand still,” and must build on the community's current momentum. That was the message delivered by Mayor Tom Mrakas to the local business community at Aurora Chamber of Commerce's annual Mayor's

Luncheon last week.

Held at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Wednesday, February 18, Mayor Mrakas delivered his annual “State of the Town” address before a packed house where he stressed the achievements of this Council over the last four years, and looked squarely to the future.

“Together, we are building a future

on our own terms, a future built on the foundation of choices that we're making today—choices that provide our community and future residents with certainty, stability, and opportunity in a time of change, choices that will undoubtedly strengthen the quality of life that we've always been known for because, in Aurora, we build

Continued on page 8



CHEERING ON TEAM CANADA

Wicked Eats was the place to be on Sunday morning as Canadians got up early to watch Canada take on the United States in the 2026 Winter Olympics' Gold Medal Hockey Game. Although the results are not what Canadians hoped for, spirits were high at the local eatery as the game unfolded. For more, see Page 20.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart



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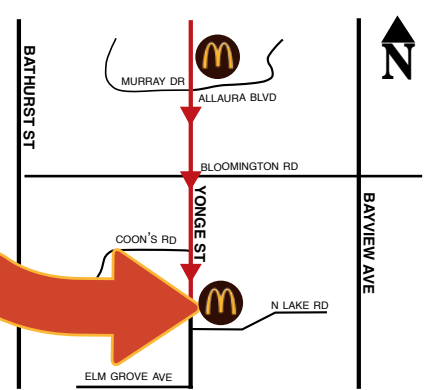


We're getting a makeover!

To bring you an even better dining experience, this location will be **fully closed** for renovations starting **March 2nd**. We can't wait to show you our **fresh new look**, but don't worry—you can still get your Big Mac fix nearby!

While we work on our new look, please visit our friends just down the road:
OAK RIDGES MCDONALD'S: 13233 YONGE STREET

Stay Tuned for an announcement in the coming weeks on when this Allaura Blvd store in Aurora will reopen with our newly renovated store.



TOWN OF AURORA

NOTICE BOARD

February 26, 2026



Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Week of March 2	No meetings		
Tuesday, March 10	9:30 a.m.	Newmarket CC	Joint Council Committee (CYFS)
Tuesday, March 10	5:45 p.m.	Holland Room	Council Closed Session
Tuesday, March 10	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	Committee of the Whole
Wednesday, March 11	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, March 12	7 p.m.	Video Conference	Committee of Adjustment
Thursday, March 12	7 p.m.	Holland Room	Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
Week of March 16	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: Akinola Adubi and Andrea Macleod - Aurora Black Community Association Presents "A Moment in Time"

This pairing aligns beautifully with ABC's mission and vision – One Vision, Diverse Voices: bridging cultures, building community, and fostering inclusion. "A Moment in Time" invites viewers to pause and reflect on those powerful, fleeting experiences that make us ask: Did this really happen? Was I there? Could this be real? Through timeless oil paintings, the artist captures joy, movement, beauty, and emotion – preserving moments that might otherwise slip away. Each piece offers an intimate glimpse into landscapes, wildlife, and portraits that feel both personal and universal. 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 EASTERPALOOZA

Presented by


Saturday, April 4, 2026
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Aurora Seniors' Centre, 90 John West Way

Indoor & outdoor activities include:

FACE PAINTING • EGG FISHING
EGG TOSS • HOPSTACLE COURSE • AND MORE!

Activity and treat bags for those 12 years of age and younger.

Have your photo taken with the Easter Bunny!

Wristbands are \$5 per child and must be purchased in advance at all Town facilities, excluding Aurora Community Centre.
aurora.ca/Easter

AURORA'S 2026

YOUTH INNOVATION FAIR
Wednesday, May 13

Aurora Town Square, 50 Victoria Street

Register by April 22
Youth Innovators!

- Grade 4 to 12
- Showcase your inventions and innovative ideas
- Platform for young change makers!
- Explore themes like STEM, Social Innovation, Robotics, Gaming, Esports, Green Tech and more!

Individuals or groups can participate.
WIN INCREDIBLE PRIZES!
aurora.ca/YouthInnovation
TORONTO'S LOST SHIPWRECK

FEATURING HEISON CHAK

Beneath Lake Ontario lies a forgotten story.
 Join Heison Chak for a presentation exploring the rediscovery of a 200-year-old schooner and how modern technology and local research are uncovering Canada's past.

TICKETS: AURORA.CA/WHATSON

MARCH 19, 7 P.M.

BREVIK HALL

Presented by the Aurora Historical Society and Aurora Museum & Archives



BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH, SHARED FUTURE

Learn & engage with us all month long

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aurorablackcommunity.ca

John Abel Community Garden
Gardeners Needed

Grow your own food at the John Abel Community Garden.

- ✓ Seasonal plots available from May 1 - November 1
- ✓ Open to Aurora residents and Aurora Based Community Groups

APPLY BY MARCH 6, 2026
aurora.ca/JohnAbelPark
Planning Our Future: Yonge Street South
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE
Mon. March 23
6 to 8 p.m.
Aurora Town Hall
100 John West Way

Helping shape building size, height, and design along Yonge Street, south of Industrial Parkway

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.

March Break Week Holiday Schedule – Programs & Activities

 Have fun over the holidays! We have programs and activities for everyone to enjoy. Visit our Holiday Schedules webpage for full details at aurora.ca/HolidaySchedules.

Spring & Summer 2026 Program Guide

 The **Spring & Summer 2026 Program Guide** will be available to view online starting on March 3. Registration dates are posted online at aurora.ca/ProgramGuide. 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 Summer Camps Program Guide

 The **2026 Summer Camps Program Guide** is available to view online at aurora.ca/SummerCamps. Registration is open for Summer Camps 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.

Aurora Family Leisure Complex (A.F.L.C.) Pool Closure from March 16 to 29

 The A.F.L.C. Pool will be closed for annual maintenance from **March 16 to March 29, 2026**. During this time, all swimming activities will take place at the S.A.R.C. Canadian Tire Aquatic Centre Pool.

 Please visit aurora.ca/Aquatics for revised swim schedules and available swim programs during this timeframe. We appreciate your cooperation.

Holi FESTIVAL

Join us for a vibrant celebration! Free and family-friendly, March 15 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

March 15

 Learn More:
aurora.ca/WhatsOn
Aurora Town Hall

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YouTube

YRP Chief Jim MacSween to retire this summer



York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween announced his retirement last week.
Photo courtesy of the York Regional Police

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween will retire on June 26, the York Regional Police Services Board announced Thursday.

MacSween has led the local police force since May 1, 2020, succeeding Eric Jolliffe who now serves as Chair of the Regional Municipality of York.

“On behalf of the Board, I want to extend our sincere congratulations to Chief MacSween on his well-earned retirement after dedicating 37 years to policing, including the past six as Chief of Police,” said King Township Mayor Steve Pellegrini, who also chairs the Police Services Board, in a statement. “Chief MacSween has served our community with integrity, professionalism, and a steadfast commitment to public safety.

“Under his leadership, our service has continued to evolve—strengthening community trust, improving support for our members, and modernizing how we respond to the changing needs of the people we serve. We are deeply grateful for the positive impact he has made across our organization and wish Chief MacSween and his family health, happiness, and every success in the next chapter.”

Prior to taking the helm as Chief of the York Regional Police, MacSween previously served in Criminal Investigations, Community Services, Training and Education. He also commanded two police districts and served as Deputy Chief overseeing the YRP’s Support Branch.

MacSween said leading the YRP has been the “greatest honour of his

career,” serving alongside those who “put professionalism, compassion, and commitment to public safety into action every day.”

“I would like to thank the Police Service Board, our members, our partners, and our communities for the trust and confidence you have placed in me over the past six years, and for my entire career,” he said. “Being privileged to work alongside and lead thousands of exceptional people, I am retiring with immense gratitude and pride. But I am still looking forward, and my commitment over the coming months is simple: Supporting a disciplined and seamless transition, so the organization’s focus stays exactly where it belongs—on building and protecting safer communities well into the future.”

Following the announcement, tributes to MacSween and his service to the community flowed in, including from Mayor Tom Mrakas who expressed his “deepest gratitude for his dedicated service to the residents of Aurora and all York Region.”

“The reality is that policing isn’t simply a career — it is a true calling rooted in courage, integrity and an unwavering sense of public duty,” he said. “And leading a police service at the scale of YRP requires not only operational expertise, but an incredible amount of empathy, sound judgment and the confidence of both its members and the public. Chief MacSween has demonstrated these qualities consistently, and our communities are stronger because of it. Most recently, Chief MacSween’s steady and principled leadership was publicly visible during the Project

South investigation, and his work on the highly sensitive matter was a true reflection of the professionalism and integrity that have defined his career.

“Whether it’s been his leadership at YRP, or his broader contributions across the policing community — including his service as President of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and his support of numerous charitable initiatives — Chief MacSween’s impact and legacy will be felt for many years in communities across the province. On behalf of all of Aurora, I thank Chief MacSween for his years of service and wish him and his family the very best in this exciting new chapter of life.”

As the Board begins the recruitment process, they said the outgoing Chief “has been a staunch advocate for the work of frontline members in the police service.”

“He championed a ‘people first’ culture and new leadership development model that supported members in their personal and professional live, while empowering them to perform at their best in service of the community,” they said.

“Through the COVID-19 pandemic, he drove the organization to meet complex operational demands, all while ensuring the safety and security of York Region’s communities and the health and wellbeing of more than 2,000 staff. Chief MacSween was also a builder, forging invaluable relationships with partners and advocacy groups, while leading York Regional Police to raise nearly \$4 million for charities of choice, including Victim Services of York Region, York Region Centre for Community Safety, and Special Olympics Ontario.”



TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION

The Town of Aurora is in receipt of a Complete Application(s) for an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) and Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA) under the Planning Act:

APPLICATION: The proposed OPA and ZBA applications is to change the existing Official Plan designation from Community Commercial Centre and Zoning from Rural Zone to a residential classification that will permit 36 townhouse condominium dwelling units (20 standard units and 16 back-to-back units).

The Applicant is proposing access onto the existing Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex driveway off Wellington Street East.

The Applicant will also need to amend the related site plan application (SP-2022-10), to obtain access onto Wellington Street East.

PROPERTY:
1426 Wellington Street East

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:
Lot 1, Plan 525 Whitchurch and Lot 2, Plan 525, Whitchurch, Aurora

APPLICANT:
Land Services Group Inc.

FILE NUMBERS:
OPA-2025-10 and ZBA-2025-09

WARD:
6



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

All inquires regarding the proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment should be directed to **Felix Chau**, of the Planning and Development Services Department, 365-500-3105 or fchau@aurora.ca

Personal Information Collection Notice

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

Dated at the Town of Aurora, this 26th day of February, 2026

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Region marks Lunar New Year

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I am pleased to extend warm wishes to all those celebrating Lunar New Year and welcoming the Year of the Horse.

Observed by many East and Southeast Asian cultures, including Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean communities among others, Lunar New Year is a time of renewal, reflection and joyful celebration with family and friends. It is an opportunity to honour traditions, express gratitude and look ahead with hope and optimism.

The Year of the Horse symbolizes energy, strength and perseverance. These qualities resonate strongly in York Region, where diversity is one of our greatest sources of vitality and success. More than half of our residents identify as a visible minority, with Chinese residents representing the largest group. This rich cultural diversity strengthens our communities and enriches our Region in countless ways.

As we celebrate the arrival of the new year, may it bring good health, happiness and prosperity to all.

Gong Hei Fat Choy. Saehae Bok Mani Badeuseyo. Chúc Mừng Năm Mới.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO

Aurora Lions Club Announces \$1,000 Scholarship

The Aurora Lions Scholarship has been established to recognize students who are not only academically successful, but also for those who have demonstrated responsible citizenship through their dedication to school and community involvement outside of school hours.

All students currently registered in a Public or Catholic high school in Aurora who are planning to go on to university or community college are eligible to apply. The scholarship is restricted to residents of Aurora. One recipient will be chosen each year.

Eligible students may apply by completing the online application available on the Aurora Lions website at auroralions.ca. Full terms are included.

The application deadline is March 31, 2026.

Aurora Lions Club

THE AURORAN
www.TheAuroran.com



@TheAuroranNews

To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@lpcmedia.ca
Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

Machell's Corners



A basketful of creativity and wonder



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

\$6.4 billion in new funding for the post-secondary sector; our government is not only ensuring the sustainability of our colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes, but also preparing our graduates with the in-demand skills they need to meaningfully find good-paying, rewarding careers, while continuing to keep education accessible and keep costs down for students and their families.”

Changes, they say, will help prepare students for in-demand careers that meet labour market needs, preserve students’ ability to “access high-quality post-secondary education, while supporting their ability to appropriately invest in their education and success,” and provide long-term sustainability for the post-secondary sector.

“Federal changes have significantly reduced international student revenues and the Province is also facing increased domestic demand for higher-cost programs and a financial aid program (OSAP) that is dramatically out of line with other jurisdictions,” the Province said. “To ensure the Province’s world-class institutions continue to produce one of the most competitive world-class institutions continue producing one of the most competitive workforces in the G7 for generations to come... a stronger, more sustainable OSAP system will ensure financial assistance remains available for future generations while supporting students’ appropriate investment in their education and success.

“To strengthen the long-term sustainability of OSAP and bring it in line with other provinces, Ontario students will be eligible to receive a maximum of 25 per cent of their OSAP funding as grants and a minimum of 75 per cent of their funding as loans. OSAP will no longer offer grants to students at private career colleges, in alignment with changes made by the federal government to its own student support funding.”

Opposition pushback to the plan was swift and continued into this week, with Opposition Leader Marit Stiles stating the

cuts will make it harder for students and families to get by and further marginalize students that are already facing barriers.

Pushback to the pushback was also swift from Premier Ford.

“You have to invest in your future, to in-demand jobs,” he said. “I’m not one to say, ‘You’re picking basket-weaving courses and there’s not too many baskets being sold out there.’ Go into healthcare, go into the trades, go into the jobs of the future. Focus on STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – those are where the jobs are.”

Now, basket-weaving has always been low-hanging fruit for people who want to make a point as the occupation and hobby has certain connotations that are thankfully largely outmoded, but the fact basket-weaving once again found itself in the crosshairs of politics is part of what I believe is a larger issue.

Careers in STEM – outlined by Ford as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – are, of course, key in our collective futures, but I much prefer the acronym STEAM as it includes Arts in the equation.

Whenever education funding comes into question, it almost always seems like the Arts and related subjects are the first on the chopping block, or, at the very least, the first subjects mooted to me less impactful and less valuable than the others – and that’s far from the case.

One only has to look at the outpouring of love that followed the sudden passing of Catherine O’Hara recently for just one example of how the arts have significant impacts on our lives, and impact us all in different ways – especially when homegrown artists are given the opportunities to flourish, no matter what their chosen media might be.

It is, of course, vitally important to support students choosing to go into those in-demand jobs, that’s just common sense, but we also have to keep in mind that in our rapidly evolving world and the alarming proliferation of Artificial Intelligence in just about every facet of our lives, what might be an in-demand job today could be among the once-hot occupations advertised by Sally Struthers in the 1990s on behalf of International Correspondence Schools. Think VCR Repair, Learning the Personal Computer, and Gun Repair.

Many examples of existing art have been used to feed the beast and “teach” AI how to create. But what comes out the other side is by no means a matter of creativity.

There will be no substitute for the creative human minds around us, and the beauty and joy they bring to the world.

Are they in-demand jobs today? Maybe, maybe not. But tomorrow, in the next year, and in the next decade, it might be a very different story.

THE AURORAN
Aurora’s Community Newspaper

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INSIDE AURORA
Scott Johnston

Dubious Savings

It'll soon be that special time of year. No, not St Patrick's Day, or Easter, or the first day of spring, but daylight savings time (DST). Contrary to popular belief, daylight savings was not introduced to assist farmers.

If you have pets, you know how poorly they take it if you try to feed them an hour later than usual. Similarly, farm animals are used to the rhythms of their day, and don't want to be fed or milked an hour earlier or later, for no apparent reason, either.

DST was actually established to save energy by making it lighter longer in the evening. Giving folks an extra hour of light in the evening was also felt more useful than having it in the early morning when most people (except farmers) were still asleep.

In theory this would also improve productivity, but ask anyone the day after the clocks go forward if they felt more productive at work with an hour's less sleep.

Probably not.

Conversely, you'd think that people would be delighted with the extra hour they receive when the clocks go back later in the year, but medical experts insist that no matter whether an hour is gained or lost, the time shift is not natural for our bodies and basically unhealthy.

Certainly, there seem to be as many grumbles about the clock shuffling in the fall as in the spring. Statistics show there are also more vehicle accidents following both time changes.

Interestingly, although the introduction of DST was discussed in several countries in the late 1800s, the first place in the world that formally adopted it was, of all places, Port Arthur – now part of Thunder Bay – in 1908.

It was quickly followed by (again, of all places) Orillia.

Of course, today DST is in place in countries all over the globe, but in an oddly piecemeal fashion. In Canada, for example, it is not observed in Saskatchewan, or various parts of Ontario, BC and Quebec. As you can imagine, this causes some confusion.

As previously noted, the health benefits of DST are a bit dubious, and some of the other supposed advantages, such as energy savings, have been questioned too.

Based on that, every year we hear talk about abolishing it.

In fact, a Bill was successfully passed in the Ontario legislature in 2020 to end the practice of shifting twice a year, but only if Quebec and New York State follow suit. While all three agree it's a good idea, in one of those "you do it first, and I'll follow" situations, none of them have had the nerve to commit to taking that first step.

Perhaps Aurora could lead the way.

Locally, there are many benefits to doing away with DST. Clocks in Town wouldn't have to be reset, we wouldn't have to stay up so late to see the fireworks on Canada Day or movies in the park, and we'd be able to appreciate the summer night sky without loosing any sleep.

And by not being either sleep deprived or sleep confused twice a year, we'd all be a bit more alert when doing such things as driving, voting, or putting up our Christmas decorations on November 1.

Aurora is already Canada's Birthday Town. There's no reason why we can't also be York Region's Standard Time Town.

Gallery Show

The Aurora Public Library is currently hosting a display of some of my most popular non-editorial cartoons, which is on until March 28. Feel free to drop by anytime during regular library hours to take a look. If you want to hear more about my cartooning journey, or just say "hi", I'll be doing an artist's talk at 7 p.m. on March 3.

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



THE AURORA MUSEUM
& ARCHIVES ARE...

...Digging Deep!

With each day seems to come a new forecast of frozen flecks falling, fouling, and frustrating all of us. We're just as tired of shoveling as all of you, but we wanted to remind you how lucky we are to have modern tools for the job. Shovels from the early 20th century, pictured here, left from 1928 (995.2.2) and right from the 1910s (77.13), and were little more than a slab of wood on a pole. Come warm up inside Aurora Town Square and check out our winter exhibit before it melts away!



March has a way of bringing people together. As winter begins to wind down and the first signs of spring appear, we're reminded that this season is about renewal, not just in nature, but in our communities as well.

As we mark International Women's Day on March 8, we celebrate the women who shape our community every day, as entrepreneurs, caregivers, public servants, mentors, and advocates. Their leadership and determination have opened doors and expanded opportunities for future generations. As we celebrate their achievements, we also recommit ourselves to ensuring that every woman and girl has the chance to succeed and to lead.



PARSA'S
PERSPECTIVE

Michael Parsa, MPP
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

And that spirit of pride continues with St. Patrick's Day, which for many families, is a time to reflect on Irish

roots, traditions, and the enduring values of resilience and community. Days like this remind us that Canada's strength lies in the stories, cultures, and contributions of people from every background.

Later in the month, many will gather to celebrate Nowruz, the Iranian New Year which marks the arrival of spring. Nowruz is a time of hope and renewal. But this year, it is also another meaningful opportunity to stand in solidarity with the people of Iran, who continue to inspire the world through their resolve toward a free and democratic Iran.

As we welcome the season ahead, may March inspire us to continue building a stronger, more resilient community together.

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

A tiny tardigrade can survive for more than 30 years without water. But we humans aren't nearly as tough as this half-millimetre-long, eight-legged critter, also known as a "water bear."

We perish after a few days if we don't replenish the liquid that we constantly lose through urine, sweat, tears, feces and breath. After all, our bodies are made up of about 60 to 70 per cent water.

As an Outside article explains, "Losing more than five percent of your body weight in fluid leads to headaches and other symptoms. Ten percent impairs performance and leaves you dizzy and faint. Beyond that, your skin will start to shrivel, your blood will get dangerously salty, and eventually you'll be at risk of critically low blood pressure and organ failure. At 15 to 20 percent, which you can reach in three days in a hot climate, you'll die."

Here in the relatively wealthy western world, we often take clean water for granted. We just turn on a tap and out it comes, hot or cold and usually drinkable. But many people throughout the world suffer from water scarcity, contamination and poor or non-existent infrastructure — including many living on Indigenous reserves in Canada.

As we continue to heat the planet by burning coal, oil and gas and pumping ever more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, we face snowballing threats around water quality and quantity. The increasing floods, droughts, fires, sea level rise, glacier melts and extreme heat that result from human-caused global heating all affect water availability

As the planet heats up, water worries worsen

and purity.

Much of our water is captured and filtered by forested lands. Destruction of those forests through logging or wildfires releases more climate-altering carbon into the atmosphere, as trees and root systems sequester carbon. But it also reduces water availability, and fires pollute water, especially when they reach houses and towns, burning plastics and other toxic materials.

Flooding brings more water, but it can also contaminate it and wreak havoc on supplies and sewage systems. As glaciers melt and mountain snowpack decreases, less is stored and rivers start to run dry. Flooding, like drought, can also affect agriculture, leading to food shortages.

Higher temperatures, agricultural runoff and contaminated stormwater also facilitate algal blooms in freshwater, making it unsafe for drinking or even swimming. As sea levels rise and rivers lose volume, more salt water travels upstream, affecting potable supplies.

The United Nations reports that the world is now entering an era of "global water bankruptcy," with "irreversible losses of natural water capital and an inability to bounce back to historic baselines."

Many places have been facing water problems for years, through scarcity, lack of safe drinking water and poor infrastructure — worsening as the planet heats.

The growing crisis around water is also causing conflict to rise. The U.S.-based Pacific Institute reports that water-related violence has doubled since 2022.

"The climate crisis and extreme weather play a part but there are

lots of other factors such as state failure and incompetent or corrupt governments, and lack of or misuse of infrastructure," said institute co-founder and senior fellow Peter Gleick.

The hydrologic, or water, cycle isn't really all that complicated, but like all natural systems, it operates according to a delicate balance and is interconnected with all other natural systems.

Solutions to our growing water woes aren't much different than the remedies for many other pollution- and climate-related problems. We need to pull together, implement legal reforms around water and climate, devise economic and political systems that don't rely on destruction and put our efforts into protecting water sources and building infrastructure to ensure everyone has access to clean water.

Unfortunately, this would take longer-term vision, along with a sense of caring for each other — something that appears to be lacking among many of our political representatives and those who profit from exploitation.

We often hear that humans are destroying the planet, but really, we're just destroying the natural systems that make it habitable for us (and many other living beings). The tardigrade will likely still be here when we and all the money we've made through pillaging nature are gone. It's not too late to prevent that, but we must act quickly.

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. Learn more at davidsuzuki.org



CAPES FOR KIDS

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese and Anthony Garramone of the International order of the Odd Fellows, joined Aurora resident – and member of the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee – Alison Hughes at the Aurora Public Library last week to support Capes for Kids, an annual public fundraiser supporting Hollandview Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation. Residents are invited to participate in the initiative by registering online to fund-raise and wearing a cape between March 6 and 13 wherever they go. “While situated in Toronto, Holland Bloorview serves 9,800 kids and families across Ontario – including many from York Region and specifically Aurora,” says Hughes. “I was a long-time client from birth to 18 years before becoming a volunteer and then long-time fundraiser. Over the last 10 years, Capes for Kids has raised close to \$8M for Holland Bloorview. Donations fund vital research, programs, and services that will increase access to pediatric disability care across Canada. Together, we can build capacity across the health care system, move innovations into clinical care faster than ever before, and take new models of care to greater heights.” For more information, including how to register, visit capesforkids.ca/holland-bloorview.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Provincial supervision “isn’t necessary,” say YCDSB leads

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Supervision by the Minister of Education is an unnecessary step as the York Catholic District School Board works to address Provincial concerns.

That was the message driven home this month by leaders within the York Catholic District School Board as they responded to an announcement made by the Ministry that they would be placed under ministry supervision if they didn’t act.

On January 28, Ontario Minister of Education Paul Calandra said the Ministry was putting the Peel District School Board under provincial supervision with immediate effect, while the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) would be subject to a similar move if it did not respond to long-standing Ministry concerns.

In his statement, the Minister cited “infighting, disruption and serious financial concerns” that have “undermined student success for years.” These, he said, “need to end immediately with every penny of public funding directed to support students in the classroom.”

“The Board’s years of inadequate financial management have depleted its reserves, putting its ability to serve students and the broader community at serious risk. High-risk financial assumptions in the Board’s financial recovery plan, along with an alarming revolving door in leadership and ongoing governance issues, have raised doubts about the YCDSB’s ability to balance its budget and put students first.”

At a special board meeting held in Aurora on February 10, many of these issues were addressed by Maria Iafrate, Chair of the YCDSB, and Jennifer Sarna, Interim Director of Education at the Board.

“The Board of Trustees and the Senior Team take this motion seriously,” said Sarna. “But supervision isn’t necessary. Because the goal of every school board is to support student success, and the YCDSB has a proud track record of student achievement. Despite our students’ excellent academic results, we are not complacent. Through our Multi-Year Strategic

Plan, the YCDSB continues to implement the supports that students need.”

Iafrate acknowledged turnover in the Director of Education position but, in turn, said Sarna brings “stable, experienced leadership” of nearly 35 years to the table. Governance, she admitted has been “an area of concern” for the Ministry and ongoing governance training within the Board is set to be completed by the end of June.

“The Trustees will use the resources available through the Ontario Education Service Corporation, Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association, and the Archdiocese of Toronto, to facilitate the work,” she said. “The training will cover everything we do: trustee roles and responsibilities; financial oversight; strategic decision-making; and how to maintain a unified voice in support of our students. We’re committed to knowing everything possible about effective governance because we know that is how we will best serve our schools.”

Sarna said it will take time to complete the work, but the Board already has a financial recovery plan in place “that our CFO is confident will meet the government’s timelines, including contingencies to mitigate risks.”

“We believe our students matter,” Iafrate concluded. “Our staff matters, and the constitutional protections that allow Catholic school boards to be governed according to our faith matters, too. Catholic school trustees are essential for keeping Catholic schools Catholic. Yes, we handle the same governance work that any school board trustee does, but we also carry the responsibility of keeping Christ at the centre of everything our schools do.”

“That work requires trustees who actually understand Catholic teaching and can apply it to governance decisions. When decisions are made, Catholic trustees protect the distinctive identity that parents chose when they sent their children to Catholic schools. This is not work you can outsource or replace with ministerial oversight. It requires people who are called to serve in this specific way. This takes people with both the competence to govern and the faith to lead.”



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Aurora doesn’t “have the option to stand still,” says Mayor in State of Town address

From page 1

what we value.”

This can be seen, he said, in the development of public spaces that foster a “special sense of connection” within a community, such as Aurora Town Square, the construction of an 8,000 square foot gymnasium at the SARC, the development of softball diamonds on the former Hallmark lands, the opening of three artificial turf fields at St. Anne’s School, Sheppard’s Bush, and the new Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School property, and more.

“It’s clear that we’re building the kind of community that people want to be a part of – a Town that has the calibre of recreational, cultural, and outdoor amenities that most communities dream of,” he said, citing the preservation and creation of parkland, an increased emphasis on accessibility, and boosting Aurora’s overall tree canopy. “However, Aurora’s success means more people want to live here and that success brings with it a responsibility to meet the challenge of ensuring current and future residents are able to raise a family, build a career, and grow old in the community that they love.”

But “growth without planning weakens a community,” he contended, shifting gears to several recent planning decisions made by the Town, including the development of the Community Planning Permit System recently approved by Council that will make way for significant intensification in the downtown core while maintaining

existing heritage facades and features.

“We plan to pre-zone for four-storey buildings in our main corridors and for five on Yonge Street that can accommodate a greater number of units,” he said. “That way, more people can live near transit, services, and amenities that make their lives easier. That’s how you reduce congestion, strengthen neighbourhoods, and build complete communities.

“In our downtown, Council recently approved the Community Planning Permit System, streamlining several approvals into a single, predictable process. What this means is new multi-level residential developments can move forward more efficiently along Yonge Street – not faster simply for the sake of it, because it will make the process clearer for how builders can build and what the community can expect, also leading to more transparent decision-making. That is growth with character, growth with intention, growth that reflects Aurora’s values.

“In the coming years, our downtown will transform into a place with thoughtfully-designed mixed-use development, retail and services at street level, and residential spaces above with a wide range of unit sizes. All of this will be enhanced by our Yonge Street Promenade redesign, a Main Street designed to create a vibrant, walkable downtown, supporting new restaurants, new retail, new jobs. Just imagine a bustling Yonge Street, a street where people live, where they can walk to Town Square for a skate on the outdoor loop, then head



It was a packed house at the Royal Venetian Mansion this past Wednesday for the annual Aurora Chamber Mayor’s Luncheon. (Top) Among the dignitaries joining Mayor Mrakas at the lunch were Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa. (Middle) The Key Advantage Team from Royal LePage was well-represented. (Above) Izzy Popat and Julien Laurion were also among the business leaders in attendance.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

up to Aw, Shucks for lunch or do a bit of shopping. That’s what a modern, inclusive, vibrant community looks like: more local employment, more economic activity, more community life.”

The Plan will give developers “clear and specific” design guidelines, including upper-storey setbacks from the main roads and heritage facades, construction materials, and more.

“We have protected our small-town character not by resisting change, but by shaping it,” he said, stressing the importance of protecting heritage assets like Hillary House National Historic Site, the Aurora Armoury, Church Street School, and scores of heritage homes throughout the community. “They’re physical connections to our identity and the people who first built this Town, because when a community remembers where it came from, it becomes unstoppable in where it can go.”

And Mayor Mrakas stressed harnessing the current momentum to define the future.

“We are moving forward into the future with intention, with responsibility, while protecting the things that matter most – and we all know that the world is changing rapidly,” he said. “Whether it’s cost-of-living pressures, housing affordability, or what AI means for job security, the worries are real, and what we’re seeing unfolding right now on the world stage can feel unsettling, even frightening at times, but here’s what I want you to leave with today:

a deep sense of confidence. Confidence that here in Aurora we’re building what matters most: the things that strengthen connection, expand belonging, and shape decisions that protect quality of life right here at home.

“At a time when the world feels uncertain, the community is choosing clarity, stability, and purpose. Aurora is proving something important: that a municipality can maintain one of the lowest tax rates in the GTHA while investing in infrastructure, expanding parks and trails, revitalizing our downtown, and still remain financially strong.

“We’re at a defining moment. Aurora is growing. Opportunities are in front of us. But so are the choices. Do we keep moving forward, investing wisely, delivering results? Or do we go backwards into delay, indecision, and missed opportunity? Because here’s the truth: what we choose now decides Aurora’s next generation: the downtown that they gather in; the parks they play in; the businesses that employ them; the community that they call home. If we continue to choose action over delay, results over rhetoric, leadership over performative politics, then Aurora’s future will not just be bright, it will be extraordinary.”

The past eight years as Aurora’s Mayor, he said, have been “a privilege of a lifetime” and added, “with your trust, I remain deeply committed to continuing this work as we build our future together in 2026 and beyond.”

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TRCA calls for municipal support in fighting salt pollution

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It's a time of year where the feeling of salt crunching underfoot is a reminder we're in the midst of winter, but once this salt dissolves, it's on its way to local watercourses – and that's a challenge the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is looking to address.

The TRCA is encouraging municipalities like Aurora to adopt a motion requesting the Attorney General of Ontario to introduce limited liability legislation practices to help regulate salt use in municipalities, while also providing training and certification on best practices surrounding snow and ice management.

“TRCA has been monitoring water quality in streams, and water bodies including Lake Ontario in the Greater Toronto Area region for decades, including chloride concentrations, which are often associated with winter road salt application,” says the TRCA in its motion, which Aurora Council will consider adopting this week. “Our analysis shows that chloride concentrations in TRCA's watersheds are above Canadian Water Quality Guidelines in many areas and continue to rise, in some cases, to levels lethal to sensitive aquatic life.

“The practice of winter salting for road safety often leads to excessive application due to concerns over liability.... Municipalities, industry and other Conservation Authorities are calling on the Province to address this issue by introducing limited liability protection legislation and promulgating regulations which protects property owner and managers, including municipalities, and government agencies from slip and fall lawsuits if they have taken all reasonable steps to follow Provincial best-management practices.”

The TRCA's motion first came before

Council at the Committee level earlier this month.

While local lawmakers sought assurances that passing the TRCA's motion wasn't doubling up on other salt mitigation measures passed by Council last year, the request to the Attorney General was supported.

“When we get something from the TRCA about something they feel is as important as this, we should support it,” said Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Added Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland: “I am absolutely in support of this, and I think all this really does is strengthen the validity of what us, as municipalities, want to enforce going forward when it comes to salt management. It's been an ongoing situation... I think this puts pressure on the Province and I think it is one small way that we can do moving this forward.”

Also lending his support to the motion was Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim.

“We all know every winter when we see salting and oversalting, there are downstream impacts, and I mean that figuratively and literally,” he said. “If we can involve the province and they can legislate something with all stakeholders in mind, then I'd be in support.”

The element of training and certification could lead to added costs, Councillors said, underscoring this as one particular question of concern, but Councillor Gaertner countered there would be trade-offs.

“There would be an investment in training, but there would also be a savings in salt,” she said.

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: “I think we're all supportive, so hopefully the Province and the Attorney General, as well as the Minister of the Environment, will listen and make necessary changes at the Provincial level to have this succeed.”

Scholarship announced in memory of Savanna May Royes

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The family of Savanna May Royes, a 20-year-old Aurora resident who lost her life last year while training for her private pilot's license, has established a memorial scholarship in her honour.

Tim and Loraine Royes have come together with the Urban Pilots Network (UPN) to establish the Savanna May Royes Flight Safety Scholarship.

Set to launch later this year, the annual scholarship will support young women of colour within the UPN with expenses related to their training, including costs to attend safety conferences, “empowering them to grow, learn, and pursue their aviation dreams safely.”

“Savanna's passing deeply affected the Aurora community and surrounding areas with more than 800 people having attended her celebration of life,” said the Royes family in a statement. “A common theme among the speakers in attendance, including six of her Northern Lights Public School teachers, was Savanna's kindness, thoughtfulness, generosity, and the bright spirit she brought to everyone around her.”

A GoFundMe page was established by the family shortly after Savanna lost her life in the July 8, 2025 midair accident in Steinbach, MB, with the expressed purpose of funding a scholarship in their daughter's name.

“After a month of searching for the right home for her scholarship, we knew it belonged with UPN, whose mission reflects everything Savanna believed in,” said Tim in a statement. “Thanks to the generosity of so many people, more than \$42,000 was raised.”

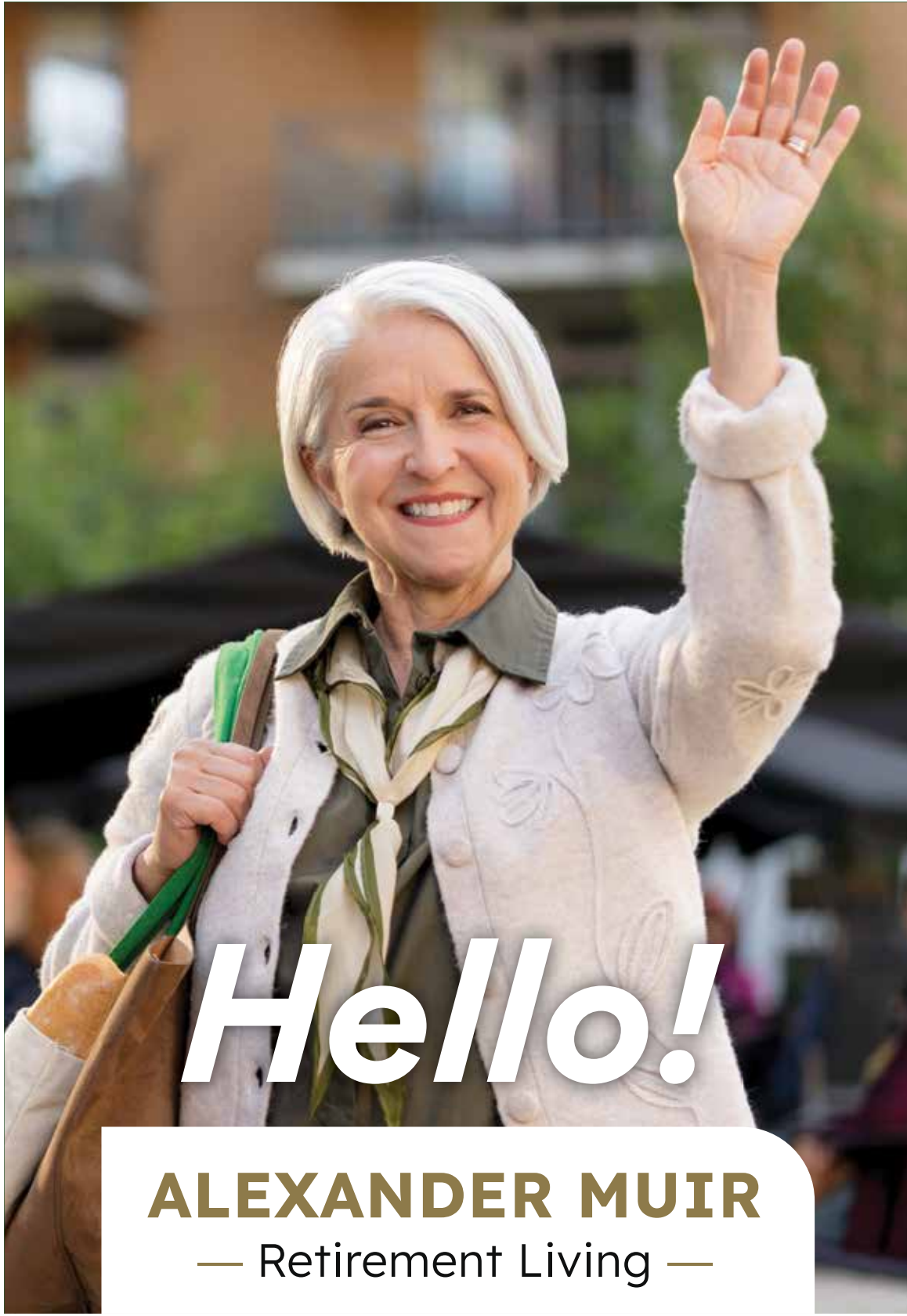


Contributed photo

UPN's mission, says the family, is to “uplift minority youths by reaching directly into communities and schools, encouraging young people to pursue careers in aviation. The group also collaborates with Black ESTEEM in running The Black Girl Boss Academy, an aviation-themed summer program that empowers young Black girls by helping them gain the skills and confidence to imagine themselves in fields where they are still under-represented.”

“We are deeply honoured to join the Royes family in establishing this significant scholarship,” said UPN Vice President Coneil Campbell. “It is with profound respect that we support this initiative, which so closely reflects our organization's enduring commitment to advancing inclusion within the aviation industry.

“Amid their time of loss, the Royes family has chosen to transform their grief into a meaningful act of service, one that will create new opportunities for women like Savanna and inspire lasting change.”



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Future of historic Victoria Hall could be determined by Council this week

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The future use of Aurora’s historic Victoria Hall could be clearer this week after a proposal to renovate the building at a cost far beyond its original estimate was presented to Council at the Committee level.

At issue was a significant budget increase in the estimated cost to overhaul the building for future use. Originally budgeted at \$500,000, the proposed costs now stand at \$2.182 million after further studies on the 1870s building found the need for new flooring due to dry rot, and the replacement of an existing addition to the Hall’s south end to make it fully accessible.

No firm decision on a path forward was made at the February Committee of the Whole meeting, with Council voting to simply receive the report for information, but final ratification is



An artist's rendering of the proposed replacement addition for Victoria Hall.

Image courtesy of the Town of Aurora

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due this week.

First to speak out against the rising price tag was Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo who questioned why these updated figures were coming to Council months after local lawmakers approved this year’s municipal budget.

“Council’s role is financial stewardship. When we are being asked to more than quadruple a project budget, we must be provided with sufficient clarity and certainty to exercise that duty responsibly,” he said. “What is now before us reflects a materially expanded scope, including demolition of the south addition, replacement of flooring systems with a slab-on-grade construction, significant structural remediation, major electrical and mechanical replacement, expanded consultant contracts... if structural deficiencies such as dry rot and load failures were present, why were they not fully identified during the earlier feasibility work?”

Outstanding questions, he said, included how the building would be operated, generate revenue for the Town, ongoing maintenance, and return on investment. He also cautioned against the funding model of dipping into municipal reserves in the face of uncertainty related to Development Charges.

Similar concerns were raised by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese who questioned how estimates could be off my more than 300 per cent. Staff contended the rising costs were related to a deeper analysis of the building from original studies which looked primarily at “general improvements.” Work to bring it up to code would be “a lot more intensive,” they said.

Nevertheless, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner said while she believes it’s important to maintain heritage buildings like Victoria Hall, residents she’s heard from have expressed some sticker shock. This was a sentiment echoed by Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim who said while initial studies were intended to show how Victoria Hall could be made safe for “just basic activities,” there has to be some leniency when it comes to old buildings that might have hidden issues.

“I agree with everyone that it’s certainly sticker shock,” he said. “Based on the discussions we’re having right now, it seems that the budget has to be tied to the use [of Victoria Hall in the future] and because we don’t know that yet, I’m in favour of just having this report for receipt only until we get more information.”

“Conflicted” was one word used by Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland to summarize her view on the proposal. Victoria Hall matters, she says, and is a “historic piece of our history” in the downtown core, and it’s worth investing in “properly.”

“What this report makes clear is essentially staff has gone beyond the surface level and you’ve definitely discovered what the building actually needs in order to have those changes made,” she said. “I don’t think this is something that we can [do] kind of helter-skelter. This is something we need to do properly once structural issues, accessibility requirements, as we’ve talked about, the modern building code standards, that’s changed quite a bit. It doesn’t leave much room for shortcuts anywhere in these times. I accept that, and unfortunately when it comes to historic buildings, older structures reveal the truth. Sometimes that truth isn’t always what we want to hear, and unfortunately that’s what costs money – and the longer you wait, the more and more it is going to cost.”

“I’ve heard some Council and maybe some members of the public saying ‘let’s do what we kind of need to do’ so...you can put lipstick on a pig all day long but then you’re just going to keep doing the same thing over and over again and I just feel like we’ve got to do this right.”

More fulsome support came from Mayor Tom Mrakas who said it came down to three options: “renovate it, sell it, or demolish it,” but stressed a decision had to be made.

“If we believe in protecting our heritage, renovation is the only responsible option,” he said. “It’s funded from our reserves that exist to invest in the infrastructure and capital assets. It does not impact the tax rate; this is about investing in our community, period.”

“Doing nothing is a neutral choice,” he continued. “Delaying the work is effectively demolition by decay. That is what we accuse developers and builders of doing when they come into our community and allow buildings to rot, yet we’re suggesting we should wait? Allowing a heritage building to deteriorate to the point where demolition becomes inevitable, this is what happens when leadership looks the other way. I will not allow that to happen to one of Aurora’s heritage assets. If people think the cost is high today, absolutely there is sticker shock, but they should ask themselves what it will cost one or two years from now? Construction costs are not going to go down; waiting only makes this more expensive and risks losing the building entirely.”

Proposed Victoria Hall renovations raises public eyebrows

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A proposal to renovate Aurora’s historic Victoria Hall for the future has raised eyebrows amongst members of the public concerned with the project’s ballooning price tag.

Residents made their feelings clear before Council at this month’s Committee of the Whole meeting.

While residents didn’t question the need to preserve heritage buildings within the community like Victoria Hall – which has served a range of uses from a church, to one of Aurora’s first public libraries, to, more recently, a rental and storage space – they did question the proposed price tag of \$2.2 million – above and beyond the \$500,000 included in the municipal financial blueprint.

Among the primary reasons for the budget increase is recently-discovered dry rot in the flooring and replacing the addition on the building’s south end to increase accessibility.

“I want to be clear that Victoria Hall is a cherished asset in the community,” said resident Rocco Morsillo. “Built in 1883, it has [had] various roles throughout its career in Aurora... [and] the building, unfortunately, has not been used for many years.”

He said he was “excited” when \$500,000 was earmarked in the budget to overhaul Victoria Hall, but questioned the rising figures.

“I have to ask, how are we getting to this point?” he asked, comparing figures to the costs to renovate commercial spaces. “With the average commercial lease at \$25 a square foot, the return on investment is going to be very far in the future. I know the Town of Aurora is here to provide community spaces, but we have to look at things realistically in terms of the building use as well.

“My opinion is that this building is a cherished asset in Aurora. The

building is in bad shape, we all know that. I want to make sure that tonight the project does go ahead. I want to be clear on that. We don’t need to create the Taj Mahal there. We need to keep the design simple, the cost effective, and we can cherish the building for years to come without the hefty price tag.

“Victoria Hall has been sitting empty for a long time and I think we really need to do something to it. The solution would be to reverse-engineer the design based on the \$500,000 budget to bring it more in line. We need to get back to the consultant, we need to ask what can be done for this project for \$500,000, we need to work with local contractors and trades that may have ideas on how to bring this project within budget.”

Local historian David Heard was also among the delegates. He questioned how the building has been allowed to deteriorate to its current condition.

“How did we get to this state?” he

asked. “Was it just a forgotten piece of the Town Square plan? But now we want to integrate it to include it in the Square.”

He also questioned if renovations were being proposed with a specific, yet-to-be-announced tenant in mind, given that Victoria Hall was included in a Request for Proposal last year for new tenants for the Aurora Armoury and the Aurora Town Square Café.

While Uxbridge’s Slabtown Cider Company has taken over what’s now called Slabtown Armoury and the café is now the local base for Newmarket’s My Indie Coffee, Victoria Hall is one missing piece of the puzzle.

“Victoria Hall has always been a community space, a library, Cubs, Guides, Scouts, parties, ghost tours, and it should remain,” Heard concluded. “Victoria Hall should remain a public space. I think we’re giving up too many of our historic spaces. We’ve lost a lot, we really have. I believe our community is worth investing in, just like our Strategic Plan lays out.”

Resident Steve Fleck said he had three simple questions related to the project: “Why are we doing this? What are we getting in the end? What is this place going to be used for?”

“According [to the report before Council], ‘the refurbishment of Victoria Hall supports the Strategic Plan goal of enabling a diverse, creative and resilient economy, promoting economic opportunities that facilitate the growth of Aurora as a desirable place to do business. The re-imagining of Victoria Hall will revitalize and possibly promote the entrepreneurship within the downtown core.’

“What does this mean? Please link that back to the three previous questions I just asked. I’m not against these sorts of projects – third places and gathering places like this are vitally important for communities, but surely we need to have a better idea of what the end goal is here before we commit this kind of money and expense for Victoria Hall.”

The proposal will be up for further Council consideration this week.



LUNAR NEW YEAR – Federal Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre joined Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena in the riding on Sunday to mark Lunar New Year. Poilievre and Cobena visited Ranch Fresh Supermarket on Bayview Avenue at Stonehaven Avenue for the celebration and are pictured here surrounded by the Ranch Fresh team.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger



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New book from Head of School challenges traditional concepts of classroom education

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The role of a teacher used to be to impart information.

This role has significantly shifted in recent years, says Dr. Cinde Lock, and schools need to recognize this to stay relevant in a window as short as five years.

“Look at the world we live in,” she says. “With AI, everybody is going to have their own private tutor soon – they already kind of do – and it can push them along, help them learn, and give them oodles of extra questions, things to think about and context. If we want to be relevant in five years’ time, we’d better rethink



Pickering College hosted a book launch for Head of School Dr. Cinde Lock last Thursday at the independent school.

Photo courtesy of Pickering College



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what school is, what we can amplify, and what we can help bring alive that AI can never do – and that is human connection.”

Dr. Lock, an educator of more than 30 years and now Head of School at Newmarket’s Pickering College, explores this topic in-depth in her new book *Connections, Academics, and Purpose: Designing the Future of School*.

Co-authored with her daughter, Anneke Lee, the book explores “a bold and timely reimagining of education – one where learning begins not with curriculum expectations, but with authentic connections, real-world problems, and meaningful community partnerships.”

First published in January and formally launched at Pickering College last week, nearly 900 books

had been sold at press time this week and it has already sparked a conversation.

Human connections, says Dr. Lock, can include fostering an environment where students feel involved, valued and heard, and where they can better understand and connect with the world around them.

It is essential to help students forge a meaningful link between some of the challenges facing our world and be a part of the change they want to see in the world. Connecting them with changemakers can help students see the issues through a new lens and see that they can make a valuable contribution.

“From a very young age, they can say, ‘I want to be a part of that journey. It’s informed citizenship and engaged citizenship. It’s also building empathy. It helps them feel like their learning is purposeful and meaningful,” Dr. Lock explains. “It’s not for the purpose of just being graded. If you go into a traditional school, every day you’re just being assessed. It’s about assessment and not learning.”

“We’re doing that in spades at Pickering College and this is really a love story to Pickering in so many ways, but it’s so much broader than that because it’s about a vision for what school should be and it’s a methodology for teachers on how to actually put it in place.”

Other types of schools and other educational institutions are so ingrained with existing systems and potentially outdated ideas of what universities are looking for in accepting first-year students out of the high school environment, Dr. Lock says.

She cites a recent discussion with a teacher just out of school as a prime example of this way of thinking. When Dr. Lock asked how the teacher could make her math lesson more interesting, the teacher linked the equation of a curve with art. But that didn’t necessarily underscore the purpose of why students need to make that calculation in the first place.

“What if the student went away and said, ‘there’s something really cool in that, and I thought it was really interesting,’ and, on their own time and in their own way, went and extended the project far beyond what

you’d ever originally assigned?” she says, relating a question she posed to the educator. “What if the student comes back four weeks later and says, ‘Look what I did! I’m so excited about this.’ Would you change the grade in the original assignment?” The teacher said no, and I asked why? What is it that’s so ingrained in your thinking about student learning that your timing and structure have to be so tight that you don’t want to encourage, nor do you want to accept a student that’s gone far beyond, and you don’t want to credit it because somehow that’s an advantage that student had that no other student did?”

The newly minted teacher stuck to their guns and said going down that route would result in “everybody getting 100 per cent,” says Dr. Lock.

“Why is that bad? Isn’t that learning? Don’t you want students to be passionate about their learning? Unfortunately, this is a narrow view of school – it’s about the assessment more than the learning, more than it is about the passion or the interest in learning. If we want to have anything other than disengaged kids, we’ve got to make changes.”

As *Connections, Academics, and Purpose: Designing the Future of School* continues to reach educators and parents alike, Dr. Lock says she wants the volume to “create a movement.” She senses an opportunity to foster change, she says, just as Pickering College instills in its own students.

“I want to take advantage of the opportunity I have because the truth is the public school system is a bigger, more difficult machine to change,” she says. “They don’t have the ability to be as playful and as innovative as an independent school like Pickering College. If we can do that hard work here and see what works, and actually figure out what school could be, we can show how it can be scaled up and share it.

“The very core thing we want kids to do is feel that they can actually make a difference in the world, live their lives with a sense of meaning and purpose.”

For more information on *Connections, Academics, and Purpose: Designing the Future of School*, including how to order the book, see supporting materials, and view online workshops, visit www.cindelock.com.

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Johnston offers glimpse behind the cartoons at APL next week



Scott Johnston is pictured with an array of his cartoons, which now take pride of place at the Aurora Public Library's Colleen Abbott Gallery. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Scott Johnston's editorial cartoons in The Auroran have kept readers laughing for a quarter-century, but Johnston's cartoonist lens extends well beyond the issues of Aurora – and next week you can get a glimpse into his creative process at the Aurora Public Library.

An array of Johnston's non-editorial cartoons are now featured at APL's Colleen Abbott Gallery through March 28. This Tuesday, March 3, however, Johnston will offer an artist's talk beginning at 7 p.m., illustrating both how he gets his ideas and how the final product all comes together.

"One of the things I really enjoy about doing the non-political cartoons is that I get to do them on anything and everything," says Johnston. "When I do the editorial stuff, I have to restrict

myself to Aurora or thereabouts. When I do the non-political cartoons, I can do them on animals and pets, mythology, fairy tales, arts, literature, science, holidays, historical figures, aliens, trees, inanimate objects – just about anything and everything. And it's very liberating to be able to think of a cartoon about trees when the next cartoon you do is about pirates, or Rapunzel or something like that. It's a lot of fun to be able to let your mind wander and to pick and choose across a wide variety of subjects."

When Johnston was invited to curate the exhibition, he started with 100 of his favourites and whittled it down to the best 35 to account for the available space.

He made a concerted effort to ensure a wide variety of subjects were represented.

"It was fun to revisit a lot of the

cartoons I hadn't looked at in a while and a challenge to pick them out because, of course, they all tend to be your favourites," he says. "When you put so much effort into them, you kind of have a soft spot for them all, so it's a bit hard to pick and choose, but, in the end, we came up with a good cross-section."

In recent years, Johnston's work has been exposed to audiences well beyond Aurora, whether through his social media profile or the five volumes of non-editorial cartoons he's published. It's a journey he says has brought a lot of "rewarding" feedback.

"When you're cartooning, it's like you're kind of drawing them for yourself, what you feel is funny, but you don't often get that immediate reaction," he says. "When I put the cartoons in the paper, it goes out, people read the paper, but I don't

necessarily know if they thought it was funny or that they got the joke, or thought it was insightful, or anything like that. In getting a wider audience, it's nice to see that my cartoons are universally appreciated – I get feedback from folks from across Canada, the States, Europe, Australia, and all over the world. It's really fun to think that people on the other side of the world are enjoying the work that I have done.

"I just want people to have fun with this show. It has been a long, cold winter here in Aurora and I think people are looking forward to the spring and being cheered up a bit. I'm hoping these cartoons will bring smiles to folks' faces, and that they'll have some fun looking at cartoons that they may not have seen before."

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Area students SPARC solutions to community challenges

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Area students have gone beyond the classroom and into the community to “SPARC” real change at Pickering College. Students at the Newmarket-based independent school recently celebrated a second year of success for their SPARC – Student Projects Advancing Real Change – where students work in groups forging community partnerships to have a real impact.

Areas explored by students in this latest term included technology, robotics and coding, social justice and advocacy, identity and community, environmental stewardship, and designing for now and the future.

At the celebration, SPARC students welcomed community partners to thank them for their support and to outline how their work together fostered change.

One such organization was the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, which helped students Becca and Just learn the importance of empathy in designing products for people living with various challenges.

“To understand our partner better, we visited CNIB and learned directly from people who are blind,” said Just. “We also went to Onoir Toronto, a restaurant where you eat in complete darkness. This experience helped us understand how much we rely on our vision and how challenging everyday tasks can be without sight. These activities helped us design with empathy.

“Together, our projects showed creativity, problem solving and empathy. Some groups focused on tools, others on learning materials, and others on awareness. Even though our projects were different, they all connected to the

same goal: making the world easier to navigate for people who are blind or have low vision. Throughout this project, we learned how important empathy is in design. We learned to listen to each other, ask helpful questions, and use feedback from CNIB and our teachers to make our work better. Working together helped us grow as designers and collaborators.”

Another group, this time in the coding and robotics category, used their skills to target scams, particularly those aimed at seniors.

“All over the world, elders are being scammed and losing money through electronic communication,” said Tyler. “This is a serious problem that affects many families and communities. Scammers love to disguise their scams well. They usually have messages saying, ‘Hey, you just won a free trip,’ and ask you for your credit card information. They will not tell you their name if you ask them otherwise, you would probably realize it is a scam immediately.”

This group created a series of interactive games to teach people about cybersecurity.

“We worked in groups of two or three to make a game on a block coding platform called Scratch,” said Ryan. “We worked with the Wise Ones, our group of local older adults, to brainstorm a game that would not only be appealing but also fun. We interviewed the Wise Ones a couple of times to ask about their experience with cyberattacks and what they would do in that situation. This makes it easier for us to impart their knowledge into our game. Through this project, we built meaningful relationships with the Wise Ones and their help was invaluable in making our games both educational and effective.”

The importance of social justice and advocacy was driven home to still more students as they partnered with



Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Newmarket’s Mission Thrift Store to raise awareness about “fast fashion,” its impact on the environment, workers and society.

“We chose this topic because almost everyone participates in fast fashion, often without realizing the harm behind cheap and trendy clothing,” said Daisy. “Through this project, we wanted to help people understand these issues better and inspire more thoughtful and responsible choices when it comes to what we wear.”

Added Chloe: “At the beginning of this project, we first learned what fast fashion is and explored the many problems it causes, such as overconsumption, pollution, landfill waste, and unfair labour practices. Many students were truly shocked and inspired by what we discovered, which motivated us to take real action instead of just learning about it in class.”

The group’s final project saw students working in groups such as The Jean Dream Team, Style & Stitch, Runway Rebels, Handmade and Reclaimed, and The Fashion Fixers, to transform old and discarded clothing into something “new,

creative and meaningful.”

“The Jean Dream Team turned old jeans into fresh, stylish pieces, showing how reusing denim can give clothing a second life,” said Daisy. “The Style & Stitch team created clothing entirely from scratch, using recycled and discarded fabric, proving that sustainability and style can go hand-in-hand.”

“The Runway Rebels created an impactful statement piece that goes beyond fashion,” continued Chloe. “Their work represents advocacy, drawing attention to overconsumption, waste, and fair labour practices. Their design shows that clothing can be a powerful way to send a message. The Fashion Fixers rescued damaged clothing and redesigned it into stuffed animals, showing that even clothes that seem ruined can be transformed into something meaningful.” Finally, the Handmade and Reclaimed team turned fabric scraps into accessories like scrunchies and tote bags, remind us that even the smallest pieces of material can have a big impact.”

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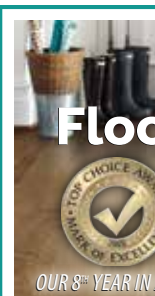
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VOL. 27 | NO. 20 | 905-727-3300 TheAuroran.com FREE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 26, 2026



PLAY (PICKLE)BALL! – Pickleball enthusiasts, and even those new to the game, had plenty to celebrate on Friday, February 13, with the grand opening of Pickleplex Aurora, where Mayor Tom Mrakas and Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese were joined by the Pickleplex team and enthusiastic players. Located at 340 Addison Hall Circle, Unit 2, Pickleplex Aurora boasts eight indoor pickleball courts, two party rooms, private bathrooms and showers, and more, and offers various membership levels. For more information, visit pickleplexclub.ca/aurora.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Junior Panthers take two of three on Eastern Ontario road trip to snap five-game losing streak

BY JIM STEWART

The Central York U22 Panthers snapped their five-game losing streak with an emphatic 5-2 win over the Ottawa Senators on Saturday afternoon.

Audrey Martone's unassisted goal 2:13 into the first period gave the sixth-place Panthers a 1-0 lead and provided the strong early start the Junior club needed to shake off its February funk.

Less than three minutes later, Senators forward Chloe Martineau evened the score and the teams took a 1-1 tie into the first intermission.

Another early goal to start a period sparked the Panthers. 1:17 into the middle frame, Central York's leading scorer Annabella Van Berkel buried her 32nd of the season—assisted by Abby Pak and Mackenzie Cotey.

Five minutes after Big Goal Van Berkel's go-ahead tally, the productive Martone picked up her second point of the contest—earning the primary assist on Ashley Minor's game-winning goal that gave the Panthers a 3-1 lead.

Central York's offense kept on rolling in the middle frame when Demi Lazarou lit the lamp with 12:40 on the clock. Lazarou's 14th of the season was assisted by Captain Keira Johnson and gave the Panthers a comfortable three-goal lead over the Senators after forty minutes of play.

3:40 into the final frame, Lily Paisley made it 5-1 when she converted Catelyn Clark's pass into her 15th goal of the campaign.

With just over five minutes remaining, Martineau's second marker of the game pulled the 14th-place Senators to within three goals, but the Panthers fought off the home side's final push

to earn their first victory since blanking Kingston 2-0 on February 1.

Panthers goaltender Jamie Sanford earned the W by turning aside 30 of the 32 shots she faced.

The win versus the Senators on Saturday evened Central York's grueling road trip record to one win against one loss after the Panthers were edged 2-1 by the East Ottawa Stars on Friday night.

It was Central York's third one-goal-loss in a row after dropping 2-1 and 4-3 decisions last week to the Whitby Wolves and Toronto Leaside Wildcats, respectively.

The lightning-fast Lazarou opened the scoring at 6:25 of the first period to kick off the Panthers' three-game road trip through Ottawa and Cornwall, but that was the only shot that eluded Stars goaltender Anna Rioux. The athletic netminder stole one on Friday night for East Ottawa, stopping 37 of 38 shots to earn an upset victory for the 19th-place Stars.

Less than five minutes into the second period, Annie McDonell pulled the Stars into a 1-1 tie and Beatrice Gauvin's power play goal was the game-winner 4:02 into the third period.

The Panthers (27-16-0) completed their whirlwind tour of eastern Ontario by matching up with the OHA Mavericks (11-31-0) in Cornwall on Sunday morning.

Central York took to the ice just hours after the disappointing Gold Medal Game result in Milan. Unlike the National Men's team, the U22 Panthers took care of business on Sunday and skated to a resounding 6-1 victory over the Mavericks.

Midway through the first period, Ella Frasca set up Ellie Lewington's 8th

of the season and the Panthers took a 1-0 lead.

Four minutes later, the home side drew even when Gabriela Lacna notched her 20th goal with help from Krisztina Weiler.

The Junior Panthers scored five unanswered goals in the second period to put the game away.

Martone's unassisted marker broke the 1-1 tie at 15:45 of the middle frame. The Panthers' second-leading scorer then earned the primary assist on Elizabeth Shapira's goal at 7:38 that bumped Central York's lead to 3-1.

Less than two minutes later, Cotey gave the Panthers a three-goal lead

with helpers earned by Pak and Rachel Talesnik.

With 2:28 to go, Van Berkel scored goal #33 of the campaign to make it 5-1 for the visitors and Anastasia Trifon finished the Panthers' offensive onslaught fifty-three seconds later to subdue the Mavericks.

The Junior Panthers will look to extend their two-game winning streak when they host the Toronto Aeros on Saturday, February 28 at 1:25 and the Stoney Creek Sabres on Sunday, March 1 at 1:55.

Both games are at SARC and close out the home portion of Central York's 48-game regular season.



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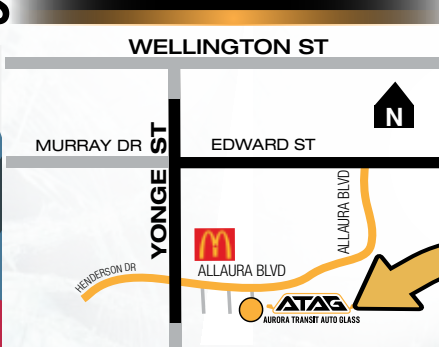
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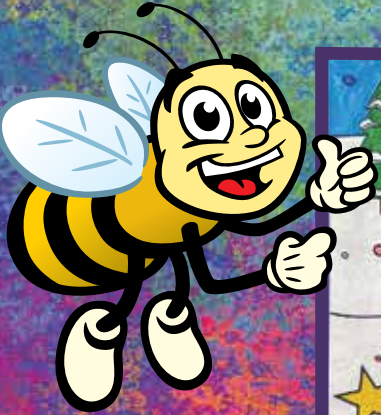
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THE AURORAN

NewRoads LakeRide concludes with \$1 million raised for Southlake

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

NewRoads Automotive Group concluded ten years of its LakeRide cycling event on a high note – achieving their goal of raising more than \$1 million for Southlake Health.

The NewRoads LakeRide, which took place each summer, setting off on various routes from Newmarket to Lake Simcoe, supported a number of key areas of development for Southlake, but put a significant emphasis on the local hospital’s Mental Health programs.

“Our partnership with NewRoads Automotive Group, through the thoughtful and generous leadership of [NewRoads President] Michael Croxon, has been a point-of-pride for Southlake Health,” said Jennifer Ritter, President and CEO of the Southlake Health Foundation. “Over the last 10 years, we have seen the NewRoads LakeRide

grow and inspire cyclists across the region to fundraise and ride to make an impact on the health of our communities. That impact is felt across our hospital, but nowhere near as acutely as in our Mental Health Program, where care has been transformed through the compassionate support of NewRoads.

“We are so grateful to the entire NewRoads Team for the commitment, enthusiasm, and support they have demonstrated for Southlake Health.”

Within Southlake’s Mental Health Program, funds from the LakeRide have



Photo courtesy of the Southlake Health Foundation

been used to foster healing environments to meet the unique needs of each patient.

The NewRoads Automotive Group Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit, which opened in 2020, is a testament to this commitment. The dedicated Unit features six private assessment rooms for patients experiencing mental health crises and requiring urgent support.

A 12-bed adult inpatient unit opened in 2023, which allowed Southlake to increase its capacity for mental health care supports.

The latest phase, which is expected to open this spring, will be a new patio for the program, Southlake’s first outdoor space to support inpatient recovery.

“As a psychiatrist caring for patients in Southlake’s Mental Health Program, I know the important role that a peaceful and healing environment plays in enabling a patient to recover,” said Dr. Gaurav Mehta, Physician Leader of Southlake’s Mental Health Program. “Patients in our communities who come to us for care are benefiting from our improved and expanded spaces, like the NewRoads Automotive Group Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit. These light-filled, purposefully designed spaces are tailored to meet the needs of mental health patients and we’re so appreciative of our partners at NewRoads and participants and donors of the NewRoads LakeRide over the last 10 years for making this a reality for Southlake.”



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Mourning in the Morning – Canada settles

BY JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Gold Medal Watch Party at Wicked Eats was the place to be on Sunday morning, if you wanted to enjoy the marquee event of the 2026 Winter Olympics with over 100 passionate hockey fans.

The north-end eatery was standing room-only for the Canada-USA puck drop at 8:10 a.m. EST, and it stayed rammed right through the OT until American forward Jack Hughes ruined the Watch Party with his gold medal-winning goal.

Red-clad hockey fans filled every seat at Robert Stewart’s restaurant. Hot breakfast platters, featuring waffles, bacon, scrambled eggs, hashbrowns, and toast, were served all morning by the proprietor’s hospitable serving staff of four.

It was also a great demographic mix on hand to watch the Clash of the Hockey Titans.

Two teams of Aurora Tigers—18U and 15U—took up one of the long tables. I was hoping that these teenagers, who were miraculously awake at the crack of dawn to join a public gathering, would experience what millions of Canadians enjoyed collectively in 1972. Paul Henderson’s goal with 34 seconds left on the clock vanquished the Soviet Union in Moscow and set off celebrations across Canada.

The rep players that were assembled at Wicked Eats were either too young or not even born when Sid the Kid’s Golden OT Goal sunk the US team and unified the nation in Vancouver in 2010.

A number of older guests took turns touching the glass of the framed Henderson jersey at Wicked Eats as a kind of Sunday morning veneration toward a national hero whose goal clinched the Summit Series.

We were hoping beyond hope that Newmarket’s Connor McDavid would deliver a decisive Golden Goal in Milan to give these young Tigers that kind of timeless historical moment.

Alongside the rep hockey players were dozens of fun hockey moms and dads—some in vintage Team C jerseys including a red Getzlaf. These were full-throated supporters of Team C – accustomed to cheering their teams during the early hours of the weekend in arenas across Ontario. They were born ready for this!

The service clubs had their own booths. Young families dotted the outer tables. Those gathered around the bar developed “Cheers”-like camaraderie.

Mayor Mrakas enjoyed the festivities with close friends and stayed for the duration in the comfy confines of the packed neighborhood bar.

With the USA up 1-0 on a first period goal by Matt Boldy, the pro-Canada crowd showed a mix of trepidation and bravado when the puck dropped to commence the middle frame.

Every scoring opportunity by the Americans and big save by Canadian goaltender Jordan Binnington caused some degree of anxiety as John Cooper’s troops looked for the equalizer.

One of the great equalizers at Wicked Eats on Sunday morning was the availability of alcohol for the early morning showdown. There’s nothing like sipping a steaming hot cup of Earl Grey Tea—enhanced with a shot of Fireball and a shot of Grand Marnier – to take the edge off another chilly February day. The concoction created some patriotic fervor in this popular neighborhood pub, as did the more conventional pints of ale that were being enjoyed by the of-age customers, thanks to Premier Doug Ford’s special events legislation.

Spending the morning with over one hundred like-minded local sports fans—living and dying with each missed scoring opportunity by the red-clad Canadian team—created memorable moments for our community. The final result was disappointing, but the experience was enriching.

Binnington’s big save at 14:05 elicited a raucous cheer from the assembly, as the kid from Richmond Hill rebuffed



It was fun times in Aurora on Sunday morning...until Jack Hughes ended the fun for more than 100 Aurorans at Wicked Eats and millions of Canadians tuned in from coast to coast to coast.

Auroran photos by Jim Stewart

the Americans and kept us in the game.

Every missed shot by a Team C player, every save by Binnington, and every call not made by the officiating crew was met by deep sighs or lusty cheers by the lively assembly.

Alas—one of the factors that doomed Team Canada took place in the middle frame when our elite professionals were gifted a 5-on-3 power play. The prospect of Canada’s best players being given more space and time to take apart the USA PK was as delicious as the hot breakfasts being delivered around the pub. Unfortunately, the USA PK had been up to that task throughout the Winter Games and Sunday’s game was no exception. As Connor McDavid intoned after the game, “We had millions of chances.” That was TSN Turning Point 1.

After the white-clad Americans fought off our national team’s power play, the mood got a wee bit surly.

Some anti-Gretzky catcalls emanated in the room and so many golden scoring opportunities were squandered. Another big save was made by US goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, but the ensuing

scrum got the crowd rolling again.

All the missed shots were forgiven when Canadian defender Cale Makar—the Bobby Orr of this era—created space and rifled a wrist shot from between the circles that beat Hellebuyck with three minutes left in the period. The big goal was much to the delight of the Wicked Eats patrons—one of the fans roared “good things happen when Canada shoots the puck.”

It was hard to disagree with the wisdom of this statement as Makar’s laser shot tied the game 1-1. Hope filled the room.

Lots of raucous applause greeted a period-ending dustup at centre ice and it appeared Team Canada had the momentum to create some Magic in Milan.

After the fans did their leg-stretching and chin-wagging between periods, a rapt audience gasped in disbelief when Devon Toews missed a goal mouth scoring opportunity less than two minutes into the final period. We actually celebrated the goal that wasn’t, as Hellebuyck got a millimeter of his

Continued on page 21

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for Silver in 2 – 1 OT loss to USA



From page 20
paddle on the puck to deflect the blue ice shot by Toews.

The Avalanche star could be haunted by that missed shot for decades. Canadian fans will be.

Somewhere in the dark recesses of my mind, a line from Colonel Walter Kurtz in Apocalypse Now resonated: “The horror. The horror.” That was TSN Turning Point 2.

I was emboldened to soldier on when my hot breakfast arrived to complement my muscular and medicinal Earl Grey concoction.

When Hellebuyck foiled Celebrini’s breakaway five minutes into the third period, there was a primal sense of dread emerging from the good folks at the eatery. That was TSN Turning Point 3.

Another missed scoring chance by McDavid on the doorstep was a gut punch to the ardent sports fans assembled as our best player and tournament MVP failed to turn off the lights on USA. That was TSN Turning Point 4.

However, in a show of spirited resilience, “Let’s Go Canada, Let’s Go” started to sweep through the room—started by a quintessential quartet of female fans that were all-in on the gold medal game. With flags waving and in full voice, they cheered through

another goalmouth scramble where the Canadians just could not muster the knockout punch.

All looked lost when Sam Bennett got the gate for a four-minute minor at 6:34, but the Canadian PK killed off the 240-second infraction. The roller coaster ride and joys of the collective public sports experience manifested itself again—especially when Bennett’s bonehead penalty elapsed with no damage done. Seconds later, Jack Hughes’s high-sticking penalty put Team C’s power play back on the ice with the chance to put the US away at 3:23.

Would the headline be “Morning Magic in Milan: Golden Moment for Team Canada” or “Mourning in the Morning: Canada settles for silver in 2-1 OT loss to USA”?

So many chances, but the USA maintained its pristine penalty killing at the 2026 Olympics and 3-on-3 overtime hockey loomed. This was TSN Turning Point 5.

It was all over—suddenly and mercilessly-- when Jack Hughes ripped a shot in OT from the left faceoff circle past Binnington to silence the assembly. Many averted their gazes in abject disappointment.

With all of Trump’s anti-Canada remarks and tariffs over the past

year, losing to the USA in the Gold Medal game in 2026 was painful. Imagine if Canada had lost to another adversary—the Soviets—in 1972. The only applause that could be heard in the eatery was for the US Captains who paraded a Johnny Gaudreau USA memorial jersey around the ice. Canadians are so classy – even in the darkest moments—and Gaudreau was saluted posthumously by the disappointed gathering.

Our next hockey gold medal will be even more enjoyable – having lived through the silver medal disappointments of 2026.

As the clearly-damaged Sid the Kid emerged to receive his silver medal, there were mixed feelings about his absence expressed by the remaining diehards, but one voice offered solace to us all:

“At least we can curl.”
Amen.

THINGS... you ought to know

TUESDAY, MARCH 3
The Aurora Public Library’s Colleen Abbott Gallery is hosting a display of some of Scott Johnston’s most popular non-editorial cartoons, through March 28. Tonight at 7 p.m., Johnston will lead an artist talk at the Library. Drop by to learn more about the work of The Auroran’s long-time cartoonist!

MARCH 10 – APRIL 18
Memory Lane Home Living invites caregivers and their loved ones experiencing cognitive changes to join Art from the Heart, a creative arts program facilitated by an Art Therapist. This hands-on program offers an opportunity to explore art activities, spark creativity, and encourage connections with other families on the same journey. The program takes place each Tuesday from March 10 – April 28 at the Aurora Public Library. Free. To register and for more information, call 905-237-1419, or visit memorylanehomeliving.ca.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19
AHS Speaker Series: Heison Chak “Toronto’s Lost Shipwreck” – 7 p.m., at Aurora Town Square or Virtual via Zoom. Hosted by the AHS in partnership with the Aurora Museum & Archives. Join us for a presentation by Heison Chak as he explores the four pillars of exploration through the recent rediscovery of a 200-year-old schooner in Toronto. Discover how modern technology and local research brings maritime heritage to life - showing that world-class discovery can begin close to home. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website (www.aurorahs.com) or by calling 905-727-8991.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28
The Town of Aurora is proud to partner with York Region and NewMakelt to bring a Repair Café to Aurora, giving residents a hands-on opportunity to fix everyday household items, reduce waste, and support a circular economy. Taking place on Saturday, March 28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC), Program Room C, the Repair Café invites residents to bring in broken, well-loved items, from bicycle chains and small household items such as small appliances to electronics and broken clasps. Skilled volunteer fixers will be on hand to help repair items free of charge, extending their lifespan and keeping them out of landfill. For

more information, visit aurora.ca/repaircafe.

Introduction to Paper Quilting. 1 p.m. Have you ever wanted to try paper quilting? In this introductory workshop, you will create a greeting card/piece of art using this easy to learn heritage craft. Workshop includes all materials. Taking place in the beautiful Hillary House National Historic Site Ballroom (2nd floor). Enjoy light refreshments, a short tour of Hillary House, and shop in the Gift Shop. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website (www.aurorahs.com) or by calling 905-727-8991.

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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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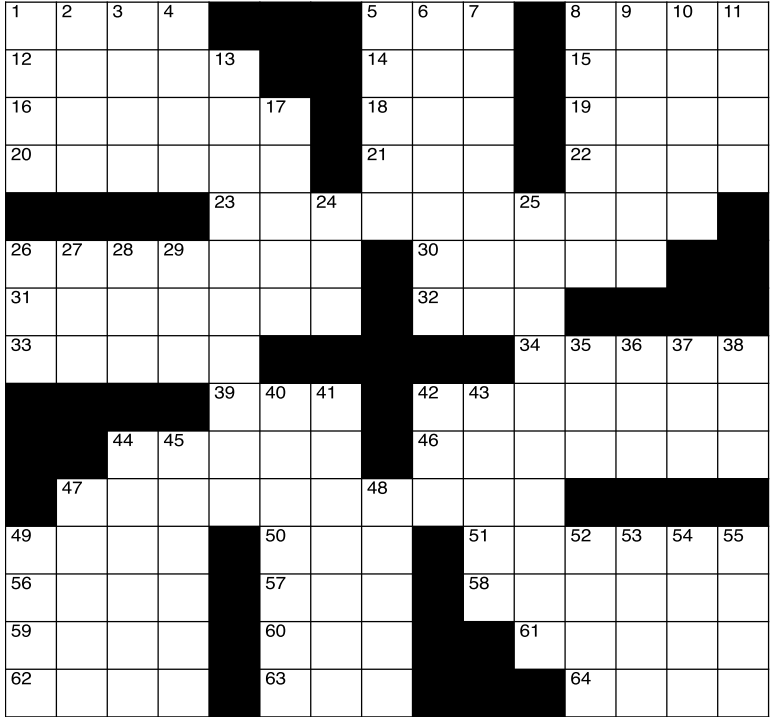
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CLUES ACROSS

- What travelers must do
- Calendar month
- Hopefully quickly
- Once more
- Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
- “Cheers” actress Perlman
- Astronomy unit
- Savings vehicle
- Get your ducks in this
- Right away
- Popular sports league
- Containers
- Entireties
- One who wassails
- Turned-up position
- Extreme modesty
- Writing utensil
- Rewards (archaic)



CLUES DOWN

- Off-Broadway figure
- Gelatinous substance
- Concern
- “Lick It Up” rockers
- Serbian river
- Part of a hat
- Bowl-shaped drinking vessel
- Semitic language
- Utter a shrill cry
- Long times
- Animal parts
- Causing annoyance
- Amorous talker
- Attempt
- Harmonic effects
- Cost per mile
- They, —
- Bitterly regret
- Not even
- A way to drop
- Title of respect
- World leader
- Georgia rockers
- National capital
- Great Plains people
- Duck-sized dinosaur genus
- Architectural recesses
- Member of U.S. Navy
- Mountainous
- Kite bird
- Sweetheart (archaic)
- Popular snack made of potato
- 70s songsters The Bee —
- SE China port —men
- Something to fill up
- League of Legends character

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Girls Night Out going “camping” for International Women’s Day

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Get all the fun of camping next week without all the hassle of packing and braving the Canadian winter when NewRoads Automotive Group partners with Girls Inc. of York Region for the annual NewRoads Girls Night Out. Hosted each year to coincide with International Women’s Day, this year’s Girls Night Out is set for Thursday, March 5, from 6 – 9 p.m. at Newmarket’s NewRoads Performing Arts Centre. It’s a night “celebrating the strength, creativity, and impact of women in our community,” with vendor tables featuring products from local women-owned businesses, an inspiring panel

discussion, and a camp-themed menu created by A Million Mouthfuls Catering. “This is our 15th year and we’re really excited to celebrate International Women’s Day,” says NewRoads’ Rachel Hawtin. “We do it every year on the first Thursday of March to commemorate International Women’s Day. This year we’re calling it Girls Night Out Goes to Camp, which we thought would be a really nice theme to tie in with Girls Inc. because they are all about summer camps, celebrating girls in our community, and providing them with really amazing opportunities at their camps. “This is our fourth year working with Girls Inc. of York Region and we’ve really loved the partnership with them. They really bring so much great energy

to the event as well. As this year is all about camp, we have a really amazing ‘elevated camp’ menu, we have a badge-system that we’re employing through the evening where you can collect some badges, and there’s going to be amazing drinks as well! Then we have our vendor market that are all women-owned businesses. That’s a big part of the evening – celebrating our local small businesses that are all women-owned. We have a lot of returning booths and we have some new people as well, which is really great.” Returning for 2026 after a few years’ absence is a panel of local women entrepreneurs. Set to take the stage are Shabi Monzavi of Market Candle Company, Lauren Francis-Smithson, founder of Lo+Co, Lynnette Lanning, co-founder

of Neighbour Media, and Anne-Marie Million, founder of A Million Mouthfuls. “They have such a presence in our community,” says Hawtin. “I hope people leave feeling empowered, celebrated, and I hope they feel inspired. This is a great opportunity to bring someone in your life who is a female out to the event for a really fun night out. There’s shopping, and who doesn’t love shopping? You’re supporting a great cause, you’re going to have delicious food and drinks, and you’re going to have a quick little inspirational moment in the theatre. It’s short and sweet, but I think it’s impactful.” For more information on this year’s NewRoads Girls Night Out, including tickets, visit www.newroads.ca/girls-night.

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