



TOWN OF AURORA  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2018**



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

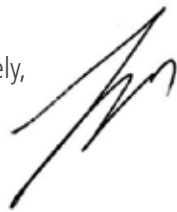
# TOM MRAKAS

Last year was one of big change here in the Town of Aurora. The most obvious change being the election and the opportunity for me to serve as your Mayor. I take great pride in being selected to lead your Council as we work alongside you - our citizens - to get things done and make exciting things happen.

Although the election kept both staff and Council busy, I am very proud to say that we accomplished a great deal and set the stage for even more positive transformation in the future. Two projects that I am particularly proud of are the restoration of the Aurora Armoury and partnership with the Canadian Food and Wine Institute at Niagara College, and the plans for a new town square. Both the Armoury and, what is currently known as Library Square, are critical elements of our downtown revitalization efforts. These projects have both been years in the making but 2018 saw designs take shape and plans being approved by Council. I continue to be impressed by the level of enthusiasm I see in the community as we get closer to the opening of the Armoury and as plans are finalized for our new town square.

As you will see from the following stories, there are always new things happening here in Aurora. Staff and Council take pride in being innovative and continue to look for ways to achieve our vision of being a progressive community with small town charm. Finally, I would like to thank former Mayor Geoffrey Dawe for his two terms of service with the Town of Aurora. We have an incredible community here and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served alongside many wonderful members of Council. As always, I encourage you to reach out to me at any time with your questions, comments or concerns. Feel free to reach out at [tmrakas@aurora.ca](mailto:tmrakas@aurora.ca) or by phone at 905-727-1375.

Sincerely,



**Tom Mrakas**  
Mayor



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# CELEBRATING JOSIE KEARNEY

2018 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the initiatives, events and programs that define our Town. Through their leadership, passion and commitment to the greater good, they inspire those around them making a difference in the lives of residents and the community. Every year during our Community Recognition Awards, members of Council acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of residents and businesses who help make Aurora the incredible community that it is. Annually, one resident is awarded the title of Citizen of the Year for their exemplary commitment to Aurora. In 2018, the Town of Aurora was proud to celebrate our Citizen of the Year, Josie Kearney.

On the evening of the awards Josie already knew she would be receiving a Youth Achievement Award, but had no idea she would also walk away with Citizen of the Year. Needless to say she was surprised and overjoyed.

A Grade 12 student at G.W. Williams Secondary School, Josie is the youngest person to receive the award since its inception nearly 50 years ago. She was recognized for her tireless work not only within the Williams community, but in the broader community around her. Amongst her many endeavours, Josie was head of the Peer Mentor Group, a student-led leadership program that ensures the successful transition of Grade 9 students at her school. She started "Change for Change", an initiative to raise funds for Toy Mountain and the Salvation Army. She also



led a group of students helping to build homes for Habitat for Humanity, is part of several school councils, and has been a key contributor to the annual Terry Fox Run. Josie also volunteers with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation, where she helps organize an annual bone marrow drive that has resulted in over 200 names being added to the bone marrow registry. In the fall of 2018 Josie went off to university. We wish her the best in her studies and in her future endeavours.

# AUROMA VOTES 2018



The 2018 Aurora Municipal Election took place on Monday, October 22, 2018 and made voting easier and more accessible than ever before by providing electors more ways and opportunities to vote.

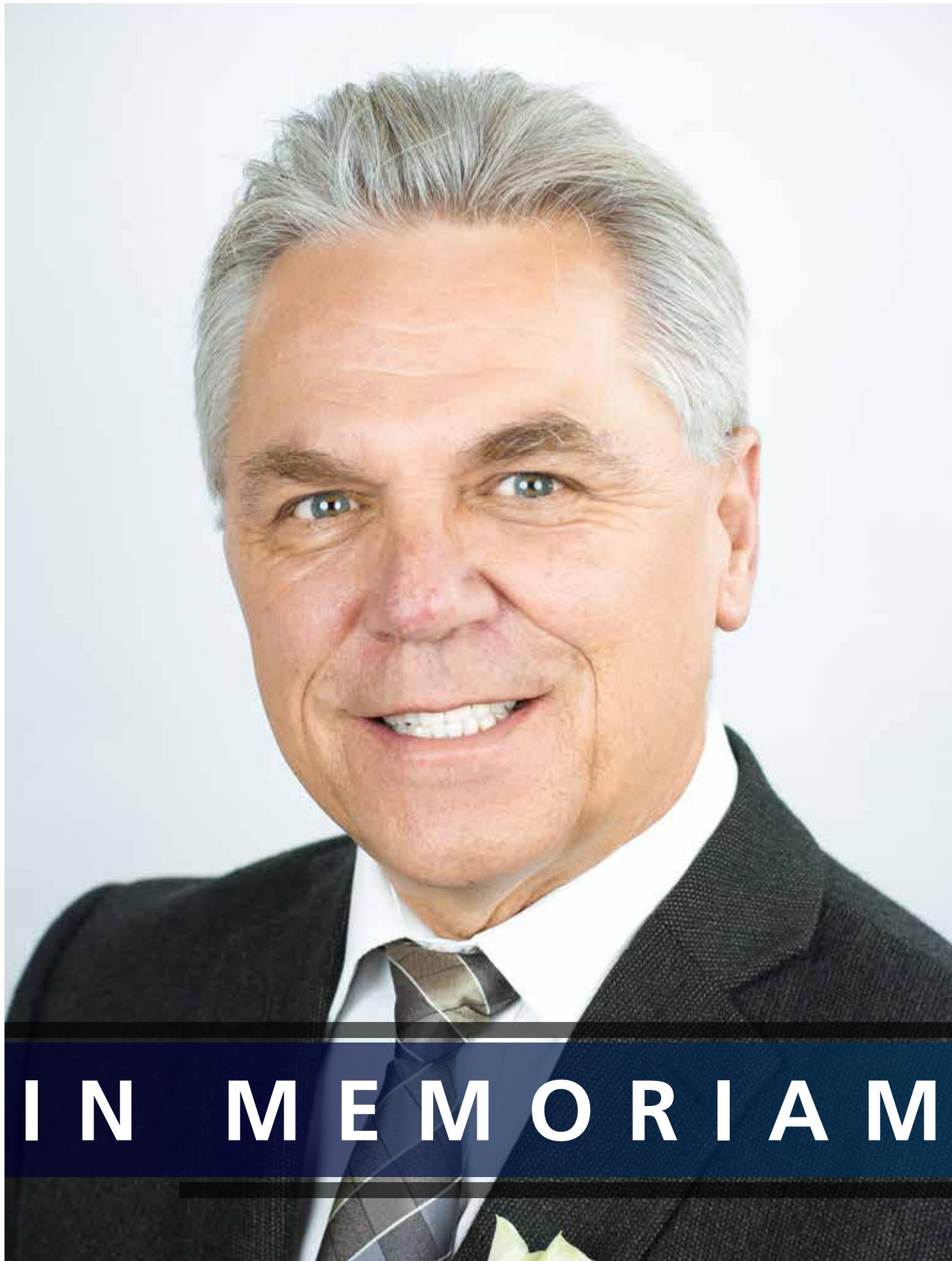
For the first time, utilizing a secure online app, electors were able to add themselves to the voters' list, as well as edit or update their information. They were also

able to vote online. In fact, internet voting was a huge success. Used throughout the advanced voting period, online voting accounted for approximately one-third of the total votes cast (4,226 of 12,518). This number exceeded staff expectations by almost double. The remainder of votes were done with traditional paper ballots in person in the advanced voting period, as well as on Election Day.

Additional efforts were also made by staff to engage residents in the electoral process. Public outreach activities provided targeted information to specific groups such as new Canadians, people with disabilities, seniors and long-term care residents.

In total, the voter turnout for Aurora was 32.1 per cent of eligible voters. Electors voted for one mayor, a school board trustee and six councillors.

Each general election provides more opportunities and ways to vote to meet the continued expectations of electors and this will continue to be a priority moving forward to the 2022 election.



# Remembering John Abel

In December 2018, The Town of Aurora was deeply saddened by the passing of former Deputy-Mayor John Abel. John served as a member of Council from 2010 to 2018. He also served on various local boards over the years including the Aurora Seniors' Association, the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame, Music Aurora, Central York Fire Services — Joint Council Committee and the Aurora Cultural Centre.

He is remembered by his colleagues on Council as a driven, passionate supporter of Aurora and its residents. He was well known for his determination and hard work on many high-level projects such as establishing Mavrinac Park (now called Thomas Coates Park), advocacy for a new home for Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, support of the Town's purchase of the Aurora Armoury and encouraging a new Cultural Services Agreement with the Aurora Cultural Centre.

John also had a passion for volunteerism. He was an avid volunteer with many local organizations. He loved music and playing his guitar. He even formed a band with former Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and former Councillor Paul Pirri called the Council Critters. The trio performed at several Town events.

He was loved by many in the community and will be greatly missed.

**I N M E M O R I A M**



# AURORA'S LIBRARY SQUARE

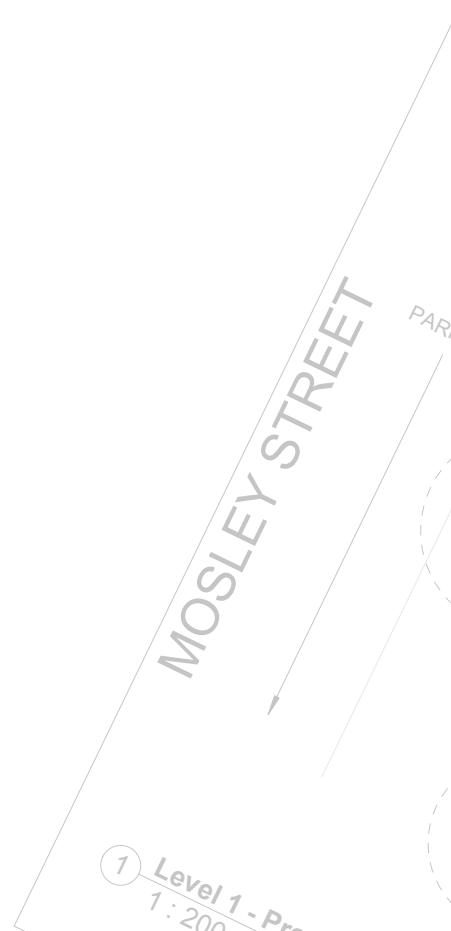
MOVES FORWARD

- Multi-purpose Performance Hall
- Performing Arts Studio
- Water Feature + Splash Pad
- Outdoor Skating Rink
- Large Atrium
- Link to Yonge Street & Library
- Music festivals, outdoor markets, theatre, dance and more!

With multiple community spaces and unlimited possibilities, Aurora's new town square will be a place where young and old can come together in all seasons to enjoy art, theatre, music, shopping, festivals, concerts, community events and activities. Although planning for the project began many years ago, 2018 was the year that plans finally began to fall into place and the true potential of the square as a catalyst for downtown revitalization came to be realized.

With a working name of *Library Square* the area includes multiple key spaces – a vibrant outdoor space, new community facility with performance hall and a bridge over the square linking the existing Aurora Public Library with the new building. The new community facility will be linked to the stunning and historic Church Street School via an atrium and will be connected to the library by a bridge that doubles as activity space. Recent approvals by Council will also see changes to the Yonge Street frontage of the Aurora Public Library, creating a link between our downtown main street and the square.

The approved addition to the Church Street School integrates Aurora's much-loved historic building with landscaped open spaces and a new cultural hub. Through its thoughtful design, which includes a triple height sky-lit atrium, performance spaces flooded with natural light and dynamic exterior architecture, the addition will complement the attached heritage building. Construction is expected to begin in 2020 with an anticipated opening in 2022.



# BREAKING GROUND

THE ARMOURY TAKES SHAPE

The shovels hit the ground in 2018 as the restoration of the historic Aurora Armoury began. The 144-year-old former drill shed for the 12th Battalion of Infantry (or Queen's York Rangers) was approved for a facelift in 2017, with the transformation expected to be completed late-summer 2019.

The building, which was historically used for town events, festivals, sporting events and political rallies, remained largely unused after the Town purchased the building in 2014 due to much-needed repair work. The restoration of the building involves re-establishing a link between the Armoury and Town Park making it a vibrant cornerstone of the downtown revitalization efforts.

The stunningly restored building will be leased to the Canadian Food and Wine Institute at Niagara College with classes slated to begin in the fall of 2019. The restored Armoury features a classroom, a teaching kitchen and light-filled event space. Outdoor space will include a patio which opens onto the park, enabling residents and visitors to enjoy world-class food and beverages while taking in the events and activities that already make Town Park an exciting community hub.



# ROGERS HOMETOWN HOCKEY



HOCKEY COMES HOME TO AURORA

## A WEEKEND OF FUN, FAMILY, AND CANADA'S GAME.

Aurora has always been known as a hockey town but in 2018 we took our love of Canada's pastime to a new level as we hosted Rogers Home Town Hockey. The Town was an official stop on the Rogers Hometown Hockey 2018/2019 Tour with TV personalities Ron MacLean and Tara Slone joining fans from across York Region in December.

The two-day festival in early December took over the parking lot of the Aurora Community Centre and included family-friendly activities, live music, giveaways and appearances from hockey alums former Toronto Maple Leafs goalie Curtis Joseph, Canadian Women's Hockey League star Laura Stacy and Olympic medallist Jayna Hefford.

On day two of the festival, Ron MacLean and Tara Slone hosted pre-game, intermission and post-game shows from Aurora while country music star Beverley Mahood helped keep attendees warm with her dance-worthy tunes. Aurora's own Junior A hockey Team, the Aurora Tigers, also battled against their rivals the Newmarket Hurricanes in a tense game inside the community centre.

Aurora was one of only two Greater Toronto Area stops on the 2018/2019 Rogers Hometown Hockey circuit.



# Santa Under The Stars



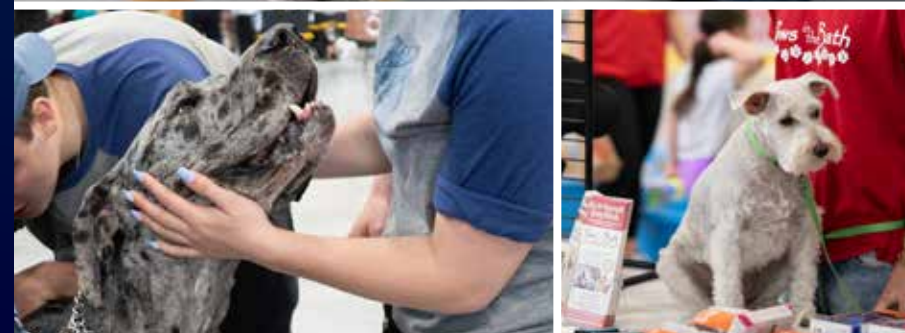
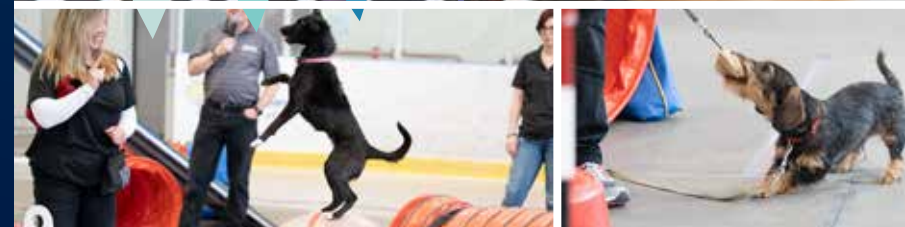
The Santa Under the Stars parade is an annual event set in late November. This evening parade has a spectacular display of beautifully decorated floats, festive walking groups and incredible marching bands. The evening parade spans a 2.4 kilometre route on Yonge Street from Orchard Heights Boulevard to Murray Drive.

It features creative displays, festive music and the magic of the season as Santa Claus makes his annual trip to Aurora. Patrons can shop the many restaurants and stores along Yonge Street before and after the event. The streets are (almost always) filled with thousands of residents and visitors waiting to see a glimpse of the man in red!

This event would not be possible without the support from many volunteers and sponsors such as the Northridge Salvation Army, the Optimist Club of Aurora, the Don Valley REACT and the great traffic control assistance from York Regional Police and their Auxiliary Units. Don't miss this annual celebration with your family, friends and neighbours.

TOWN OF AURORA

## PAWS IN THE SARC



The Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex went to the dogs on Saturday, May 12, 2018 during Aurora's first annual Paws in the SARC event. Members of the community - and their four legged friends - came together for a fun day filled with local pet vendors, information and demonstrations, including the Famous Ruff Dog Agility Show, where talented canines showed their athletic prowess in this fun agility course. What a great weekend celebrating our love of dogs and learning about responsible pet ownership. We cannot wait for next year's event!





# NEW TURF

In 2018, the Town of Aurora formally opened two new artificial turf fields at Sheppard's Bush and Stewart Burnett Park.

The turf located within Sheppard's Bush can facilitate football, rugby and soccer. The field will be used by many sports user groups from Aurora and surrounding communities. The venue includes a multi-sport artificial turf field with seating for 500 people, eight natural grass soccer fields, a picnic shelter, a washroom, snack bar, two parking lots, a fitness trail with several exercise stations and direct access to Aurora's trail system. The artificial turf field allows for increased hours of operation, lower maintenance costs, a longer season and fewer cancellations due to weather.

The new FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) regulation size artificial turf soccer field at Stewart Burnett Park is an exciting and welcome addition to our town. The park is located next to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) at Wellington Street East and Leslie Street and is the official home of Aurora Football Club. The field includes an electronic scoreboard and seating for 500 people. When the full park is completed in 2019 it will include a splash pad, playground, washroom facilities and a trail connection into the new wildlife park opening in 2020.



## AURA AWARDS

Recognizing Town staff's hard work.

On a daily basis, Town staff go above and beyond to make Aurora a great, inclusive community for its citizens. Whether it is through volunteering their time to aid those in need, going the extra mile to improve Town programs and services or coming up with creative and innovative ways to reduce costs and find efficiencies, these hardworking employees definitely deserve to be recognized. The Aura Awards is an annual event held to recognize outstanding individual staff and teams for their high-level achievements. Staff members nominate their



peers for outstanding achievements and hard work. Winners are chosen by a committee of fellow staff members. Awards include the following categories: the Great Idea Award, the Resourcefulness Award, Creativity and Innovation Award, the Health, Safety and Wellness Award and the Outstanding Performance Award. The ceremony is held in April and all Town staff are invited to attend. Congratulations to the 2018 winners! Thank you to Town staff for their hard work and dedication in making Aurora a better place to live, work and play. Keep up the fabulous work.





TOWN OF AURORA

# Christmas Market

2018

## Having a Holly, Jolly, Christmas.

Sparkling lights, Christmas carols and the magic of the holiday season enveloped guests at this year's outdoor Christmas Market. The expanded market provided three days of festive fun outside of Town Hall, kicking off on the Friday evening with our annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.

Kids big and small gathered around the tree sipping hot chocolate and listening to the brassy renditions of holiday music such as Jingle Bells and Frosty the Snowman, as they counted down to the moment when Santa made his big appearance and the large evergreen tree would light up the night sky. Then it was time for Mrs. Claus to captivate the kids with a reading of *The Night Before Christmas*, while the reindeer relaxed in the Petch House and visited with children and families.

Over the course of the weekend, guests wandered through the outdoor market enjoying our first-ever light tunnel, the festive atmosphere, caroling and buskers. With different vendors each day, there was always something new to check out, and opportunities to get creative with holiday workshops and theatrical performances. What a great kick-off to the holiday season.



# OPEN FOR ~~BUSINESS~~ FUN!

The Town of Aurora formally opened Thomas Coates Park in May 2018. Town Council and staff worked closely with the local community to create a park that has amenities for residents of all ages. This six-acre park features a playground, walking trail, open play area, basketball court, tennis court, pickle ball court and 15 parking spaces.

The park was given an interim name, Mavrinac Park. However, in early 2018, Council approved the proposal to name the public park after former resident Thomas Coates. Mr. Coates owned the property where the current park stands from 1854 to 1892, after which it was passed down onto many generations in his family. The process to design and build the

park from conception to its beautifully completed construction took approximately 18 months.

Learn more about our parks and trails at [aurora.ca/parks](http://aurora.ca/parks)



## CONTINUING OUR SUPPORT

### FOR THE UNITED WAY

Since its introduction in 1939, the United Way has been committed to helping Canadians and their families through responsible and effective methods. The United Way campaign helps support and change the lives for the better of the residents living in the local community.

The Town of Aurora has been a proud supporter of the United Way for more than 20 years. One hundred and forty Town staff members have raised over \$12,000, many using donations from payroll deductions and through fundraising events.

2018 saw a variety of events including the 5th Annual 5k Walk/Run at the Arboretum, a Silent Auction and a week of bingo card sales. 2018 also marked the first year Town staff participated in the CN Tower Stair Climb, adding to the overall donation amount.



12,000

10,000

5,000

2,500



# AURORA PRIDE

There's no shortage of pride in Aurora and June 2018 was our time to stand loud and proud with the LGBTQ+ community. For the first-time ever the Town participated in the York Pride Parade with staff and friends marching and enjoying the festivities. Decorated in rainbows, staff and members of Council joined thousands of festival-goers who lined Main Street in Newmarket to share the message that all are welcome in our community.

The rainbow flag was also highly visible at Town Hall in 2018 as we proudly joined with friends from York Pride, PFLAG York Region and other community groups to raise the flag at 100 John West Way. The flag flies outside Town Hall for the entire month of June as a beacon that shares our values of diversity and inclusion.



# TEMPLE OF FAME

Although much has changed in the past 100 years, the women of Aurora were still the heroes of the story as the Temple of Fame play took the stage a century after its last curtain call.

In May of 1918, the Town of Aurora bore witness to a small but impactful performance of the play Temple of Fame. Based on the poem by Alexander Pope, the play featured women throughout history pleading their cases before the Goddess of Fame as to why they should win the crown. Originally presented in Aurora in 1900, the play was updated with new characters for its 1918 remount, the year in which women in Canada were granted the right to vote. To celebrate the 100th anniversary, the Temple of Fame was modernized for 2018 by local artist and author, Corrie Clark.

1918

Local women vied for roles in this modern version of the play which, once again, featured famous women in both the recent and far gone past. In addition to the theatrical production, the Aurora Museum and Archives ran a Temple of Fame exhibit showcasing three themes: mounting of the production, the impact of WWI on the lives of Aurorans and the activities of women's groups. The exhibit also featured items from the original production and a costume from the 2018 remount.

This show was made possible thanks to the hard work of local community members and the Aurora Museum and Archives. Funding support was also gratefully provided by the Government of Canada. Performances ran daily from May 11 to 13, 2018, which coincided with the Mother's Day weekend, providing a special opportunity for the women of Aurora to celebrate together.





# FOCUSED ON BUSINESS

Aurora's Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) plays an advisory role, helping local businesses in Aurora grow and diversify. The corporation was established in 2018 and is responsible for working with community stakeholders to develop and maintain a community-wide Economic Development Strategy for the Town.

AEDC's Board of Directors is made up of eight local residents or business owners that represent various economic and geographic sectors of the Town. The Board also includes the Mayor, two members of Council and the Town's CAO (non-voting).

The main purpose of this group is to guide economic development activities and investment over short, medium and long term periods. AEDC is currently in the process of developing a five-year economic development strategy to help business thrive and revitalize business in Aurora's downtown core.

## ▶ 2018 FISCAL YEAR-END

The Town of Aurora takes fiscal responsibility seriously. Each year, the Town's external auditors complete a review of the municipality's financial statements and present them to the Audit Committee and Council. To view our full financial statements, please visit [aurora.ca/financialstatements](http://aurora.ca/financialstatements).

The Town's tax levy funded operations ended the year with a surplus of of \$896,300 driven by strong development revenues and other operational savings.

Actual total expenditures for 2018 were \$67,840,200 which was 5.8 percent or \$3,715,100 above the established budget of \$64,125,100. Total 2018 revenues (including the \$44,175,100 tax levy) were \$68,736,500, which was 7.2 per cent, or \$4,611,400 higher, than the \$64,125,100 budgeted for total revenue. These two variances result in the net surplus of \$896,300.

The Town's water bill funded operations ended the year with a deficit of \$321,300 most attributable to larger than anticipated wholesale water and wastewater treatment costs, as well as the one-time write off of uncollectable water receivables.



**\$896K  
SURPLUS**



**\$162.5K  
DEFICIT**



# HOW THE NUMBERS BREAK DOWN

## The Final Numbers for 2018

Numbers shown in \$,000s

DEPARTMENT	NET ADJUSTED BUDGET	FINAL ACTUAL	VARIANCE
COUNCIL OFFICE	\$632.5	\$607.2	4%
OFFICE OF THE CAO	\$1,846.3	\$1,773.2	4%
CORPORATE SERVICES	\$7,393.9	\$7,110.9	3.8%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	\$1,856.4	\$2,119.9	(14.2%)
FIRE SERVICES	\$10,484.2	\$10,496.4	(0.1%)
OPERATIONAL SERVICES	\$9,875.5	\$10,009.7	(1.4%)
COMMUNITY SERVICES	\$8,624.6	\$7,901.1	8.4%
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES	\$301.1	(\$161.9)	153.8% (due to larger than expected revenues generated by development)
CORPORATE REVENUE AND EXPENSES	\$4,071.3	\$4,029.5	1%
TOTAL TAX LEVY FUNDED OPERATIONS	\$44,453.3	\$43,278.8	2.6%
TOTAL TAX LEVY	(\$44,453.3)	(\$44,175.1)	(0.6%)
OPERATING BUDGET (SURPLUS) DEFICIT		(\$896.3)	1.5%

# KEY FINANCIAL HEALTH INDICATORS

As of December 31, 2018

KEY INDICATORS	DESCRIPTION	FISCAL YEAR		STATUS (Strengthening/Regressing)
		2017	2018	
Net financial position (\$'s)	Refers to the remaining book value of the Town's assets after deducting all liabilities. This value indicates the Town's ability to meet its debt responsibilities, and to have funds set aside for future sustainability.	\$535,598,000	\$537,909,000	Strengthening
Cash & financial investments (\$'s)	Taken from the financial statements, this value represents the amount of cash available to the Town for various purposes.	\$126,858,000	\$138,631,000	Strengthening
Total reserve funds, Incl. deferred revenue types (\$'s)	Total consolidated value of the cash reserves held in support the Town's future sustainability.	\$96,183,600	\$95,602,000	Slight Regression
Total net capital assets (\$'s)	The original value of all Town assets, less "amortization". Amortization is an estimate of the portion of each asset's value that has already been consumed through time, use, or wear.	\$453,402,000	\$459,416,000	Strengthening
Asset consumption ratio (%)	Represents the estimated portion of existing asset value that has already been consumed through time, use or wear.	28.7%	29.8%	Slight Regression
Capital reserve contributions includes all known infrastructure grants (\$'s)	Represents the amount of the annual contribution to reserves in support of the Town's asset sustainability.	\$10,916,000	\$11,949,000	Strengthening
Capital reserve contribution as a percentage of amortization (%)	The amount of the annual contribution to reserves in support of town asset sustainability compared to the total annual amortization amount.	74.1%	80%	Strengthening
<b>DEBT</b>				
Total external long term debt (\$'s)	Total value of all Town held external debt relating to the SARC & JOC construction and streetlight LED conversion.	\$10,842,000	\$9,695,000	Strengthening
Town legislated unused annual repayment limit (ARL) capacity (\$'s)	Total available Town annual repayment limit (ARL) capacity less annual total debt & interest payments. The total ARL capacity is equal to 25% of the Town's total net revenues.	\$17,357,000	\$23,790,000	Strengthening
Total debt payments as a percentage of the Town's ARL capacity (%)	The total value of the Town's annual debt principal and interest payments compared to its net revenues.	11.7%	4.2%	Strengthening
Total debt & interest payments (\$'s)	Total value of the Town's annual debt principal and interest payments.	\$2,033,000	\$1,006,000	Strengthening



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**Town of Aurora**

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