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Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 25 No. 37 905-727-3300

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Stronach charged in sexual assault investigation

Charges span from 1980s through 2023

BY BROCK WEIR

Magna founder Frank Stronach is facing multiple charges in connection with a sexual assault investigation.

Stronach was arrested and charged with five criminal offences on June 7, Peel Regional Police announced on

Friday.

Charges include rape, indecent assault on a female, two charges of sexual assault, and forcible confinement.

The charges have not been proven in court.

“Investigators from the Special Victims Unit have charged a 91-year-old male from Aurora in connection with a sexual assault investigation,”

said Police. “It is alleged that the sexual assaults spanned from the 1980s to as recent as 2023.”

Peel Regional Police confirmed there is more than one victim in this case.

“We understand there is significant public interest in this investigation,” they said. “To protect the identity... of the victims and to maintain the

Continued on page 6



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Aurora's Affordable Housing Action Plan presented to Council

Draft will be up for public consultation

BY BROCK WEIR

Aurora's Affordable Housing Action Plan will soon be up for public review after a draft of the plan was presented to Council last week.

The Affordable Housing Action Plan, if ultimately passed, will serve as a "blueprint" to foster affordable housing options within the community through 2051 – a time that's expected to see significant population growth within Aurora.

The draft plan, as presented at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting, received mixed reviews from local lawmakers with some questioning whether the goals set out in the plan will achieve objectives as well as just what constitutes "affordable" in a community like Aurora.

The plan is guided by six key objectives: increase housing supply, promote housing affordability and stability, ensure complete community growth, streamline approvals, enhance partnerships, and "continually monitor, assess and educate."

Among the recommendations to increase housing supply is to permit four units per residential lot to "increase 'missing middle' and rental opportunities"; increase density "incrementally" within the downtown Aurora Promenade area and the Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) around the GO Station; undertake a study to look at opportunities to convert land designated for commercial and employment uses; and looking at housing opportunities at "key sites," with 50-100 Bloomington Road West held up as just one example; and update zoning provisions to support housing creation.

Under the objective of Promote Housing Affordability and Sustainability, the Town will, should the plan be implemented, develop an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund, funded through Community Benefit Charges or developers' contributions, to allow the Town to "assist with affordable housing projects" such as non-profit and co-op models.

Additional goals here include requiring affordable housing assessments for all new residential developments; implement inclusionary zoning for the MTSA; prioritize government-owned land for housing use; and explore the "benefits and feasibility" of modular and prefab construction.

To ensure "Complete Community Growth," the draft plan suggests eliminating minimum parking requirements within the MTSA to lower housing costs; creating an Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan, which would arm a municipality with tools to direct funds to "incentivize" the creation of affordable housing through grants, loans and tax breaks. Streetscape improvements in the Aurora Promenade Area to "reduce the overall cost of development" and "Assist with housing affordability for the area" while adding to its vibrancy.

Streamlining the approval of developments is a key pillar in the plan. Recommendations here include a Community Planning Permit System that would allow multiple application processes consolidated into a single review; continuing to enhance the Town's online planning application system; prioritizing the approval of affordable housing developments; and waiving application fees for "critical housing opportunities," including emergency, transitional and supportive housing.

Success of the plan will also hinge

on enhancing partnerships with housing stakeholders, including assisting York Region and Housing York in identifying appropriate sites for housing. Partnerships could also entail working with school boards to identify opportunities for housing; connecting developers with "Affordable and Rental Housing Providers at the pre-consultation stage;" advocating with upper levels of government for housing funding and support; and supporting community housing providers.

Additional objectives range from developing an Aurora-wide assessment of housing needs and gaps, advocacy and education work to "remove the stigma" associated with certain housing types, and a commitment to regularly update the plan in question.

The Draft Plan goes one step further to address what's always been a thorny issue in discussions around affordable housing: just what constitutes "affordable" in this day and age.

Generally, "affordable" in the housing context is pegged at "no less than 30 per cent of an individual or family's gross income."

The draft plan notes that the average Aurora rental is \$1,371 for a one-bedroom, \$1,794 for a two-bedroom, and \$2,065 for a three-bedroom dwelling, based on 2021 Census data. The average market value for a home is \$1,450,000 notes the report through data provided by the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board, while the average gross total income for families locally is \$180,200.

"The Affordability Price Threshold is a measurement to determine the maximum price that households can afford to pay for private market dwellings, which includes the cost of a mortgage, mortgage insurance, and property taxes relative to 30 per cent of gross overall income," the draft

notes. "The [Threshold] based on these factors for Aurora is \$682,000 for the average gross total income for families, but then \$509,000 based on the median gross income for families."

These numbers drew questions around the Council table, with Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson suggesting Aurora would be "hard-pressed to find any success in that particular area" if those prices are the target.

Some lawmakers suggested that the targets and objectives outlined in the plan were not "aggressive" enough looking ahead to 2051.

"I really hope we can get some true actionable items out of this," said Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese. "We're supposed to be asking for 25 per cent of all our developments that are supposed to be affordable and we've had that in our Official Plan for quite some time, but it just hasn't worked."

Councillor Weese also said some of the goals were "pretty non-specific" and sought assurances that Aurora's so-called Stable Neighbourhoods were protected with rules that protect their character.

"I am still not convinced that in specific areas, such as the Berczy Street area, that minimum parking is going to be useful and beneficial, even though it is in the MTSA," he added. "It may create problems in the adjacent residential areas because there is no parking and I hope we're going to be looking at a parking strategy and a traffic strategy that goes along with this because it is not just about housing."

Developments within the MTSA were also on the radar of Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner. While she said it makes "perfect sense" for developers to look at areas like this, it will take "persuasion" to make affordable units happen.



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Date of Acceptance: May 28, 2024

Applicable By-law Number: 6609-24

Description of Public Works Accepted: All services referred to in Section 3.01 of the Subdivision Agreement between Mattamy Aurora Limited Phase 4 and The Corporation of The Town of Aurora for Registered Plan 65M-4520.

Description of Street in which Public Works accepted are located:

Forest Grove Court, Plan 65M-4520

The public works as described above are herewith accepted by the Town of Aurora.
For more information, please contact 905-727-1375.

aurora.ca/publicnotices

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Heroes of Normandy

The Lasting Legacy of War Amputees

On June 6, 1944, a pivotal moment unfolded as thousands of Canadian soldiers stormed Juno Beach in Normandy, in the heavily German-fortified coast of France. As the world commemorates the 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, The War Amps pays homage to the Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice during the invasion, and the resilience of those who returned home severely wounded, many missing limbs.

These were young men from small towns and the inner cities embodying the true spirit of citizen soldiers during the Second World War. Driven by patriotism, adventure, or simply a sense of duty, they enlisted with the Canadian Army, unaware that they would become the vanguard of the allied invasion of Europe.

Among them were individuals like Ron Reid, Gavin Hickey, Bob Ross, Jim Parsons, Bill Neil and Dave Ingram. Ron Reid, of Torbay, Newfoundland, suffered severe injuries upon landing on Juno Beach. Amidst relentless enemy machine gun and mortar fire, he lost his left leg above the knee.

Gavin Hickey, hailing from Durham Centre, NB, was a mere 19-years-old when his regiment stormed Juno Beach. Wounded during the battle for Carpique, he lost his left leg below the knee and his left hand.

Bob Ross of Niagara Falls, ON, was injured during heavy enemy shelling at the Battle of Hill 195, resulting in the loss of his leg above the knee. Many years later, he reflected on his experience and shared, "It was an ordeal. I don't think I would do it again because maybe I couldn't come back the next time."

Jim Parsons, a local of Sherbrooke, QC, landed on Juno Beach on D-Day and fought his way inland. Later that year, he lost his left hand and forearm due to an injury. He received a Mention in Dispatches for his bravery in hauling his troop commander out of a burning tank despite having a badly shattered arm.

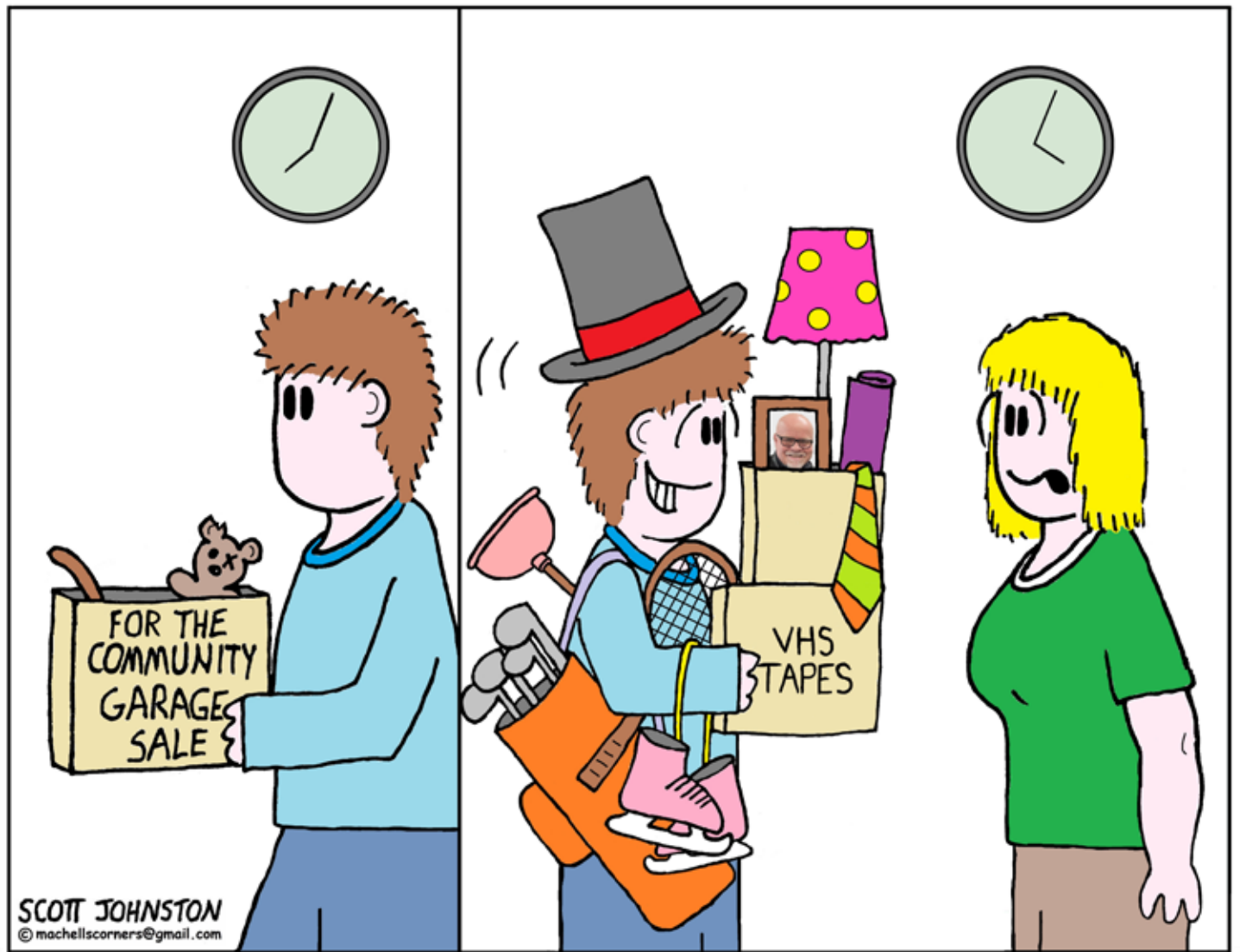
Bill Neil, from Winnipeg, MB, and Dave Ingram, of Edmonton, AB, were also severely injured during the invasion. Neil, wounded in the Battle of Falaise when his armoured car was hit, lost his left arm above the elbow. Ingram lost his left leg above the knee and part of his right heel after stepping on a landmine during a sniper patrol:

When they returned to Canada, these brave soldiers became members of The War Amps, which was started by amputee veterans returning from the First World War to help each other adapt to their new reality as amputees.

Rob Larman, a Senior Advisor at The War Amps and a leg amputee himself, said, "In the Battle of Normandy, many Canadians died or suffered wounds they had to carry for the rest of their lives. As we mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day, it's important that we never forget."

War Amps Canada

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



Respect in a changing landscape

Before I came back to journalism, my early career took an unexpected turn.

But, come to think of it, it really wasn't all that unexpected.

I went to school in our nation's capital, so it shouldn't have been all that much of a surprise that my first "real" job was in the political realm. It was Ottawa, after all, and most people I encountered were either politicians, bureaucrats or their staffers – or "recovering" politicians, bureaucrats and staffers. Or the people who cover both: journalists.

Why I initially went in the opposite direction of what I was studying to do was pure happenstance, but I'm glad the fates had other ideas in mind before gently nudging me back in the path of my chosen profession.

It gave me insight as to how both sides of the proverbial coin operated.

Before walking through the corridors of Parliament, I hadn't a full appreciation of the ins and outs of government, the time it took to come to a reasonable solution – or resolution – on even the most mundane of matters, or how much showmanship went into Question Period, one of our country's most notable and longest-running repertoire company of political theatre.

Sometimes, a familiar quote from English economist Walter Bagehot would pop into my head when certain ideas, conceptions and myths were well and truly busted: "If you begin to poke about it, you cannot reverence it... its mystery is life. We must not daylight upon magic."

Bagehot was speaking about the concept of royalty, but I don't think it's too far off the mark to apply it to our various seats and levels of government as well.

The experience did indeed cast daylight upon what I conceived to be a certain brand of magic – for better or worse – but as irreverent as I consider myself to be, where appropriate, the respect I had for the systems and offices that were in place were, in many cases, bolstered.

While that respect had rarely wavered – and I do admit to one or two instances where I've felt that one might need to adjust respect for certain office in conjunction with the respect for the office the office-holder has for said office – in recent years its often felt that we have to continually adjust to what people often describe as "the political game."

Social media, for instance, has changed the way politicians communicate with the people they represent, or hope to represent – again, for better or worse.

Door-knocking, always a perennial favourite for politicians established and aspiring, continues to be pushed front and centre as the bread and butter of any



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

campaign or engagement exercise, and rightly so.

As are ads, flyers, brochures and other forms of analogue communication where a campaign plank or a promise delivered can be summed up with some eye-catching graphics, and a few pithy slogans designed to stick in the minds of the consumer; "Build the homes. Fix the budget. Stop the crime" are vague slogans that I think most people would agree with, regardless of where they fall on the political spectrum ("Axe the tax" is a different beast all together, but that's a subject for another column) but the devil is always in the details – and the deliverables.

Some traditions, whether spoken or unspoken, have hit the skids, both a "tell" of respect for the electorate.

First, the unspoken agreement that if one shows up to exercise their constitutional right to vote, the government that is elected will serve the term they have been hired to carry out – not, as the rumours coming out of Queen's Park would suggest, tossing the will of the people out the door and calling another election for the sake of political expediency.

The other is the continued fall-out-of-fashion of the humble political debate.

In the United States, both men looking for another four-year term as President appear to be using the idea of a debate as a means to play a slow-moving game of Chicken. Things aren't quite as bad here, but they're rapidly headed in the same direction.

Several years ago, we, as a paper, organized a debate for candidates seeking a higher level of office beyond the Council table.

In this particular instance, the candidates for the major parties showed up – but, for one candidate, one got the impression that it was a great imposition, despite the fact that more than 200 residents showed up to hear what they have to say.

"I could be out door-knocking right now," one heard them say before the start of the session, which was held on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon to give

people who couldn't otherwise attend an early evening debate, such as commuters, a chance to hear what the applicants for one of the most important jobs in the community have to say and how they answer very real questions that might be on their own minds.

Now, the people of Mississauga have a new Mayor after a contentious campaign to replace Bonnie Crombie, who has set her sights on higher office at Queen's Park.

The main contender through much of the race, up until the final heat, is long-time Council member Carolyn Parrish, who came into the field with several years as a Federal Member of Parliament under her belt.

As the campaign has worn on, Parrish has faced criticism for refusing most campaign debates on the basis of "personal threats" she's received along the way – particularly, as reported in the Toronto Star, in light of comments that critics have alleged are transphobic and anti-refugee.

"We are respectfully declining all debates," said the Parrish campaign on social media. "Our campaign will continue to focus on a positive, productive approach, engaging directly with Mississauga residents. Carolyn is eager to continue meeting with individuals and groups in the short time that remains until election day."

The campaign did not comment on the nature of the threats.

The fraught nature of our political landscape now cannot be understated.

Threats against our public officials are very real, sometimes organized, and need to be dealt with accordingly and, as such, they are changing the traditional "rules of engagement."

But those who are losing in this shifting landscape are the voters – well, specifically, the genuinely engaged voters who take their ballots seriously and do their utmost to vote on election day or in advance polls.

They should be respected enough to be given the chance to see candidates debate each other, express the issues that matter to them, and see how they will react in the heat of the moment – after all, voters must select one of these individuals to do that very thing.

They should also be respected enough to follow through on the commitment they've made with the people who have elected them to carry out the mandate assigned to them in the expected timeframe.

THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

The Auroran Newspaper Company Ltd. 15213 Yonge Street, Suite 8, Aurora, L4G 1L8

Main number 905-727-3300 Fax number 905-727-2620

Founder: Ron Wallace | Publisher Emeritus: Rosemary Schumaker

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

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada



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

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is... the darkness



DIALOGUE WITH DAWN

By Dawn Gallagher Murphy
MPP, Newmarket-Aurora



It's hard for us to imagine the world illuminated entirely by candlelight. For millennia, regular folks would use tallow candles, sometimes lit on both ends, hence the saying. Tallow candles were made of animal fat, smelled foul, and produced very weak light. The wealthy and clergy had beeswax candles, which were odourless and produced bright, white, light. In the mid-1850s, paraffin became the dominant wax for candles. Liquid paraffin was poured into forms and the wick was secured on top. This candle-making form (85.20) is made from tin, another preferred Victorian material, and made six candles. Candle use declined rapidly in the 1870s due to the advent of the electric lightbulb. Thousands of years of illumination snuffed out – the moment a light switch was turned on.



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

At last week's committee meeting, Council approved an important step forward in addressing housing affordability. The draft Affordable Housing Action Plan will now be shared with the public and other key stakeholders for feedback before a final version is brought back to Council for endorsement.

This decision is the first step in our commitment to creating a collaborative approach to housing solutions. I firmly believe that input from residents, community groups, and industry experts is essential to developing a plan that truly meets the needs of our community—a plan that is made in Aurora for Aurora.

To tackle this housing crisis, we need to develop strategies that will help provide a diverse housing stock in our community, a Built-in-Aurora plan that is appropriate for our community.

We also need both the Province and the Federal governments to step up and

provide funding for all municipalities that will ensure we have the infrastructure to handle growth without burdening our residents through property taxes. This plan is just one piece of our efforts that will continue to build on what makes Aurora one of the best places to live, work, and play in Canada.

The public consultation period will begin soon, and we encourage everyone to participate. Detailed information on how you can get involved will be shared shortly. We look forward to working together to create innovative action items that will build on the key objectives of the plan, including increasing housing supply, promoting housing affordability and stability, ensuring complete community growth, streamlining

approvals, enhancing partnerships, and continually monitoring, assessing, and educating.

Once the consultation phase is complete, the feedback will be used to refine the draft, making it robust and comprehensive. The revised plan will then be presented to the Council for final endorsement.

I look forward to our residents' active participation in this important process. Together, we can make significant strides towards ensuring affordable and accessible housing for all members of our community, creating a plan made by Aurorans for Aurorans and future Aurorans.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by email tmrakas@aurora.ca or by phone 905-726-4746. I am here for you.

The man and his plan



Time Travellers Diary

By Jacqueline Stuart

It seems that every time one drives around the older residential parts of Aurora yet another "new" house has appeared, either a complete replacement or an overwhelming alteration of an older home.

To this diarist, these changes seem most prevalent in the area of south-east old Aurora which is part of Plan 68, a plan of subdivision drawn up in 1853. Plan 68's boundaries were Yonge, Wellington, Berczy, and Metcalfe/Church. Mr. Mosley might well be staggered by the value of that land today.

John Mosley was born in Toronto in 1806. He worked at the Bank of Upper Canada, where he was a senior bookkeeper. Apparently, he handled his own money well: he was not quite thirty when he purchased the 79 acres (32 hectares) of land which would become Plan 68.

But why was an accountant buying land in tiny Aurora in 1836? During his working hours John Mosley may well have learned a good deal about plans afoot in the business world. There were various schemes, for instance, for a railway from Toronto to Lake Huron, an important route going far back into First Nations history. Just buying land at the edge of an established crossroads community on one of Ontario's most

important roads seemed to be a pretty safe investment in itself. And younger brother, James, had been living in Aurora as early as the 1830s.

After purchasing the land, John Mosley continued to live in Toronto. However, he had more than just a financial interest in Aurora. He was a devout Anglican. He became involved in the development of an Anglican congregation here and in 1845 donated the site for a church building at the corner of Victoria and Metcalfe streets. He also made sizeable cash gifts.

In 1851, construction of the long-awaited railway began and by the spring of 1853 was completed up to Aurora. The first trip with fare-paying passengers was made to Aurora on May 16, 1853.

Recently I took a quick trip back to that day. My time machine also takes care of my wardrobe and I was able to blend in the crowd at the station. I saw the postmaster and powerful village leader, Charles Doan, and also Richard Machell, a local landowner and a political rival of Charles Doan. They

were not chatting. I probably saw John Mosley, but did not recognize him from the one photo I had seen of a very severe looking man. When the train came in there were a few speeches, but people were more interested in exploring the locomotive, "Toronto," and its four attached cars for passengers and freight. I came back to the present, using a very different mode of transportation.

John Mosley was just about ready for the hoped-for flood of new residents. His Plan 68 was legally registered in August 1853.

The building lots did not go flying off the shelves. Some did sell that very year; others were still available more than twenty-five years later. As a result we now see a range of architectural styles along the streets. That diversity has been further enriched – usually! – by the more recent changes that have taken place.

John Mosley lived long enough to see some of that development. He remained in Toronto until at least 1871. Possibly at his retirement from the bank he moved up to Aurora. He died at his fine Yonge Street home (demolished about 1952) in 1877. He was single and left no children, but for some of us there can be reminders of him right in the centre of town. They include the side street closest to his home: Mosley.

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Do you support the Ontario Government's move to allow alcohol sales in convenience stores?

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RESULTS TO DATE	JUNE 8, 2024		
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Stronach charged in sexual assault investigation

From page 1
integrity of the judicial process, we will not be releasing any further information.”

In a statement to media, lawyer Brian Greenspan said Stronach “categorically denied” the allegations.

“Mr. Stronach categorically denies the allegations of impropriety which have been brought against him,”

said Greenspan. “He looks forward to the opportunity to fully respond to the charges and to maintain his legacy both as a philanthropist and as an icon of the Canadian business community.”

Stronach founded what was to become Magna International in 1957.

For three decades, the company has been headquartered in Aurora and Stronach has been a community builder through his philanthropic efforts.

His name, and that of his daughter Belinda, who served as Newmarket-Aurora’s MP from 2004–2008, is borne by the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre at Newmarket’s Southlake Regional Health Centre. Aurora’s

eastern most recreation complex, the Stronach Aurora Recreation Centre, was dedicated in his honour. Streets and parks in Aurora, Newmarket and beyond are also a testament to the Stronach name.

“The Town of Aurora is aware of the serious charges brought against Frank Stronach,” said Carley Smith, the Town’s Communications Manager. “As this matter is now before the courts, we’ll be monitoring closely to determine appropriate action in the future.”

Stronach has previously been awarded the Key to the Town and, in 2013, was part of the inaugural list of inductees into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

Stronach stepped down as Chairman of Magna International in 2011 and retained his interest in thoroughbred racing and farming.

In recent years, as head of Stronach international, his focus has been on developing zero-emission micro-mobility vehicles, organic farming, and developing what he’s described as an Economic Bill of Rights.

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Fresh Food Market aims to make fruits and veggies more accessible amid rising costs



Markets will take place at Trinity's Rectory, Northridge Community Church

BY BROCK WEIR

As costs rise and budgets become more limited, sometimes fresh fruits and vegetables can be more of an afterthought once all the staples are covered – but a new community partnership aims to put greens front, centre, and accessible for all.

This week, in partnership between the Region of York, York Region Food Network, Welcoming Arms, and the Salvation Army's Northridge Community Church, Aurora will see the first of a series of new Fresh Food Markets.

An initiative that has been spearheaded in five other municipalities by the York Region Food Network (YRFN), Aurora is the latest community to benefit from the ongoing pilot project. Recent funding from the Region has allowed them to expand – with Aurora being chosen as the next venue over similar bids from East Gwillimbury and Vaughan.

The aim of the Fresh Food Market is not to be a charitable initiative but simply to make locally-sourced produce more accessible and affordable for all.

"It's not a scarcity or a charity model,"

says Chantal McCallum, Community Market Coordinator for the YRFN. "These are definitely affordably priced or less than you would pay in a grocery store. I often hear, 'I don't want to take away from someone who needs it,' but this is not a charity model, it's not a scarcity model, we want to just really invite all to take part in an inclusive fresh food market. We're really focusing on dignity, respect and choice."

Another objective is to locate these markets where people would most benefit and, such, they have partnered with Welcoming Arms, the ecumenical organization with the mission of providing services for community members in need, and the similarly-guided Northridge Community Church of the Salvation Army.

The first market will unfold this Wednesday, June 12, at the Trinity Anglican Church Rectory on Metcalfe Street, just north of Victoria, from 4 – 5.30 p.m., just before guests arrive for their Welcome Table dinner service.

"I heard about this initiative a few months ago and thought it would be a great match with the programs we run here," says Welcoming Arms Project Manager Sally Freitas. "What we're doing here in all of our programs, really, is looking

at increasing food security, whether it is through community meals or our drop-in program, which gives out grocery gift cards to eligible visitors. I thought it would be a perfect match.

"It is a great opportunity for folks who are experiencing food insecurity to be able to come out, have access to fresh produce, and make their own choices. It's a little bit different than going to the food bank where it is very limited and sometimes those choices are made for you – but in this case, come out, do some shopping, participate in the marketplace, which is such an empowering experience in itself."

The initiative, she adds, will add "another layer" of food access in the community – "By the time you buy your bare minimum, do you have enough money left over for a red pepper or a nice head of romaine?"

Following this week's inaugural market, the next event will take place at Northridge, located on Leslie Street just north of Wellington Street East, on June 26, again from 4 – 5.30 p.m.

Additional dates at Welcoming Arms are July 10, August 14, and September 11, while Northridge will host additional markets on July 24, August 28, and September 25.

Future dates will be determined down the road.

"We have been in a pilot phase since last year," says McCallum. "Since 2023, our funding from [the Region] has been a pilot project and this is a continuation of still another pilot project. Our funding is limited, but we're looking to extend it to the end of the year in December and to continue. There are still some unknowns around that on how we're going to move forward beyond our funding."

"We do a lot of evaluation during our markets, consistently getting the testimonials [so] the information is there, and it's making a difference. Our funders are looking for information which we will be gathering through these next many. Months until September, so we can get more funding."

Expected to be up for sale at the markets this month include seasonal produce from local farms, as well as the YRFN's own gardens, such as leafy greens, greenhouse-grown items like tomatoes and cucumbers, and cabbage and other veggies from last fall's harvest.

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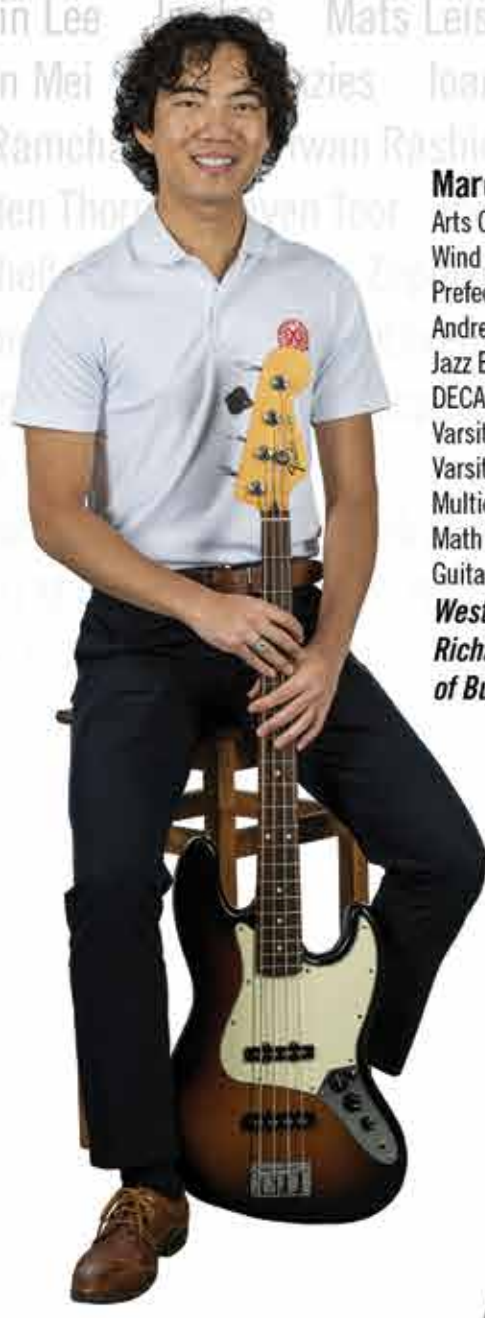
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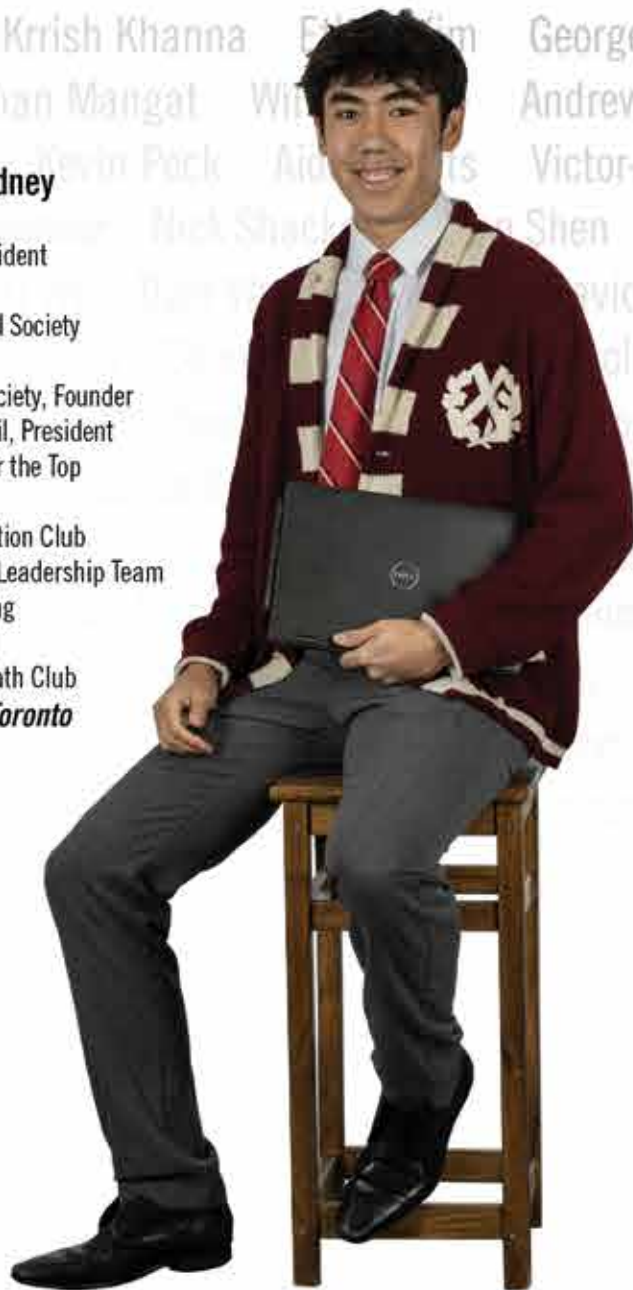
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Upcoming short film, doc puts local seniors into the spotlight

The Rug is latest from director Cisterna

BY BROCK WEIR

Local seniors picked up new skills last week while coming away with a little bit of “Hollywood North” stardust on their shoulders.

Hillary House National Historic Site was recently a hub of activity as director Sean Cisterna transformed the local house of horrors for his upcoming short film *The Rug*, starring Canadian acting icon Jayne Eastwood.

The Rug centres on a woman played by Eastwood who finds an eye-catching rug bundled up on the side of the road with the rest of the garbage. Rather than letting the rug go to landfill, she brings it home as the perfect piece of décor – until she discovers it has an appetite for more than just collecting dust.

Similarly, *The Rug* is more than just a short film; it’s also the subject of a concurrent documentary which charts Cisterna’s efforts to get local seniors into the production side of the film.

“I think what makes this a very special project is we don’t really have a traditional crew this time. We’re using a group of inexperienced senior citizens to help bring this movie to life,” Cisterna told *The Auroran* during a filming break on May 31. “I thought if

we had a senior protagonist, why don’t we try making a movie with a group of seniors to see what happens.

“This movie is a horror film so to see our seniors work with blood and guts and gore, all kinds of special effects. Using our creativity rather than throwing our money on digital effects, we’re bringing this rug to life practically through puppetry and it really is the ingenuity of our senior crew members who are truly bringing everything to life.”

In order to make this happen, Cisterna and his skeleton crew of professionals visited local seniors groups with as simple pitch to “anyone who isn’t afraid of gore or guts... to sign up for an adventure in low-budget horror filmmaking.”

“To our surprise, we had quite a few volunteers,” said Cisterna, noting that he hopes participating seniors see new potential outlets for creativity. “Everyone has chipped in, creatively and passionately. I think some of our other younger crew members want to bring seniors on as their assistants because they have done such an incredible job over the last few days.”

Their work has also earned the thumbs-up of Eastwood, who has worked with some of the best in the business, with credits including multiple episodes of *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Workin’*



Moms, the Anne of Green Gables films, the My Big Fat Greek Wedding Franchise, and the musical *Chicago*, which took home the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2023.

“This is a total change of pace, especially when you’ve been doing Christmas movies for the last five years for Hallmark!” Eastwood joked about the shift to horror. “This is a really great set – these guys are fast, efficient, amazing, and this whole documentary of seniors learning the film business is going to be really, really interesting. It’s just a fantastic thing to be a part of. We’re a pretty happy crowd here.

“Everyone has a mentor so nothing can go wrong, but there is a fair amount of hands-on. They’re learning as they go and it is just a brilliant experience for everyone. I don’t see why more

seniors couldn’t be working in the film industry. I think we might have a few people who are just really gung-ho and want to learn as much as they can and see how far they can go, even if it is just on a volunteer basis. It’s a great thing to do. It could be the beginning of a whole new movement, which I think is terrific – and I’m a senior myself at 77!”

Cisterna said his ultimate goal with *The Rug* and the associated documentary is for it to travel the world to various film festivals “and use it as not only a tool for horror cinema but also an amazing behind-the-scenes story to feature the creativity of the seniors” who brought it to life.

“We want to inspire others to be creative regardless of our age limits,” he said.

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Music and storytelling will fill Town Park for National Indigenous History Month

Gathering will take place June 22 beginning at 9 a.m.

BY BROCK WEIR

National Indigenous History Month will be marked at Town Park on Saturday, June 22, with music and storytelling.

Led by Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley, who has been preparing the event alongside Town of Aurora Staff, the event will run from 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., opening with Dave Mowatt & Trio, followed by traditional storytelling from Wheatley herself.

Additional on-site attractions will include a story walk and activities, all centred on the theme of maize.

“This year’s theme symbolizes unity and coming together,” says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, on the banner of Circles of Reconciliation. “As with all the programming we’ve done that has an Indigenous component to it, bringing people together and trying to unite us has always been one of the key objectives. This year we want to present a vibrant opportunity to explore and celebrate the cultures, traditions and experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis.”

Each year’s event is planned based on experiences and learnings that have been gleaned from year’s past.

Ware says “we have so much we need to learn, we have so much growth, and we still have so much ground to cover” that lessons are learned every year.

“I can’t underscore enough how extremely appreciative and fortunate we are to work with Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley who helps guide us,” she says. “She doesn’t tell us what to do, she forces us to do our work, come to the planning table, and then she guides us from that stage onward. We look at where we’re at, we look at how it

felt the day of, qualitative and quantitative feedback. We look at how this year has progressed as well, not only as a community, but as a nation, too. We’re going to be learning for decades. As we learn, we change as individuals as well.

“As Kim told me many years ago, when she comes to these settings she personally likes to plant seeds and to plant a seed that can grow within you. That can be in the sense of curiosity, in terms of wanting to learn more. We really want the experience on June 22, hopefully, that you learn new things, you feel a movement within yourself, but you also walk away with a ton more curiosity and motivation to learn more. There is so much that we need to learn, so hopefully you will learn some things that you can incorporate into your daily living and maybe later on that day, or during your breakfast on Sunday, something just resonates with you and it is in your mind and it transforms your actions or how you choose to spend your time thereafter, which is a very personal experience and a very personal journey, too.”

Mowatt and his trio, which will, she says, “immerse the audience in the heart and soul of the blues genre” will be an integral part of this – and his music proved “transformative” at last year’s gathering.

Beyond the music and the storytelling, the story walk is an activity that attendees can do on their own time. Centred on the cultivation of the often yellow, often white, and sometimes multicoloured veggie, Ware hopes people will leave with a greater understanding of how maize has been used both here at home and around the world.

“Take advantage of this amazing learning opportunity that is in your back yard,” says Ware. “You don’t need to travel way out of York Region for this. This is brought to you, so take advantage that it



is here in our charming Aurora, that you get to come to the gorgeous Town Park and take in this experience for free, as well as exploring the Farmer’s Market, which is a huge in the community. I can’t think of a better combination!”

performances and Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim Wheatley’s two storytelling sessions, visit www.aurora.ca/en/recreation-arts-and-culture/indigenous-history-month.aspx.

For more on the event, including schedules for Dave Mowatt’s two

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



New playground for Town Park should be accessible for all residents: advocate

Aurora has chance to lead the way, says Allison Hughes

BY BROCK WEIR

Allison Hughes grew up a stone's throw from Tamarac Green, a popular greenspace she came to love as a place where she and her friends could gather and have a great time.

But, as much as Hughes, a disabled woman who relies on a wheelchair, came to love the park, some of it was just out of reach – both as a child and as a resident who now brings her own children to a place that is an inextricable part of her own childhood in Aurora.

“The park’s inaccessibility, not my disability, has always posed barriers and created safety risks for me to use that space,” says Hughes, who says was eager to provide input when the Town redesigned the park about six years ago. “At the time, despite emails, face-to-face meetings and connecting with [the Town’s] Accessibility Advisor, the project

seemed to steamroll ahead. Despite the pause with the pandemic to rethink design, I’m left with a park that leaves me on the sidelines and leaves much to be desired.”

Now that the Town of Aurora is looking to redesign the playground at Town Park in the heart of Aurora’s historic downtown core, Hughes is determined that the new build will leave no one behind.

Hughes’ comments came at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting, where she implored Council to not only approve a budget increase of \$132,000 to make it happen – bringing the estimated total bill to \$532,000 – and also to improve and upgrade the surface of the nearby splash pad to \$90,700, an increase of \$15,700 to the budget.

“The goal of this improvement project is to create a new and fully accessible playground space, with features that provide opportunities for both junior and senior children aged 18 months to 12 years of age to play within an intentionally-designed space that incorporates both users

and caregivers’ accessibility needs,” said Matthew Volpintesta, Manager of Parks and Fleet, in a report to Council. “This upgraded playground will serve as one of four accessible playgrounds, as recommended in each quadrant of the Town.

“To avoid making any assumptions and ensuring all design components were considered,” a number of public consultation opportunities were rolled out, along with consultation with “passionate community members, some of whom spoke firsthand about personal accessibility challenges.”

Features coming out of this consultation included a junior and senior child combination play structure with included accessible ramps for users and child supervisors; a full swing set with junior and single child options, with an accessible swing seat; two side-by-side double slides for junior and senior kids; an interactive play board with touch and turn features; spinning wheel features suitable for individuals using wheelchairs; and barrier-free rubber surfacing.

As welcome as those features are, Hughes says they don’t quite go far enough and Aurora has the opportunity to set the standard for York Region.

“I was giddy when I heard Town Park was slated for redesign,” she said. “I need to applaud our Parks team for exercising patience, listening to feedback, pausing and making tweaks to their initial design a few times over. I have been relentless in my pursuit to ensure we have the best park in Aurora and perhaps all of York Region.... The renderings are markedly improved from the initial designs proposed when the Town put out the community survey for feedback. I was disheartened to see that a swing design specifically for youth wheelchair users was left out. I am hopeful this is still a consideration. Expecting folks to help someone transfer is simply unacceptable and sometimes not possible or safe. It is worth noting

there are four known such swings in all of Ontario, none in York Region. What a great opportunity and a pivotal moment to pause and make sure we make this a priority.

“I appreciate the small footprint at Town Park, but my personal view is quality and intentionality over quantity of elements. While I care about a swing on a personal level, I am asking for this on behalf of every child who I see myself in who deserves this. With this park as a hub for events, for gatherings and in proximity to our almost complete Town Square, this is the park...let’s show kids and adults, frankly, who are wheelchair users in Aurora and York Region that they belong and they have a right to play.”

The accessible swing in question, according to Sara Tienkamp, Aurora’s Director of Operational Services, could be accommodated if some of the amenities originally proposed for the playground are “changed out.”

The swing could cost approximately \$33,000.

Grant opportunities being pursued by the Town could bring a further \$60,000 into the project to offset costs.

“I would hope there’s not going to be any hesitation in trying to meet the needs of what we need for that Town Park area playground,” said Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese. “In that area of Town... within two years, we’re going to have a significant population increase through Berczy Street which is going to create a tremendous load for that. I just want to make sure we have the capacity for the additional residents who are going to be there. If there is a need to spend a little bit more on that park to make sure it is the feature that we need.”

Council could make a final decision as early as the June 25 Council meeting.

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CHAMBER WAITING AD DIANE



George Street Public School will soon meet wrecking ball

Public consultation will take place on housing options

BY BROCK WEIR

The George Street Public School building will soon be razed, but what will ultimately replace the school on a portion of the land will be up for community and public consultation.

The Town of Aurora purchased the former public school this past April for \$10,72 million funded from reserves with the goal of building a neighbourhood park of between four to 10 acres, allowing for multi-use courts, playgrounds and other amenities, with the balance of the site to be sold to recoup some of the purchase price.

The goal of the remainder of the property closest to George Street has been for additional homes and housing forms, but the nature of what will ultimately be build will be planned in consultation with the community, Council decided last week.

“Currently, we have a school site zoned institutional so we’re seeking direction from Council to initiate the process of going out to the public to consider rezoning that frontage to an appropriate residential zone,” said Marco Ramunno, Aurora’s Director of Planning, at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting.

Ramunno was responding to Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, who sought assurances that not only would the upcoming redevelopment of the site go through a formal public planning process, but that residents have been kept in the loop to date.

“I have talked to and I know Councillor Gilliland in her Ward has talked to quite a few [residents] as well,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas. “The majority of them are aware of what is in front of us tonight.”

Asked by Councillor Gallo what the feedback has been to date, the

Mayor responded they’re “excited” to see a park, but, for the Councillor, the question remained on just how excited existing residents are to see homes built.

“That’s the real question,” said Councillor Gallo, questioning whether there is a recommendation to have whatever is built consistent with the existing neighbourhood.

That is indeed the present plan, responded Ramunno, noting that minimum 50-foot lots are envisioned, but he noted Council direction can change this course – whether the final lots will prove larger or smaller.

Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, for instance, questioned whether there was an opportunity here to look at zoning that would allow for different housing forms, including purpose-built rentals.

“Certainly, as part of the process moving forward, based on the comments from the public and Council, perhaps it could be [an opportunity] for larger lot sizes or even smaller sizes and different built forms,” said Ramunno.

Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she was “uncomfortable” with the recommendation on the floor as “the public is expecting that we go out to them and present different options” and meeting that expectation would be “wise.”

“At the end of the day, we can do what we want, and I think a lot of the public will agree with that, especially if they understand the idea of bringing in some money for that to offset the purchase (of the park) – but I certainly wouldn’t be in favour of the rezoning this evening, or for the (June 25) Council meeting,” she said.

Since the Town announced the purchase of the George Street Public School site earlier this spring, it’s been prepared for demolition.

According to a Council report from Lisa Hausz, the Town’s Manager of Economic Development, the site has been secured and the next steps include

demolition, removal of materials and debris, and preparing the site for future servicing.

The building, at present, is expected to be demolished as early as this fall pending Council approval.

“The rezoning proposal for the subject lands at 115 George Street aims to optimize land usage for residential and recreational purposes,” said Hausz. “With approximately 130 metre (426 feet) of frontage along this portion of George Street, the area is suitable to be rezoned from Institutional to R3 – Detached Third Density Zoning Category. The R3 zoning has the potential to create seven to eight single-detached residential lots, each with a frontage of 15 metres (50 feet) and a lot area of 460 square metres (4,951

square feet).

“This adjustment aligns the Official Plan policy for compatibility with the existing adjacent residential lots. Concurrently, the remaining area, previously designated as Institutional, is proposed to be rezoned to open space, safeguarding it for future community use as a neighborhood park. This proactive measure ensures that no further development encroaches upon this valuable green space, preserving it for the well-being and enjoyment of residents. Importantly, these proposed zoning adjustments operate within the framework of the existing Official Plan, eliminating the necessity for an Official Plan amendment while accommodating evolving community needs.”

National Indigenous Peoples Day June 21

TONY Van Bynen
Member of Parliament Newmarket-Aurora

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Aurora, Historical Society to begin talks on Hillary House's future

Maintaining the National Historic Site could come with \$1.5 million price tag

It's a landmark that has been held up as one of the country's best examples of Victorian Gothic architecture, and now the future of Hillary House National Historic Site is the subject of talks between the Aurora Historical Society and the Town of Aurora.

As The Auroran reported last week, the Aurora Historical Society (AHS), which owns the Town's only National Historic Site, is seeking support from the Town to ensure the long-term sustainability of the house and property, which has stood on Yonge Street, just north of Irwin, for more than 160 years.

Currently a historic house museum and home to the Koffler Museum of Medicine in a nod to its heritage as one of Aurora's first medical practices, the AHS has struggled to raise funds to maintain the building in recent years.

Those concerns were voiced to Council last week by AHS co-president, and former Aurora mayor Geoff Dawe.

"Hillary House is an asset of the Aurora Historical Society and has been maintained by the Society since its acquisition in 1981. However, the challenges of maintaining the building have been increasing as it ages is exacerbated by increasing difficulties in raising necessary funds," said Dawe, noting that the latest repair assessment for Hillary House has clocked in at approximately \$1.2 million.

"Our financial position, which has been reported to Council over the last number of years... is well-known to Council."

Options for partnerships and support with the Town will help "maintain that gem of Aurora we call Hillary House."

"We appreciate and respect everything that the AHS has done for Hillary House and the community, and protecting and preserving our heritage," said Mayor

Tom Mrakas. "We thank you guys, all. I think we're all eagerly looking forward... to seeing how where this unfolds and how we can ensure that the Hillary House is something that our Town and future generations can look forward to seeing for another 150 years."

How this unfolds will be determined in future weeks.

According to Robin McDougall, Aurora's Director of Community Service, the first step will be to meet with the AHS Board and Executive to hear what their vision is ahead of beginning a public consultation process, whether that is held by the AHS or the Town.

Also to be considered, she said, is economic development potential.

"I am certainly supportive of the motion itself," said Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson on getting discussions underway. think that an important aspect of it is to engage in the various stakeholders, residents, and having these open and honest dialogues and conversations with regards to the long-term viability of Hillary House and making a decision so we can all move forward."

Added Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese: "I really hope that in this consultation we are going to focus on the value of our heritage in this community because we have a very unique community that has a lot of heritage to it, a very strong history, and I think it is marketable. I hope that is one of the questions that we're going to be asking in community consultations. It really important that we look at heritage and value it. I also am very hopeful that we can find a way to continue to work with the Historical Society... which has done an awful lot of work for us for a very long time and a committed group of volunteers that have a lot of expertise. I really hope that we can work on something to work with the AHS because they have been great cultural partners over these last number of years."

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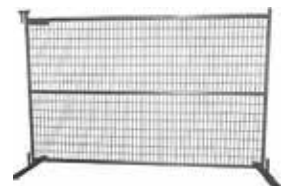
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Saturday's Performing Arts festival set to showcase array of local talent

BY BROCK WEIR

An array of local talent in multiple age groups and multiple disciplines will be in the spotlight this Saturday, June 15, as the Aurora Performing Arts Festival returns to Town Park.

Kicking off at 10 a.m., the festival, hosted by Marquee Theatrical Productions in association with the Town of Aurora, will culminate with the crowning of Aurora's 2024 Teen Idol.

"It's shaping up to be a great event with lots of entertaining entries," says Marquee's Sheryl Thomas. "We had to make some really tough choices with the panel of judges to get our finalists in line. A real positive [this year] is our acting division is finally taking flight, which is nice, and the vocal category is strong, strong, strong. We're hoping that everyone comes out to not only support our performers and the show itself, but also the Aurora Farmers' Market, which is happening at the same time."

Now in its third year, the Aurora Performing Arts Festival has expanded every season – and Thomas says the community is getting "more and more involved" with each passing year.

This same view is offered by Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator with the Town of Aurora, who says she's "so grateful I'm not a judge!"

"The talent this year, if you look at the story of the evolution of those coming forward, sharing their talents, the quality of it – it's not even describable the amount of talent in York Region that are choosing to participate in this Performing

Arts Festival," says Ware. "You never know who you're going to see on that stage and maybe the next time you see them it will be on that jumbo TV screen."

"Even if the ages (of participants) are young, this is your one and only opportunity to see the age of innocence as a precursor to someone potentially exploding into acting. Sheryl and I have the inside scoop because we've seen the videos, but this event is so unique. It's not like Concerts in the Park when you come knowing you're going to see a tribute artist and you know what you're in for; when you come to an open arts festival, you're given an unmapped experience across different genres, different age groups. It's an unplanned adventure that we're providing to you for free!"

This year's Festival is also something of a finale.

While it will continue into the foreseeable future, it's set to move from Town Park next year to new space at Aurora Town Square, a move which Thomas says will allow the Festival to expand even further.

"I'm really excited to move into that – it's going to be a game-changer because we can add other components to the performances," she says. "The lighting can be a new thing and weather is never going to be a factor, and that's a beautiful, beautiful thing right there. I think that is going to be a great way to kick things off for the next season!"

For more on this year's Aurora Performing Arts Festival, visit www.aurora.ca/en/recreation-arts-and-culture/aurora-performing-arts-festival.aspx.

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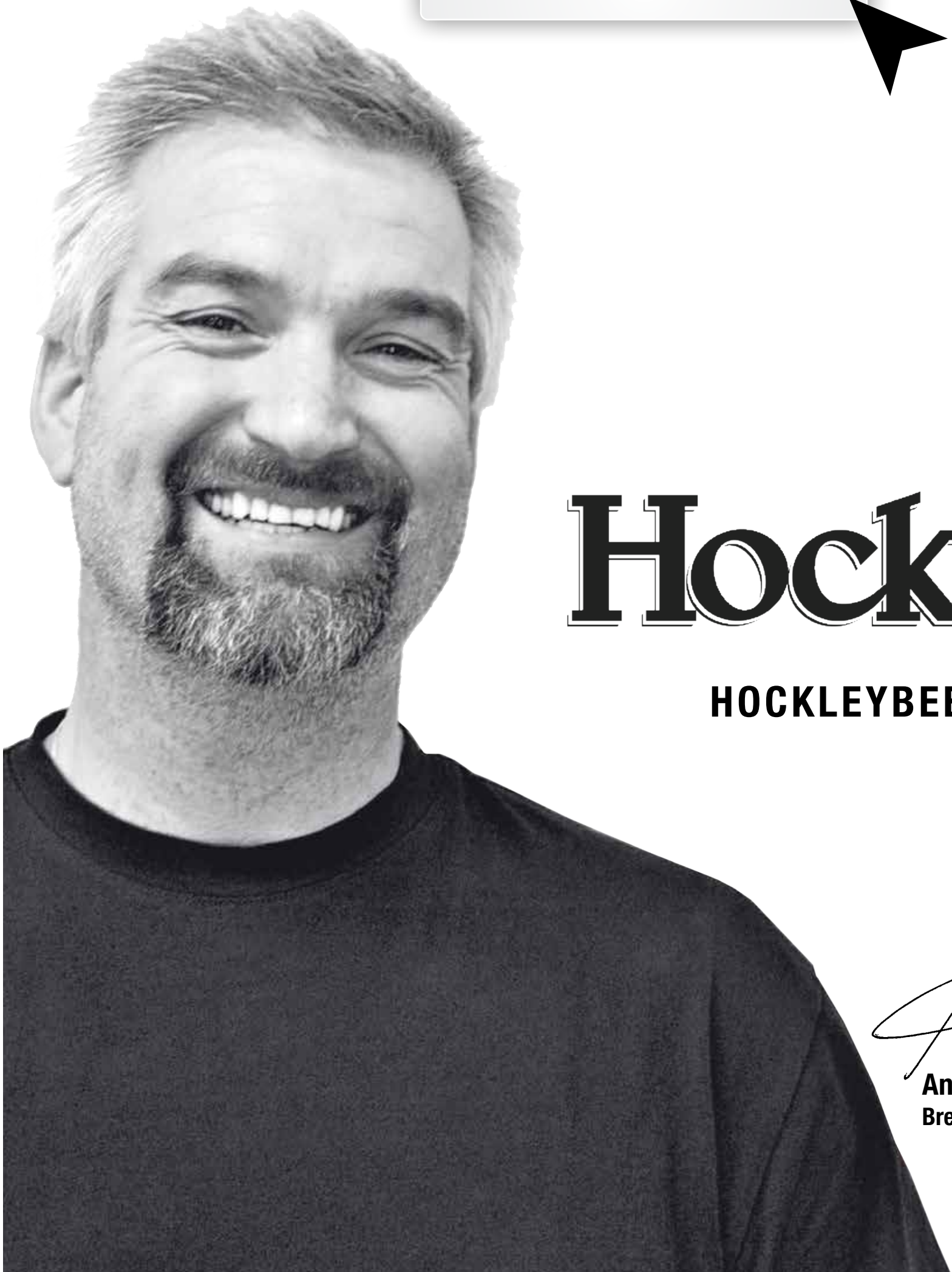


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Sport Aurora's 5th annual "All-Sport—One Day" showcases seven sports at McMahon Park

By Jim Stewart

Sport Aurora's 5th annual "All-Sport—One Day" event was held in pleasant Spring conditions at McMahon Park on Saturday.

Three sports were featured in the morning session: Lawn Bowling instructed by the venerable Aurora Lawn Bowling Club; Field Lacrosse demonstrated by the St. Andrew's College Saints Varsity Lacrosse team; and Tennis presented by Jordan Master of the Aurora Community Tennis Club and Bill Maron of Total Tennis.

The forty participants—aged 6-12—enjoyed the four-sport afternoon session as well. It featured the expertise of the Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club, the Rising Stars Soccer Academy, and K.O. Club Martial Arts. Elevation Athletics and the Aurora Seniors' Association combined their instructional talents to share the finer points of Pickleball on the tennis courts at leafy McMahon Park.

Sport Aurora's Executive Director Laurie Mueller said she felt the best part of seven-sport day "was seeing the kids engaged, positive, and happy."

"They were exposed to so much expertise and so many sports experiences in so little time."

Mueller was also pleased with the setting of the Spring session: "McMahon Park is a multi-use facility with tennis courts and a great lawn bowling green on-site along with two fields. It's compact, and it's a safe, family environment with a shaded

playground for the kids, too."

The dynamic Executive Director also extolled the virtues of her excellent volunteer team who supervised the forty youngsters.

"We have great volunteers every year. Some are high school students in need of community service hours, and some are local residents who volunteer regularly for Sport Aurora events over the course of the year. I was really happy to see that some of this session's volunteers are Student Athletes of the Year that we have recognized in past ceremonies. It's great to see them putting back into their communities."

Ron Weese, President of Sport Aurora and a multi-sport athlete, agreed with his colleague about the influence of the younger volunteers.

"The kids are given the opportunity to volunteer and teach a sport. They help with the purposes of the event: to promote a variety of sports to build confidence and competence in kids. We're also here today to engage kids who have never had the chance to participate in a variety of sports, due to financial restrictions and limited opportunities. Lawn bowling, for example, is nice to watch just for the intergenerational interaction. People don't participate in sports that aren't comfortable, but this is comfortable and the kids are active."

Mueller added that "the event was possible due to the generous sponsorship by ParticipACTION whose goals about kids' physical fitness and activity were on display today at McMahon."



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Tyler Pridham commits to the Division 1 State College of Florida Manatees



Hill.”
 Pridham has established some roots on the west coast of Florida over the winter so he is looking forward to continuing his residency in Bradenton.
 “The location played a part with the choice as well, because I’ve already spent five months in Bradenton this year. IMG Academy, where I played a spring baseball season, is in a beautiful suburban city with great weather and everything close by. I remember in February when the Junior College baseball rankings came out. Seeing SCF, which was across the street from where I was staying, in the Top 10 was enough for me. I told my Dad [Canadian pro tennis player Chris Pridham] and anyone else who would listen that SCF was where I wanted to go.”
 With his heart set on studying at and playing for a four-year school in the USA, Pridham has an academic pathway in mind at SCF.
 “Associate in arts degree – I was told it transfers best to the four-year schools. I’m going to have all business course electives hopefully because that’s what I want to pursue a career in after a career in professional baseball.”

Special thanks to you, Jim, and Coach JB as well, for seeing something in me at a young age and bringing me to the Titans. Really respect you and look up to you!”
 When asked to offer advice to younger players about achieving post-secondary goals as a student-athlete, the CPBL veteran counselled them to “take it one step at a time and enjoy every moment.”
 “I spent a lot of energy comparing myself to others. With jealousy being the root of all evil, it is not a good use of energy. Instead, put all your time and effort into improving yourself as a player and person. When you take the field, play as hard as you can and do whatever it takes to help your team win. If you do those things in your training and when you play, your post-secondary school goals will fall into place. You will get out of it what you put in. I remember Coach Nick Dimpfel saying your work ethic better match your goals. Lastly, listen to your coaches – they want the best for you no matter who you are and they know what they’re talking about.”
 The sky is the limit for Pridham in his two baseball settings in 2024: patrolling centrefield this Spring during his final season with the CPBL Titans and then back to The Sunshine State with the SCF DI Manatees in September.



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By Jim Stewart

Aurora resident and veteran Titans outfielder Tyler Pridham signed his letter of intent last week to attend the State College of Florida and compete for the NJCAA Division 1 Manatees in Bradenton, FL.

The exemplary student-athlete is a significant veteran presence on the 18U Titans Baseball Club—a Canadian Premier Baseball League franchise that plays its home games and runs its practices at St. Andrew’s College.

Pridham is the fifteenth Titan to commit to a US College from the Class of 2024 and the organization’s College Placement Officer Denis Bailey was pleased with the middle infielder’s post-secondary choice.

“Tyler has all the tools to succeed at the next level. He is heading down to a great situation in Bradenton and has a chance to win a starting job with the Manatees from day one.”

The Honor Roll graduate of Aurora High School outlined his reasons for committing to the SCF Manatees.

“I chose SCF because of their incredible coaching staff and great baseball program. I see it as a place I can continue to grow as a person and player with the help of Coach

The speedy, hard-hitting centerfielder has set lofty goals at the State College of Florida.

“My athletic goal is to earn a starting spot in the Outfield in my first year and continue to improve. My academic goal is to maintain a 3.7 GPA and above.”

Pridham expressed his gratitude to the Titans Baseball Club for helping him with the recruiting process.

“The Titans helped create many opportunities at various colleges and universities for me. As well as offering plenty of guidance and support along the way, I can recall many calls and conversations made to Coach Denis Bailey and Coach Eddie McKiernan asking questions and getting advice during my recruiting process.”

He highlighted what he’d liked best about being a Titan for four years.

“I think just the day-to-day, coming into the facility, training with some of my teammates who are now some of my best friends. I will always cherish the time I’ve spent with them. As well learning and working with Coach Eddie. I would not be the player I am today without his guidance.



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THINGS...you ought to know

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

The Aurora Farmers' Market returns to Town Park today. Come by and shop local from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Aurora Performing Arts Festival will take place in Town Park today from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Do you enjoy singing, acting or dancing? Then this is the competition for you! Aurora Performing Arts Festival, presented by Marquee Theatrical Productions, in partnership with the Town of Aurora, is an exciting performance opportunity for children and youth. For more information, please

email Marquee Theatrical Productions. To speak with someone directly, please call 905-726-4762 or 905-713-1040.

The Aurora Seniors Association Presents: Mexican Fiesta! From 6.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. At the Aurora Seniors Centre, 90 John West Way, Aurora. Featuring: Mexican Buffet & Dessert Bar, Coffee Tea, Mariachi Band, Photo Booth, Games with Prizes, Cash Bar. Tickets must be purchased in advance at \$60. Tickets on sale now from the Aurora Seniors' Centre

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SATURDAY, JUNE 22

National Indigenous History Month – Celebrate and learn more about the cultural diversity of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples with Indigenous Storytelling and a live music performance by Dave Mowat and Trio happening in Aurora at Town Park.

SUNDAY, JUNE 23

Aurora Garden Tour – 12 noon to 4.30 p.m. Garden Aurora presents our annual tour of nine beautiful local gardens. Owners of these private paradises will be in attendance to answer all of your questions. This is a self guided tour, rain or shine. Tickets are \$15 and available at Royal Rose Art Gallery and Petal Me Sugar Florist in Aurora. In Newmarket, tickets are sold at New Roots Garden Centre, Wild Birds Unlimited and Replenish General Store. Tickets will also be available at the Aurora Farmers Market June 15th, 22nd and same day at Garden #1. More information is available at www.gardenaurora.ca or 905-713-6660.

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Early Summer 2024 Musings

Before this column returns to the local themes of people, politics and public affairs, below are some unconnected, stream-of-conscious and (most likely) incoherent musings and observations regarding the early summer of 2024 in Aurora.

Over the years I have written a number of times about a subject that had been of increasing concern to me – the lack of adequate customer service in our society.

I reported that this kind of ill treatment had occurred a number of times to me while in local businesses within our community; I will protect the names of the guilty offenders.

Some very recent local experiences have compelled me to do so again.

I am not Ralph Nader here on some type of corporate crusade; I simply want, when I go to purchase a good or service, as the old advertising line goes, “to be treated like a somebody.”

My biggest gripe (it has been festering for quite some time really) is standing in a long line at the check-out at a grocery store or in a line at a bank and only one person is on duty at the cash register. What is particularly galling is when you see a bunch of other store employees stocking shelves and ignoring you or if in a bank, another bank employee(s) sitting at a desk, twenty feet from you, ignoring you while one bank teller tries to deal with everyone.

I also had a similar situation at one of the local pharmaceutical stores; a big line up at the check-out with only one teller. And this was not late at night – it was the middle of the day. Finally, someone came to assist the lonely cashier.

Like a great many people, I have worked part time in retail. Granted, I was probably not the best employee but two things always stayed with me – be pleasant to the customer and if you think he / she may require help – kindly ask them. It used to drive my manager insane if he saw you cleaning up things on the shelves while a customer waited at the check-out.

Eventually, after what seemed an eternity, another cashier came to help.

Marketing professors are big on “buying experiences” and trying to ensure that each and every time that someone interacts with a potential customer that the experience is a positive one.



FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE

Stephen Somerville

Being the good Canadians that we are, all of us in that line just suffered silently. I wonder how many of my fellow shoppers will be back.

My second item is about golf. With the weather getting better my thoughts immediately change to this sport and the upcoming season.

I am very much looking forward to getting out and working on my game.

Question for readers - Are you aware of the new golf club statute of limitations?

You have all heard of the legal statute of limitations and how, after a certain period of time, someone can't be charged with a crime that they may have committed. (Murder is not included.)

I bought a new driver and putter two summers ago and at the time asked my golf buddies how or whether I should inform my wife.

They said I had two options.

First, tell my wife that I was awarded the equipment as a result of winning a long drive competition or a putting competition at a corporate outing. This would not work for the simple reason that my wife has seen me both drive a ball and also putt – she wouldn't buy this explanation.

If this doesn't work, then tell her that you won these in a draw at a corporate outing last year and that you had already told her about it. Again, a bad idea because my wife forgets absolutely NOTHING.

Notice how the guys did not offer up “tell her the simple truth” as one of the options?

The guys told me the formal statute of new golf club limitations is legally 18 months – except a wife's anger could go on for quite a bit longer; How much longer I asked, and they said, to steal a phrase from Buzz LightYear – “To infinity and beyond!”

Good thing that I told her!

An appropriate way to end this rambling soliloquy would be to make some of my patented, dead-on and fearless predictions. Here goes.

First, another Canadian will win the Canadian Open this weekend! I think it will Mackenize Hughes.

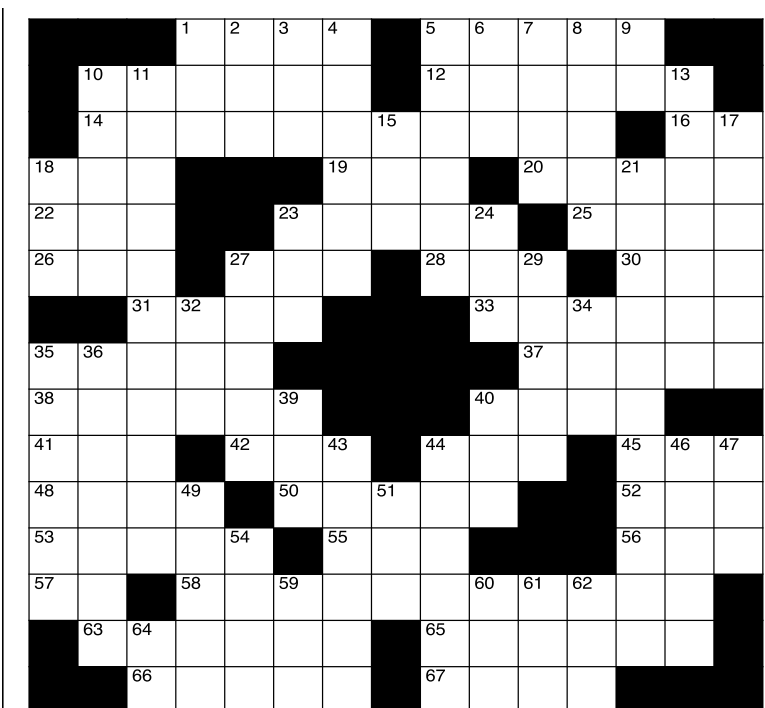
And the Edmonton Oilers will defeat the Florida Panthers in six games to win the Stanley Cup!

Stephen can be contacted at stephengsomerville@yahoo.com



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- Native American people
- Very long periods of time (Brit.)
- Schoolboard accessory
- Rods
- One who renews
- Sculpted body part
- Chatter incessantly
- King Cole, musician
- Plates on a turtle's shell
- University of Utah athlete
- The world of the dead
- Singer Redding
- Former Yankee great Mattingly
- Prefix indicating wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown or black
- Restaurants have a lot of them
- Made a mistake

CLUES DOWN

- Witch
- Utilize
- Writing utensil
- Places to perform
- Subsides
- Consume
- Athleisure clothing brand
- California town
- Atomic #50
- The Muse of lyric and love poetry
- Creates anew
- Humorous commentaries
- Cool!
- Most ignoble
- Soggy dirt
- Designed to be useful
- Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- High schoolers' test
- One-time internet accessory
- City in India
- Furniture
- You have likely chatted with o
- Pass or go by
- Proof of purchase
- A digital tape recording of sou
- More (Spanish)
- Disfigured
- White (Spanish)
- Building occupied by monks
- Georgia rock band
- Light that generates intense beam of light
- State of agitation
- Make by braiding
- Local area network
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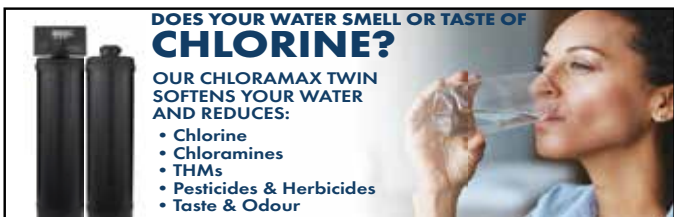
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EXECUTIVE HOME: \$400K EXTERIOR UPGRADES

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EXECUTIVE HOME WITH LUXURY UPGRADES

Brand new executive home in Princeton Heights, Aurora Estates! This luxurious Fernbrook Homes property features a 3-car tandem garage, white oak hardwood floors, an elegant living room with coffered ceilings, a chef's dream kitchen by Downsview, a great room with 20ft ceilings, and a finished lower level with an exercise/media room, recreation room, wet bar, and spa-like bathroom.



BRAND NEW EXECUTIVE "GREEN" & "SMART" HOME

Experience eco-smart luxury in South Aurora's prestigious Royal Hill. This home features a gourmet kitchen, spa-like master suite, hardwood and porcelain floors, 10' ceilings, and an oak staircase. Highlights include a walk-out lower level, green technology, and serene views. Located close to amenities, nature, and transit for unparalleled sustainable living.



BRAND NEW - DOUBLE LOT SIZE

Brand new custom-built executive home on a premium 96' x 126' lot in Richmond Hill. Open concept layout with high-quality craftsmanship, 10' ceilings, chef's kitchen, spa-like ensuite, and spacious bedrooms. Includes a 38' x 126' easement. Free finished basement if sold by July 5th. Truly a masterpiece!



LUXURIOUS HOME WITH RESORT BACKYARD

Experience luxury living with modern finishes, hardwood floors, a gourmet kitchen, an elegant family room, luxurious bedrooms, a finished basement with an extra suite, and a stunning backyard featuring a saltwater pool and cabana. This property is the epitome of refined elegance and contemporary comfort.



ZONED FOR HOME BUSINESS, SALTWATER POOL

This fully renovated executive home in Richmond Hill boasts a 4-car garage, finished basement, solariums, and a pool with a waterfall. Perfect for remote work, it's near schools, parks, and amenities. Zoned to allow 35% of its space for home business, it also includes a sunroom, indoor hot tub, and fenced backyard.



CUSTOMIZE YOUR DREAM LAKE WILCOX HOME

Introducing an opportunity to customize your dream executive home in Lake Wilcox. This to-be-built residence is designed with 4+1 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, and a chef's kitchen outfitted with high-end JennAir appliances. Envision luxurious finishes throughout, with the chance to select your preferences to truly make it your own.



LUXURIOUS 'FERNBROOK' HOME IN AURORA

Presenting the exquisitely designed 'Fernbrook' executive home in Princeton Heights, Aurora Estates. This expansive lot property boasts premium finishes and a gourmet kitchen, with customization options available. It includes four generously sized bedrooms, each with its own private bathroom.



ALMOST NEW BUNGALOW LIVING

Exceptional 4-bed, 3-bath bungalow featuring an open concept layout with 9ft ceilings and hardwood floors. The chef's kitchen has quartz counters, and the family room opens to a fenced backyard. Enjoy a luxurious primary suite, finished lower level, and convenient access to amenities, schools, parks, water, and highways.



OAK RIDGES HOME WITH ADJACENT LAND

Beautifully renovated home, nearly 3000 sqft plus lower level, on a 74 x 296ft lot in Oak Ridges. Features a modern kitchen with walk-out to a pool-sized backyard, large family room with gas fireplace, formal living and dining rooms, and a primary suite with walk-in closet and luxurious ensuite. Rare chance to purchase with adjacent vacant land, totaling over 48,000 sqft.



SPACIOUS MODERN CORNER UNIT

Nestled in Express Condos, Clanton Park, this stunning corner unit features 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a den, high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, and a gourmet kitchen. Includes private parking, a storage locker, and amenities like a pool, fitness room, BBQ facilities, and more.



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2

“There is not going to be as much profit in affordable housing and possibly not in attainable development,” she said, citing the Affordability Threshold. “I don’t see developers being that excited about doing this kind of housing, but I really hope we can [incentivize them] because it is needed.”

Perception, however, was key for Councillor Weese who said the aforementioned “stigmatization” was “one of the biggest problems” in achieving more affordable units.

“I think one of the biggest problems we have is considered to be a stigmatization of people who may not have the affordability and the ability to do things,” he said. “I think it is really an important part that we do to relieve the stigma of all of that. We have seen it before here and it raises its ugly head, and I think it is important that we have a community that is bound together with a cause to improve the quality of life for all of our residents, including those people who aren’t at the upper echelons of income.”

From the perspective of Mayor Tom Mrakas, achieving these goals will require creativity.

“I am looking forward to seeing what comes back to us after going out to the public,” he said. “Personally, I think that we’ve got to start getting really creative when it comes to this stuff. I think as we’re doing at the Region now, we need to start doing it here: looking at properties that possibly we own that we can repurpose or look at land-lease deals where you eliminate the land cost for the development, which would significantly reduce those financial burdens and be able to create true affordability in rentals in our community. I think those are some of the things we need to look at.”