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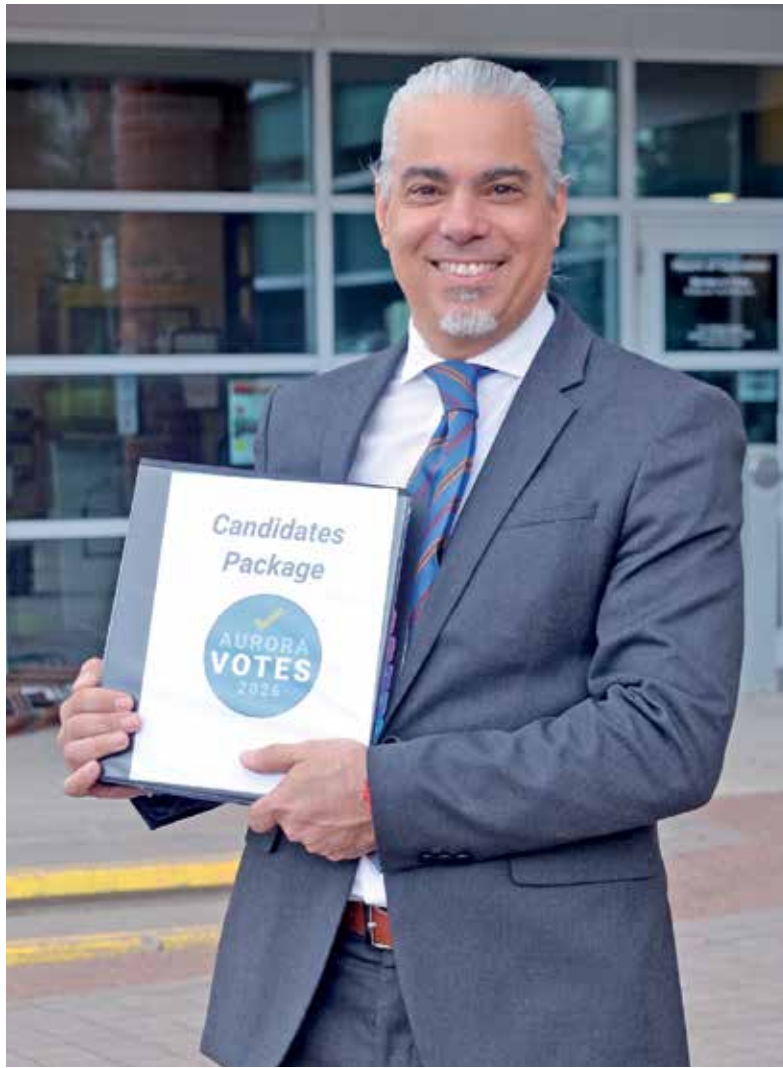
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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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RE/MAX Community REALTY

Candidate registration for the 2026 Municipal Election opened Friday, May 1, and among the first to throw their hats in the ring for Aurora's top job were mayoral candidates Shawn Deane, left, and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, right. For more on the first day of registration, see page 20. For more on Gallo's campaign launch, see Page 21. **Auroran photos by Brock Weir**

Gallo announces Mayoral run on first day of registration

Deane's registration makes it a two-way race for Mayor – so far

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Long-time Councillor John Gallo has formally thrown his hat into the ring for Aurora's top job.

Councillor Gallo formally registered his candidacy for Mayor on Friday morning, just a couple of hours after the process opened.

It became a two-person race less than an hour later when Shawn Deane, a frequent delegate to Council on financial and budgetary matters, registered as well.

Incumbent Tom Mrakas had not formally announced his intentions by press time.

Also joining the municipal race on the first day of registration was Lauren Hanna, who is vying for the role of Ward

1 Councillor, and Nikki Alber, who is seeking the Councillor position in Ward 3.

"I'm excited to bring my message to everyone and have them join the momentum," said Gallo, adding voters looking for a "different style of leadership in Aurora."

"I've got 14 years [of Council

Continued on page 20

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ART IN FOCUS - The Town of Aurora and the Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA) hosted the 62nd annual Aurora Art Show and Sale this past weekend, featuring hundreds of works throughout all three floors of Town Hall. A juried show, awards were presented in Council Chambers on Friday evening by Mayor Tom Mrakas and SOYRA's Linda Welch. For more, see Page 15. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

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PUBLIC NOTICE ARE YOU CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR OFFICE?

This notice is for anyone who is considering running as a candidate in the municipal election on **Monday, October 26, 2026**.

Nomination may be filed with the Town Clerk at the Town of Aurora Administration Office located at 100 John West Way, Aurora between **May 1, 2026** and **August 20, 2026** by appointment during regular working hours, and on Nomination Day, **Friday, August 21, 2026** between the hours of **9 a.m. and 2 p.m.**

The required fee for a Member of Council or School Board Trustee is \$100 and the required fee for the Mayor is \$200. The required fee shall be in the form of cash, debit or credit card, a certified cheque or money order made payable to the Town of Aurora and must accompany the completed forms.

The Municipal Elections Act requires that each nomination (excluding School Board Trustee candidates) must be signed by 25 eligible Town of Aurora electors. The individuals providing signatures must be Canadian citizens, aged 18 or older, have a qualifying address in the municipality, and must not be prohibited from voting under any Act. The forms are available online or in person.

A nomination must be filed with the Returning Officer before an individual becomes a candidate for office and can accept campaign contributions or incur any election related expenses.

Offices for which a person may file a nomination paper for the 2026 Municipal Election:

- Town of Aurora Council
- Mayor (1 to be elected at large)
- Ward 1 Councillor (1 to be elected)
- Ward 2 Councillor (1 to be elected)
- Ward 3 Councillor (1 to be elected)
- Ward 4 Councillor (1 to be elected)
- Ward 5 Councillor (1 to be elected)
- Ward 6 Councillor (1 to be elected)

Nomination Forms must be filed with the Municipal Clerk:

Returning Officer/Town Clerk
Town of Aurora
100 John West Way
Aurora, L4G 6J1
elections@aurora.ca

School Board Trustees

York Catholic District School Board Trustee

Trustee Electoral Area; Aurora, King, Whitchurch- Stouffville (1 to be elected)
Nomination Forms must be filed with the Clerk of the Town of Aurora

York Region District School Board Trustee

Trustee Electoral Area; Aurora and King
Nomination Forms must be filed with the Clerk of the Town of Aurora

Conseil scolaire Viamonde Trustee

Nomination Forms must be filed with the City of Vaughan:
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1

Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir

Nomination Forms must be filed with the City of Vaughan:
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1

Nomination forms and other candidate information is available at the Clerk's office or by visiting the Town's website at aurora.ca/Vote2026.

Anne Kantharajah, Returning Officer/Town Clerk



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Aurora's Da Silva named York Region's next Police Chief



York Regional Police Chief Designate Paulo Da Silva is seen here at a Remembrance event. **York Regional Police Photo**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

York Regional Police Deputy Chief Paulo Da Silva has been appointed to lead the force.

Da Silva, whose appointment was announced by the York Regional Police Services Board on Thursday, will succeed outgoing Police Chief Jim MacSween on June 27.

In a statement, the Board said the new Chief-Designate was “the right leader to guide York Regional Police into the future.”

“He is widely recognized for his sound judgement, collaborative leadership style, and dedication to excellence in policing,” said Board Chair Steve Pellegrini, Mayor of King Township. “His experience and forward-looking perspective will be

instrumental as the organization continues to evolve to meet the needs of a growing and diverse community.”

Da Silva has been in policing for more than 30 years and has served as a Deputy Chief in York for the last five. In this role, he has led the YRP’s Administration Branch and, most recently, the Community Safety Branch, overseeing more than 1,200 members of the service.

“I am deeply honoured to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as Chief of Police, and I am grateful to the York Regional Police Services Board for their trust in my leadership,” said Da Silva in a statement. “York Regional Police is defined by its people and its commitment to the communities we serve. I look forward to building on that foundation, working alongside our members and community

partners to deliver policing that is responsive, inclusive, and forward-looking, grounded in compassion, integrity, fairness and respect.

“I want to recognize our uniform and civilian members, our volunteers, and the leadership of both the York Regional Police Association and the Senior Officers’ Association – your professionalism and dedication are the strength of this organization. Together, we will strengthen trust through transparency, collaboration, and accountability.

“Our focus remains clear: to keep our communities safe, and to ensure they feel safe.”

Da Silva has been with the York Regional Police since 1997. Over the course of his career, he’s earned the Governor General of Canada’s Exemplary Service 20 Year Medal, has been appointed to the Order of Merit for Police Services, and received the King Charles III Coronation Medal for his services to the community.

He is a member of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy, Quantico, the Police Leadership Program at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management, and the Executive

Strategic Management Program at the Senior Management Institute for Police.

He also holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Toronto.

A resident of Aurora, Da Silva’s appointment was hailed by Mayor Tom Mrakas, who said he was looking forward to working with the Chief-Designate in “keeping our communities safe and strong.”

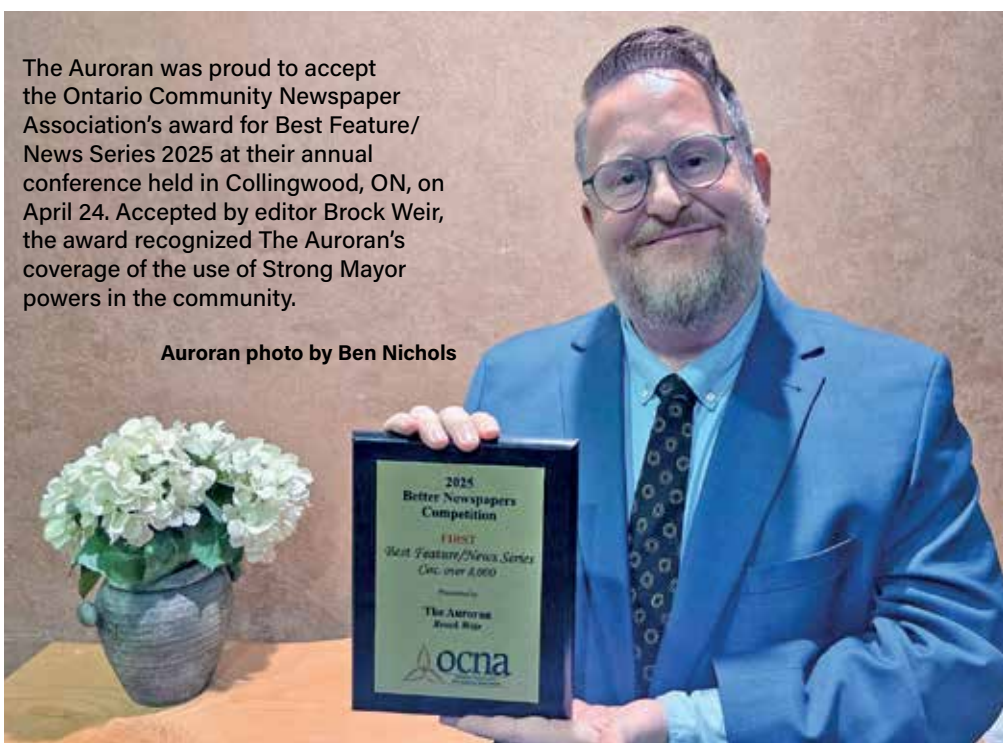
“The reality is this is an exceptionally strong selection,” he said. “As an Aurora resident, Chief-Designate Da Silva has decades of experience in policing, including serving as YRP Deputy Chief for the last five years. He’s known for his commitment to innovation, community-focused policing, and professional development, all of which have helped build high-performing teams, strong partnerships and an inclusive and supportive workplace.

“His collaborative leadership style and sound judgement have also earned him the deep respect of YRP members, something essential for any successful police chief. I want to thank the York Regional Police Services Board for this appointment, as well as outgoing YRP Chief Jim MacSween, who will be instrumental in transitioning Chief-Designate Da Silva into his new role.”

HONORED BY ONTARIO COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS ASSOCIATION

The Auroran was proud to accept the Ontario Community Newspaper Association’s award for Best Feature/News Series 2025 at their annual conference held in Collingwood, ON, on April 24. Accepted by editor Brock Weir, the award recognized The Auroran’s coverage of the use of Strong Mayor powers in the community.

Auroran photo by Ben Nichols



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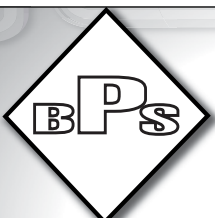
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Come Together, York Region and South Simcoe, for Mental Health Week 2026

Technology means we can connect instantly with anyone, anywhere. And yet, people in our community are struggling with loneliness. This Mental Health Week (May 4-10), the Canadian Mental Health Association York Region South Simcoe (CMHA YSS) is asking: what are the impacts of loneliness on the mental health of caregivers in our community?

Social connection is essential to improving health and mental well-being. Having social support has been found to lead to positive health outcomes, a sense of purpose, belonging, security, and self-worth. It also increases access to health-promoting resources and behaviours. But, too many people are feeling alone. 13% of Canadians (aged 15+) say they feel lonely “always or often.”

“Come Together, York Region and South Simcoe” is a call to spark small, everyday actions of connection, and to recognize the role we all play in supporting mental health through connection. Loneliness, anxiety and declining mental health are commonly experienced issues faced by caregivers. According to The Ontario Caregiver Organization, of the over 4.2 million caregivers in Ontario, 69% feel so burnt out they are not sure how they will continue and 46% feel lonely, isolated, and depressed.

CMHA YSS is committed to supporting caregivers in our community through meaningful connection because we understand what they’re going through. “Connection is so important. Many families and caregivers feel like they’re carrying everything on their own. Having someone to talk to—someone who understands both the system and their experience—can help ease that weight,” says Yannes Lam, MSW, RSW, Social Worker with the ACT Team at CMHA YSS. “You can’t pour from an empty cup. Self-care is often overlooked in a caregiving role, but it’s essential in order to continue supporting a loved one. Building connections can be the difference between feeling overwhelmed and feeling empowered,” adds Megan Davis, RSW, Social Worker with the ACT Team at CMHA YSS.

Our family and caregiver mental health supports can help caregivers get off the sidelines and become an active participant by empowering individuals with education, resources and an action plan. Our education and support groups create opportunities for families and caregivers to connect over shared experiences in a supportive environment. To learn more about our family and caregiver programs, visit: <https://cmha-yr.on.ca/get-support/families-and-caregivers/>

To learn more about loneliness and mental well-being this Mental Health Week (May 4-10, 2026), follow us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Ketzia Barron
Communications Advisor
Canadian Mental Health Association
York Region South Simcoe

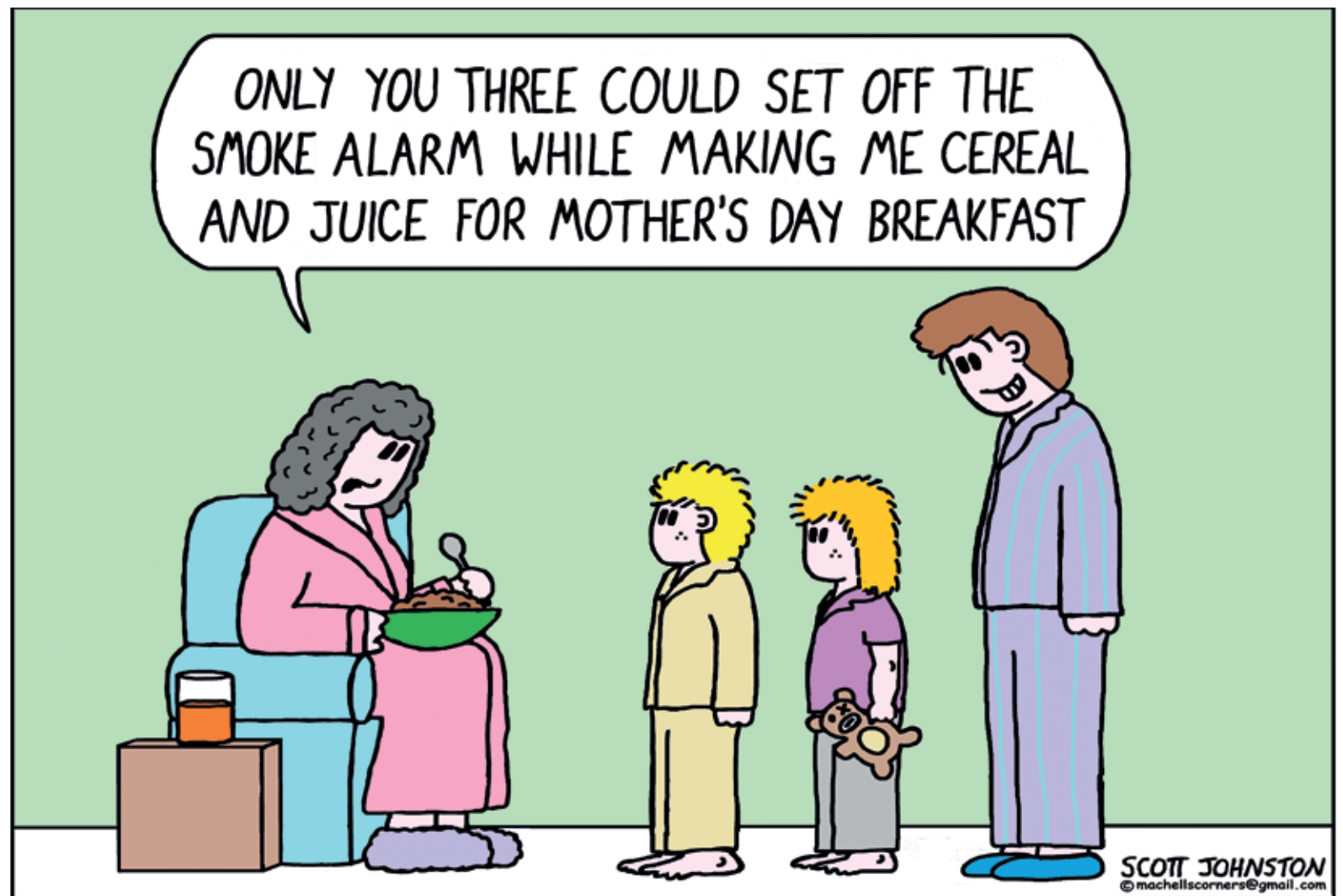
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Machell's Corners



Reflections on Mary Simon

When push comes to shove, I think it’s safe to say that Canadians are proud of our country.

Sure, there are those who look to our neighbours to the south for their flashy brand of patriotism as somehow superior to our own quiet homegrown pride – I can’t count the number of times I heard the co-opted commercial catch phrase “only in Canada” delivered with something of a dismissive snort.

Then there are others who like to drone on and on (and on) about how Canada is allegedly “broken” when, if you really want to get down to brass tacks, it’s only broken because the person you want to ride in on a proverbial white charger to apparently save the day has faced more than a few stumbles coming out of the starting block.

There are more still who subscribe to a certain brand of Canadian pride that is defined by what we aren’t rather than what we are. There’s a value to that, don’t get me wrong, particularly when put up against those aforementioned southern neighbours, but, personally speaking, I’d rather take pride in what we are than what we are not.

One of the facets of Canada I hold particularly close to my heart is our system of government – that is the system itself, not the individuals who may or may not hold office at any given point. It’s a system that has served the country well and stood the test of time, and a key component of that is the role of the Canadian Crown.

I’ve taken my fair share of jibes over the years for my enthusiasm for the institution. Yes, there are valid arguments for and against maintaining it in this country, but, in my view, it’s hard to argue with results.

Many Canadians have questioned the Crown’s relevance over the years. Heck, its status has been a question since Confederation in 1867, but its value has certainly been demonstrated especially in the last couple of years as we face down threats to our independence and very existence.

Take, for instance, multiple sources reporting that not only did the incumbent President of the United States not know King Charles III is Canada’s Head of State, but that the realization of that very basic fact is apparently one of the few reasons “51st State” rhetoric has died down.

This was demonstrated a year ago this month when the King opened Parliament, the first time the sovereign had done so since 1977, and as recently as last week when the King wasted no opportunity to remind his hosts at the White House of this truth, regardless of



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

the fact he was acting in his capacity as Head of State of the United Kingdom at the time.

It is also being demonstrated this week with the appointment on Tuesday of celebrated jurist and human rights advocate Louise Arbour as Canada’s Governor General-designate, succeeding the history-making tenure of Mary Simon as the King’s representative here at home.

Mary Simon was appointed to the role in 2021, picking up from the brief and rather disastrous tenure of astronaut Julie Payette, whose resignation led to many Canadians to question the value of maintaining role in our governmental hierarchy when the office holder seemed to have little idea – or regard for – the role she accepted.

An Inuk, Simon has the distinction of being the first Indigenous Governor General in our nearly 160-year history of this country – a distinction that is much more than just a historical footnote.

As it became clear over the last week or so that Simon’s time at Rideau Hall was coming to an end – a Governor General’s term has typically been about five years, give or take a year or two – it seems as though Simon’s achievements in office have taken a backseat to the fact that she’s not fluent in French.

Now, I’m not discounting the importance of the person representing the Crown in Canada being able to speak both official languages. In fact, it’s a qualification more important for a Governor General than an Air Canada honcho. But, as Simon’s husband Whit Fraser retorted early on in his wife’s term, Simon is bilingual – and how many of her critics can fluently speak an Indigenous language? It’s not in the job description, but it certainly doesn’t hurt!

The former Prime Minister was criticized for appointing a person with minimal knowledge of the French language to the post, but, in my view, it was the right appointment for the right moment, an important step in our

collective road to Truth & Reconciliation and, in Simon, an invaluable path through whom we had – and continue to have – an important national conversation.

“What I value most about my upbringing was my parents teaching my siblings and I how to live in two worlds: the Inuit world and the non-Inuit southern world,” said Simon in her installation speech. “This foundation of core values has both served and shaped me throughout my life and I believe helped me get to the important turning point as a young girl when I stopped being afraid. It took time before I gained the self-confidence to assert myself and my beliefs in a non-Indigenous world, but when I came to understand that my voice had power and that others were looking to me to be their voice, I was able to let go of my fear....”

“I have always viewed Canada as a metaphor for a family. As members of our large and diverse Canadian family, we have to replace the hurt with hope and find the grace and humility to stand together and move towards a more just and equitable future.... Since the publication of the Truth & Reconciliation Report six years ago, we have learned as a country that we need to learn the real history of Canada. Embracing this truth makes us stronger as a nation, unites Canadian society and teaches our kids that we must always do our best, especially when it’s hard....”

“Reconciliation is a way of life and requires work every day. Reconciliation is getting to know one another. Reconciliation invites us to get to know one another. As stated in the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report, reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. We are reminded daily that even though diversity is a core Canadian value, our country must do more to respect all languages, cultures, ethnicities, religions, and ways of living. As Governor-General, I will embody our nation’s commitment to diversity and acceptance.”

In that, I think Mary Simon can look back with pride over her time as Canada’s Governor-General and with the sense of an accomplished mission.

Canadians, in turn, can take pride in the fact that Mary Simon succeeded in her mandate, represented Canadians abroad admirably.

And further pride can be found in the fact she is set to be succeeded by another eminent Canadian with a distinguished career, a proven track record, and a commitment to values so many of us hold close to our hearts.

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Aurora's Community Newspaper

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MAY FLOWERS



The Diamond Dyes Company was one of the leading cloth dye companies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This card was distributed by the local pharmacy operated by Dr. Rutherford, who ran his practice and shop out of Medical Hall. We're fortunate these bold colours have survived – but let's not think too hard about the chemicals used over a century ago to make them so bright!



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

This past weekend, we came together as a community to celebrate the life of Sam Saberi, and what a powerful reminder it was of the impact one person can have. A packed room. Countless stories. So many lives touched.

Sam wasn't just known in our community, he was felt.

Through his generosity, his kindness, and the way he showed up for people when it mattered most. Aurora has lost someone truly special... but his legacy will live on in this community for years to come.

Rest in peace, Sam. You will always be remembered.



MP SANDRA COBENA'S UPDATE

Sandra Cobena, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Our Youth in Action

This week, I had the pleasure of welcoming 30 young leaders from Newmarket-Aurora to Ottawa as part of our Youth Advisory Council on the Hill.

Through this program, these students have engaged directly with their Mayor, MPP and Members of Parliament, while raising thoughtful concerns about the issues that matter most to them and to our community. Their work has already taken shape through petitions that reflect both their ideas and their commitment to meaningful change.

As I write this, they are on Parliament Hill, touring our institutions, attending Question Period, meeting with parliamentarians, and witnessing firsthand where decisions that shape our country are made. Beyond

advocacy, the experience is equipping them with hands-on skills in leadership, policymaking, and community service.

Investing in the next generation requires more than words; it requires opportunity. That is why I was proud to launch an essay contest to select a youth delegate from Newmarket-Aurora to represent Canada as a Canadian Youth Ambassador at the 22nd ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly and the 10th Open Parliament Network Gathering in Ottawa.

At a time when trade and economic

opportunity are central to Canada's future, this initiative will give one young leader the chance to stand shoulder to shoulder with parliamentarians and youth leaders from across the Americas and the Caribbean and help advance ideas on trade, jobs, innovation, and the future of work.

Supporting the leaders of tomorrow means opening doors today.

By creating these opportunities, we can ensure that the next generation is prepared to lead and to make a lasting difference in our community and beyond.

If you are between 14-25 and want to be part of our Youth Advisory Council send us an email to sandra.cobena@parl.gc.ca.

To say I love May is the understatement of the world.

Good-bye winter, good-bye freezing and the chance of a freak storm. Hello, warm sunshine and the endless colour that surrounds me. This morning, we are not doomed to dullness. We need colour in our lives that liven up our soul.

Have you ever noticed how much your moods change with the seasons? It's not just because you need to layer up in the fall, or because the sun wakes you up early in the summer. With each change of season comes a change in colours. The colours change on trees, the sky, and even the colours people wear. This can have a significant impact on your moods.

The colours you wear don't have to be the same colours you live with. I love colour, I especially loved the 70s era, when colour was at its height of fun and full of life. Have you ever noticed how a vibrant sunset can lift your spirits, or how a soft blue room can calm your nerves? There is solid science behind these reactions.

Our brains are wired to respond to colour, and this simple fact opens a world of possibilities for helping some anxious seniors. Colour therapy isn't just about making things pretty. It's rooted in how our bodies and minds react to different hues.

Red might get your heart pumping while green can help you feel balanced. Blue? It's like a mental lullaby, soothing and serene.

Imagine a world where the antidote to anxiety comes not in a



Senior Scape

By Christina Doyle

pill bottle, but in a crayon box.

For seniors, this isn't just a flight of fancy – it's becoming a colourful reality.

The wonderful programs that the Aurora Seniors' Center offers in this area are not just pretty pictures, they are portals to peace. Adult colouring books for instance offer a structured playground for the mind, a safe space where anxiety takes a backseat to the simple joy of staying within the lines.

Wearing colour, well, it takes a certain confidence to be seen. Bright colours mean no discreet blending into the crowd. Arguably age brings the confidence to wear what we choose and less concern about pleasing others. This erases that older women especially should quietly fade away.

The late Queen Elizabeth II wore memorably vivid outfits for her walkabouts so she could be seen from a distance and in large crowds. Her colours were always chosen to make her visible. This was most evident on her overseas tours, and trying to spot her diminutive figure amongst tall grey men would have been difficult

but in her bright outfits, no trouble at all. Bless her, she is indeed missed.

As we grow older, we change. Our skin, hair and bodies all change. Dark colours can become draining as we lose colour from our hair and skin while brighter tones or vivid hues can create a highlight.

I for one love colour and have all my life...it is those moments when I have felt sad that I end up wearing black and most happy when there is colour on my body. It's interesting at times when I hear gentlemen who are seniors have a comment about my wearing of colour that they find amusing as they don their dull muted green or the standard beige pants and matching top.

I feel tired already! Sorry fellas, no can do, but then there are those men who are not afraid to don a cheerful colour which brightens up their skin and mood. I find them a much happier group.

Our bodies are always sending messages to our minds, and when you see a bright colour, your brain gets the information that something good is going on.

A team of researchers at the University of Vienna did a study on the connection between brightness and positivity.

They found that the association is strong and universal. Bright colours stimulate positive emotions while dark colours conjure negative emotions. So, here is a little exercise for you. The next time you are in your grocery store, take a look at how colour is used in breakfast

Continued on page 19

Continued on page 18

Dare To Rise marks first year of community impact at Royal Rose

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Absane “Abbie” Ibrahim found herself at a crossroads when she and her two sons left a negative domestic situation.

Overwhelmed by all she needed to do to forge a new path, she realized she needed a village of support to rise above the adversity – but didn’t know where to turn.

In looking for her village of support, she laid the foundation of a supportive village of her own – and co-founded Dare to Rise, a foundation that has brought together women of shared experiences to uplift families, support individuals, and help forge change.

The non-profit foundation marked a full year of community impact last week at Aurora’s Royal Rose Gallery celebrating how far they’ve come over the last twelve months while also acknowledging there’s still much work to do in helping community members “rise up” to achieve their full potential.

“To rise it takes a village,” says Ibrahim, who co-founded Dare to Rise with Chika Oh. “I went to Family Court in Newmarket and there you’re just a number – they’re nice, they’re warm, but you’re so overwhelmed that you don’t know what you need to do for your next step. They give you a pamphlet with all the legal aid names, there are hundreds of names, you don’t know who to choose – you go home and you’re really panicking. You have kids to take care of, you don’t know what you’re doing, and your brain just freezes.

“Going through that process was extremely overwhelming. I’m educated, I’m a strong person, but to go through that alone was not fun – and it was the hardest moment in my life. I’m part of the community, I work a lot, but nobody knew I was going through that.... There are so many other women going through this, so I had the audacity, the courage, to create this organization. This is my story. This was my niche I wanted to help, give them a template, and I wanted to take the word ‘single mother’ back and not be ashamed, because single moms are doctors, nurses, cooks, cleaners, and we’re everything in one person.”

Ibrahim describes the celebration of their successful first year of mentorship and lending a hand as a “perfect” evening.

Since its inception, the grassroots-supported organization has stepped up to assist 55 local moms and their families. Help has ranged from securing them diapers and infant formula to providing free one-on-one life coaching.

“They feel welcomed, they feel heard, they feel seen, and that, for me, is encouragement to continue,” says Ibrahim of working with clients through the foundation. “There are so many organizations out there and they’re all good, but the way we approach things is we do it organically one-on-one. We listen to them because all the women involved on our team have been through something like that. For them to look at us [knowing] where we’ve been and where we are today, they feel more connected and that they can do this, too. It’s a reflection of different



Dare to Rise Foundation co-founder Absane “Abbie” Ibrahim, centre, is flanked by Royal Rose Gallery owner Rosa Calabrese and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy at a celebration held at the gallery Thursday night to mark the foundation’s first year of work.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

cultures, different backgrounds, and different stages of our lives, and over the past year there has been a lot of organic referrals to us.”

Dare to Rise is not content to rest on the laurels of a successful first year, however. They’re hard at work launching new programs and workshops for women and youth to address gaps they see in existing services, building upon their foundations of Legal Navigation, Mental Health & Wellness, Creative Expression & Arts, and

Community Empowerment and Literacy.

They’re also aiming to increase their community outreach and build that village that is at the heart of it all.

“I would love for people to connect with us to volunteer,” says Ibrahim. “We’re open to people from different fields – youth, to women, and men, too.”

For more information about Dare to Rise, how to apply for services, and to become involved as a volunteer, visit daretorisefoundation.org

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Briefly

MOTHER'S DAY MEAL GOES EXTRA MILE AT STATE & MAIN

If you're treating mom to a special meal this Mother's Day, consider making a reservation at Aurora's State & Main. The restaurant, located on Yonge Street and Murray Drive, is taking part in the nation-wide initiative A Mother's Day Meal That Gives Back. "Treat mom and give back! Take mom out to any State & Main location between May 1 and 10, 2026, and we'll donate \$10 per reservation to local charities benefiting women in your community." Money raised through the initiative here in Aurora will benefit Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers. Rose of Sharon provides support and educational services in York Region to prenatal and parenting young women between the ages of 14 and 29. For more information about what they do, visit roseofsharon.com. For more on the restaurant initiative, visit stateandmain.ca.

CELEBRATE MOM AMIDST HISTORY

There is no shortage of things to do with Mom this Mother's Day, and if you want to do something that's "steeped" in history, head over to Hillary House National Historic Site where the Aurora Historical Society will host Mother's Day Teas on Saturday, May 9 and Sunday, May 10. "Join us for a special afternoon tea at Hillary House National Historic Site and treat the special moms in your life," says the AHS. "Happening inside our lovely heritage building, the menu includes a pot of tea, sandwiches, scones, and a variety of desserts." To pick your date and time, visit aurorahs.com.



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



Yonge Street is pictured looking north towards Industrial Parkway South.

Town of Aurora image

Yonge Street's multi-use path approved amid budget questions

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Construction on a new multi-use path for Yonge Street between Bloomington Road and Industrial Parkway South will

begin this summer following Council approval last week.

Local lawmakers gave the green light to the Yonge Street Active Transportation Facilities Plan – commonly known as a multi-use path (MUP) – accommodating

pedestrians, cyclists and more, along with a contentious budget increase to make it a reality.

Council approved a budget increase of \$2,531,900 for the project, bringing its total cost to \$7,861,100, funded largely through reserves and with a \$2.8 million contribution from the Region of York, which covers half the cost of construction itself.

“The project includes a multi-use path on the west side of Yonge and a sidewalk on the east side,” said the Town following last Tuesday’s Council meeting. “The total budget is now approximately \$7,861,100 funded through development charges, the Growth and New Reserve, and a \$2,800,000 contribution from York Region, which is covering half the cost of the multi-use path.”

In discussions at the Committee level last month, Council members spoke out against the project’s growing budget, but underscored the value of the overall vision and the Region’s contributions as reasons to move forward.

These views were reiterated last week ahead of the final vote. Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson said the MUP has been a long-term project that’s been subject to extensive public consultation.

“It’s in some ways...disappointing to see that, again, we have a situation where the initial budget cost has ballooned, but staff have provided the additional expectations and the fact they didn’t necessarily anticipate it,” he said. “Fortunately, this time around the Region is offering \$2.8 million. When we approved the Master Plan in 2024, when we approved this initial Capital Project... we were going to pay for it all, so it’s a windfall in some ways. I think to date... we’ve already spent \$500,000 on the

design and moving this project forward. I think that it, in my opinion, is much-needed.

“The residents down there deserve it. It’s a safety issue. We’ve talked in the past about how residents are walking up and down Yonge Street to access the plaza at Henderson and it’s needed. I’m grateful that staff were able to work with the Region to find and secure some additional money. I’m fully in support of moving forward with it because we committed to it a long time ago and we’ve stuck with it.”

Also voicing the importance of moving forward was Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese. In voicing his support, however, he questioned the timeline of moving forward now when there’s still some uncertainty over Metrolinx’s plans for the Yonge Street rail trestle as they prepare for double-tracking to make all-day two-way GO Train service a reality.

Director of Planning Marco Ramunno said any work related to the bridge is “essentially on hold” and there was no timeframe. Even if there was a time frame, he added, any work would be carried out at the northern boundary of the MUP and impacts would be minimal, he suggested.

“We’re ready to go this summer,” said Ramunno. “Metrolinx is probably a few years off before they move forward with that bridge. Things may change, but they’re not going in there any time soon.”

Replied Councillor Weese: “My purpose for bringing this forward had to do primarily with the questions that I’ve received from others. I wanted to be out on public record – I don’t want anybody to think that I don’t want the MUP on there. It’s absolutely critical for connectivity, for our cycling, and it’s important for a quality community.”

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Windrow removal pilot extended into 2026-2027 winter

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora's windrow removal pilot will continue into the winter of 2026-2027 following a Council decision last week.

The program, which was established for senior residents and residents living with mobility challenges to remove the dense ridge of snow left at the ends of driveways by passing snow plows, will once again be provided at a fee of \$200 for those eligible households, and the financial assistance program for eligible residents will carry forward as well.

Now in its fourth season, the pilot program has experienced several challenges since its inception, as well as mixed feedback from those residents who have taken advantage of the program.

Municipal staff recommended the discontinuation of the program for the winter ahead, but given recent investments in new snow removal equipment in the 2026 Municipal Budget, Council members weren't yet prepared to scrap the program all together.

Prior to last week's vote, the pilot's mixed reviews were reflected by residents delegating to Council both in favour of the program's extension as well as staff's original recommendation to wind down the windrow program.

First to delegate was resident John Hartman who cited the costs of maintaining the pilot and a perceived lack of success in previous seasons as reasons to draw a line under the initiative.

"After three less-than-successful pilots, we're kicking it to pilot four hoping the outcome will change. We all know that hope is not a strategy. I propose we look at this as we did years ago as a high school science experiment," said Hartman. "The control experiment is we do nothing, something that Aurora would support. Experiments one, two, three, or what we call pilots one, two, three, and those experiments, we have lots of data and defined outcomes such as, 'it did not work,' 'let's blame the weather,' 'failed equipment,' 'it's very costly,' every time the majority of participants were dissatisfied with the service. Now in experiment four, or pilot four being debated tonight by some members, they say, 'Let's try it again.' I applaud the effort by our snow removal crews, but it's the results and the impact that truly matter.

"In three years, the Town has spent over \$260,000 of tax payers' money or \$10,000 per snow event against a collection of \$50,000 in fees. Please also remember that almost one third of participants...do not pay due to their own personal circumstances. Added to this are the direct costs or countless hours of staff time designing, debating and researching and answering hundreds of complaints. I'm all in for helping seniors, the disabled and those that have a serious need for windrow clearing, but not at this

One day, you too will be seniors. We're asking for your empathy and our support today, just as you may need support in the future. Many seniors and residents with disabilities rely on this service to stay safe in their homes. Please do not ignore us. I urge you to maintain this vital program. It could be better, but it was okay; it's much, much better than nothing

level.

"Here's an idea: let's try pilot 4A or experiment 4A without spending \$140,000 this year. Allocate funding [of] \$200 per qualified residents to those residents in need or qualify and identify a single service provider to do windrows and windrows only. In the end, we will save taxpayers money this fiscal year, save staff time, staff headaches and, in the end, a different comparative model."

Discontinuing the pilot wouldn't be a slight against vulnerable residents, but "acknowledging that this delivery model doesn't work and shifting towards alternatives like grants or reimbursements that give residents control, faster service and dignity."

A senior's perspective was offered by Boris Gertzman who said that while many residents see a windrow as an "inconvenience," it can be a "significant health risk" for others.

"The snow windrow is often packed, salty, wet, and extremely heavy. For seniors and residents with physical disabilities, clearing snow is a dangerous task," he said. "Every year, we hear stories of seniors suffering injuries or experiencing serious health episodes while trying to clear their driveways. For us, this program is not a luxury. It is a matter of safety and long-term health.

"While the moral argument for supporting our most vulnerable residents is clear, I also want to address the economic concerns. Some have suggested this program is too costly. I have reviewed the available data, and I would like to offer some perspective.... In the 2024-25 season, there were 468 participants. With a fee of \$100, revenue was \$38,400 against a total cost of \$91,000, resulting in a net operation cost of roughly \$53,000. In the 2025-26 season, with the fee increased up to \$200, participation dropped to 276. Even if we assume that the net operating cost remained at the same level of \$53,000, we must look at what it actually

means for our Town. Aurora has over 21,500 private households. When you divide this \$53,000 cost across all households, it amounts to less than \$2.50 per household per year. In fact, I even do not count the contribution from the Aurora's businesses, so it should be about \$1 per year per household. If \$1 or \$2 per household per year is high price to pay for the safety of independence of our seniors and residents with disabilities, I believe it is small necessary investment in our community's well-being.

"Finally, I have a gentle reminder for those who may be considering

discontinuing this program. One day, you too will be seniors. We're asking for your empathy and our support today, just as you may need support in the future. Many seniors and residents with disabilities rely on this service to stay safe in their homes. Please do not ignore us. I urge you to maintain this vital program. It could be better, but it was okay; it's much, much better than nothing, so please continue at least like this. And about fees, I think it could be dropped back to \$100. In this case, it will be better for seniors, and I believe it will be more participants and more giving you at the end."

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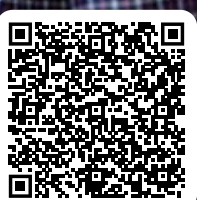
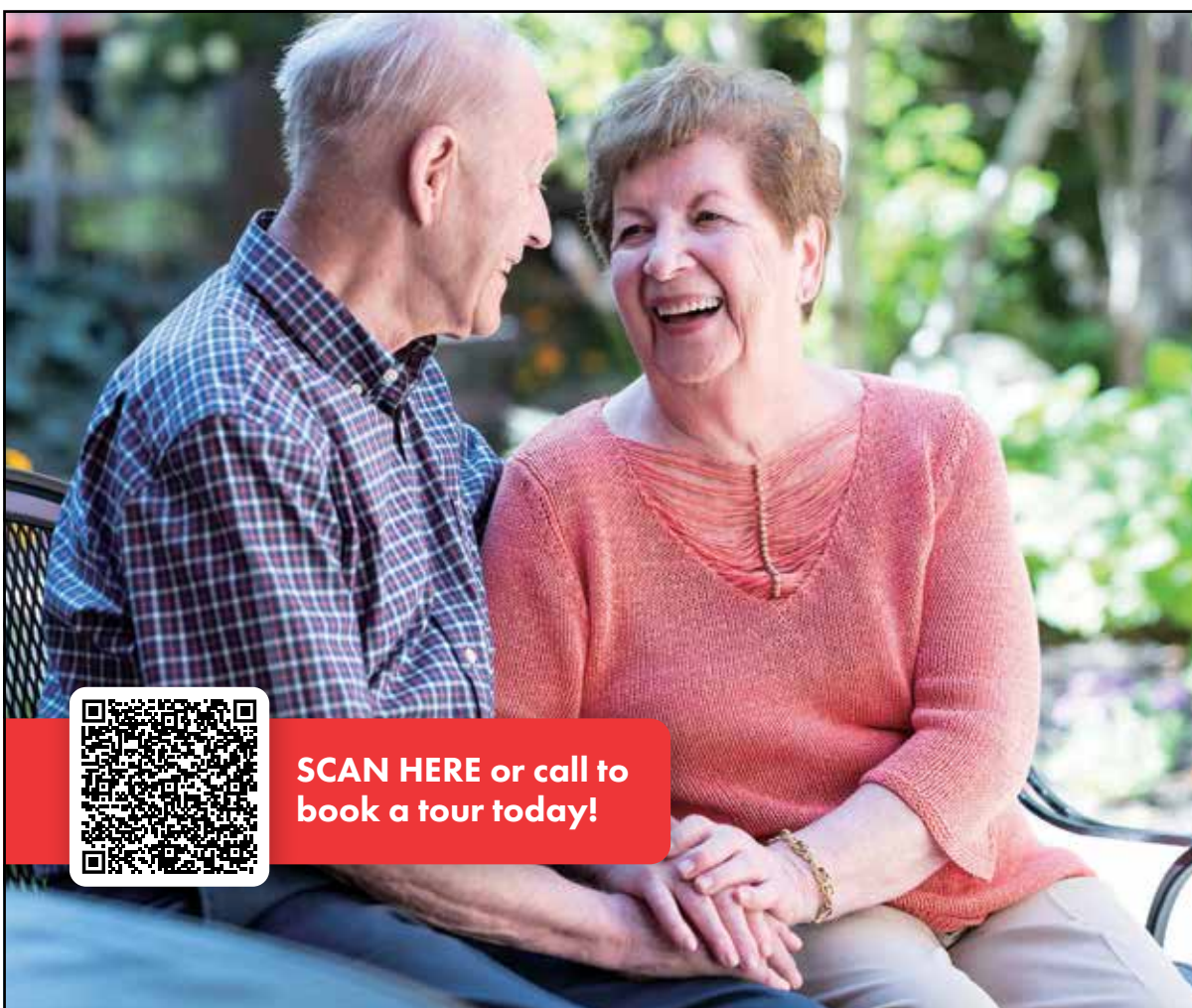
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AHS students set to lace up to raise awareness of water health in Indigenous communities

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Aurora High School students are preparing to lace up to raise awareness of water health in Indigenous communities and train a spotlight on the non-profit Shining Paddle Water Initiative.

On Friday, May 15, AHS students will set out into the community for their fifth annual Water Walk event. The event aims to not only educate members of the school community about the importance of water conservation and environmental stewardship, but the wider Aurora community as well.

The Shining Water Paddle Initiative is led by Vicky Wolske, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, the First Nation closest to Aurora. The name “Shining Water” reflects the Anishinaabe name for Lake Simcoe and its mission is to raise awareness of the health of Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

This is the fourth year Aurora High School’s Indigenous Allyship Club has partnered with Shining Water Paddle and it’s a relationship that goes from strength to strength each year.

“For as long as we have been doing this, I’m always amazed by how much we can learn through an Indigenous lens and Indigenous perspective, especially with our closest partners in education, which are the Chippewas of Georgina Island,” says teacher Vincenzo Fragomeni who is the faculty’s co-lead facilitating the Indigenous Allyship Club.

Fragomeni grew up in North Bay and, during his childhood, and remembers boil water advisories in his community from time to time.

“We’d get the advisory, my mom would boil a jug of water, put it in the fridge, and we were just reminded to drink that water – you don’t think about it until much later than life and how we take something like that for granted,” he recalls. “Anything we can do to bring awareness to something I think a lot of people in this country feel should have been solved long ago – I feel like, for us, on a micro level, it’s



Grade 11 Aurora High School student Aaron Khaykin is one of the student leads for their May 15 Water Walk, highlighting the work of the Shining Paddle Initiative. He’s pictured with donations that have come in to support the event and paddles signed by participating students in previous Water Walk events. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

just trying to do what we can to bring awareness to people who take water for granted every day.”

This is a sentiment shared by Grade 11 student Aaron Khaykin one of the student co-leads for the May 15 walk.

“I’m thankful I’ve never had the personal experience of a boil water advisory, but I can just imagine not even how scary, but how stressful a situation like that may be because you never know how long it is going to last,” he says.

This will be the second Water Walk in which Aaron has participated and he is eager for he and the team to do their part to raise awareness of Shining Water Paddle and the work that it does around Lake Simcoe and beyond.

This work is already underway as teammates have fanned out throughout the community with door

flyers, as well as invitations to local businesses and community members at large to come out and participate, or simply make a donation to Shining Paddle.

The Walk is expected to begin around 9.45 a.m. with a ceremony led by Wolskie. Following the ceremony, which includes the blessing of water in copper vessels, participants will be invited to set out for the trek itself, which includes a number of stations designed to educate on water knowledge, connection, and more.

“We’re just so proud of the collection of students who come forward, who have expressed interest in wanting to do this,” says Fragomeni. “For us,

being in Year Five, I feel like every year I’ve done, I’ve had to do a little bit less because the kids have really come forward and done most of it. As long as the kids want to keep doing it and as long as Vicky allows us to do it and we can host this great event, we’ll keep going.”

Adds Aaron: “I think it is going to be a lot of fun and I think I still have a lot to learn about this initiative, and I hope to be able to continue helping with this initiative in the future and just bring awareness about these overall issues.”

For more information about this year’s Water Walk, including how to get involved, email Vincenzo.fragomeni@yrdsb.ca.



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Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger



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Cultural Centre lifts curtain on new Spring exhibitions

Works showcase talents of Jing Fu and Brandon Baghaee



Works by Jing Fu, left, and Brandon Baghaee, the Aurora Cultural Centre's winter Artist in Residence, will take pride of place in the Centre's galleries this month – and residents are invited to celebrate the launch of their respective exhibitions. **Images courtesy of the Aurora Cultural Centre**

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local art lovers will have plenty to celebrate at the Aurora Cultural Centre this Thursday, May 7, when they invite the community to mark the launch of a series of spring exhibitions.

Taking centre-stage at the Centre's Spring Halls Soiree will be the work of Brandon Baghaee, the Aurora Cultural Centre's artist-in-residence this past winter, whose exhibition, *In a Friendly Sky*, will explore his Jamaican-Canadian roots through the art of portraiture.

"Building on his signature surreal, hyperrealist self-portraits, the paintings in this series move beyond the autobiographical to explore questions of diasporic identity, culture, and genealogy," says the Centre. "In this series, the artist explores his relationship to his Jamaican grandparents through self-portraiture, seamlessly weaving

family history with broader cultural and historical references. Tapping into bell hooks' writings on building Black community through liberatory habits of being, Brandon connects to his grandparents by recreating their daily practices within his paintings

"Although the artist appears alone in his compositions, he invokes his grandparents' presence through the everyday artifacts that signify their lives and habits."

Ashlyn Gregory, Interim Gallery Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre, says prior to being appointed the Winter Artist-in-Residence, Baghaee often worked with small canvasses. Taking advantage of the studio space at the Centre allowed him to think big.

"These are life-sized autobiographical self-portraits he's working through as he considers his relationship to his grandparents," says Gregory. "They're very focused on ties of kinship, what we

inherit from our culture, our lineage, our family members, and also just really focusing on that connection between him and his grandparents."

The Centre's Artist in Residence program provides chosen artists with a paid three-month opportunity to create within its studio space within Aurora Town Square, connect with professionals, and produce a body of work that features in a gallery show at the end of the term.

Four of the featured works were created during Baghaee's residency.

"It's something that can be a real career-launcher because Brandon is only 23, he's a recent graduate from OCAD, and it's really rare to see such a young artist have such a fulsome understanding of his craft, his practice, and just a fantastic research-based approach to his work," says Gregory. "The interesting thing about Brandon's work is it is so layered in meaning. Everything is

very intentional, everything means something, so being able to do some research into the history of Jamaica, where his grandparents are from, and that culture allowed him to create these really meaningful pieces of work."

The following week, on May 14, the Cultural Centre will welcome artist Jing Fu with her new exhibition *Unearthed – My Equilibrium*.

The exhibition shows the two sides of Fu's work – atmospheric landscapes and abstracts.

"Informed by her training in *'shan shui'* (literally translated as 'mountains and water' paintings), the works on display balance Eastern aesthetics with local influences," says the Centre. "Since immigrating to Canada from urban Shanghai more than twenty years ago, Fu's close observations of southern Ontario's natural environments have become central to her practice. A frequent hiker and prolific painter, she expertly translates her meditations on the natural world onto canvas.

"If Fu's landscapes evoke the opposing yet harmonious forces of nature on a grand scale, her *Roots* series turns inward, offering a more intimate exploration of nature's symbolism and symmetry. Through bold brushstrokes and richly layered textures, she conveys the strength of the gnarled tree roots, while the finely rendered details reveal the delicacy of the intricate root networks beneath our feet. Together, these two bodies of work reflect her pursuit of both internal and artistic balance as she moves fluidly between Eastern and Western visual languages."

Fu's exhibition is the first Gregory has curated for the Aurora Cultural Centre in her interim role and says it's been a very "rewarding" experience.

"At first, we were really seeing the

Continued on page 23

MUCHMUSIC MEMORIES

with

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Walk for Alzheimer's will help Society address significant community needs – one step at a time

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As the Alzheimer Society of York Region marks 40 years in the community, they're doing so while managing wait lists for day programs that have more than doubled from this point last year, coupled with the rising costs of making these programs a reality.

This month, community members can help the Aurora-based Society address these important community needs one step at a time through the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's.

Set for Saturday, May 30, at Lake Wilcox Park in Richmond Hill, the walk will not only raise awareness of various forms of dementia and the programs designed by the

Society to help client and caregiver alike on this difficult journey, but give participants an opportunity to pay tribute to those lost to the disease.

Every dollar raised during the walk will stay in York Region, helping an estimated 21,000 people in this community living with dementia – and, as the Society notes, for every one person diagnosed with dementia, another 10 to 12 people are directly impacted.

"The goal this year is to raise \$165,000 and we're well on our way," says Yolanda Mol Amelink, Director of Philanthropy for the Alzheimer Society of York Region.

Kari Quinn-Humphrey, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of York Region, says the organization's programs are "trying to reach everyone where they are in the

disease process," and funds raised through the Walk will help "fill the gaps."

"We receive a lot of government funding, but this allows us that flexibility to support the community where they need that support," she says.

And this flexibility is particularly important in addressing rapidly increasing demand.

"Post-COVID, the waitlist for our day programs were down, but they are double what they were last year," says Quinn-Humphrey. "The need is growing and people are seeking more supports, that they're not able to do on their own and they need help."

"I think there's more complexity," she adds, when asked whether this significant uptick is the result of community growth, an aging population, more individuals receiving a proper diagnosis, or a combination of factors. "People are staying in the community longer because the waitlists for long-term care homes are so long. People want to remain home, so caregivers are trying to do that more."

This increased demand coincides with the increased costs of just about everything these days – including the resources it takes to make these vital day programs operational.

"We're trying not to raise our fees for the day programs as the cost-of-living increases," says Quinn-Humphrey, stressing the increasing costs of food, materials and IT services, as well as the cost of gas and automobile insurance – vital components in bringing clients to and from the programs.

"You don't think about IT cybersecurity for a non-profit organization, but those costs and protecting our clients' privacy and donor privacy, we have to stay on top of that, and that's not something everyone considers when they're making a donation to the Society. They want it to go to the programs, which we all want, but, at the same time, we also do have those hidden costs that all charities have, that people


aren't always thinking about the importance of, and we have to keep that top of mind."

As the May 30 event approaches there are a number of ways you can support the Walk and the Society it benefits. In addition to registering to walk yourself, you can help sponsor a registered individual or team, volunteer for the day of, and, if you're not available on the day, there are many more chances to volunteer for the Society throughout the year.

"There's more opportunities to volunteer with the organization than just with the event because now we are now embedding volunteers to support a lot of our programs, including the day program," says Mol Amelink. "I know that we have a lot of retirees in the Aurora community that are looking to support the community in that way, and that's a great way to engage with the Alzheimer's Society of York Region. We have our dementia-friendly communities training, so organizations in Aurora who are as committed as we are to creating a more dementia-friendly community, we offer them free training as well and a lot more people are taking advantage of that – but we have some ways to go still."

Adds Quinn-Humphrey: "Our volunteer coordinator's goal is that she has a volunteer every day in every one of our day programs. So, if the community could help us to achieve that, that's our new volunteer coordinator's goal. An [ideal volunteer is someone who is] open learning about the disease process and how they can communicate well and support that person if they're open to that. If they have a special talent, like they can play a musical instrument, or if they're an artist, or if they can enrich people's lives through one of their talents they'd be willing to share, that would be amazing"

For more information about the upcoming Walk, including registration, sponsorship, and volunteer opportunities, visit www.alzging.ca/yorkregion2026.



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Councillors approve building framework to publicly report on expenses related to conferences, events

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Council members will soon need to report to their colleagues – and the public – on the value of attending conferences, seminars, and events.

Last week, Council formally signed off on tasking staff with developing a new reporting framework that will require those lawmakers attending such events to report back on what they learned and how what they learned could impact the Aurora community.

The decision follows a motion brought forward by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo at April's Committee of the Whole meeting.

"[The motion] directs staff to create a formal reporting framework for Members of Council who attend conferences, seminars, or external events paid for by the Town," said the Town of Aurora following last week's Council meeting. "The framework will require Councillors to publicly report key details – including event information, costs, sessions attended, key learnings, and any best practices relevant to Aurora – through a Council or Committee agenda within a set timeframe.

"Staff will also review and report back on any administrative, financial, or procedural implications of implementing this new requirement, including how it aligns with existing policies, as well as setting limitations to the number of conferences a member may attend."

Councillor Gallo's motion passed unanimously at both the Committee and the Council level, and was

supported at the podium by resident Shawn Deane, who subsequently formalized his intentions to run for Mayor of Aurora on Friday afternoon.

"Most companies expect the same thing if not stronger reporting requirements – and a photo or social media is not formal reporting," said Deane. "Why does this Town need to send six Council members to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities [conference] in June in Edmonton of this year?"

"I applaud Councillor Gaertner for not going as she is leaving Council [at the end of this term], but why is the Town allowing funding for anyone not running in 2026 or who we all know won't be here next year moving north," he continued, referring to Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who now lives outside the community while still maintaining a rental presence in Aurora. "If your platform is fiscal responsibility or if you're not running, don't go and save taxpayer money. In the future, a possible addition to the motion is a Councillor gets to go to two FCM conferences in a four-year term with the exception of the Mayor.

"I'm sure the next Council could collaborate and determine who should go in any one year based on the issues and the agenda posted. During these economic times, especially during election years, it requires more prudent, transparent, and accountable use of our tax dollars. You need to find efficiencies in common sense expense management from windrows to conference attendees.... Let's rethink some things and truly lead by example and rethink our current

realities."

Limits on how many conferences "any one member of Council" can attend in a calendar year is something Councillor Gallo said was worth exploring later on in the meeting.

"I've had a few people question that," he said. "When it comes back, whether we want to add another point to it or take it under advisement just to see when it comes back to provide us with some recommendations. Maybe other municipalities do it, a little bit of research just to give us a sense of what others do and whether or not that would be something to be included."

Why does this Town need to send six Council members to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities [conference] in June in Edmonton of this year?



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Farmers' Market brings warmth to Town Park on chilly opening



The Aurora Farmers' Market brought much needed warmth to Town Park on Saturday as they opened their 2026 Market Season under blustery – and slightly snowy – conditions. (Top Row) Aaron and Paddy welcome patrons to the Market. Donna Lewis of Garden Aurora greeted shoppers as well – this time in her evocative Monarch costume in honour of Pollinators Month. (Middle Row) Vinyl historian Dave Heard entertained shoppers, spinning records throughout the morning. Volunteer Tyson kept warm at the craft station, which also had a pollinator theme. (Third Row) Among the vendors on May 2 were Kathy of In Our Spare Tyme Creations, and Cathy and Lynne of Catarina's Kitchen, meeting shoppers Connor and Jean. **Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger**

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Aurora Art Show & Sale shines light on York Region artists



Aurora Town Hall was bustling with activity over the weekend as it provided the backdrop to the 62nd annual Aurora Art Show & Sale, hosted by the Town of Aurora and the Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA). Prior to welcoming members of the public to take it all in on Saturday and Sunday, an opening reception was held where participating artists were honoured for their contributions in presentations made by Mayor Tom Mrakas and SOYRA's Linda Welch. (Top Row) Honours in the Acrylics category went to Eva Folks, who took home first place with *The Brewologist*. She's pictured with her painting, right, and with Honourable Mention winner Kim Last. (Second Row) Welch herself took home a prize herself in the juried show, taking top honours in the Photography category with *Carpe Diem*. She's pictured here with Honourable Mention winners John Yates and Debbie Conacher. (Third Row) Lucy Quinn took first place in Oils with *Trusted Companion*. Honourable mentions went to Catherine Fairs and Judy Sherman. (Fourth Row) Mary Ellen Gerster's *Strawberries & Cream* took top prize in the Watercolour category, with honourable mentions going to Karen Levert and Karen Goodale. (Fifth Row) The Artist's Hand, as pointed by Mike Simunek, came out strong in Alternative Media, taking prize to Val Brubacher and Kate Greenway. (Sixth Row) Rain Sun's *The Pood* earned him the SOYRA Award of Excellence. In the Best In Youth Award, sponsored by the Optimist Club of Aurora, Optimist Bonnie Robertson joined Mayor Mrakas in honouring Vera Papieva, Sabina Colceriu (first place winner for *My Great-Grandma's Recipe*) and Helia Chaharmahali.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger



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WEEK OF MAY 7, 2026

Veteran York-Simcoe Express Coach Ilir Mehmeti becomes Bench Boss of Aurora's Junior Tigers



Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

It's been said by many commentators that the only constant in the twenty-first century is change.

The Aurora Tigers' new Head Coach Ilir Mehmeti embraced change last week when he accepted Owner Jim Thomson's offer to be Bench Boss of the junior hockey club.

"I was ecstatic to get the call from Jim and go over plans for the next few seasons. I'm excited to get the process going. From everything I've been told, we have quality pieces coming back and many of those players have ambitions to play in the OHL."

Mehmeti acknowledged the volatility of OJHL rosters—which are fraught with change from season to season and within those seasons through trades and promotions—and delineated his plan to create successful junior hockey players who want to play at the next level.

"I want them to have aspirations and attain the highest level of hockey they can get. I had a great talk with [veteran Tigers centre and leading scorer] Cayden Smith who I've known since he was 8. For example, I hope he plays for Erie in the OHL, but, if he's back with us next season, he'll play a vital role. A kid who's moving on to the next level—whether it's the OHL or college—puts a grin on my face."

The new Junior Tigers' bench boss was similarly pleased by his York-Simcoe Express 16U squad's performance in 2025-26 and considered last season, which was filled with change, to be one of the high points of his lengthy coaching run.

"I've been doing this for a long time. I've been running camps and mentoring players since 2003, but I had a great experience with the 2010 YSE group. It happened to be one of the highlights of my coaching career. We brought in ten new players. We had a core group of nine and the new ten embraced values, culture, and brotherhood. It was the most enjoyable group to coach. We lost in the Finals and no one in the league thought that we'd get there. I've coached two OMHA-winning

teams, but this was a group of 19 players committed to the team. The parents were pleased and no one complained about ice time. We ran three lines, split the goaltending 50-50, and it was unique. We set goals and advanced past the round-robin stage in every tournament. Everybody contributed."

Coach Mehmeti added that the timing was right in his life to assume the reins of a junior hockey team after so many successful seasons with the York-Simcoe Express.

"The timing is right for me to coach in the OJHL—my three girls have been raised—and they've been raised with the same values in my dressing room. I want the culture of the room to be that they're all in it for one another. There's always a brotherhood on a winning team. As a player, I won the Junior loop in 1989 and I'm still best friends with my linemates. It is a brotherhood. The nucleus has to be set by the foundational players in order to create a winning team culture. I'll be looking for hard-working players who are accountable. Successful kids want to know where they stand. Hard work is #1 for me—I can't fix desire or work ethic."

The newly-appointed Tigers' Head Coach noted that his roster will be in flux until mid-summer and noted a few factors that will affect the makeup of his new squad.

"The OHL draft is late this year. We'll see what happens after the prospect camps and after the Draft which is June 13. Even the OJHL Showcase Event in Buffalo in September could affect how the team is comprised during the season."

Despite these factors that affect roster stability, Coach Mehmeti projected calmness amid the storm that is OJHL roster-making.

"I'm content where I am—I'm ecstatic to be here and I hope it's for five years, ten years. I'd like to create continuity and familiarity and develop junior players so that the Tigers hockey club becomes a place of stability and success."

Coach Mehmeti takes over a Junior Tigers team that finished the season strongly under Interim Head Coach James Thomson who guided the upstart

squad to a 5-3 record after the dismissal of Aurora Bench Boss Darcy Roy. Thomson—who was set to serve as Head Coach and General Manager of the Aurora Junior Tigers for the 2026-27 season—accepted an Assistant Coaching job with the Ontario Tech Ridgebacks of the OUA in April.

Coaching Carousel at the ACC

Ilir Mehmeti is the fourth Head Coach hired by the Aurora Tigers since December 2023 when former NHLer Greg Johnston was relieved of his duties.

Despite guiding his 2022-23 squad to the OJHL playoffs and impelling the competitive 2023-24 Junior Tigers into

seventh place in the OJHL standings by Christmas, the congenial Johnston was replaced by Thomas Milne in mid-season. A fire sale ensued with many of the club's top players shipped off to the Toronto Junior Canadians, and Milne's depleted team—unfortunately mired in mediocrity—missed the playoffs.

In subsequent campaigns after Milne's firing, the Tigers missed the playoffs under Coaches Roy and Thomson in 2024-25 and 2025-26, respectively.

Despite this flurry of changes in the coaching ranks, hope springs eternal in the Jungle with a new sheriff in Town and a strong core of players, developed by Coaches Roy and Thomson, returning to Aurora for 2026-27.



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LEYTON GIRARDO

AURORA HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Leyton Girardo is a young athlete whose passion for sport has made a strong impression on the Aurora Community Tennis Club. Raised in an athletic family, with both parents actively involved in tennis and volleyball, Leyton was introduced to competitive sport at an early age. He first picked up a tennis racquet at just one year old, and from that moment, his enthusiasm for the game has only continued to grow. He enjoys studying coaching materials and athlete biographies to improve his understanding of the sport.

Leyton has represented both the Aurora Community Tennis Club and the Newmarket Community Tennis Club with great success. His competitive achievements include being named an intercounty tennis area finalist and earning a place in the Tennis Rocks Final Tournament for two consecutive years. These accomplishments highlight not only his skill, but also his consistency and ability to compete at a high level.

Leyton's performance at the Aurora Community Tennis Club Championships demonstrates his development and competitiveness. Over the past three years, he has competed in both singles and doubles events, regularly finishing among the top players. In 2023, he captured the U12 Doubles Championship title. He followed this with an outstanding 2024 season, winning the U12 Singles Championship and finishing second in doubles. In 2025, Leyton once again proved his consistency by placing second in both singles and doubles, making him the only male athlete to achieve top-two finishes in both events across the past two seasons.

In addition to tennis, Leyton is a multi-sport athlete at Aurora Heights Public School, where he contributes to badminton, volleyball, and cross-country teams.

Leyton enjoys outdoor activities and reading science fiction. Professional tennis champion Jannik Sinner is his favourite athlete.

Known for his teamwork, perseverance, and positive attitude, Leyton represents the qualities of both a leader and a supportive teammate. His dedication to excellence across sport makes him a very deserving Future Hall of Famer of the Month recipient.



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ABLE NETWORK WALK - The ABLE Network hosted its annual 5K walk on Sunday, a fun way to raise awareness of the Aurora-based organization, for participants to celebrate with their peers, friends, family, and caregivers, and to celebrate the team that makes the program a success. Supporting adults with intellectual disabilities, the walk is one of ABLE's most important fundraisers. Participants are pictured here at Aurora Town Square as they set out into the community. **Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan**

OPINION

From page 5

from President Trump — if they're "in self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed." But the U.S. administration can't even keep its justifications for joining the war against Iran straight — and has also offered varying excuses for its recent attacks on Venezuela.

Instead of praying and working "toward lasting peace while avoiding the evils and injustices that accompany all wars," as the bishops have urged, people in the U.S. administration, such as former Fox host and current Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, have prayed for "overwhelming violence of action against those who deserve no mercy."

The U.S. has claimed, without

evidence, that its attacks on Venezuela and on small boats in nearby waters are to halt that country's alleged drug trafficking. Some in the U.S. administration have admitted the attacks have more to do with oil and a few have made no secret of their desire to see a more pro-U.S. government in charge.

As for the war on Iran, "the Trump administration still hasn't been able to land on one coherent answer. Some contradict each other, and some contradict Donald Trump himself. Some — delivered hours apart by senior officials — are flatly incompatible," the Guardian reports. They range from destroying Iran's missile and nuclear

programs to self-defence to helping Israel realize its objectives to toppling the regime.

Regardless of the reasons given, some people are reaping massive profits and some are hoping to benefit by distracting from domestic scandals. Meanwhile, too many people continue to suffer and die. The horrific impacts will persist for generations.

It all points to the folly of an oil and gas-fuelled economic system in which profit and power are worshipped regardless of the enormous costs to people, animals, the environment and all we have created to make our brief lives better, from art to infrastructure.

One of the few bright spots amid the

bloodshed and chaos is an acceleration of the renewable energy transition as many countries distance themselves from the geopolitical and economic instability of fossil fuel reliance. But it shouldn't take wars to do the right and necessary thing.

As Starr sang, "Life is much too short and precious to be fighting wars these days. War can't give life, it can only take it away."

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

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BILL - On April 29, friends of Aurora resident Bill Kudelski gathered at the McDonalds location at Yonge and Allaura to celebrate his 105th birthday. Kudelski is pictured here with Mayor Tom Mrakas, who brought greetings on behalf of the Town, and former Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy, who presented the centenarian with a certificate from Prime Minister Mark Carney.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Senior Scape

From page 5

cereal packaging. What types of colours are used on cereals for kids, and what colour schemes dominate adult cereal packaging?

Flip through a seed or gardening catalog. What colours of flowers or shrubs draw your eye?

When driving through a neighbourhood or just simply walking in your area which house colours are most appealing to you? At home, during mealtime, choose to fill your plate with a variety of colours to appeal to your appetite and help maintain a healthy lifestyle.

So, friends, the colours you wear don't have to be the same colours you live with. Don't be afraid of experimenting with colour. Discover your own personal pallet and add one new colour to your life. We are in the best years of our lives, don't waste them on what others may think, wear what makes you happy, and, at the end it may be those beige pants. Welcome May and God's beautiful hues.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SENIORS CENTRE AND WHY

Roof and Parking lot Projects (May 2026 – September 2026) – Beginning in May, full roof replacement work will take place at the Seniors' Centre and Town Hall. This work is expected to have minimal impact on daily activities, and all programs will continue as scheduled. Temporary accessible parking spaces will be placed as our permanent spaces will be impacted. Some outdoor space around the Centre will be fenced off to ensure safety. Following the roof work, the South parking lot shared by the Seniors' Centre and Town Hall, along with the walkway from John West Way, will undergo a full redesign to improve safety, accessibility, and overall usability. Construction is

expected to begin the end of June, with the parking lot reopening in September. Once complete, the redesigned lot will include:

- 13 additional parking spaces;
- Improved lighting;
- Safer traffic flow;
- Better accessibility for all users.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

South Parking Lot Closure: The main South parking lot will be fully closed starting the end of June and will remain closed until the project is complete (anticipated reopening in September).

Centre Access: The Seniors' Centre will remain open throughout the construction period. The main entrance will continue to be the primary point of entry. Impacted areas will be fenced off to ensure safety. **Alternative Parking Options:** Parking will be available at:

- Town Hall North Lot;
- Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park;
- Street parking on Amber Hill Drive and John West Way.

Drop-Off & Accessible Parking: A temporary drop-off zone will be available at the bus stop on John West Way. In addition, six accessible parking spaces will be available along John West Way during construction.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. The monthly Seniors Association bulletin is posted on our web site so for all the details on Association activities, clubs, events, bistro lunches, sports, and movies to mention a few, and town programs, trips and other valuable information concerning the Aurora Seniors Association, take a look at www.auroraseniors.ca/

Gallo announces Mayoral run on first day of registration

From page 1

experience], I think I know the role, and I think we need a change,” he added. “I think we’re at an important moment in Aurora’s history. We need a change in style, a change in the way this place is run.”

After six years on Council, Gallo previously ran for Mayor of Aurora in 2014, challenging incumbent Geoffrey Dawe for the role. He was subsequently re-elected to Council in 2018 and again, this time representing Ward 5, in 2022.

Deane told The Auroran he’s looking forward to offering the people of Aurora “a fresh new choice for leadership.”

“Today, I’m excited to register,” he said. “I look forward once again to bringing the people of Aurora fresh new leadership – and a choice.”

First to arrive at Town Hall to register for a Council position on Friday morning was Alber, having already received the endorsement of outgoing Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who is retiring after more than two consecutive decades on Council.

Alber said Gaertner’s endorsement is “everything” and she’s “excited for the opportunity to give back.”

“I’ve always been looking for ways to give back, so when this opportunity arose, I knew that I had to take it and...support the community that we’re living in,” she said.

Community safety and development are among her top concerns.

“We need development, but we want to make sure it’s responsible, respectful of residents that are living there, but also responsible from an environmental and a financial perspective,” she said. “I’m excited to get started [with the campaign]. I’m excited to meet people from the community. I’m a candidate because I want to solve problems that I hear all the time people have in the community. I want to put myself in a position where I can make a difference.”

Hanna, who signalled her intention to run earlier this year, arrived at Town Hall moments after Alber to formalize her Ward 1 run. She said she has been “excited” for the registration day.

“I want to get out early for people to know that I’m a serious, keen, hard-working contender,” she said on why she wanted to sign up on the first day of the campaign. “I’ve really appreciated the advice, encouragement, support, and offers to help. It’s been encouraging to know I’ll have a strong team behind me.”

“I get the sense that residents are keen to be more engaged in the Town and issues that are impacting them, to be involved in local decisions and feel their voice matters. At the same time, I think we can do more to increase accountability and have more trust in our Ward Councillor and the government at large,” she said. “It’s about being someone who cares deeply about the Town and is passionate about doing more to engage residents. I think that having improved communication and involvement of citizens is a way to build that trust and culture of democracy that starts at the community level and can grow from there.”

The vote in Ward 1 became a two-person race on Monday with Heritage Advisory Committee member Rocco Morsillo also throwing his hat into the ring.

“I’m excited to finally register to run for Councillor of Ward 1,” he said. “I feel very connected to this community and know I can represent the constituents with a strong, clear voice on Council. I’ve had a construction, development and property investment company in Aurora for over two decades. I’ve also served on the Heritage Committee for several years and live in the Heritage District. I believe this background is ideal to understanding controlled development and municipal budgets in Aurora. I’ve had overwhelming support from the community and I’m focused on ensuring I put residents first.”



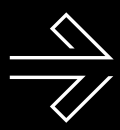
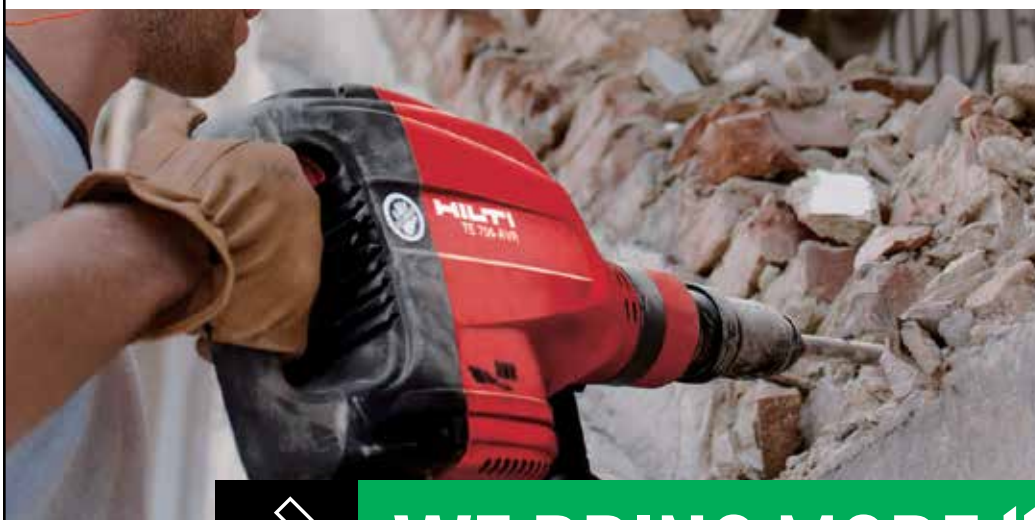
Ward 1 candidate Lauren Hanna, left, and Ward 3 candidate Nikki Alber, right, were the first two residents to join the Council race on Friday morning. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**



Mayoral candidate John Gallo was joined by his daughter, Tosca, at his registration. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**



The start of a new week brought a second resident into the Ward 1 Council race as Rocco Morsillo filed his nomination papers. **Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan**



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Gallo will “throw Strong Mayor powers to the curb” if elected: campaign launch

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

John Gallo will “throw Strong Mayor powers to the curb” if he’s elected Aurora’s next Mayor.

That was the message the Ward 5 Councillor delivered to supporters on Friday night as he formally launched his bid for the Town’s top job.

Gallo, who has served on Aurora Council for 14 non-consecutive years and who ran for Mayor in 2014, outlined his vision at a launch event held May 1 at the Cork & Confidential event space on Industrial Parkway South.

He said this campaign was about choice: “a choice about the kind of Aurora we want to be, a choice about how we are governed, [and] a choice about the future we will build together.”

“Aurora is a special place,” he said. “It’s a place where families build their lives, where neighbours look out for one another, where people take pride in the community and believe in something more than themselves.”

The community, he continued, is a place “where neighbours still look out for one another, where people care, where community still means something great.”

“It’s also a place where if you leave your house for five minutes, you are probably running into someone who is going to ask you about potholes, taxes, and what Council is doing – and I wouldn’t have it any other way,” he said. “That connection, that accessibility, that is what makes this community strong.”

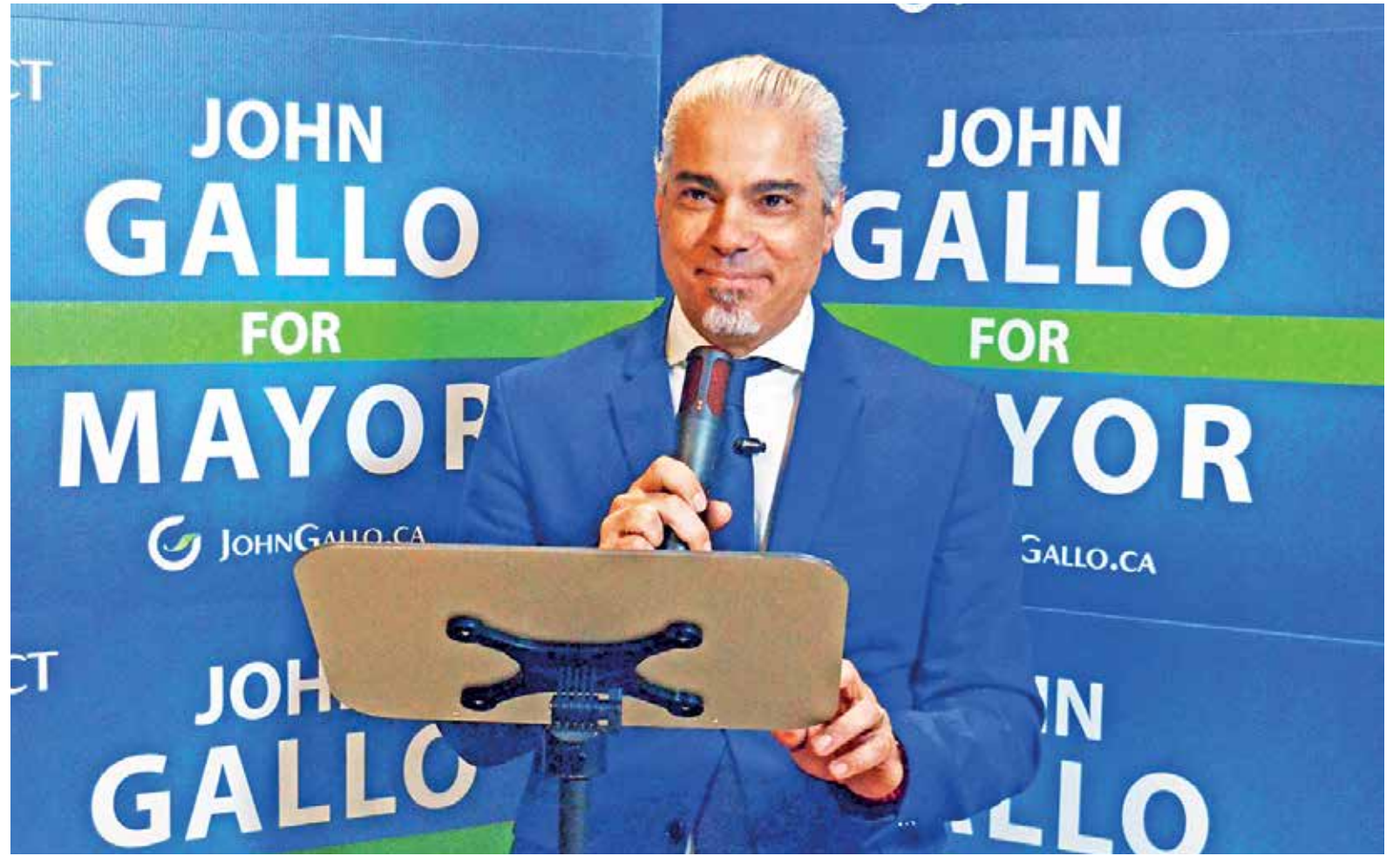
Noting he has lived in Aurora for 30 years, he said he has seen Aurora’s strength, but he’s also seen what he described as a “growing frustration” that “decisions are not always clear, a feeling that people have lost their connection with their government,” and residents have said they “want to be included [and] to trust their local government again.”

“I think part of the challenge is this: on the surface, things look fine, the message sounds positive, the updates look polished, and everything appears to be moving in the right direction. But leadership is not about appearances – it’s about how decisions are made,” Gallo contended. “It is about whether people are truly informed, or whether they are genuinely included in the process, because when you look at it a little deeper, people are asking questions. They are asking how decisions are being made. They are asking why things are happening the way they are. They are asking whether they are getting a full picture. That matters, because trust is not built on [what looks] good; it’s built on what is clear, consistent, and accountable.

“That’s not too much to ask. In fact, that is the foundation of good leadership.”

Gallo said he is running to be Mayor “because this community deserves better.” That doesn’t mean “louder leadership” or “more complicated leadership”, but leadership that is “steady, transparent, [and] respects both the responsibilities of the office and the people it serves.”

“Aurora is at a turning point, and moments like this demand more than words – they demand transparency, they demand discipline, and they demand a clear sense of purpose.”



Mayoral candidate John Gallo formally launched his campaign with a reception held Friday night.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

During this campaign, Gallo said he has three priorities: leading with integrity and good governance, making life more affordable and creating opportunities, and making Aurora safe and secure.

On the pillar of integrity and good governance, he said building trust was key.

“Without trust, progress slows. Without trust, communities divide. Trust is not built in a day; it is built through openness, through consistency, through leadership that is willing to explain not just what is being done, but why,” he said. “We must respect democracy and the role of Councillors, and throw Strong Mayor powers to the curb. We must ensure that more residents are connected to how decisions are made. That means creating real opportunities for people to be a part of the conversation, including students who are learning about the community and want to understand how it works. Public service is not about control; it’s about responsibility and responsibility begins with trust.”

Addressing affordability and opportunity, he said Aurora “must remain a place of opportunity, a place where hard work is rewarded, where families can build a future and where growth is guided, not rushed,” and an essential ingredient in that is “discipline.”

“We must be disciplined – disciplined in spending, disciplined in planning, disciplined in the choices we make, because affordability is not just about dollars; it’s about dignity. It’s about giving people confidence they can build a life here. It’s also about ensuring the next generation can see a future in this community, that they have opportunities to stay, to work, and to build their lives right here in Aurora.”

A safe community, he added, doesn’t happen “by chance,” but is fostered through “planning, investment, and leadership that sees the challenges before they become problems.”

“Safety means more than enforcement; it means safe streets, safe public spaces, and a safe community where families and seniors can feel secure every single day.”

he said. “We must be proactive, because when people feel safe, they thrive, and when communities thrive, everything is possible – and that includes ensuring that our community remains welcoming and supportive for the next generation, so that young people feel connected, included, and confident in their future here.

“These are our priorities: integrity, affordability, and safety. But more than that, they are our responsibilities because

leadership is not about reacting, it’s about setting a standard, setting a tone, setting a direction that others can believe in....

“I am running to raise that standard: to bring clarity where there has been confusion, to bring discipline where there has been uncertainty, and to bring trust back to where it belongs, because Aurora deserves leadership that reflects its values: strong, respectful, forward-looking.... Aurora’s future is ours to build, and tonight we take that first step.”

OBITUARIES - FOREVER IN OUR *Hearts*

Donald Herman Lewis

Donald Herman Lewis was born May 9, 1933, in Pembroke, Ontario, and passed peacefully on April 23rd, 2026, at Southlake Health, with his loving wife, Kathi, by his side. He was 92 years old and was a resident of Aurora, Ontario.

Donald will be greatly missed by his grandchildren: Christopher Lewis (Laura), Jason Lewis (Meagan), Ryan Lewis, Jasmine Gavigan, Amanda Gavigan (Ruben), Shawn Gavigan (Christine), as well as 7 great grandchildren and 1 great great grandchild. He is also remembered with love by his daughter in law Ruth-Anne Lewis (Donald Jr’s wife), and by his siblings, Clare Lewis and Mel Lewis (Mary).

Donald was predeceased by his wife Joyce, to whom he was married for 50 years prior to her passing, and by his children with Joyce: Donald, Dale, and Shirley Gavigan. He was also predeceased by his siblings, June Hamel, Harvey Lewis, Sarah Scott, and Elroy Lewis.

Donald began his policing career in the mid 50’s, joining in Sutton, and then went on to serve with the Aurora police force. In 1971, when York Regional Police was founded, he continued his policing career where he would eventually retire as Staff Sergeant. His life reflected steady commitment and a deep respect for community—values that continue through the many family members who, following Donald’s example, chose a path in policing to help keep communities safe.

Beyond his years of service, Donald found lasting satisfaction in the outdoors and in practical work done with care. He enjoyed hunting and fishing, and in retirement became a capable handyman, taking pride in building and fixing with patient attention and quiet skill.

In 2001, Donald met Kathi in Florida, where they were both snowbirds. They married a year later and shared 24 years together—years marked by companionship, devotion, and the simple grace of a life lived side by side.

A Funeral Service took place on Thursday, April 30, 2026 at Thompson Funeral Home, Aurora, ON.

In lieu of flowers please consider a donation in Donald’s memory to the Lion’s Club of Aurora.

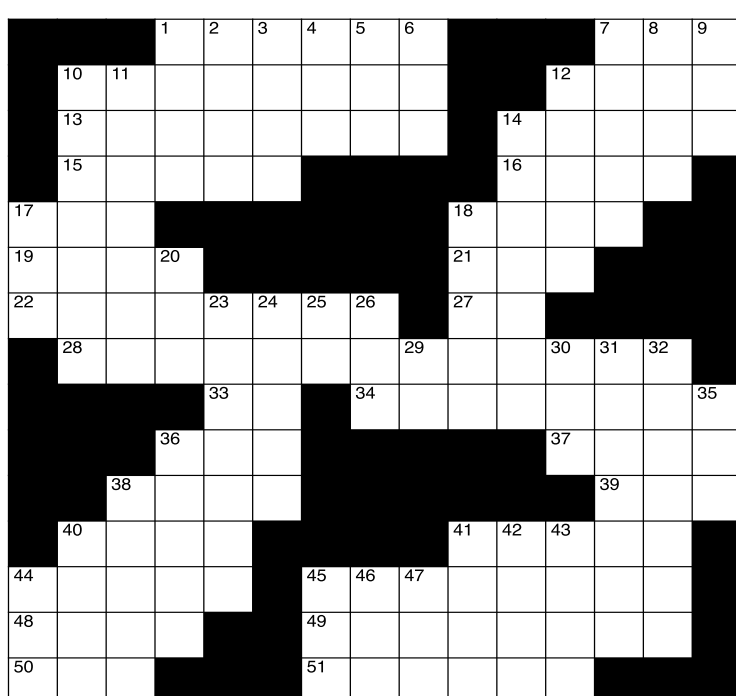
Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.thompsonFH-Aurora.com



Donald Herman Lewis
May 9, 1933 - April 23, 2026

CROSSWORD

Puzzle No. TAMAY726 • Solution in Classifieds



CLUES ACROSS

1. Large dung beetle
7. Gambling game _lo
10. Further along
12. Type of tobacco
13. Looked for
14. Silk fabric
15. Computer method to solve equations
16. As fast as can be done (abbr.)
17. Tear
18. Brews
19. “Famous” cookie baker
21. Women’s Army Corps
22. Front parts of an animal
27. It’s causing quite a stir



CLUES DOWN

28. Beloved March holiday
33. 12th letter of the Greek alphabet
34. More impudent
36. Indicates center
37. Young woman (French)
38. A cause of distress
39. Santa’s helper
40. Hillside
41. Many wombs
44. Is afraid of
45. Popular baked goods ingredient
48. Popular computers
49. Conceiving of
50. Google certification (abbr.)
51. Sturdy
1. Peruse quickly
2. Automobiles
3. Razorbill genus
4. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
5. Consumed
6. A place to sleep
7. Small seeds
8. Legendary law man Wyatt
9. Female sheep
10. Indigenous peoples of eastern Siberia
11. A place ships dock
12. Reciprocal of sine
14. Discomfort
17. British Air Aces
18. Exit sleep
20. Solar energetic particle
23. Plagues characterized by starvation
24. Short musical composition
25. Trauma center
26. Habitual twitching
29. A place where checks are exchanged (abbr.)
30. Decimeter
31. Hinged surface in a wing
32. Shouting
35. Sports official
36. Volcanic craters
38. Supportive device
40. It’s part of a rosary
41. Two-toed sloth
42. Body art
43. Let out
44. Foreign medical graduate
45. Nonprofit journalism organization (abbr.)
46. Couples say it
47. Bird’s beak



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J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932), *Forest Wilderness (detail)*,
1921, oil on canvas, 122 x 152 cm, Gift of Colonel R.S.
McLaughlin, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1968.71

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Area land donation strengthens critical conservation network

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A key piece of the Oak Ridges Moraine, surrounded by existing conservation lands has now been permanently protected by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), with support from donors and partners, including the Government of Ontario through the Greenlands Conservation Partnership.

King-Vaughan MPP Lecce helped secure over \$76,000 to protect almost 30 acres of land in the Happy Valley Forest area.

“King’s natural heritage and character is derived from its many trails, creeks, and parks – something that must be conserved for future generations,” said Stephen Lecce. “I am proud to forge a partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to protect the Happy Valley Forest and Oak Ridges Moraine, preserving King’s natural beauty for the benefit of our children. This builds on recent investments to build new green, sport, and recreation spaces at the provincially funded King-Township Wide Recreation Centre.”

This project strengthens a broader network of protected lands, reinforcing a nature-based system that keeps local water clean, air fresh, and the landscape resilient for the millions of people who call the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) home.

The 12-hectare property is nestled in the heart of NCC’s Happy Valley Forest, a natural oasis surrounded by farmlands and rapidly expanding urban growth. Here, over 30 species at risk find sanctuary. The trees are on their way to forming an old-growth forest, a process that takes decades. The strengthened protection of the property means safeguarding nature based solutions and bolstering community resiliency, making this milestone a win worth celebrating for people and nature.

“Protecting land in Happy Valley

Forest is a significant win for King Township and the entire region,” said King Mayor Steve Pellegrini. “This conservation effort helps safeguard one of the Oak Ridges Moraine’s most important natural landscapes, preserving vital forest habitat, protecting water resources, and supporting biodiversity right here in our community. Supported by the Government of Ontario through the Greenlands Conservation Partnership, this project strengthens a network of protected lands that residents and visitors can continue to enjoy through well-used public trails and access to King’s unique natural heritage.”

Happy Valley Forest’s natural “sponge” function provides a critical service that reaches far beyond King Township. It’s a powerhouse for managing water quality and quantity, absorbing rainfall and snowmelt and slowly releasing water into the watershed, reducing downstream flooding risks. This natural floodmitigation system helps protect homes, infrastructure, and communities, while also supporting the longterm health and resilience of the region’s rivers, wetlands, and aquifers.

This project was also made possible thanks to the support of long-term champions of nature, Ron and Mary Tasker, in addition to support from the Government of Ontario through the Greenlands Conservation Partnership Program, administered by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, the Regional Municipality of York and many individual supporters.

The Greenlands Conservation Partnership program is the single largest provincial fund to secure private land in Ontario. This unique program, administered by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, leverages non-governmental dollars to acquire, restore and manage privately owned natural areas such as wetlands,

grasslands and forests. For every dollar of provincial funding provided, grant recipients match it with a minimum of \$2 from other conservation partners, including individual donors, foundations and other levels of government. Since 2020, the Ontario government has invested \$58 million into the program, which has helped to protect over 437,000 acres (over 177,000 hectares) of private land across the province – more than 2.75 times the size of Toronto.

At a time when the GTA continues to grow and face increasing environmental pressures, protecting the region’s headwaters and mature forests is essential to protecting life in southern Ontario. Caring for the Happy Valley Forest is an important piece of the puzzle, helping to maintain the natural infrastructure that supports healthy communities, cleaner water, cleaner air and flood protection for the region.

Since 2001, the Nature Conservancy of Canada has been working in this area to protect the lands and waters that sustain us all. This project is the result of a collective effort and a shared commitment to both nature and people.

“Strengthening the protection of Happy Valley Forest is a powerful reminder of what we can achieve when people come together for nature. Thanks to the Tasker family’s generosity, support from the Government of Ontario, the commitment of York Region, and our wonderful donors this property will continue to benefit both nature and people. It will protect rare interior forest and provide habitat for many species at risk, while also providing clean air and fresh water and protecting communities from flooding,” said Dr. Rick Simpson, Program Director – Central Ontario West, Nature Conservancy of Canada.

The property contributes to over 270 hectares of continuous protected

forest habitat in Happy Valley Forest, which was historically logged. Now, it is home to one of the largest intact blocks of deciduous forest on the Oak Ridges Moraine and an old-growth forest in the making.

The Happy Valley Forest is home to several salamander and bat species whose presence is an excellent indicator of a high-quality, resilient ecosystem.

Happy Valley Forest is being conserved at a scale large enough to allow for interior forest habitat which is the core of a forest that provides undisturbed habitat for wildlife. While large areas of interior forest are exceedingly rare in southern Ontario, there is over 46 hectares protected in Happy Valley Forest.

NCC offers several trails in Happy Valley Forest that are open to the public, including NCC’s first fully accessible trail on the Goldie Feldman Nature Reserve. By creating and implementing a visitor management plan, NCC is looking at how Happy Valley Forest can be enjoyed sustainably for generations to come.

Across Canada, NCC is taking on projects like this one — protecting the lands and waters that sustain us all. Find out how you can help at natureconservancy.ca/donate.

Since 1962, the Nature Conservancy of Canada has brought people together to protect the lands and waters that sustain us all. As an environmental charity working hand in hand with communities, Indigenous Nations, governments and businesses, they deliver nature-based solutions at a scale no one else can. Our conservation work safeguards clean air and water, stores carbon and reduces the risks of floods and wildfires — protecting our health, strengthening local economies and building more resilient communities.

Learn more at natureconservancy.ca.

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THINGS... you ought to know

MAY 1 – 9

Theatre Aurora closes out its 2025-2026 season with Arsenic & Old Lace. Get ready for a wickedly funny romp in Joseph Kesselring's Arsenic and Old Lace. Meet the delightfully eccentric Brewster sisters, who believe their charitable calling involves adding a rather lethal ingredient to the elderberry wine they serve lonely gentlemen. When their unwitting nephew Mortimer stumbles upon his aunts' peculiar pastime, he scrambles to keep their secret under wraps—while dealing with a brother who thinks he's Teddy Roosevelt and another with a notorious past. Filled with rapid-fire wit and unexpected twists, this classic comedy proves that sometimes family ties can be downright deadly—and hilariously so! For tickets and showtimes, visit theatreaurora.com.

MAY 9 & 10

The Aurora Historical Society will host its Mother's Day Afternoon Teas on Saturday, May 9, and Saturday, May 10, with two seatings each day at 12 noon and 2.30 p.m. Enjoy assorted teas, tea sandwiches, freshly-baked scones with jam and whipped cream, and a variety of desserts in the Hillary House Ballroom. Tickets are \$37.50 per person and must be purchased in advance. For more, call 905-727-8991, or visit aurorahs.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 9

The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

Aurora's Youth Innovation Fair will take place tonight from 6 – 8.30 p.m. at Aurora Town Square. The Town of Aurora is proud to support youth innovation and community engagement through Aurora's Youth Innovation Fair. Open to students in Grades 4 to 12 and features a wide variety of innovative ideas and inventions created by youth. It is an exciting opportunity for youth to engage in innovation and share their ideas to tackle real-world issues.

SATURDAY, MAY 16

The Aurora Farmers' Market & Artisan Fair takes place today at Town Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

The Aurora Performing Arts Festival will take place at Aurora Town Square today from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Come out and see who gets crowned Aurora's 2026 Teen Idol! For more information, visit www.aurora.ca/recreation-arts-and-culture/specialevents/aurora-performing-arts-festival.

ONGOING

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

Works showcase talents of Jing Fu and Brandon Baghaee

From page 11

bodies of work as separate, as two different practices, but through talking to Jing and learning more about how she works, it was very clear to me that she moves fluidly between these two theories," she says. "At first I saw them as separate, but I think it's all part of a very well-integrated arts practice.

"Another really interesting thing I've taken away from watching Jing work is that I think she's a little bit of a perfectionist in that she'll come back to previous paintings and add to them. She has some work that she's worked on for a period of 15-plus years. It's like she's never finished with the work and she's always coming back to it with fresh interpretations and I think that's really interesting."

The Aurora Cultural Centre's Spring Halls Soiree will take place this Thursday, May 7, from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m. and all are welcome. Light refreshments will be provided.

The Centre will host the opening night reception for Unearthed: My Equilibrium on Thursday, May 14, from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m.

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EXPECTATIONS:

- Have a positive attitude
- Willing to work hard and enjoy rewards in a team environment
- Willing to take chances and learn from your peers

DESIRED SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:

- Sales Driven
- Great Personal Skills
- Some Sales Skills Preferred but would be willing to train the right candidate
- Works Well with Deadlines and Budgets
- Organized with an Intermediate Knowledge of Microsoft Excel

COMPENSATION:

Base + Commission

Let's Talk.

EMAIL RESUME FOR CONSIDERATION:

Zach Shoub
416-803-9940
zach@lpcmedia.ca



!!! WANTED !!!
WE PAY FOR GOLF BALLS
Pay \$0.15 to \$0.40 per ball
Year Round! Pick-up Available
416-889-9365. Peter
NO MIN QTY OR NO MAX!!

WE PAY CASH FOR SCRAP vehicles any size. We also buy construction and farm equipment. Open 7 days a week. Call 905-859-0817 (Peter).

GARAGE SALE
Saturday May 9: 7AM-2PM
58 TIMBERLINE TRAIL
Assorted Gift Wear
Travel Accessories
and Household Goods!

GARAGE SALE
88 WELLS STREET
Aurora
Saturday May 9
9am - noon
Rain or Shine!

PUZZLE SOLUTION

		S	C	A	R	A	B			C	E	E				
E	S	C	A	L	A	T	E			C	H	A	W			
S	E	A	R	C	H	E	D			M	O	I	R	E		
K	A	N	S	A						A	S	A	P			
R	I	P								A	L	E	S			
A	M	O	S							W	A	C				
F	O	R	E	F	E	E	T			A	I					
S	T	P	A	T	R	I	C	K	S	D	A	Y				
				M	U			C	H	E	E	K	I	E	R	
				M	I	D					M	L	L	E		
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G	D	E						R	O	B	U	S	T			

Advertise in The Auroran Classifieds & At Your Service Directory
Call 905-727-3300 ext 102



New Roads Subaru Newmarket



12
in stock
to choose
from

2026 SUBARU CROSSTREK



WEEKLY LEASE OF

\$85

AT

2.49%
APR

FOR 36 MONTHS WITH \$1,950 DOWN
ON 2026 CROSSTREK CONVENIENCE

**HYBRID
CROSSTREK
ALSO IN-STOCK
NOW!**

2026 SUBARU FORESTER



7
in stock
to choose
from

**HYBRID
FORESTER
ALSO IN-STOCK
NOW!**

WEEKLY LEASE OF

\$100

AT

2.99%
APR

FOR 36 MONTHS WITH \$2,259 DOWN
ON 2026 FORESTER CONVENIENCE



2026 SUBARU OUTBACK



All-New Engineering, Consistently Legendary Capability

The Subaru Outback has always defined its own category – an adventure vehicle engineered for real life, built to perform where other SUVs and crossovers meet their limits. The all-new 2026 Subaru Outback carries that legacy forward with a bold new design, increased stance, refined interior and even greater capability in all conditions.



New Roads Subaru Newmarket

17415 Yonge Street, Newmarket nrsubaru.ca

Limited-time lease offer provided through Subaru Financial Services by TCCI on approved credit. Representative lease example based on a new and previously unregistered 2026 Crosstrek Convenience model (TXACP). Lease Vehicle Price is \$33,460, which includes: MSRP \$30,595; freight and PDI \$2,295; dealer administration fee \$549; Air Conditioning Surcharge \$100, OMVIC Fee \$22, Tire Resource Recovery Environmental Fee \$25, PPSA Fee \$24, PPSA Service Fee \$4, Security \$399; as well as all other applicable fees, levies and duties (all of which may vary by dealer). Applicable sales taxes, license, registration and insurance are extra. Lease APR of 2.49% for 36 months. Lease payments of \$85 weekly with \$1,950 down payment. Total of 156 weekly lease payments required. Lease end value \$20,185.20 with \$3162.59 due on delivery. \$15,210 total lease obligation. Lease based on a maximum of 16,000 km per year for 36 months, with excess charged at \$0.10/km. Offer ends April 30, 2026. See NewRoads Subaru Newmarket for details.



SUBARU

289.319.1060