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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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WEEK OF MARCH 19, 2026



CELEBRATING HOLI – The community came together in a colourful celebration on Sunday as the Town of Aurora hosted its second-annual Holi Festival, “celebrating the arrival of spring, new beginnings, and the spirit of love.” Among the day’s activities were a Bollywood-style dance workshop, crafts, and, pictured here, colour throwing in Aurora Town Square. For more, see Page 11. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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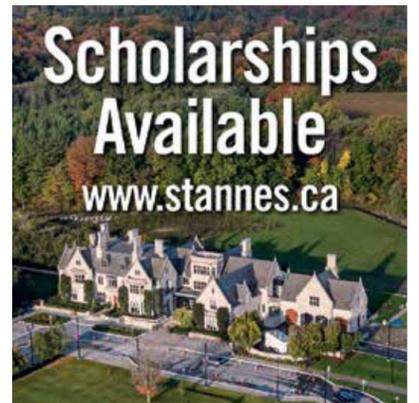
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Aurora moves to protect vulnerable communities in wake of rising antisemitism

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora has set in motion a number of measures to protect “vulnerable” communities and spaces following rising antisemitism and other forms of hate throughout the Greater Toronto Area – including right here in York Region.

Motions from both Mayor Tom

Mrakas and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo called on municipal staff to develop several initiatives to address the situation going forward, including a joint Task Force and funding to combat antisemitic hate, brought forward by the Councillor, and new rules suggested by the Mayor to prohibit demonstrations or “activities that intimidate, incite hatred, violence, intolerance, or

discrimination within a defined distance of vulnerable social infrastructure, including places of worship, schools, childcare centres, hospitals, and congregate care facilities” within Aurora.

Councillor Gallo’s motion, the first of the two to be discussed at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting, called on Council

Continued on page 12

“Take the music into your heart so you have it forever”

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As she headed into a Toronto TV studio in the early morning hours to record a promotion for an upcoming music event in the city, Sharon Hampson had an encounter with a well-wisher that remains as vivid today as ever before.

It was just after 7 a.m., and Hampson

Continued on page 10



POLAR PLUNGE – The York Regional Police held its annual Polar Plunge outside its Aurora headquarters last week, raising a record-breaking \$75,000 for Special Olympics Ontario. For more, see Page 18. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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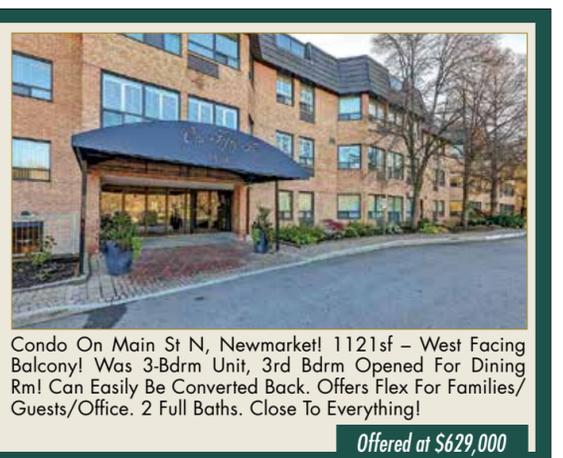
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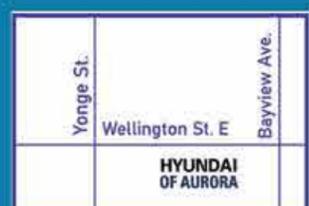
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CHATS Community Arts Showcase set to inspire with creativity of older adults

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The creativity and talent of older adults in our communities will find a well-deserved place in the spotlight next Saturday, March 28, when CHATS – Community and Home Assistance to Seniors – hosts its second annual Community Arts Showcase.

The Showcase will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, with an opening reception, complete with the chance to talk to participating artists, unfolding from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The second-annual event is a significant expansion from the first exhibition in January of 2025, featuring more than 100 individual pieces created by senior artists throughout York Region and South Simcoe County.

Featured artists range from seasoned pros to those who began exploring their talents later in life.

“We got such a great reception from the community and also from our staff,” says Alexis Gada, Caregiver Education Counsellor at CHATS. “One of the things that was really great about last year’s show is we also had some contributions not just from the community at large, but also from some of our internal CHATS programs, like our day program and our outreach



program. Both of those programs support older adults in the community.

“In the day program, there are lots of people in those programs that have mild cognitive impairment, for example, and then in our outreach programs those are social wellness programs that are focused on helping older adults to avoid isolation, and we had great engagement from them – including our Iranian and Russian programs.

“The programs really provided an opportunity, particularly in those social wellbeing spaces, to allow people to highlight what they’re doing. For example, from our Russian program last year, we had a very gifted painter and I believe her

family mentioned that she had not started painting until she was well into retirement.”

Community engagement is key for CHATS’ menu of program options and Gada says that one of the priorities with this Showcase is to “make sure that visibility is prioritized” for older community members.

“This is what tends to be a more invisible population – that was our focus for last year and we just got such a warm reception from it that CHATS decided they wanted to make it an annual event,” she said. “It’s not just about CHATS programs...these are just older adults saying, ‘Hey, you know, I have an opportunity here to also be visible and I want to take part in that, too.’ We’re just making sure that it’s a space where everyone is welcome and it’s just really wonderful to have the community come together for that common creative interest.

“When we do community presentations, sometimes we’ll visit retirement homes or community spaces like the Libraries... and the one thing we talk about for social wellbeing later in life, for just overall healthy, anti-stress, low-anxiety ways of being, we talk about trying new things and exploring what we could be good at. We talk about that all the time, ‘Hey, try a new thing. If it looks like it kind of interests you but you’re not sure, try it. If it doesn’t work out, it doesn’t work out, but you may discover that you’re really good at something!’”

Briefly

WOMEN’S HEALTH SUMMIT

The Women’s Health Summit, hosted by Kitchen Table CEOs, will take place Thursday, March 26, at Aurora Town Square from 9.15 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Aurora Town Square. The six-hour event will offer many opportunities to learn more about your health and move your body, learning from the experts “on how to thrive at every age and stage, especially peri-menopause and beyond). Feeling exhausted, burnt out and like a hamster on a wheel? Practice taking time for you and how to decompress.” For more information, including tickets and registration, visit kitchen-table-ceos.myflodesk.com/healthsummit2026.

GET READY FOR COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP

Registration is now on for Aurora’s Spring Community Cleanup. The Community Cleanup Day will take place Saturday, April 25, and if you’d like to take part, visit aurora.ca/Cleanup to reserve your cleanup kit. “Spring is all about renewal, and there’s no better way to celebrate than by working together to make our community shine,” says Mayor Tom Mrakas. “Every bag collected makes a difference. It’s inspiring to see residents of all ages come out, take action, and demonstrate what community spirit in Aurora is all about.”

Police issue appeal for suspect identification in a March 2025 home invasion

A year after a March 2025 Aurora home invasion, with no significant leads to date, investigators with the York Regional Police Hold-Up Unit are re-releasing images of a male suspect and seeking the public’s assistance in identifying him.

On Thursday, March 6, 2025, at approximately 11:20 a.m., police were called to a residence in the area of Murray Drive and Kennedy Street after receiving reports of a home invasion.

The female victim told officers she answered the door after someone was knocking aggressively. As the front door opened, a male suspect forced his way into the residence and attempted to restrain her.

A second victim, who was also at the residence, attempted to intervene and was violently assaulted.

The suspect fled the residence in an unknown direction on foot, without making any demands for valuables or stealing anything.

Both victims suffered serious, but non-life-threatening injuries.

Images of the male suspect were obtained from security cameras at a store, in the area of Yonge Street and Murray Drive, on the day of the offence.

The suspect is described as a white male, between the ages of 20 and 30, approximately 6’ and weighing around



175 lbs. to 180 lbs.

The suspect is described as wearing a black balaclava, with two eye-holes and a separate mouth hole, at the time of the offence. Also wearing a midweight black puffy coat, black pants and black boot-like footwear

York Regional Police would like to warn the community to always know who is at your door before opening it. This can be done from a window where the person would not be able to see you, for example, a second floor or living room window. If you can, use security cameras or peepholes to verify who is at the door before opening it.

If you feel unsafe, trust your instincts and call 9-1-1 right away.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police Hold-Up Unit at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 6630. Anonymous tips can be sent to Crime Stoppers by calling 1-800-222-TIPS or by visiting www.1800222tips.com.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

A Public Open House is being held to receive input on the Yonge Street Regional Corridor within the OPA 34 Secondary Plan area:

Monday, March 23, 2026
6 to 8 p.m.
Aurora Town Hall,
100 John West Way

Purpose of the Public Open House:

The purpose of the open house is to gather comments and input from the public regarding the Yonge Street Regional Corridor as part of the Yonge Street South Secondary Plan (OPA 34). This public consultation will inform a land use study and Official Plan amendment regarding development standards including size, built-form and densities along this portion of the Yonge Street Regional Corridor.

Additional information:

Any questions regarding this Public Open House or the Yonge Street Regional Corridor Land Use Study can be directed to:
Dania Asahi Ogie, Policy Planner, at daogie@aurora.ca.

aurora.ca/publicnotices

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

York Region denounces violence targeting Jewish communities

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I am deeply troubled by the recent shootings targeting synagogues across the Greater Toronto Area, including one incident in the City of Vaughan.

Places of worship must be safe spaces for prayer, reflection and gathering. Acts of violence and intimidation directed at any faith community are unacceptable and have no place in York Region. These incidents are alarming and deeply distressing for members of the Jewish community and for residents across our cities and towns who believe in respect, safety and inclusion.

York Region is proudly home to people of many faiths, cultures and backgrounds and that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Attempts to spread fear, hatred or division will never define our community. Today, and every day, we stand with our Jewish residents and with all those who believe everyone deserves to live, worship and participate in community life free from fear.

We are grateful for the work of York Regional Police and their law enforcement partners as they investigate these incidents and continue their efforts to protect our communities.

In moments like this, we must come together and stand united in our rejection of hate and in our shared commitment to building a community where everyone feels safe, valued and welcomed.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO

OPP mark March Break with hockey, decals

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is gearing up to show its support for the Little Native Hockey League (LNHL) Tournament, happening March 16-20, 2026, in Markham.

OPP vehicles across the province will once again sport "Proud Supporter of the LNHL" decals, back with a fresh new design, leading up to and during the tournament. This initiative, launched in 2025 through a partnership between the OPP Indigenous Policing Bureau, the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario, and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, aims to garner police support for the tournament and raise funds for First Nations youth.

Last year, decal sales raised \$7,500, which was used to establish a new Ontario Police Services bursary for LNHL players who are committed to community safety and looking to pursue a career in policing.

"The OPP recognizes that the LNHL Tournament offers a unique opportunity to engage in meaningful community outreach and foster positive relationships with Indigenous youth," said Chief Superintendent Gary Maracle, OPP Indigenous Policing Bureau. "Every decal sold helps strengthen community connections, celebrate culture, and create opportunities for First Nations athletes."

The LNHL is Ontario's largest annual hockey tournament for First Nations youth. In 2025, it hosted 275 teams and approximately 3,500 players, attracting over 10,000 fans. Its pillars, education, citizenship, sportsmanship, and respect, align closely with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action and other reports and recommendations that aim to advance truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

Ontario Provincial Police

Machell's Corners



Answering the Call



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

Do you always answer the phone when it rings, vibrates, or lights up? If you are, you might be in good company.

A few years ago, the BBC explored the idea of why Gen Z and Millennials are "hung up on answering the phone."

The data cited in the report found that 25 per cent of people between the ages of 18 and 34 never answer the phone, preferring instead to "ignore the ringing, respond via text, or search the number online if they don't recognize it."

The conclusion rendered by Yasmin Rufo found it's a generational thing in that those who were between the ages of 18 and 34 in 2024 grew up in a time where texting was gaining a foothold and traditional telephone use was taking a backseat.

So, what's the excuse of those of us who have barely aged out of the 18-34 demo?

I don't have a clear answer.

Admittedly, talking on the phone is not my favourite thing in the world, but when I have to use it, I send up a silent thank-you to the brains that came up with the simple concept of Call Display.

I love hearing from all of you, and please keep the calls coming, but over my years at this desk, some calls have been nothing short of head-scratchers.

One such call that always comes to mind was from an incensed reader who took exception to a photo caption.

There was nothing wrong with the caption as far as I could tell. It was factual. It stated the facts.

So, what was the problem? It was a photo of the Member of Parliament of the day and, as the caller in question didn't vote for him, they were offended we would refer to them as such.

The caller was old enough to know that our Members of Parliament are chosen by the collective, rather than the individual, but it was clear the caller was in no mood to receive a civics lesson, and I was in no mood at that moment to give one.

But, what a missed opportunity!

Three MPs have come and gone in that riding since I first received that call, and, if recent events are any indication, I don't think the level of civic engagement has improved over those intervening years.

This is often most evident when we, as Canadians, are in a Minority Parliament situation, as we are now.

While the numbers are currently on the Prime Minister's side, sabres often rattle louder when a minority government has secured its status as such by the thinnest of margins and opposing parties might see an opportunity in banding together to form a coalition.

"This is not what Canadians voted for," is the common refrain when political parties at loggerheads during the campaign

Parliament, I have always worked to bring Nunavut's priorities into national focus: especially ensuring the immediate needs of Nunavut are addressed and so that we can confront the high cost of living, the urgent need for housing and food security, the importance of protecting our land and waters, and the need for policies that reflect the culture, language, and rights of Inuit and Canadians all throughout the North.

"... At this turning point in our history, I am ready to work with [Carney] to build a strong future for Nunavut and for all of Canada."

While I sympathise with disappointed members of the Nunavut electorate who voted for Iddout solely due to the fact she ran under an orange banner in the last campaign – while that's not how I vote, I say this as a voter who has seen his MP of the day cross the floor not once but twice – one can only hope the majority of her constituents cast their vote because she was the right person to affect the change so desperately needed in Canada's north.

It's a mandate she can certainly fulfil much more effectively as a member of Government rather than on the backbenches of parliament in a party with little more than a handful of members left. That's inarguable. But people vote for different reasons.

I'm sure many went to polling stations last April to vote for Mark Carney, Pierre Poilievre, Jagmeet Singh, etc., and their respective parties rather than for the person whose name was actually on the ballot. But, at the end of the day, no matter what your intentions, you're voting for your local representative and who you feel will best represent your interests in Ottawa.

Conservatives have accused the Prime Minister of making "backroom deals" to facilitate the recent wave of floor-crossings, of members themselves betraying their voters in the process, but it's curious that when Parliamentarians cross the floor to the Conservatives from any other party, it's often framed as a principled decision and a move that should be celebrated in the name of democracy.

It can't go both ways.

Nunavut voters will have the chance to signal their support of Iddout's move in the next Federal election, but the time between now and then will help determine whether she made the right decision on behalf of her constituents and her territory as a whole.

As for the other ridings impacted by floor crossings, it's a chance for some introspection on whether you vote for the person, the party, the plan, the potential impact, or any combination thereof.

Your motivations might surprise you.

THE AURORAN

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Founder: Ron Wallace | Publisher Emeritus: Rosmaryn Schumaker

Subscriptions available within Canada and U.S.
email: administration@auroran.com

EDITOR
Brock Weir
brock@ipcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Zach Shoub
zach@ipcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Karen Nemet
karen@ipcmedia.ca

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GENERAL MANAGER
Zach Shoub
zach@ipcmedia.ca

ADVERTISING
Diane Buchanan
diane@ipcmedia.ca

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Cynthia Proctor
cynthiap@ipcmedia.ca

TODAY'S NEW HOMES
Zach Shoub
zach@ipcmedia.ca

MOTORING
Heather Erwin
heather@caledoncitizen.com

CLASSIFIEDS
905-727-3300 ex.102
cynthiap@ipcmedia.ca

PHOTOGRAPHY
Glenn Rodger
grodger@rogers.com

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
Sheila Ogram
sheila@ipcmedia.ca

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Don't have a crummy time!

Sometimes, our forebears had all the right ideas. This clever crumb tray and matching brush (X76.30.2) were essential for keeping a dinner table clean. Come see this and other archaic cleaning implements in our Spring Cleaning display at Aurora Town Square!



Time Travellers Diary

By Jacqueline Stuart

Life at Elmsleigh

Victoria Hall's frequent appearances in the local news recently reminded me of a woman who supported its first use, as a Disciples of Christ church, in its last years. I decided to get to know her better.

Elizabeth Rutherford Dickson was born in 1864 in Seaford, Ontario, north-west of Stratford. She became a public school teacher. By 1891 she had somehow made her way to Aurora and was teaching at the school on Church Street. Eliza (as she was known) was particularly skilled in the teaching of arithmetic.

1892 was a year of great change for Eliza. In February she married James Whimster, a wealthy local merchant some 20 years her senior. In those days her marriage meant that she had to give up teaching. She would have time to decide on the finishing touches to her new home: new to her and newly built.

That house was, and is, on the east side of Victoria Street, immediately south of Wellington. It is of a somewhat orange-y brick. The Whimsters called their home "Elmsleigh." It had the highest assessed value of any private home in Aurora at that time.

At some point Eliza became Ruth. Perhaps – dare I say it? – Eliza was just not a suitable name for someone of Mrs. Whimster's new station in life.

Ruth belonged to several organizations but the ones most important to her were those supporting the Liberal party: the Aurora Women's Liberal Club and the Ontario Women's Liberal Association. She was president of the local club for many years and treasurer of the provincial body for 12 terms: she was an expert in arithmetic, after all.

Finding this information made me want to have a closer look. My time machine took me back just under a century, to the early summer of 1926.

Mrs. Whimster was holding a garden party for her friends from the Horticultural Society. She was an active member and always a winner of multiple prizes in their competitions. Her favourite flower was the peony and her large garden was lush with the gently colored, gently scented blossoms. Tables were set up with refreshments and Margaret, the housemaid, was scurrying about.

I was in invisible mode so could not indulge in the baked goodies being offered. I walked around the perimeter of the house: maybe I could peek through a window. As I came to the front a most impressive car drew up. The driver, definitely a chauffeur, hopped out and opened a rear door.

Out stepped 80-something Mr. Whimster, with whiter-than-white hair and moustache and smartly dressed. He went into the house, but as I returned to the garden he appeared from the rear door.

He greeted the visitors in a pleasant but not overly jovial way. Similarly, Ruth Whimster was friendly but gave the impression of being somewhat reserved. She was a handsome rather than a pretty or beautiful woman.

Enough of being a mere onlooker at a party: I sent a mental call to my machine and came back to the present.

I wound up my search for information about Elizabeth Rutherford "Ruth" Whimster. She became a widow upon James' death in 1935. Unfortunately, her activities were limited by illness in the late 1940s and she died in 1949. "Elmsleigh" still stands, still grand.

As we welcome the spring season, I hope you are all enjoying the longer days, and that the warmer weather will soon allow us to fully enjoy everything our community has to offer during this time of year.

Here in Newmarket-Aurora, our local manufacturing sector continues to play a critical role in the strength of our economy. In recent weeks, I was proud to announce several significant investments that will support local businesses, protect workers, and help our manufacturers remain competitive in the face of growing global pressures, including U.S. tariffs. Through Ontario's plan to Protect Ontario, our government is working directly with local manufacturers to strengthen domestic production, secure supply chains, and ensure good-paying jobs remain right here in our community.

Here in Aurora, Eco Guardian is making a significant \$11.6 million investment to expand its domestic manufacturing operations and increase production of sustainable, compostable food packaging products. Our government is supporting this project with \$1.5 million through the Regional Development Program. This investment will help the company grow its manufacturing footprint while creating 42 new good-paying jobs in our community.

In Newmarket, Exco Engineering is investing over \$4.2 million to strengthen its manufacturing capabilities and reshore advanced tooling production that had previously been sourced internationally. Our government is supporting this project with \$1.7 million through the Ontario Together Trade Fund, helping the company protect 140 existing jobs and create four new positions locally.

Another long-standing employer in our



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora

community, Eurospec Manufacturing is investing \$307,714 to modernize its production systems and improve operational efficiency. Through the Ontario Automotive Modernization Program, our government is contributing \$150,000 toward this project, helping the company strengthen its competitiveness while protecting 175 existing jobs and creating two new positions in Newmarket-Aurora.

Finally, Bramden Precision is making a \$1.3 million investment to enhance advanced manufacturing technologies and expand domestic production capabilities. Our government is supporting this initiative with \$263,250 through the Ontario Together Trade Fund, helping the company create eight new jobs and protect 14 existing positions.

Together, these projects represent more than \$17.4 million in private-sector investment in Newmarket-Aurora's manufacturing sector, supported by over \$3.6 million from the Ontario government. Most importantly, they will create 56 new good-paying jobs and help protect 329 existing

positions, strengthening our local economy and ensuring workers and families continue to benefit from stable careers in advanced manufacturing.

Alongside supporting economic growth, our government continues to invest in improving care for Ontario's seniors. As Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care, I recently visited homes in Markham and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to announce the launch of the province's Improving Dementia Care Program, which will introduce innovative, emotion-based care models in 17 long-term care homes across Ontario. These approaches—including models such as Butterfly, Eden Alternative, and Behavioural Supports Ontario's 5STaR model—focus on dignity, relationships, and personalized care to enhance the well-being of residents living with dementia. In addition, Ontario is investing \$3.35 million this year and \$9.82 million annually starting in 2026-27 to expand Behavioural Specialized Units, adding 153 specialized dementia care beds to better support residents with complex needs and provide their families with the confidence that their loved ones are receiving the high-quality care they need and deserve.

Next week, the Legislature will resume, and I look forward to returning to Queen's Park with new ideas and perspectives gathered from my meetings with local businesses, community organizations, and residents here in Newmarket-Aurora. Your priorities continue to guide my work, and I will bring your voices forward as we continue advancing our plan to Protect Ontario and prepare to present the 2026 Ontario Budget.

As always, my office is here to support you. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

Live long and prosper with exercise

As the war ended, British Columbia saw an opportunity to eliminate part of the "yellow peril" by offering a choice to those incarcerated in camps: renounce citizenship for a one-way ticket to Japan or move east of the Rocky Mountains. My family had no choice because Japan was a foreign country and my sisters and I couldn't speak Japanese.

In 1945, we ended up on a farm in southern Ontario. We kids picked berries and harvested vegetables to supplement the family's meagre income. Farm work started at 7 a.m. At noon we took half an hour for lunch, then worked till 6, six days a week. It was hard labour, but I never felt it was terrible. It was physical activity. There weren't gyms or fitness programs; we just moved.

After my family relocated to London, ON, I got a job in construction, shovelling gravel, carrying lumber, hammering and sawing to build houses. It was hard work but I loved it. I was buff.

I continued to work in construction on weekends, holidays and summers until I graduated from college in 1958. That year, I got a job as a fish biologist in northern Ontario. I later enrolled in graduate school in genetics and chose to study the fruit fly, *Drosophila*.

We'd spend a lot of time looking through microscopes — much different than shovelling gravel or hammering studs. I became rather pudgy. But it didn't bother me — the excitement of research with my students was exhilarating.

At 35, I met my life partner, Tara,

who's still with me after 53 years. She was 12 years younger than me. A year after our marriage, I was flying from San Francisco to Toronto with a flight change at Chicago's massive O'Hare International Airport. I landed at one end of the terminal. Air Canada was at the other end. With half an hour to make my connection, I grabbed my bag and began to sprint. Halfway to the concourse, I was doubled over, gasping and exhausted. I missed my flight.

It was an epiphany. I decided to enroll in a faculty exercise class.

At first, I mainly jogged, and was discouraged by how out of shape I was. When I met Tara, I smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol and didn't pay attention to my diet. When I began to attend fitness class, I couldn't even complete a track circuit without stopping. But I stuck with it and, over weeks, my body responded.

For years, I was into running. After decades of working out, I actually got down to my high school weight, although gravity, stretched skin and old age have reshaped me.

Today, elders are the fastest growing group in society. They should be recognized and valued for what they've experienced and witnessed. And governments should subsidize fitness programs and centres to help elders move their bodies.

David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Learn more at davidsozuzuki.org

OPINION

BY DAVID SUZUKI

On March 24, I'll complete my 90th ride around the sun. I'm often asked to what I owe my longevity. I usually joke, "I chose my parents carefully." As a geneticist, I know the genetic lottery plays a part.

I once interviewed a Toronto doctor who continued to treat patients after he turned 100. I asked what he owed his longevity to. "Porridge," he replied. "I eat it every day." He was serious, but his belief was anecdotal and proved nothing.

The scientifically documented key to a healthy long life is exercise. Studies show it reduces the risk of a wide array of conditions associated with old age, from diabetes, obesity and cancer to Alzheimer's, stroke and heart disease. No drug, diet or treatment can match the spectrum or degree of reduced risk as exercise.

Like the doctor's porridge, my personal record with exercise is anecdotal. Nevertheless, it's been a critical part of my life and health, and science corroborates its benefits (as well as porridge's benefits). I never set out to deliberately avoid medical issues from aging by exercising. I lucked out because of life circumstances.

The Second World War enabled racists and opportunists to goad Parliament to brand Japanese Canadians as "enemy aliens" — including those like my parents, sisters and me who were born and raised in Canada and had never even been to Japan. All our citizenship rights were suspended under the War Measures Act.



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LSRCA to be folded into new, broader Conservation Authority

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities, including the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, will be restructured into nine broader Conservation Authorities, "to deliver more consistent services, strengthen watershed management, and better protect communities," says the Province.

The Ontario Government announced the restructuring of conservation authorities

last week, with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) being folded into the new Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority.

Local knowledge and input will continue to "guide watershed management," they said, through the establishment of "local watershed councils" to "help identify local priorities for watershed-based conservation programs and services."

"Regional conservation authorities would remain municipally-governed, with regional municipalities, counties, and

cities appointing members to conservation authorities," said the Province. "Lower-tier municipalities in counties, such as towns and townships, will no longer be participating municipalities of a conservation authority under this approach."

The move, they said, follows "extensive consultation on how conservation authorities can help get shovels in the ground faster on homes and other local infrastructure projects, while strengthening their vital role in managing watersheds and protecting communities from floods and natural hazards."

"Ontario's improved approach would feature watershed-based regional conservation authorities operating under consistent provincial standards, modern tools and strengthened capacity – delivering stronger watershed management, flood resilience and better support for housing and infrastructure growth," said Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, in a statement. "We listened and used feedback from last fall's consultations to refine and strengthen our plan, including optimizing regional boundaries to better reflect local needs, knowledge and relationships."

Hassaan Basit, Ontario's Chief Conservation Executive described the decision as a "milestone for conservation" in the Province.

"By building a modern, more unified system, we're protecting local expertise while supporting front-line programs that communities rely on. The Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency would lead a smooth, well-supported transition, ensuring conservation authorities have the tools and resources they need every step of the way to deliver effective watershed management programs, meeting the needs of today and the future."

The Province says the 36 existing Conservation Authorities have "varying policies, processes, and capacities" that have created a "fragmented system with inconsistent standards and timelines."

They claim this fragmentation and consistency has created "uncertainty and delays" for builders, farmers, and landowners, while also making it "more challenging for conservation authorities to carry out their role in protecting communities from floods and natural

hazards."

"To address this, the province created the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) last fall and began consulting with conservation authorities, municipalities and other partners on proposed boundaries for consolidating the province's conservation authorities," said the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks in the statement. "Based on the extensive feedback received, the government amended its proposed conservation authority boundaries and intends to introduce amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act in the coming weeks that, if passed, will set out a path to consolidate Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to create nine new regional conservation authorities. Under this plan, the OPCA would coordinate a clear and successful transition targeting early 2027 for consolidation, and to deliver on its goal of improving customer service, enabling more consistent decision-making and strengthening watershed management across the province."

"With centralized leadership and independent oversight of conservation authorities by the OPCA, Ontario's plan for a regional conservation authority system will reduce administrative duplication across the system and allow conservation authorities to redirect resources to front-line services, operate with greater consistency and transparency and deliver strengthened services to municipalities and permit applicants. This would better position conservation authorities to support the building of new homes and infrastructure while continuing to protect communities from flooding and other natural hazards. Programs and services delivered by conservation authorities would remain the same, including watershed management, natural hazard management and source water protection."

The LSRCA was founded in 1951 as a local watershed management authority, "dedicated to conserving, restoring, and managing the Lake Simcoe Watershed."

Initially based around the five municipalities through which the East Holland River flows, its jurisdiction presently includes the entire Lake Simcoe Watershed with the exception of the City of Orillia and the Upper Talbot River Subwatershed.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Costs of renoviction program requested by Council before final decision

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Council has requested a full costing of potential programs to protect local renters from “renovictions” before making a final decision on next steps.

Local lawmakers last week considered a recommendation from Town Staff against proceeding with developing an anti-renoviction bylaw citing cost concerns regarding enforcement.

The motion to look further into what Aurora can do to prevent local renters against renovictions was first brought forward by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, who said the report lacked the clear numbers to back up the concerns.

Weese brought forward a successful amendment to the motion asking for full administration costs to come before Council by the end of the month for consideration.

The request followed a series of delegations to Council from renters supporting the motion as they feel they could soon be subjected to renovictions themselves.

“For many of us, these buildings are not just rental units, they are our homes, our community, our stability,” said Nada Ismail, a resident of 14 Wellington Street of more than 20 years, a building that faces extensive renovations. “We have raised families here,

cared for aging parents here, and built our lives around this neighbourhood. The uncertainty surrounding redevelopment has created enormous anxiety. We do not know when eviction notices may come and what the timelines will be, or whether we will have any ability to remain in Aurora once this process begins.”

Ismail said that designs show her long-time home will be eliminated as part of the renovations and she’s not alone in this.

“As our respected Mayor and Councillors, I ask you honestly – is this the reputation you want for Aurora? A Town where long-standing residents who have contributed to this community for decades are pushed out because there are no protections in place? Aurora has always been a community that values its residents. A renoviction bylaw would stop that development and it would ensure that redevelopment does not come at a cost of pushing out the very people who built this community. It would give tenants a fair chance to stay in their homes and protect the diversity and stability of our neighbourhoods.

“Please adopt a renoviction bylaw that protects Aurora’s residents from displacement disguised as demolition. We want nothing more than to remain in this Town we love and we continue contributing to the community we call home.”

Ismail was joined at the podium by

her neighbour, William, who described himself as a senior stroke-survivor on a fixed income.

“Without stronger protections, seniors like me are pushed into homelessness,” he said.

Fellow neighbour Nate added that the property is where he and his children have built their lives.

“This Town is our home. It’s the community that shaped my kids. The place that they made their friends and where we built our lives. We have not been served an N-13 notice yet, but we see the direction things are heading. And we know how vulnerable we are without stronger protections,” he said. “If our building is classified as demolition, my family will have no right to return. With today’s rental prices, we simply cannot afford to stay in Aurora. For us, a renoviction wouldn’t just mean finding a new place to live. It would mean being forced out of the town we love. It would mean pulling my children away from their school, their teachers and friends they’ve grown up with. It would mean losing the stability and the support networks that my family needs. I worry every day about how I would explain to my kids we have to leave the only community that we’ve known.”

While Councillor Weese stressed the importance of getting accurate costing back, he also underscored the importance of the bylaw itself.

“This isn’t a trivial thing, it’s life altering for [the delegates] and all the other renters in this community,” he said. “If we believe that the statistics are there, that’s 19 per cent of our population who are residents who live in rental units – that’s 12,300 people who at some point could learn that their landlord wants to improve his property, which means to renovate it, to increase

rents, and should the existing tenant not be able to or want to and can’t afford to wait, or can’t afford those increased costs, this, again, is life-altering. They could be on the street, looking for other affordable accommodations, which can be in the supply chain for rental units.

“This is really at the heart of any renoviction law. It’s not designed to restrict landlords from renovating or ask for reasonable increases in rent as is provincially mandated. We have a Landlord and Tenant Board that does that all the time. It’s designed to allow renovation and improvements for landlords, but not to evict tenants for an extended period of time, nor ask for unreasonable rent increases or prevent the existing tenant to return from their home, which is the crux of the problem.”

The Province, he added, has been working on a renoviction bylaw for two years now, but there is an urgency behind it, he added.

“The cost of administration of this issue is not for staff to decide – it’s for Council to decide,” he concluded. “We have evidence before us of a problem that immediately affects six families and units, and likely another 20 very soon. Without proper communication to our renters in Town, there may be more than we are aware of. I’m reminded of the phrase originally by Nicholas Butler, who is the president of Columbia University, who stated, the population of nations may readily be divided into three groups: those who make things happen, many more that watch things happen, and the overwhelming majority have no notion of what is happening. I prefer us in Aurora to be a group who makes things happen, not watch things happen or wonder what happened.”



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Fleury Park tree was structurally unsafe, say staff

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

“Some of the main structural limbs had been removed and, as a result, there was a large cavity.”

“When we were doing the design for the retrofit at Fleury Park, we had it assessed for structural integrity and to see whether it could be retained. It was found that it was beyond, and due to the species of tree, willows are very weak-wooded, so it was determined that it could potentially be a public safety hazard in the future. We decided to remove it proactively, and there’s a very robust replanting plan within the park as part of the reconstruction.”

Responding to the analysis, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner suggested communication with nearby residents could have been more robust.

“I’m not in favour of putting any pins, or nails, or thumbtacks into tree trunks,” she said. “But, in the case like that, could we have put up a sign? The residents could have just read what was happening to the tree and why, because there was quite a bit of uproar.”

The removal of a centuries-old willow tree at Fleury Park raised residential concerns and a wave of nostalgia last week, but municipal staff say the tree in question was unsafe for the public.

At issue is a landmark tree which was removed as part of ongoing renovations and facility updates at Fleury Park, just south of the Aurora Community Centre.

Its removal sparked a flurry of discussion on social media, ranging from concerns that the tree was removed without public notice, to nostalgic memories of the tree which had become nothing short of a landmark for them.

“It had significant damage in a storm a number of years ago,” said Sara Tienkamp, Aurora’s Director of Operations, when asked about the tree by Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting.

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Financial clarity on big-ticket Council items could soon be made public



An artist's rendering of how Victoria Hall might look after renovations.

Image courtesy of the Town of Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Confidential materials, including costs, on some key recent municipal decisions could soon be made public following last week's Committee of the Whole meeting.

On March 10, Council gave the green light to a series of motions that will, if this decision is ratified by Council at the end of the month, see confidential reports related to recently-approved renovations to Victoria Hall, the work of Aurora's Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Board, and behind-the-scenes discussions related to Hillary House, Henderson Forest, and 1289 Wellington Street East made public.

First to be discussed at last week's Committee meeting was a motion from Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo directing staff to present a report outlining municipal funds allocated to the AEDC, a breakdown of all its expenditures, external funding received, and a comparison between its approved budget and actual expenditures.

"The AEDC plays an advisory role in supporting economic development initiatives in our community, its Board makes recommendations regarding activities and initiatives intended to support business attraction, investment, and economic growth in Aurora," said Councillor Gallo last week. "However, the financial structure around these initiatives is somewhat unique. The AEDC itself does not approve expenditures, nor does it maintain

standalone financial statements; instead, funding these initiatives through the Town's Economic Development Division and is administered through the Town's financial system and budgets. Because of that structure, there is currently no single consolidated report that shows Council or the public the full financial picture of these initiatives associated with the AEDC."

The motion, he said, was not about questioning the value of economic development initiatives, but about ensuring Council "as stewards of public funds" maintains "clear and accessible reporting for the community we serve."

"This motion is simply about transparency and good governance," he said. "As members of Council, we all have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure there is clear oversight of how public funds are being used, providing a detailed report outlining the total budget allocated, the expenditures and external funding, and a comparison between approved budgets and actual spending will give Council and the community a better understanding of how these economic development initiatives are being funded and implemented. The motion also asks that this reporting occur annually going forward so that Council and residents have consistent transparency year after year."

The second motion, brought forward by Mayor Tom Mrakas, calls a review of what materials can be made public on the purchase of lands known as Henderson Forest, discussions concerning Hillary House National Historic Site, and property matters associated with 1289 Wellington Street East.

"Why did you choose these properties in particular?" asked Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Mayor Mrakas replied they were files Council was finished with "and I just felt we should provide the documentation and whatever can be provided to the public out of closed session should be provided at all times."

"I actually have a motion coming next month to create a policy to ensure that

these things get done with and we don't need these motions to come anymore individually and everything, once able to, will be released," he said. "By all means, if you have others that you want in there, you can make an amendment and add them. The more the merrier!"

"I think this is a great start," said Councillor Gaertner. "I believe it is somewhere in our Procedural Bylaw that once this information is no longer confidential that it can be disclosed to the public, so I'd like to see that it's just automatically done."

Disclosures related to Victoria Hall renovations were subject of a motion from Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo.

The motion calls for all non-confidential documentation related to the refurbishments of Victoria Hall approved by Council last month.

Doing so is a matter of "straightforward transparency," he said.

"Council recently approved an increase Victoria Hall refurbishment budget from \$500,000 to approximately \$2.18 million. That represents a significant change in the financial scope of this project and understandably has generated a great deal of public interest and discussion," said Councillor Gallo. "Residents want to understand how and why this increase occurred. They want to see the information... that informed Council's decision, including the engineering findings, design work, cost estimates that led to the revised budget. That is a reasonable expectation when millions of taxpayer dollars are involved. The motion before [Council] simply directs staff to comply and release all non-confidential documentation related to that increase. This includes engineering and structural reports, architectural design consultant reports, the class D cost estimate dated December 1, 2025, project scope documents, and any other technical or supporting documentation relied upon in preparing the report, recommending the budget increase.

"Importantly, this motion fully acknowledges that some information

may need to be protected. Procurement integrity, legal considerations, or third-party confidentiality obligations must always be respected. That is why the motion clearly allows for appropriate redactions where required under legislation or procurement rules. But where information can be shared, it should be shared. Transparency strengthens public confidence in municipal decision-making. When residents can see the information that informed Council's decision, it allows them to better understand the challenges associated with restoring an aging historic building and the factors that contributed to the increased costs.

"This motion is not about relitigating decision Council has already made. That decision has been taken. This motion is about ensuring that residents have access to the information that led to that decision."

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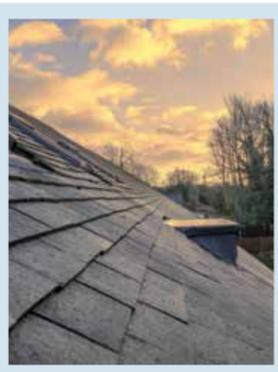
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Iconic Sharon, Lois and Bram singer set to bring songs, stories, memories to Aurora

From page 1

was greeted by a fan with tears in her eyes.

Despite having to get to work that morning, the fan just knew she had to make a stop along the way to say thanks for all Hampson, and her musical partners Bram Morrison and the late Lois Lilienstein, had brought into her life.

"I said to her, 'It's okay to get weepy because you're remembering childhood memories, and that's only good,'" says Hampson, one third of the iconic Canadian music trio, Sharon, Lois and

Bram. "I'm grateful when people get teary when they meet me because I know they're thinking back to times that were good for them. But, it's not always like that, there are some people for whom we were a rescue, and I'm very aware of that as well."

Whether their music brought joy, an escape, or a little bit of both, the music of Sharon, Lois, and Bram is an inextricable part of the lives of generations of Canadians, and this Saturday, March 21, Hampson is eager to meet fans as she, along with her daughter Randi and grandson Ethan, participate in a day of special events at the Aurora Public Library (APL) and Aurora Town Square (ATS).

The fun begins at the APL at 10.30 a.m. with the free event Skinnamarink: Storytime with Sharon, Randi, and Ethen. The event will include a meet-and-greet, story time, and, of course, plenty of music.

Focus shifts to the ATS Performance Hall at 2 p.m. when Sharon, joined by Randi and Ethan, will sit down with Andrew Applebaum of the Toronto Legends podcast with reminiscences, tales, and... well, keep your vocal cords warmed up!

"There's about a 99 per cent guarantee some songs will break out," says Applebaum with a laugh, adding the very idea of him sharing the stage with Hampson is nothing short of "surreal."

"Lois used to come into my kindergarten class growing up, so the chance to talk to Sharon for the Toronto Legends podcast was a no-brainer," he says. "Sharon was nice enough to do [the podcast], we had a great time, and fast-forward to now we're doing live events where I share stories with these personalities for the bigger audience."

"So many people of my generation



Canadian singers Sharon, Lois, and Bram are pictured with their iconic Elephant. Sharon Hampson will share memories and meet fans in Aurora this weekend.

Photo courtesy of Toronto Legends

really resonate with the whole Sharon, Lois and Bram story."

The Sharon, Lois and Bram story began in 1978.

Hampson tells The Auroran they had no inkling that when they came together to make that first record they were starting a completely new career trajectory, but what was clear from the outset was the singers shared "three fundamental goals: really good music, don't cheap out because it's for the kids, and make sure it's for the children and the family."

Those fundamentals, says Hampson, never changed – whether they worked as a trio, as Sharon & Bram after Lilienstein's passing, and now as a family act of Sharon, her daughter, and grandson.

"It just came out to us in a really natural way, to sing good songs, to engage the audience, to find physical ways to express ourselves so that they could also join in – we got better at doing that, we got more relaxed about it, but, I don't know, I think we had something unique to offer."

"She's not going to say it, but I can say it was like lightening in a bottle," Randi interjects. "They just really complemented each other and when they would do the three-part harmonies, there was just nothing, nothing like it at the time."

Randi grew up in a musical family. In addition to her musical mom, her late father, Joe, was a folk singer and often did musical arrangements for the band.

"My dad would be working on harmonies and he and my mom and I would sit at the piano together and run through tunes together; I would sit in the studio when they were recording and it was just really fun to be in the thick of that. I felt really lucky because we got to hang out in a recording studio or go to the Juno Awards –"

"Or be the elephant at the Juno awards!"

adds Sharon with a laugh, revealing perhaps a Polkaroo-level secret.

Sharon, Randi and Ethen came together formally as a family band during COVID.

Sheltering in their bubble, they sat down for an impromptu living room concert one day and were astonished to find more than 10,000 viewers watching from around the world. It started off with a capella songs from the Sharon, Lois and Bram songbook before Ethan jumped in with a few chords, his brother Elijah adding some vocals, his dad Jim joining the fun, and it evolved from there.

"There has been a boom in the growth of community choirs, and I think there is a huge appetite among adults to sing and make music together," says Randi. "What you can do if you go to a Sharon, Lois and Bram singalong is a family singing together, making music together, and, for a lot of people, reconnecting with your child spirit. A lot of the people who come to the shows now grew up on the music and really want to be transported back to the memories of a simpler time when they could just be carefree. Times are hard, so having a few minutes of respite from the reality of day-to-day life, I think helps to enable us to continue sharing the music."

This is a sentiment close to Sharon's heart.

"One of our goals was [for listeners] was to take the music into your heart so you have it forever, and I think that we accomplished that because we provided music that people could have access to," she says. "I think they saw real people on TV or on the stage. We were not characters."

For more information about Saturday's free event at the Aurora Public Library and the ticketed afternoon event at Aurora Town Square, visit aurora.ca/whatson.



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Holi Festival is an early welcome to Spring



Holi, the Hindu festival of colours, love, and spring was marked at Aurora Town Square on Sunday morning with a variety of family-friendly activities, including dances, crafts, food, and colour-throwing. Mayor Mrakas joined scores of participants from throughout the community, who came together to mark the Town's second-annual festival a resounding success. **Aurora photos by Glenn Rodger**

Next exit: Making the meeting



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Aurora moves to protect vulnerable communities, people, in wake of rising antisemitism

From page 1

to request the Federal and Provincial Governments work with the Region and the Town to establish a joint task force “composed and not limited to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canadian Security Intelligence Services, Ontario Provincial Police, and York Regional Police, to coordinate intelligence, prevention, and enforcement efforts to combat and prevent antisemitic hate and violence, and to protect vulnerable communities.”

“I’m bringing forward this motion today because municipalities across Canada, including here in York Region, are seeing a deeply troubling rise in antisemitic incidents and hate-motivated actions,” said Councillor Gallo. “These incidents are not abstract statistics. They impact real people in our community – families, students, and residents who deserve to feel safe practicing their faith, attending their community events, and simply living their lives without fear.

“Aurora has always prided itself on being a welcoming and inclusive community. We are a Town where people of many faiths, cultures, and backgrounds live together and contribute to the strength of our community. Protecting that environment is not just a moral responsibility; it is a public safety responsibility. While policing is not a municipal responsibility alone, municipalities are often the first level of government that communities raise concerns about safety and rising incidents of hate. This motion recognizes that combatting hate-motivated violence requires coordination between all levels of government.”

The purpose of coordinating all levels of government and policing on this task force, he said, is to “ensure that the intelligence and prevention

efforts, and enforcement resources are aligned to address the growing threat of antisemitic hate and violence.”

The Councillor’s motion also called for “dedicated and sustainable” funding from the Provincial and Federal governments to support coordinated enforcement and prevention efforts, as well as to support the local police with operational increases as a result of hate-motivated incidents.

“It is also important to emphasize that while this motion specifically addresses the rise in antisemitic incidents, the goal is broader to ensure that all vulnerable communities are protected from hate and violence,” Councillor Gallo continued. “Hate directed at one community ultimately threatens the safety and cohesion of the entire community. Aurora has always stood against discrimination, intolerance, and violence in all forms.

“This motion is an opportunity for our Council to reaffirm that commitment and to call on the Federal and Provincial partners to take coordinated action. I believe this motion sends a clear message that Aurora stands firmly against hate, that we support our residents who feel vulnerable, and that we believe government must work together to address this issue. I hope that members of Council will support this motion so that we can continue to ensure Aurora remains a safe and welcoming community for everyone.”

The motion was indeed passed unanimously, with Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese calling it “a great place to start,” while Councillor Wendy Gaertner asked staff to consider ways to expedite follow-up information to Council.

Mayor Mrakas’ motion also received unanimous support.

His motion called for staff to report back to Council at the earliest opportunity for a bylaw or policy framework that would “prohibit demonstrations or activities that intimidate, incite hatred, violence, intolerance, or discrimination within a defined distance of vulnerable social infrastructure, including places of worship, schools, childcare centres, hospitals, and congregational care facilities within the Town of Aurora.”

It also called on staff to review best practices from other municipalities on these issues, and propose penalties that fit within the current provisions of the Municipal Act.

“At the heart of public service is a simple responsibility: to ensure the people we serve feel safe in their own community. Safe in their neighbourhoods, safe in their schools, safe in the institutions that serve them, and safe in the places where they gather to worship. Those spaces should be sanctuaries. Places where people come together to pray, to learn, to heal, and to support one another,” said Mayor Mrakas. “But when hate and intimidation begin targeting these spaces, leadership demands that we stand up and act.

“Recently, just this last week, we saw something that should concern all of us: shots fired at three GTA synagogues, including one in Thornhill. Let me say that again. Shots fired at a place of worship. Think about that for a moment. A place where families gather, where children learn their traditions, where people seek peace and reflection. An act like that is not simply directed at a building. It is meant to send fear through an entire community, and when any community in our region is targeted with hate or intimidation, it becomes the responsibility of all of us to stand up and respond. Now, while we have not seen similar occurrences

in our Town, leadership is not about waiting for something to happen before taking action. Leadership means being proactive, recognizing what is happening around us, and ensuring our community remains safe.”

But the motion, he cautioned, was “not about one faith or one community alone,” but “about protecting all vulnerable social infrastructure in our Town.”

“Every resident should feel safe accessing these spaces without fear or intimidation,” he said. “Aurora is a diverse community made up of people from many faiths, cultures and backgrounds – Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Palestinian, Israeli, and many others – and our responsibility at the municipal level is simple; to ensure everyone feels safe and respected in our community. Canada is a democracy. Peaceful expression and lawful protest are fundamental rights and they must always remain protected. But those rights must also be balanced with ensuring that residents can safely attend their synagogue, their church, their mosque, their temple, bring their children to school or daycare, or access healthcare and community services without feeling threatened. And that balance matters. And that is exactly what this motion asks staff to do.”

Support was clear around the Council table, with Councillor Gaertner questioning whether the entire Town could be considered such a zone.

“If through our bylaw, when it comes back, if it shows that it would incorporate the entire Town then so be it,” replied Mayor Mrakas. “That’s what we do, and we tell people that you’re not allowed to come to this Town and create fear and intimidation in the Town of Aurora, period.”

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Ontario

Community members voice support for anti-hate measures considered by Council

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora has always been a warm and welcoming place to long-time community member Nikki Abler, but she has recently seen examples of antisemitism on the rise.

Abler, co-founder of the non-profit group Jewish Families Connected, shared her personal experiences in Council Chambers last week in support of motions brought forward by Mayor Tom Mrakas and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo following numerous examples of antisemitism and hate across York Region and the Greater Toronto Area in recent weeks.

Unanimously passed by Council, Mayor Mrakas' motion tasks staff with developing a policy framework and bylaw to prohibit demonstrations or activities that intimidate and incite hatred and violence at social infrastructure including places of worship, schools, and hospitals. Councillor Gallo's motion calls for the establishment of a Joint Task Force of all levels of government and policing to coordinate intelligence, prevention and enforcement efforts preventing antisemitic hate and violence.

"To me, Aurora has always been a welcoming and inclusive place to live. But recently, especially since October 7, 2023, there has been a very real and very scary rise in antisemitism, in Canada, in the GTA and right here in Aurora," said Abler. "Police data continues to show that there is a majority of reported hate crimes are antisemitic incidences. These are just not things that we expect to see in Canada, but let me make it a bit more real for you by bringing it even closer to home, just 10 minutes away from where we are right now in Newmarket, a children's program at the Newmarket Public Library was the target of intense online harassment and threats. This is a program designed for kids to socialize, make friends, learn language, learn culture.

"Imagine as a parent having to weigh the risk of sending your child to have a play date at the Library and worrying about their safety. Right now, at the dinner table, your neighbours are having to ask things

like, is it safe to send my kids to the Library for that program? Should I sign them up for summer camp this summer? Is it safe to wear my Star of David to the grocery store tomorrow? Or should I take down that mezuzah on my front door before my delivery arrives tomorrow? These are something that no Canadians should need to ask."

Her forebears who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, she added, came to Canada to build their families, businesses, and contribute to the community, holding the phrase "Never again" close to their hearts.

"My parents were a lot more fortunate. They grew up in a Canada where they weren't afraid to have a mezuzah on their door. They weren't afraid to wear a Star of David to the grocery store. They said 'never again' because their parents said it to them over and over and they thought it would never happen again. Not only that, they thought the idea that it could happen in Canada, in today's society, was crazy," she continued. "Now I stand here today and I say never again, not as a history lesson, but as a warning. Hatred towards Jews is on the rise here in Aurora. I say 'never again' as a reminder to myself and my community that if we do not fight back now, my son is going to have to grow up in a Canada where it's not safe to be Jewish. I don't accept that and neither should any of you. So, I'm here tonight to ask you all for help to make sure that when my son gets older, he says 'never again', just like my parents did as a...history lesson that was never a reality for him."

Motions like the ones considered at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting, which are expected to receive final ratification at Council later this month, weren't just words, but they matter in "sending a very clear message, not just to Jewish residents, but to all vulnerable communities, that hate has no place in Aurora."

"You're sending a message that if anyone in this community is under attack, Aurora is going to stand up and protect them," she concluded. "That's the Aurora I want to

live in."

Similar sentiments were expressed by resident Jennifer Brooks who said the community was "past the point of statements" and "real enforcement and real leadership was needed."

"It takes chutzpah to stand up and turn words into action," she said.

Brooks, a mother of four who has lived in the area for 15 years, said she was "part of the large Jewish community that calls this Region home" – the third largest Jewish community in Canada.

"I'm here tonight alongside many others from our community to express our sincere gratitude to Councillor John Gallo for bringing forward the motion to establish an anti-Semitism task force. We also want to recognize and thank the Mayor for introducing the motion to protect vulnerable social infrastructure and places of worship. These actions matter because our community has a lot to be worried about," she said. "Jewish families are seeing things we've never imagined we would see in our own communities.

"Libraries are being harassed for hosting Hebrew story time. Jewish teens are being targeted and harassed. Community programs are facing intimidation simply because they're Jewish. In York Region, particularly in Jewish neighbourhoods, synagogues and businesses have already been targeted. These are not abstract places. They are well-known buildings and communities where families live, pray and gather.

"Here in Aurora and across the N6 communities, Jewish programming often takes place in shared public spaces like libraries and community centres, and these are places where families, all families, should feel welcome. When antisemitism becomes rationalized, it becomes dangerous for everyone. When it becomes acceptable to harass Jews and teenagers just because they're Jewish, as long as they're called Zionists, or when people try and cancel something as simple as Hebrew story time at a library, that is not activism. It is intimidation. We need to see our elected officials align words with action, so thank

you for recognizing that we are past the point of statements."

These views were bolstered by Richard Roberson, Director of Research and Advocacy from B'nai Brith Canada, an organization which supported both motions on the table.

"15.7% of the incidents recorded in the anti-Semitism in Ontario's K-12 schools report, which was published in 2025, occurred in York Region District School Board schools," he said. "As a national issue that manifests locally, antisemitism requires a coordinated government response at all levels. The motion before Council is commendable as for its recognition that there is an urgent need for the development of a combined approach that incorporates Federal, Provincial, Regional, and Municipal resources and for its appreciation of the requirement that law enforcement be furnished with additional funding to confront the antisemitism that is plaguing our society. B'nai Brith of Canada has itself called on the Government of Canada to create a Federal, Provincial, Municipal task force in support of the City of Toronto in December of 2025, when Toronto City Council passed a motion calling for the development of such. Similarly, we have advocated for the allocation of additional funding and resources to law enforcement.

"I would like to take a moment to clarify for you what vulnerable infrastructure legislation does not do: it does not prevent individuals from protesting, congregating or expressing themselves within the buffer zone. It does not prima facie infringe on human or charter rights. It does not create protest-free zones. It only prevents conduct that meets the prescribed definition of nuisance protest or nuisance demonstration from occurring within the defined geographic parameters outlined in a bylaw. It would not prevent an anti-Israel protest or any other protest from occurring anywhere in the city, provided the protest did not devolve into a nuisance demonstration. Any other implied consequence amounts to an inaccurate hysteria. Vulnerable infrastructure legislation would equally protect all vulnerable infrastructure within the municipality."

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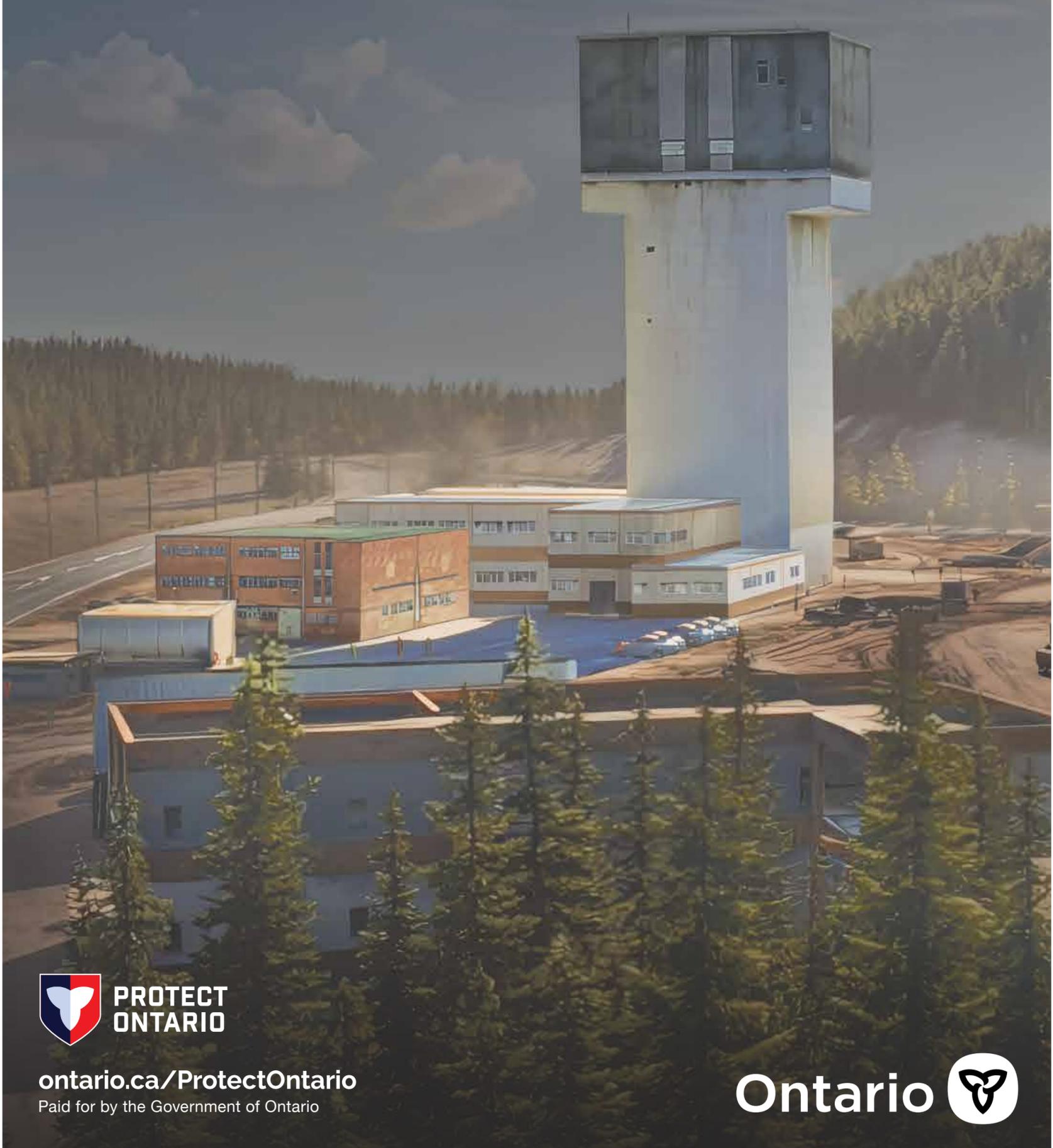
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WEEK OF MARCH 19, 2026

Junior Panthers split Games 1 and 2 with Kingston to open OWHL playoffs

BY JIM STEWART

The U22 Central York Panthers had a golden opportunity to exorcise their recent OWHL playoff demons when the Kingston Ice Wolves settled in at SARC on Saturday and Sunday.

Last Spring, Kingston upset higher-ranked Central York in their best-of-five opening round series. During Saturday's matinee, the 7th-ranked Panthers edged the 10th-ranked Ice Wolves 2-1, lending credence to the adage "revenge is a dish best served cold."

It was Panther defender Mackenzie Cotey who meted out that revenge on

behalf of her teammates when she tallied the game-winning goal late in the second period to break a 1-1 tie.

After Ice Wolves forward Ashlea Whyte was sent to the sin bin for body-checking at 3:44, Cotey took advantage of the open space in Kingston's zone.

Pinpoint passing by Zoe Ordanis and Annabella Van Berkel broke down the D, Cotey crept in from the blue line, cradled a pass from Van Berkel, and snapped the puck from between the circles past Ice Wolves' goalie Lilyana Reid.

The mobile defender described her game-winner that tickled the twine 23 seconds into the power play: "We were working the puck really well. It was a great power play by everybody on the ice. Zoe and Berkie got me the puck. I could see the open corner when I got it. Everyone was crashing the net so I know I needed to rip it."

After a scoreless first period, the Panthers got on the board 1:19 into the middle frame when Annabella Van Berkel rifled the puck past Reid. The significance of scoring first was described by Cotey: "It was so important. It gave us a big boost and got us hyped up. We scored on a set play. Abby [Pak] won the draw to me, I was able to pass it behind to Berkie, and create a screen for her. The play worked. It was a great shot by Berkie that went top right. She knows how to rip it."

"Big Goal" Van Berkel's quick opening marker was followed by a parade to the penalty box by both sides after an infraction-free first period. The Ice Wolves took advantage of their second power play and created sustained pressure in the Panthers' end. At 16:30, Whyte roofed



Panthers' leading scorer Annabella Van Berkel (12) digs for a rebound against Kingston netminder Lilyana Reid (88) and Captain Kaylynn Fisher (94) at the SARC. Van Berkel tallied two points in Central York's 2 - 1 win on Saturday. Reid made 44 saves in Kingston's 2 - 1 win on Sunday.

Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

the puck high blocker short side from the left faceoff circle—beating Central York netminder Claire Hicks to tie the game 1-1.

It was the only puck to elude the red-hot Hicks who backstopped the Panthers to their Game 1 victory. Cotey described her goaltender's 22-save performance: "She was amazing. She played incredible, especially in the second period when we had so many penalties. We feel very confident with her behind us. She was so locked in today, right from her pre-game rituals. Claire made some great sliding saves on the 2-on-1's to bail us out."

Hicks was, indeed, her team's best penalty killer in a game when the Panthers were penalized eight times in a 25-minute span in the second and third periods, including an odd four-minute minor to Cotey for head contact with 7:07 left in the game.

Cotey was puzzled by the call and noted that she "wasn't sure what I did to get that penalty."

She expressed relief that her PK fought off the double-minor and even generated a penalty shot after speedy Ellie Lewington was hauled down by Peyton Borton between the circles on a clear path to the net.

Lewington beat Reid, but missed by millimeters inside the right post.

In the final frenetic minutes of play, with the Kingston net empty, the Panthers preserved their one-goal lead with a combination of big blocks, active sticks, and Claire Hicks. Cotey credited that PK's selfless efforts for the big team win.

"One of the biggest things was blocking shots. Everyone was diving for pucks. We put our bodies on the line. Everyone was playing the team game when killing penalties—no one was on their own."

On Sunday afternoon, the Panthers exploded out of the gate—looking dead-set on a weekend sweep—by outshooting the Ice Wolves 18-5 after 20 minutes of play. Incredibly, the hard-charging hosts were edged 2-1 as Lilyana Reid returned

between the pipes for Kingston and repelled 44 of the 45 shots she faced to steal a win for the visitors.

Panthers Captain Keira Johnson broke Reid's Sunday afternoon hex when she rifled in a rebound off Lily Paisley's snap shot. Johnson—crashing the net on the left doorstep—lifted the puck over the sprawled Reid with 2:02 left in the game and the Panthers' net empty in favor of an extra attacker.

Despite being buoyed by Johnson's big goal, the home side's intense closing pressure did not yield another marker and the Ice Wolves escaped down the 401 with a narrow victory despite being outshot 45-15.

It was that kind of afternoon for the diligent Panthers. After a golden scoring opportunity by Demi Lazarou whose labelled wrist shot ticked off the top of Reid's stick and over the crossbar, the Ice Wolves made the most of their limited opportunities on the ensuing rush.

Chloe Trotter banged home Jocelyn Osborn's bouncing rebound on the edge of the crease past Claire Hicks with 4:27 left in the opening frame to give the vastly-outplayed visitors a 1-0 lead.

The opportunistic Ice Wolves made it 2-0 when a deflection off Ashlea Whyte's shin pad bounced inside the left post past Hicks with 2:40 to go before second intermission.

Kingston parlayed a pair of fortuitous playoff bounces into a two-goal lead heading into the final frame and the rest was left to Reid.

The Ice Wolves goaltender was peppered by so many Panther pucks that her white jersey was blackened with innumerable vulcanized rubber smudges. She saved most of her Game 2 magic for the third period where she turned aside 19 of 20 shots to stymie the home side's Herculean efforts to notch the equalizer.

The entertaining best-of-five series continues in Kingston with Game 3 on Friday night and Game 4 on Saturday afternoon.

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Central York Panther Grad and Carleton Raven Erica Buckley earns berth on OUA All-Rookie Team



Erica Buckley (18) earned a berth on the OUA All-Rookie Team after scoring seven goals and five assists in 26 games with the Carleton Ravens. Buckley finished sixth among Rookie scorers in 2025 – 2026.

Photo courtesy of Erica Buckley

BY JIM STEWART

Aurora resident Erica Buckley finished her impressive first season with the Carleton Ravens by earning a berth on the OUA All-Rookie Team.

Buckley—who finished sixth in Rookie scoring with 7 goals and 5 assists in 26 games—was pleased by the post-season league recognition.

“I knew coming into my first year that it was one of my goals. All the work and effort—especially in the off-season and over the summer—paid off. My strength coach at Carleton was really impressed when I reported to training camp.”

The life-long Central York Panther described her hockey highlights in 2025-26: “My first goal—against Ottawa—got the monkey off my back. It was a relief to get the first one. Another highlight was against Guelph—the top team. I got a great pass in the slot and scored. When I scored that goal, I knew I could compete at this level and the best

part was we won it in overtime. I also scored the tying goal versus Windsor and we went on to win that game, too.”

Buckley described the best part about attending Carleton as a first-year student-athlete: “In general, Carleton isn’t a huge school, but it’s not tiny either. It’s perfect for me. We have built-in friendships on the hockey team which makes settling into a new school much easier.”

When asked if life in Ottawa during an old-fashioned winter created any extra challenges, the rookie Raven was nonchalant about the daunting snowfalls in the Nation’s Capital.

“It wasn’t that bad—it was like living in Aurora. One of the best things about living in Ottawa during the Winter was skating on the Canal. A couple of rookies joined me for a skate—we skated from one end of the Canal to the other and had hot chocolate at the end. The ice was good.”

In addition to enjoying the longest skating rink in the world, Buckley also noted that she likes the pace of life associated with being a student-athlete at university.

“The first couple of weeks were actually slow. It was mostly introductory work in my classes. It picked up during hockey season and I found I had to do my homework at night after workouts in the morning and classes in the afternoon. Keeping up with things was really important—doing my work as it was assigned was important with hockey in the mornings and classes after that.”

As we chatted on the phone, the first-year Raven described her busy Monday during which she had a morning workout, Chemistry Lab exam in the afternoon, and was studying for a Biology Lab exam on Tuesday morning. During her reflection on her academic and athletic successes at Carleton during Year One, Buckley expressed her gratitude towards the Central York Panthers for preparing her for life at the next level.

“I was prepared for this by the Panthers, especially in my Junior years. [Head Coach] Steve [Dempsey]

focused us on foundations and drills and developing good habits on and off the ice. The Panthers’ environment was always competitive—and we were pushed to be better, but none of it was personal. We all worked to get better as individual players and as a team and Steve reminded us that we were being prepared to be great university players.”

It appears that the recipe the Panthers have been using has prepared their student-athletes like Erica Buckley to thrive at the next level.

Panther Grads Cranney and Lunney excel in the OUA

In addition to Buckley’s success as one of the top rookies in the 14-team OUA this season, two other Central York grads had excellent seasons for their respective teams.

Mikayla Cranney—skating for the Queen’s Golden Gaels—won the OUA regular season scoring race with 16 goals and 15 assists in 26 games.

Abby Lunney—skating for Nipissing University—finished 13th in scoring with 13 goals and 8 assists in 26 games.

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Aurora's Ryan Nembhard signs two-year deal with the NBA's Dallas Mavericks

BY JIM STEWART

The remarkable NBA journeys of Andrew and Ryan Nembhard continued last week.

The Aurora-born NCAA stars and accomplished NBA players opened a new chapter in their book of brotherly professional achievements.

Ryan Nembhard signed a standard two-year NBA contract in Dallas on Saturday, based on his excellent play with the Mavericks as a rookie.

Nembhard had bounced back and forth between the NBA Mavericks and the G-League Texas Legends — playing well for both teams while fulfilling the obligations of his original two-way contract.

In thirty-eight games with the Mavericks, Nembhard has averaged 6.7 points, 1.8 rebounds, and 4.9 assists while shooting 37.9 per cent from 3-point range.

In six games with the Legends, he averaged 23.0 points, 4.2 rebounds, 10.5 assists, and 1 steal—a veritable one-man wrecking crew in the G-League that caught the eye of Mavericks' management.

On Saturday, Nembhard was rewarded with a standard NBA contract, which will provide the rookie point guard with a singular focus as he works his way toward spot-starter status with the Mavericks.

Ryan Nembhard exploded onto the College Basketball

scene by earning Big East Freshman of the Year honours in 2021 with the Creighton University Blue Jays.

Just as his older brother did, Ryan flourished during his NCAA career with the Gonzaga Bulldogs. In two seasons with the Bulldogs, he was an All-WCC First Team All-Star in 2024 and 2025 and led the NCAA in assists as a senior.

Exciting times are ahead for the newest Maverick as he'll line up in the backcourt with rookie phenom Cooper Flagg while Kyrie Irving recovers from season-ending knee surgery. The sky's the limit for this three-man backcourt for Dallas in 2026-27.

North of Dallas in Indianapolis, Andrew Nembhard is battling through the Pacers' injury-plagued 2025-26 season. Although the team has fallen out of playoff contention due to the loss of most of their starters, Andrew has been one of the team's bright lights — averaging 17.2 points, 2.9 rebounds, 7.3 assists, and shooting 43.9 per cent. The 26-year-old has replicated the high-quality play he displayed last season for Indiana that took the Pacers all the way to the NBA Finals as the Eastern Conference champion and runner-up to the Oklahoma City Thunder for the Larry O'Brien Trophy in June 2025.

TAKING THE PLUNGE



It was a record-setting Polar Plunge for the York Regional Police last week as scores of teams, many of which were dressed in themed costumes, raised more than \$75,000 for Special Olympics Ontario. "Your donations mean that local athletes will get to continue their social and physical development and create special memories at National Games in Alberta this summer," said the YRP.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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February 2026



RYAN COLLIE

THE DR. G.W. WILLIAMS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ryan Collie is a Grade 12 student at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School where he has been a dedicated member of the boys' basketball team throughout all four years of high school. He's a forward on the court with a strong all-around skillset and remarkable athleticism and character according to his Wildcats' coach, Neil Joshi.

"Even though he was our leading scorer and rebounder for several years, he has always demonstrated humility, grit and tremendous work ethic," said Joshi. "He has always led by example and has grown into a more vocal presence on the court. I've always appreciated Ryan's maturity as an athlete. He chooses to lead with his actions and hard work."

Ryan's approach to the game is inspired from afar by his favourite athlete, Russell Westbrook of the NBA's Sacramento Kings. His consistency, work ethic, and understanding of team play have made him a reliable presence on Joshi's team.

In addition to basketball, Ryan also excels at flag football and he's done sprints in track for the school as well. He enjoys rock music — specifically Nirvana and Green Day.

Away from competition, Ryan is committed to giving back to his community. He has volunteered at the Elevation Athletics Basketball Camp for 5 to 15-year-olds, helping young athletes strengthen their skills while building confidence and a love for the game. He also participated in the York Region Police's Crime Prevention Academy, an experience that broadened his understanding of leadership and community responsibility.

In September, Ryan will enroll in the Athletic Therapy program at Seneca College at the King Campus. With his passion for sport and desire to support others, he looks forward to potentially building a future helping athletes stay healthy and perform at their best.

Congratulations, Ryan!

Theatre Aurora's Where You Are: A Review



Theatre Aurora's production of Where You Are, the penultimate offering of their 2025 - 2026 season, opens March 20 and runs on select dates and times through March 28.

BY SCOTT JOHNSTON

Theatre Aurora's latest production is the warm Ontario comedy "Where You Are".

Written by playwright Kristen Da Silva, it tells the story of sisters Glenda and Suzanne, who have lived for many years together on Manitoulin Island.

It looks like they have gotten away from it all, as they live a quiet life in this remote setting, popping into town occasionally, and enjoying regular visits from their charming younger neighbour, Patrick.

They both very much anticipate the pending visit of Suzanne's daughter Beth, a doctor from Toronto.

However, when Beth arrives with a small suitcase, we soon find all four characters have much more of their own emotional baggage to contend with. As secrets emerge, soon we are laughing and crying as they explore their lives and relationships in scenes both hilarious and heartwarming.

This production has everything going for it, starting with a wonderfully written script, full of realistic character interactions and observations on life. The single cottage set and lighting are simple, but very effective, and allow for rapid

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

scene changes. Most importantly, this show features one of the strongest casts of the season.

Tristan Stansfield plays Patrick, the friendly but shy veterinarian, who manages, barely, to hold his own against his well-meaning, but overly inquisitive neighbours. In a play about relationships, Stansfield also shows his skills at physical comedy.

Daughter Beth is portrayed by Jess Falcioni. She is perfectly cast, showing us a strong woman with determination, but also a soft spot for her older relatives, who she needs as much as they need her.

But the standouts here are Angela Gliatta and Judy Atherton as personality-opposite sisters Glenda and Suzanne. They have wonderful chemistry together, and are equally adept at casting out humorous one-liners as they are tugging at our heart-strings. Gliatta, especially, delivers some wonderfully emotional monologues.

Theatre Aurora veteran and director Judi Cragg says that she was thrilled to be able to put on this play, and it's easy to see why. This honest and heartwarming portrayal of family, forgiveness and falling in love from our local theatre company is truly a must-see.

Evening performances of "Where You are"

continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, on March 21, 22 & 28. Tickets are available March 20, 21, 26, 27 & 28, with matinees through the box office at 905-727-3669.

♥ OBITUARIES - FOREVER IN OUR *Hearts*

MARIAN DOYLE (NÉE WILSON)



Beloved wife of Darryl for 59 years, passed away peacefully on March 4 at the age of 84.

Marian was a devoted and loving mother to Dave, Susan, and Allison, and a proud grandmother committed to her family. She was a cherished sister to Joy, Susan, Tommy, and Lesley. Born in Willington, County Durham, England, Marian set sail for Canada at 21 years old, bravely beginning a new life that would be filled with love.

The family has already held a private celebration of Marian's life, and she will be remembered with love, laughter, and gratitude for a life well lived.

Donations in Marian's memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Society of Canada.

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.thompsonFH-Aurora.com

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THINGS... you ought to know

MARCH 10 - APRIL 28

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 memorylanehome.com.

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 21

The Town of Aurora & Aurora Public Library present an Afternoon with Sharon Lois & Bram's Sharon Hampson, hosted by Andrew Applebaum. Sharon Hampson continues to enthusiastically share the life and times of Sharon, Lois & Bram...multi-platinum selling artists, award-winning television stars, best-selling authors, Order of Canada recipients. Sharon is joined by her daughter Randi and grandson Ethan to share her most memorable life and career stories...and some classic SL&B tunes are sure to break out! York Region resident Andrew Applebaum from the Toronto Legends podcast will be the host, with an audience Q&A and Meet & Greet to follow. Come say "Hi" to Sharon and enjoy the best stories and songs from Sharon, Lois & Bram's legendary family entertainment career! Presented in partnership with the Aurora Public Library. Join us for a family-friendly Storybook Singalong and Meet and Greet with Sharon, Randi and Ethan at 10:30 am in the Library. Follow along

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

The Town of Aurora is proud to partner with York Region and NewMarket 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.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

The Town of Aurora will host the annual Easterpalooza today from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. at the Aurora Seniors Centre (90 John West Way). Wristbands are required for children ages two to twelve at \$5 per child. Wristbands must be purchased in advance from the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Aurora Town Hall, Aurora Town Square, the Joint Operations Centre, and the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. Explore various Easter themed outdoor and interactive activities such as crafts, face painting, egg fishing, hopstake course, story walk and more. You can even have your photo taken with the Easter Bunny! Food Donations for the Aurora Food Pantry are greatly appreciated.

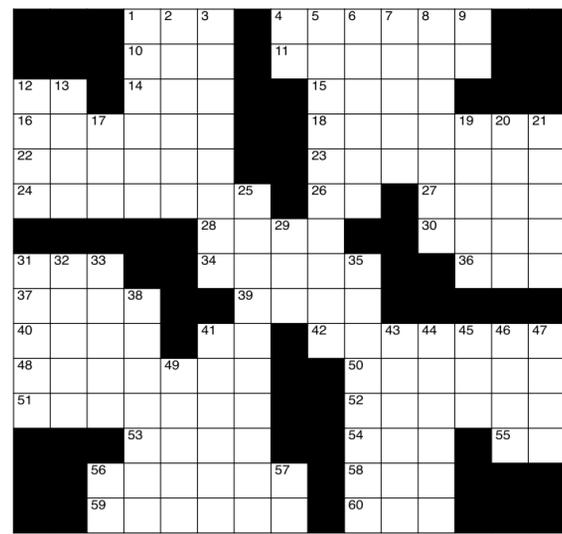
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Support AbuseHurts' Delivering Hope Full Circle Program

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.

CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. TAMAR1926 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

- Inclined to do
- Sketches
- Book of Chronicles (abbr.)
- Atomic #58
- Dorm official
- Small Eurasian deer
- Southern constellation
- Workers' groups
- Former
- Excellent
- Romance language related to Spanish
- Reference
- Equally
- Dirty towels
- A cargo (abbr.)
- Ammunition
- You get one in summer

- Slang for trucks with trailers
- Swiss river
- Exchange rate
- British School
- College teacher
- Foreign Service
- Horse gear
- Cost to fly
- A salt or ester of boric acid
- Mocking
- One who bird-watches
- Concluding passage
- A major division of geological time
- Sodium
- A way to produce
- Soak
- Laughed loudly and harshly
- Affirmative

CLUES DOWN

- Moth species phalonia ___
- Quantum of energy
- Break the law
- Location of White House
- Official cancellation of a decision
- Where rockers work
- Cut of beef: ___ mignon
- Nocturnal burrowing reptile
- Atomic #62
- Genus of evergreen shrubs
- Flowering plant of the legume family
- Inches per minute (abbr.)
- Tropical fruit
- Hot fluid beneath the earth's crust
- James ___ painter
- Popular dessert
- Payment (abbr.)
- Cuisine style
- Genus of true flies
- City in western France
- Arrogance
- One holding a position of command
- Weekday
- An evening party
- Print errors
- Not good
- Egyptian Sun god
- East German town
- Olfactory property
- Atomic #37
- "Pollock" actor Harris

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Senior Account Executive
ZACH SHOUB
zach@pcmedia.ca

Account Executive
KAREN NEMET
karen@pcmedia.ca

Senior Account Executive
DIANE BUCHANAN
diane@auroran.com

Art Director
SARAH DIDYCYZ

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Julianne Boileau, Sales Representative with RE/MAX Hallmark York Group has enjoyed a long successful career in Real Estate based on her knowledge of the industry trends and her ability to successfully negotiate a deal.

Growing up in Richmond Hill and currently living in Schomberg, Julianne is a lifelong resident of the region and has an intimate knowledge of many of the towns and cities in the area. Her mother is still an active realtor, and her late stepfather was also a realtor. Julianne learned the industry from the ground up.

"I enjoy the challenges and rewards my career has afforded me," Julianne explained. "It is such an amazing feeling when all is done, and my clients are packing and moving, with the excitement of the future in their new home."

After 37 years in the industry, Julianne knows pretty much all there is to know when it comes to real estate. She can help guide you to a neighbourhood and a home that will meet your needs.

Most clients have requirements for where they would like to live. Julianne can advise you on the

neighbourhoods, and local amenities like schools, restaurants, shopping, sports clubs, and recreational activities available in the area.

She is known as a skilled negotiator and has the ability to work with clients no matter what type of residential property they would like to sell or buy. From smaller homes that may require some work to high-end homes that attract a completely different buyer. Julianne has the experience and knowledge to attract potential buyers through her superior marketing techniques.

"The best is the least I can do," Julianne said. "I am so happy to help my clients navigate this important process and ensure they end up exactly where they should be. My years of experience with every level of real estate from high-end luxury homes to affordable rentals have given me considerable experience. I pride myself on my integrity, ability to solve problems, strong communication skills, networking, and determination."

Julianne is a 'people person' who enjoys meeting clients as much as she enjoys her work. Many clients over the years have become personal friends.

Because of her interpersonal skills, experience, and knowledge of the industry, many clients refer family and friends to Julianne because they were so satisfied with how she helped them when they were purchasing or selling a home.

Julianne is always aware of current trends and stays informed of the market changes throughout the year. Her personal philosophy as it relates to clients is 'I am big enough to get results, small enough to care.'

Julianne serves the entire GTA region and is an active Real Estate Sales Representative in Schomberg, King City, Newmarket, Aurora, Bradford, Richmond Hill, Mississauga, Malton, Toronto, Pickering and Uxbridge.

Julianne is known to always answer her phone! She can be reached at 416-418-6683.

WRITTEN BY Brian Lockhart

Moving this spring?

What to review before changing addresses

(NC) Moving to a new home is an exciting time, and there's a lot to process. Between closing documents, packing and unpacking, it's easy to lose track of some administrative details. You can save yourself some potential headaches by taking these items into consideration:

UPDATE ONLINE SERVICES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS.
A lot of these use your home address, so get ahead of the move by updating them to your new address. This will help you avoid disruptions and having to scramble to

get everything where it needs to be on top of having to settle in.

MAKE A RECORD OF VALUABLE ITEMS.

In case anything gets damaged or goes missing during a move, it's important to have a clear record of what you had before the process. One useful trick is to photograph any valuables from a couple of angles for easy reference later on.

PLAN AHEAD FOR CONNECTIVITY IN A NEW HOME.

Getting internet, TV and phone services set up is an early priority during a move. You can notify your provider to help make the process easier, but the truth is that issues can happen. You may run into unexpected fees during a move or even service disruptions.

If your service provider doesn't deal with the issue to your satisfaction, you still have options, such as taking the issue to the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-



television Services (CCTS), an independent agency that can deal directly with providers. It handles unresolved wireless, TV, phone and internet service issues from thousands of Canadians each year.

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD.

Moving can also be a chance to only take what you truly value with you. Instead of looking at all your stuff as automatically coming with you, try imagining it was something

being offered to you for your new home. If it's something that excites you to have there, pack it—if not, consider letting it go.

Moving is always stressful, but staying connected during the process doesn't have to be. You can learn more about resolving issues with your telecom service provider at letsstayconnected.ca.

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HOME INSPECTIONS: What they really do (and How Buyers Can Use Them Wisely)

A home inspection is one of the most valuable steps in the buying process — not because it guarantees a “perfect” home, but because it helps you understand what you’re buying. In today’s market, inspections can also be a practical bargaining tool: they can change the terms of a deal without ending it.

The goal of a home inspection is simple: information. It provides a clearer picture of a home’s condition on the day of the inspection, highlights visible safety concerns or major defects, and helps buyers prioritize repairs and maintenance. For sellers, it can reduce surprises and support more confident negotiations. For both sides, it keeps the transaction grounded in facts.

WHAT A HOME INSPECTION IS — AND WHAT IT ISN’T

A home inspection is typically a non-invasive, visual assessment of a property’s major systems and components. It’s not a guarantee, a warranty, or a pass/fail test. Inspectors generally do not open up walls, move heavy furniture, dismantle equipment, or perform destructive testing.

Think of it as a professional snapshot of condition and risk — not a promise that nothing will ever go wrong.

WHY INSPECTIONS MATTER (EVEN WHEN A HOME LOOKS “FINE”)

Most homes have issues — even well cared for ones. Buyers often focus on finishes, layout, and curb appeal, but inspections look at the systems that can be expensive or disruptive if they fail.

A thorough inspection can help:

- identify potential safety issues (electrical hazards, moisture or ventilation concerns)
- flag major defects (roofing concerns, foundation movement, plumbing leaks)
- reveal deferred maintenance (aging HVAC equipment, deteriorating exterior components)
- provide a realistic repair/maintenance roadmap
- confirm what’s in good working order, which brings peace of mind

THE INSPECTION AS A BARGAINING TOOL (NOT A DEAL-BREAKER)

A good inspection doesn’t “kill” a deal — it clarifies it. The point isn’t to demand perfection. It’s to ensure the purchase price and terms reflect the home’s real-world condition.

For example, if a roof receives a poor rating or shows signs of nearing end-of-life, buyers may have several reasonable options:

- request a price adjustment to reflect replacement cost
- request the seller complete repairs by a qualified professional before closing
- request a credit (where applicable) to offset repairs
- accept the condition but adjust other terms (closing date, inclusions, etc.)

In a balanced market, inspection findings often lead to a practical rebalancing of expectations: the home is still the right home — the deal just needs to make sense.

WHAT HOME INSPECTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

While exact scope varies, a typical home inspection includes a visual review of many of the following areas:

Exterior and structure: visible foundation condition, grading/drainage, exterior cladding and flashing, decks/steps/railings, and visible signs of settlement or moisture entry.

Roofing: visible roof covering condition, flashing, vents and penetrations, and visible evidence of leaks in accessible attic areas or ceilings. (Any “remaining life” comments are an opinion, not a guarantee.)

Plumbing: visible supply and drain lines where accessible, basic water flow observations, hot water tank age/condition, visible leaks or corrosion, and general fixture function.

Electrical: service panel observations, visible wiring concerns, presence/function of GFCI/AFCI protection where testable, and a sampling of outlets/switches for function.

Heating, cooling and ventilation: basic operation of furnace/boiler/heat pump when conditions allow, central air where seasonally appropriate, visible ductwork/vents/filters, exhaust fans, and ventilation concerns that could contribute to moisture issues.

Insulation and attic (when accessible): general insulation coverage, attic ventilation, visible moisture staining, and visible structural concerns (not an engineering assessment).

Interior: ceilings, walls, and floors for visible defects;

windows/doors for basic function; and stairs/railings for safety.

Fireplaces (limited): a basic visual review of accessible components; inspectors commonly recommend a specialist for a deeper safety evaluation.

Inspection reports typically categorize issues by severity (for example: safety, major defect, maintenance, monitor) and note limitations — especially areas that weren’t accessible at the time.

WHAT INSPECTORS ARE NOT DOING

This is where expectations matter. In most cases, a standard home inspection does not include:

- invasive inspection behind walls or under floors
- mold/air quality testing (unless added as a separate service)
- asbestos testing
- septic and well testing (usually separate specialists and tests)
- full chimney flue inspection (often requires a camera inspection)
- pest inspections (sometimes separate)
- engineering opinions on structure/foundation
- code compliance certification
- predicting remaining life with certainty (roof/HVAC life estimates are educated opinions)

Because inspectors can only report on what’s visible and accessible, no inspection can uncover every issue.

LIMITATIONS AND LIABILITY: THE IMPORTANT REALITY

Home inspection reports include limitations and disclaimers for a reason. A home inspector provides a professional opinion based on visible conditions and standard inspection practices — but they are not guaranteeing perfection or future performance.

Inspectors generally limit their liability through the inspection agreement and report terms. That means if something is missed — especially something hidden behind walls, under finishes, or inside sealed systems — the inspector is typically not responsible for the full cost of that failure. This is why it’s important for buyers to

read the inspection agreement, understand the scope, and ask questions during the inspection.

In plain terms: an inspection reduces risk, but it does not eliminate it.

HOW TO GET THE MOST VALUE FROM A HOME INSPECTION

A few best practices can make inspections far more useful:

- Attend the inspection if possible — seeing issues first-hand helps you understand what matters most.
- Ask for clarity, not catastrophes: “Is this urgent? What’s the typical fix? What would you do first?”
- Focus on major systems and safety, not cosmetic items.
- Use specialists when needed: targeted quotes can turn a concern into a number.
- Negotiate reasonably: the best outcomes happen when findings lead to fair adjustments, not unrealistic demands.

THE TAKEAWAY

No home is perfect. No inspection reveals everything. But a good inspection provides valuable information that helps buyers make informed decisions and negotiate intelligently. In many cases, it doesn’t end a deal — it simply shapes the deal into one that better reflects the home’s true condition.

If you’re considering a move and would like straightforward advice on your options in today’s market, feel free to contact Michele Denniston at 416-433-8316 or michele@micheledenniston.com

WRITTEN BY: The Michele Denniston Real Estate Team



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4 things to test for when buying a home



(NC) Moving into your new home is an exciting and sometimes overwhelming time. Between all the organizing and settling in, safety tests are probably the last thing on your mind. But there are still important things to check. Here are a few simple but important issues to look for:

1 INSULATION AND AIRFLOW

More than 10 per cent of the energy used in Canada every year goes to heating our homes, and poor insulation can waste a lot of it. One way to check airflow is with a blower door test. A membrane goes over an



external doorway with a powerful fan built in. It depressurizes the home by drawing air out quickly, and infrared cameras can show where air is being drawn in from outside to fill the low-pressure interior.

2 RADON GAS

Every home in Canada has some level of radon. It's an invisible radioactive gas that makes its way into homes from the ground through cracks and gaps in the foundation. Exposure increases the risk of lung cancer considerably, so it's important to test for it. Radon levels go up and down, but you can estimate your annual exposure by using a simple test kit for three months. If your levels are high, a professional can reduce them by up to 90 per cent for less than the cost of replacing your furnace or air conditioner.

3 MOISTURE AND MOULD

High moisture levels can damage the home and lead to mould growth. Mould may cause a number of health issues such as wheezing, shortness of breath and the worsening of asthma symptoms. Health Canada doesn't recommend testing the air itself for mould, but reducing moisture levels can be an effective prevention. Pay special attention to the kitchen, bathroom and basement, where moisture can be greater. Using dehumidifiers or ventilation can help you keep the humidity level between 30 and 50 per cent.

4 PLUMBING

Faults in your plumbing can worsen existing moisture issues and damage drywall, bricks and foundation materials. Look for signs of current or past leaks—discolouration on ceilings or walls, as well as spots where the paint seems to bulge or sag. It's also important to verify your pipes' material: some homes still have lead fixtures connecting them to the municipal service lines. Consider testing your service line connections early and replacing them if necessary.

Not every safety risk in the home is obvious. Some, like radon, are literally invisible, and the only way to know is to test. You can learn more about getting started with a do-it-yourself test kit or electronic monitor at takeactiononradon.ca.

www.newscanada.com

MARKET UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2026

AURORA

AVERAGE SALES PRICE

\$1,229,261

AVERAGE 35 DAYS ON MARKET

NUMBER OF SALES

40

126 NEW LISTINGS

SALE TO LIST RATIO

98%

YEAR OVER YEAR % CHANGE

-9.73%

KING

AVERAGE SALES PRICE

\$2,626,800

AVERAGE 37 DAYS ON MARKET

NUMBER OF SALES

10

72 NEW LISTINGS

SALE TO LIST RATIO

88%

YEAR OVER YEAR % CHANGE

-9.37%

*The statistics provided were obtained from the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board's Market Watch FEBRUARY 2026; Summary of Existing Home Transactions for All Home Types, FEBRUARY 2026 + Focus on the MLS Home Price Index for Composite, FEBRUARY 2026 for York Region's Aurora and King

As we move through the first quarter of 2026, the York Region real estate market continues to show signs of a market recalibration. While activity remains measured compared to the heightened pace of previous years, the market is gradually finding its balance as both buyers and sellers adjust to current economic conditions.

In February, the average home price in Aurora was approximately \$1.10M, with homes taking about 34 days on average to sell. Inventory has also increased modestly, with roughly 120–127 new listings entering the market over the past month, giving buyers more choice and negotiating power than we saw during the peak years of the market cycle.

Across the broader Greater Toronto Area, sales activity has remained somewhat subdued as economic uncertainty and affordability concerns continue to keep some buyers on the sidelines. This has contributed to softer pricing trends and a market that increasingly favours well-prepared buyers.

This is a strategic market: Buyers benefit from greater choice and negotiating room, while Sellers who price correctly and present their homes well will still achieve strong results.

As we move into our most robust selling season, the key will be to price correctly and take the appropriate steps to best showcase a home. In an evolving market, Key Advantage is always here as a trusted advisor to provide support, guidance and information.

– Provided by Key Advantage Team Royal LePage RCR Realty
Lindsay Strom, Broker
www.KeyAdvantage.ca | 905-836-1212 | info@KeyAdvantage.ca
* Not intended to solicit buyers or sellers currently under contract.



435 KETTLEBY ROAD, KING
\$1,699,000



16 BONNELL CRESCENT, AURORA
\$1,699,000



142 REGATTA AVENUE, RICHMOND HILL
\$1,699,000



2 MEYER CIRCLE, MARKHAM
\$1,628,888



20 MORLEY CRESCENT, WHITBY
\$1,549,000

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Planning a backyard project?

This step is required by law

(NC) Picture this: You're looking out your back window, imagining your dream patio. You've got the vision, and now you're going to put it into motion. But before you do, did you know you're required by law in Ontario to determine the location of the underground infrastructure outside?

Before any project that involves digging, homeowners must request a "locate" to identify underground infrastructure. This requirement applies to everything from planting a tree or installing a mailbox to building a deck or putting up a fence. The goal is simple: to prevent damage to natural gas lines and other utilities that serve your home and neighbourhood.

Underground utility lines can be much closer to the surface than most people expect. A shovel placed just a few centimetres in the wrong spot can cause damage that leads to service interruptions, costly repairs or serious safety risks. Requesting a locate shows you the approximate location of these lines so you can plan your work and dig with confidence.

In this province, locates are requested through Ontario One Call, a free public safety service that connects homeowners with local utility providers. Once you submit your request, it notifies utilities, and they'll come and mark the location of underground infrastructure on your property. This process can take up to five business days, so it's essential to plan ahead.

Starting a project without a locate not only puts people and property at risk but may also result in legal and financial consequences. By taking this simple, required step, you can protect your home, stay compliant with provincial regulations and avoid unnecessary delays.

TIPS TO KEEP YOUR PROJECT ON TRACK

- Walk your yard before submitting a locate request so you can clearly identify where digging will take place.
- Mark your planned project area using flags or biodegradable paint to help the locate crews understand the scope of work.
- Avoid digging if weather conditions make locate markings hard to see; wait until markings are clear and visible.
- Keep your project plans, sketches and locate records in one place so that everything is easy to reference.
- Take photos of locate markings once they're applied in case rain, wind, or lawn activity causes them to fade.

With a little planning, your outdoor project can move forward safely, legally and smoothly. Find more information on staying compliant and protecting your home, at enbridgegas.com/ontario.

www.newscanada.com



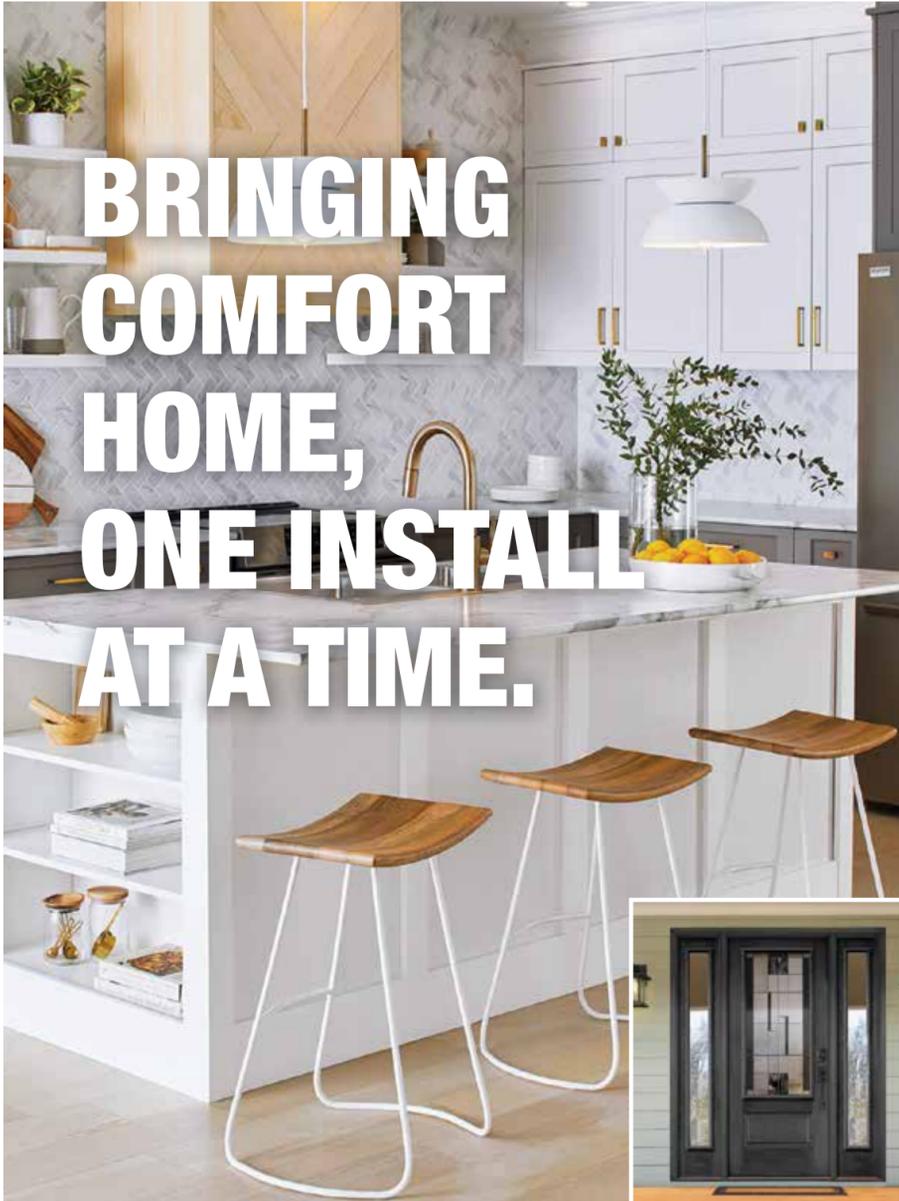
Stunning 5+1 bedroom, 4-bath residence on a beautifully landscaped half-acre lot in prestigious Nobleton. This exceptional home blends timeless elegance with modern upgrades. Exquisite finishes throughout and recently re-modelled. Professionally finished basement with private entrance. Includes two 5-piece ensuites on second floor, and a bonus detached garage—ideal for hobbyists or car enthusiasts alike.



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A GUIDE TO • Survive lengthy home renovations

Renovations can transform homes into spaces that mirror homeowners' dreams. Regardless of the scope of a project, a home renovation will involve some level of disruption to residents' daily lives. Lengthy, more involved projects may impact daily life considerably.

Renovation timelines vary depending on the scale of the project. Painting may take a week or two, while a kitchen or bathroom remodel may last anywhere from four to 16 weeks. Larger projects like adding a room can take between three and six months, say the experts at John Merrill Homes. Projects also often take longer than expected, as surprises may be in store once homeowners begin peeling back the layers in homes. Homeowners about to embark on lengthy renovation projects can embrace these tips to come through on the other side relatively unscathed.

CHOOSE YOUR TIMING

The timing of a renovation may have to coincide with contractor availability or having the budget to fund the project. But homeowners should consider life circumstances and season before starting a project.

You might not have the energy to take on a project right before the holidays. If kids play on sports teams that require a lot of travel, it might be better to wait until the season winds down. Figure out what you can realistically take on to reduce the likelihood that you'll feel overwhelmed.

PLAN ACCORDINGLY

Creating and sticking to a daily schedule, and knowing what is happening each day, can keep a project on track. It also allows you to determine which days will be the most chaotic. Demolition days can be noisy and messy, and maybe those are days when you plan to be away from the house for a few hours.

STORE ITEMS OUT OF HARM'S WAY

Invest in a storage solution for the duration of the renovation. Decluttering and removing items before

the project is in full force will make it easier to work and maneuver, and it also means fewer items will need to be cleaned afterwards. Renovations tend to kick up a lot of construction dust, after all.

DESIGNATE A SAFE ZONE

Establish a room or rooms as work-free areas to which residents can retreat. If multiple rooms are being renovated, you might consider spending time with a family member or friend, or getting a hotel for a short duration until the bulk of disruption dies down.

LOWER YOUR STANDARDS

Homecooked meals may be your standard most days of the week, but it's alright to be a bit lax when remodeling projects begin. Relying on frozen foods or takeout might be necessary for a little while.

The most popular rooms to remodel

HOME IMPROVEMENT TRENDS come and go. In a testament to that reality, the wildly popular open floor plan concepts that have dominated homeowners' desires over the last decade-plus could be falling out of favor, a shift that Rachel Stults of Realtor.com linked to the COVID-19 pandemic in a 2023 interview with Business Insider. Stults noted open floor plans will likely exhibit some measure of staying power, but linked the shift toward more traditional layouts to COVID lockdowns and the desire for more privacy among residents.

The shift away from open floor plans is a testament to the fleeting nature of home renovation trends. But trends still deserve a place at the table among real estate investors and homeowners who want to renovate their homes with an eye on projects that could be most appealing to prospective buyers. As homeowners balance their own preferences with those that might help them sell their homes down the road, they can consider this list of the most popular rooms to renovate, courtesy of the "2024 U.S. Houzz & Home Study" from Houzz Research.

1. Kitchen
2. Guest bathroom
3. Primary bathroom
4. Living room
5. Guest bedroom
6. Primary bedroom
7. Laundry room
8. Closet
9. Dining room
10. Home office

When considering renovating these or other rooms, homeowners should know that Houzz researchers found that the median spend increased for most interior room upgrades compared to the previous year. However, the median cost to upgrade living rooms and home offices remained unchanged.



107 Orchard Heights Blvd, Aurora



COMING SOON TO MLS!
This beautifully renovated three-bedroom, 2 bathroom, family home is located in the heart of Aurora. It's truly one-of-a-kind and ready for move-in.

4 Vata Court, Unit 16, Aurora



A prime industrial unit offers a 50/50 split. Half is office space, while the other half is unfinished industrial space featuring a large roll-up drive-through door. This is ideal for service-based businesses or business just starting out or investment.
\$720,000
MLS# N12760990

105 Orchard Heights Blvd, Aurora



This meticulously renovated four-bedroom, three-bathroom home is move-in ready. Located on a pristine corner lot, it offers ample outdoor space for kids to play, relax, and create lasting memories. The home also features a large outdoor heated workshop, perfect for an office or storage.
\$1,215,000
MLS# N12833318



HEART OF NEWMARKET

Renovated 4 bdrm residence offers contemporary open concept design anchored by stunning white oak hrdwd flrs & wood staircase w/ wrought iron accents. Chef-inspired kitchen features centre island, quartz counters and built-in appls, walk out to huge deck w/ pergola & sunny South/West exposure. Oversized family rm w/ custom built-in display shelves and a sleek linear fireplace, living & dining areas accommodate large family gatherings. 4 generous bdrms, primary suite with custom walk-in closet & 3pc ensuite. Main flr laundry w/ direct garage access, parking for 6 cars + unspoiled bsmt ready for your personal touch. **\$1,235,000**

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Did you know?

AN ASSORTMENT OF VARIABLES will dictate just how long a home's siding will last, including the amount of sun a home receives and the location of the home. The life expectancy of siding will also depend on the siding material. According to Sunshine Contracting, vinyl siding lasts between 20 and 40 years. It's a popular choice because of how long it lasts and the minimal upkeep it requires. Wood siding, another traditional favourite, is more expensive, but it also boasts impressive longevity, according to BobVila.com. With proper maintenance, which includes cleaning and refinishing, wood siding may last for decades. The coating on aluminum siding typically begins to fade after about 15 years. Fiber cement siding is affordable, durable and low maintenance, and it may actually last as long as the home itself. It needs to be repainted occasionally. Sunshine Contracting says stone veneer siding will last between 20 and 75 years, depending on the stone that is used.



THINGS TO KNOW WHEN

replacing windows

Windows are durable, but they do not last forever. The experts at This Old House say the life span of home windows is between 15 and 50 years, with most reaching the upper limits of their life expectancy at around 20 years. Once they reach this age, the seals begin to weaken or fail, and windows become susceptible to drafts and water seepage.

Replacing windows can be a good investment. Such a project is one of the more effective ways to elevate a home's curb appeal and value. New windows are energy efficient and make homes more secure. They also tend to look better than old, fading windows. When pondering a window replacement project, it's important to consider these factors.

• KNOW THE WINDOW TYPES. Double hung windows are classic and have operable upper and lower sashes. Lowering the upper sash allows warm air near the ceiling to escape and cooler air can flow in through the bottom. Single hung windows only have an operable lower sash. Sliding windows have one or more panels that move horizontally, and picture windows are fixed models designed to offer wide, unobstructed views and lots of light.

• REPAIR OR REPLACE WINDOWS. Existing windows might just need to be repaired, saving homeowners thousands of dollars. It's best to consult with a professional to see if certain components can be repaired rather than replaced. Typically, rotten framing, wet or weeping windows or significant drafts require replacement.

• IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REPLACEMENT WINDOWS AND CONSTRUCTION WINDOWS. Traditional replacement windows are sometimes called pocket windows, says Consumer Reports. They fit inside an existing window frame. Construction windows require the removal of the entire old window, including the frame, sill and trim. The latter cost more to install.

• FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH WINDOW FRAME MATERIALS. Various window frame materials are available for purchase, and variables such as heat transfer, maintenance and durability differ with each product. Vinyl is a common material that's low-maintenance

and affordable. Aluminum and aluminum clad windows can be economical options, and they are corrosion-resistant and require little maintenance. Wood also is popular for the interior parts of a window, and offer a traditional look. Wood is available on new construction windows. Fiberglass windows also are available in new construction windows. They won't crack, warp, rust, corrode, or peel, and the frames will not expand and contract as much as other materials.

• KEEP COSTS IN MIND. According to Fixr, an online marketplace for local remodeling services, the average national price for a professional to replace a window is around \$800. For a one-story house, a window replacement project of multiple windows may cost around \$8,000.

When selecting replacement windows, look for The National Fenestration Rating Council label to get a snapshot of the window's energy performance to compare with others. The Energy Star logo indicates that the window meets Energy Star standards.



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When the *Easter Bunny* needed a **REAL ESTATE AGENT**



By Julien Laurion
Real Estate

Spring has officially arrived in Aurora. The snow is mostly gone, the birds are back, and the familiar sight of real estate signs starting to pop up around town means one thing: the spring market is waking up. Around here, that's almost as much of a seasonal tradition as Easter itself.

But this year, something unusual happened while I was checking in on one of my renovation projects.

I had stopped by a property we were getting ready for market. The floors had just gone in, trim was being installed, and the painters were finishing their final coats. It's one of my favourite stages of a project—the moment when a house really begins transforming from “needs work” into “someone’s dream home.” As I stepped into the backyard with my coffee in hand to take a look around, I noticed something strange in the grass.

A trail of footprints.

Not work boots. Not shoes.

Little bunny prints.

Now, Aurora has its fair share of wildlife, but these tracks led straight to the shed, and the door was slightly open. Inside was a basket sitting on the workbench. On top of it was a small handwritten note.

“Julien – I hear you help people with homes. Even rabbits need an upgrade sometimes.”

And just like that, it appears the Easter Bunny had entered the spring market.

According to the note, the Bunny has been dealing with a few “operational challenges.” When your job involves hiding thousands of eggs across neighbour-

hoods in a single night, apparently logistics become very important. His current burrow somewhere north of Aurora simply isn't keeping up with demand. Storage is tight, the insulation is questionable, and the layout—well, let's just say it wouldn't exactly photograph well on an MLS listing.

After hearing that I help people not only buy and sell homes but also renovate them to maximize their value, the Bunny figured I might be able to help.

Honestly, he came to the right place.

Because the truth is, real estate isn't just about buying or selling. Sometimes the smartest move is improving the home you already have. A well-planned renovation can completely transform a property—both in how it lives and in how it performs on the market.

The Bunny's place was a perfect example.

From the photos he left, the burrow had potential, but it clearly needed some love. The ceilings were low, the tunnels were dark, and there was very little natural light. From a resale perspective, most buyers would walk through and say the same thing: “Great location... but it needs work.”

That's exactly where my contracting side comes in.

When I work with homeowners, we often look at ways to renovate strategically before listing a property. Updating flooring, refreshing kitchens, opening spaces, and improving lighting can dramatically change how a home feels—and more importantly, how buyers respond to it.

If the Easter Bunny were my client, my first recommendations would be fairly straightforward: raise the ceilings a bit for better airflow, install proper lighting throughout the tunnels, add a larger entrance for egg transportation logistics, and upgrade the insulation so Ontario winters don't turn the burrow into a freezer. A dedicated chocolate storage room wouldn't hurt either.

With those changes, suddenly the burrow isn't just a hole in the ground—it becomes a charming woodland retreat with real market appeal. Even magical creatures understand that presentation matters.

Of course, the other factor we discussed in the Bunny's note was timing. Spring is always the most active time



of year for real estate. Families are preparing for moves before the next school year, buyers become more motivated, and homes that show well tend to attract serious attention.

When people ask me what makes a home stand out in a busy market, the answer usually comes down to three things: condition, pricing, and exposure.

Condition means presenting the home in its best possible shape. Pricing means understanding where the property fits in today's market. Exposure means making sure the right buyers actually see it.

Now, the Easter Bunny arguably has excellent exposure already—he does visit every house once a year, after all—but condition and pricing are where strategy really makes the difference.

Homes that are properly prepared and positioned don't just sit on the market... they move. Sometimes surprisingly quickly.

The Bunny may end up renovating his current burrow and staying put. But if he decides to upgrade, I've already got a few areas in Aurora in mind that would make ideal headquarters. Our town has incredible family-friendly neighbourhoods, beautiful parks, and backyards that practically look designed for Easter morning. Tree-lined streets, gardens, and plenty of places to hide eggs—what more could a rabbit ask for?

In all seriousness, while the Easter Bunny story might sound like a bit of springtime fun, there's actually a real lesson behind it.

Every home has potential. Sometimes that potential is unlocked through thoughtful renovations. Sometimes it comes from smart pricing and marketing. And sometimes it's simply about having someone who understands both the construction side and the real estate side working with you to make the right decisions.

That combination is exactly what I aim to bring to every client I work with. When you understand how homes are built, how they can be improved, and how buyers think, you can unlock opportunities that others might miss.

As I was leaving the property that day, I noticed one last thing in the basket the Bunny had left behind. Next to the note was a single chocolate egg and a message scribbled underneath.

“Thanks Julien. If the renovations go well... I might list next spring.”

Now I can't officially confirm that the Easter Bunny endorses my services.

But if he does decide to sell his burrow one day, we'll stage it properly—and I have a feeling it will sell faster than a kid finding the golden egg on Easter morning.

From my family to yours, I hope you have a wonderful Easter and enjoy the start of a beautiful spring here in Aurora. And if you happen to see a few extra bunny tracks around your yard this weekend... don't worry. He might just be checking out the neighbourhood.

And maybe, just maybe, thinking about moving.

Julien Laurion
Realtor. Contractor. Local Dad.
All About Homes.
Serving Aurora, King City, and the
communities in between.

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I'm a local Realtor who has lived in Aurora for more than 30 years and know it inside and out. With A LOT of home construction experience, I have an eye that will help you make informed decisions re: home concerns and renovations. Let me help you with your next big purchase/move. Please feel free to call or email me directly at 416-402-5530 or julien@julienlaurion.com or check out my socials at @julienlaurionrealestate

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