

The Cosmos is taking a break on Dec. 29, and will be back in your mailbox on Jan. 5, 2023. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



**HALLELUJAH** - *Messiah* is back! Despite missing performances because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and losing their beloved venue, Trinity United Church, The Uxbridge Messiah Singers gathered Monday evening in front of a sold out audience and, under the direction of Tom Baker, sang Handel's *Messiah* at the Uxbridge Baptist Church. There was a second performance on Tuesday evening.

*Photo by John Covers*

## Track problems force YDHR to cancel Christmas trains

by Conrad Boyce, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The York-Durham Heritage Railway (YDHR) has decided to cancel a number of trips at its busiest time of the year, and will be offering exchanges instead of refunds to thousands of disappointed customers.

The railway ran its last Santa Train on Dec. 11, says YDHR CEO John Perks, because of difficulties with the track, problems that could not be fixed in a timely manner because of a strike of Metrolinx employees, as well as a mechanical problem with the generator on one of

its locomotives. YDHR does not own its own track between Uxbridge and Stouffville, but leases it from Metrolinx, the GTA rail authority, through an arrangement with the Township of Uxbridge. YDHR will not resume service now until the first weekend in March.

Customers, about 7,000 in total, will not receive refunds for the 18 cancelled trips. The railway says that when booking, it is made clear to customers that the payments are non-refundable donations (YDHR is a registered charity). In lieu of refunds, customers were offered a chance to meet Santa at a tour of the YDHR yards on Dec. 17 or 18 (almost 4,000

took advantage of that opportunity), and will also be offered a free trip on the railway at some future time, as well as admission to its special event at Easter.

Some ticket holders expressed their disappointment and frustration with the situation online, namely on YDHR's Facebook page. The *Cosmos* attempted to reach out to some of these would-be passengers, but YDHR had removed the comments and/or turned off further posting.

As a registered charity, the YDHR has a board of directors, which set the non-refund policy

...continued on page 11

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## Council & Committee Meetings

### Meeting Schedule for December 2022 and January 2023

CANCELLED - Wednesday, December 21,  
7:00 p.m. - COMMITTEE OF  
ADJUSTMENT

Monday, January 9, 10:00 a.m.  
COUNCIL MEETING

Monday January 16, 10:00 a.m.  
GENERAL PURPOSE AND  
ADMINISTRATION

Monday January 16, 1:30 p.m.  
COUNCIL EDUCATION SESSION  
(Open to the Public)

CANCELLED - Wednesday, January 18,  
7:00 p.m. - COMMITTEE OF  
ADJUSTMENT

Thursday, January 19, 1:00 p.m.  
FINANCE COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 26, 1:00 p.m.  
FINANCE COMMITTEE

### Proclamations for January

January 15 – World Religion Day

January 21 – Lincoln Alexander Day

January 24 – International Day of Education

January 25 – Bell Let's Talk Day

January 27 – Int'l Day of Commemoration  
in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust

January 29 – National Day of Remembrance  
of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and  
Action Against Islamophobia

## Road Closures

Visit [uxbridge.ca/roads](http://uxbridge.ca/roads)  
for up-to-date notices

# Uxbridge at a Glance

The Corporation of The Township of Uxbridge  
51 Toronto Street South, P.O. Box 190  
Uxbridge L9P 1T1  
905-852-9181 [info@uxbridge.ca](mailto:info@uxbridge.ca)

## Employment Opportunities

Complete details and qualifications required for these positions are  
available at [uxbridge.ca/careers](http://uxbridge.ca/careers)

### Current Opportunities

#### Uxbridge Historical Centre - Curator & Manager

Closes Friday, January 20, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

#### Tourism Coordinator

Closes Friday, January 20, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

#### Crossing Guards - Resumés accepted on an ongoing basis

#### Box Office Volunteers – Uxbridge Music Hall - Interested parties accepted on an ongoing basis

*The Township of Uxbridge is an equal opportunity employer in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC). The Township of Uxbridge will provide accommodations throughout the recruitment and selection and/or assessment process to applicants with disabilities and/or needs related to the OHRC. Personal information provided is collected under the authority of The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.*



## Uxbridge BIA Board of Directors Wanted!



The Uxbridge BIA Board of Directors is a Committee of Council for the Township of Uxbridge that is appointed for the Term of Council. As a result, we are welcoming **NEW DIRECTORS to join our team!**

If you have ideas on how we can improve our BIA area, please consider this opportunity to help shape our business community and make a difference to the vitality of our community. Our mandate is to promote 'shop, savour, unwind, explore Uxbridge'!

BIA Board meetings are held on the first Wednesday evening of each month, at 7:00 p.m., and are held virtually on Microsoft Teams.

Interested candidates who wish to help plan, evaluate and vote on projects to support our BIA member businesses are encouraged to **JOIN OUR BIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.**

Applications will be accepted until Friday, January 6, 2023, by the undersigned.

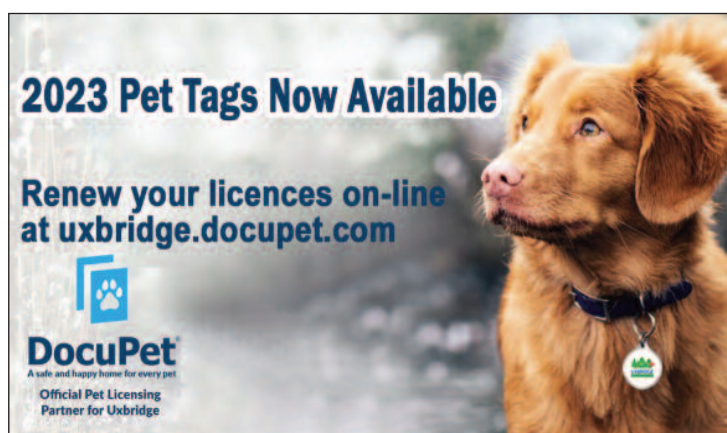
Debbie Leroux, [dleroux@uxbridge.ca](mailto:dleroux@uxbridge.ca)

Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

P.O. Box 190, 51 Toronto Street South

Uxbridge, Ontario L9P 1T1

Phone 905-852-9181, ext. 228 Fax 905-852-9674



Township of Uxbridge documents are available in alternate formats upon request.  
Please fill out the Request for Alternate Formats Form at [uxbridge.ca/accessibility](http://uxbridge.ca/accessibility)

email: [accessibility@uxbridge.ca](mailto:accessibility@uxbridge.ca)  
phone: 905-852-9181 ext.209

# Uxbridge at a Glance

## Uxbridge Township Board & Committee Appointments 2023-2026

The Council of the Township of Uxbridge invites applications from members of the public who are qualified electors of the Township of Uxbridge who wish to have their names considered for a four-year appointment (term of Council – expiring November 2026) to one of the various Boards, Committees, etc. **Any** person interested in offering their services, and would accept an appointment (including present members with expired terms), are invited to submit a Volunteer-Committee Member Application Form available on the Township’s Website [uxbridge.ca/volunteering](http://uxbridge.ca/volunteering) along with a letter of interest outlining relevant qualifications and experience to the undersigned by Friday, January 6, 2023. To view the complete list with ease, visit [uxbridge.ca](http://uxbridge.ca) and click ‘Board & Committee Appointments’.

Any questions regarding these appointments may be directed to the Clerk.

Debbie Leroux  
Director of Legislative Services/Clerk  
P.O. Box 190, 51 Toronto Street South  
Uxbridge, Ontario L9P 1T1  
Email [dleroux@uxbridge.ca](mailto:dleroux@uxbridge.ca)  
Phone 905-852-9181, ext. 228  
Fax 905-852-9674

**Accessibility Advisory Committee**  
This committee will provide advice to Council with respect to the Annual Accessibility Plan and matters relating to accessibility issues within the Community. Legislation requires the majority of the nine (9) voting members of the Committee to be persons with disabilities including visual, hearing, physical, speech, cognitive, perceptual and mental health. The other four (4) members shall include a Senior Citizen, a Member of Council and persons from the community with an interest in issues relating to persons with disabilities who may be employed by supporting agencies or parents of children with disabilities. Members shall be chosen for their expertise and commitment to the promotion and facilitation of a ‘barrier-free’ Uxbridge.

**Active Transportation Committee**  
To advise Council on matters pertaining to active transportation and to advocate for and assist with the development and implementation of the Township's Active Transportation Plan to maintain and enhance Uxbridge as a safe, vibrant and active community for people of all ages and abilities. UXACT will encourage, promote and participate in the planning of active transportation policies, programs and facilities and will advise Council on implementation of aspects of the Official Plan Downtown Vision, specifically to “enable people to walk or bicycle from downtown into surrounding natural areas.”

**Age Friendly Committee**  
The purpose of the Age-friendly Community Advisory Committee is to advise Council on the current state of age-friendliness of Uxbridge and recommend ways to optimize opportunities for residents to age in place and remain engaged in all aspects of civic and social life.

**Canada Day Advisory Committee**  
To plan, budget and organize the community celebration for Canada Day.

**Climate Adaptation and Transition Committee**  
The Climate Adaptation and Transition Committee requires volunteers with varying skills and backgrounds specifically in the areas of engineering, alternative energy, HVAC, IT, representation from the agricultural community, representation from the building industry. The Township will be looking to this team of 7-9 individuals to develop and move our climate action plan forward by providing advice, support and guidance to Council regarding climate change adaptation.

**Committee of Adjustment**  
The Committee of Adjustment is appointed by Council pursuant to the provisions of The Planning Act to deal with applications for minor variances within the Township of Uxbridge. Applications submitted by an owner of land requesting a minor variance to the Townships’ zoning by-law, in respect of land, building or structure or the use of the land are also heard by the Committee of Adjustment. **Qualifications:** Preference is members who have a professional designation or background in land use planning. Interviews will be held to fill the positions of this committee.

**Downtown Revitalization Committee**  
The Downtown Revitalization Committee provides a community perspective on how to achieve the Downtown Vision by providing advice to Council and Township of Uxbridge staff as it relates to carrying out and implementing the Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan and Action Plan.

**Economic Development Committee**  
Provide advice and recommendations to Council on matters relating to the attractions, development, and retention of all business sectors within the municipality inclusive of aggregates, manufacturing, commercial (personal service and retail), agriculture and home-based businesses.

**Fence Viewers**  
Fence Viewers are appointed and follow a process as found in the Line Fences Act to resolve issues relating to disputes between owners of adjoining properties relating to line (boundary) fences. Council is required to appoint no less than three (3) fence viewers. The Fence Viewers are called upon only when the Township receives an application for a viewing by a property owner. This does not apply to residential fencing.

**Heritage Committee**  
Function as an advocate for the preservation and conservation of heritage properties within the Township. Heritage Uxbridge shall advise and assist Council in matters relating to heritage conservation districts and individual structures and properties of historical, cultural and/or architectural significance.

**Library Board**  
The Library Board operates under the authority of the Ontario Public Libraries Act (R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44) and most public libraries or library systems in the province have such a governing board. The Board is responsible for

making policies for the operation of the Library; for obtaining adequate funding for Library materials, services and programs; and for promoting the Library in the community. The nine (9) Library Board members are appointed by the Township of Uxbridge Council for a 4-year term that runs concurrently with the term of the appointing Municipal Council.

**Museum Advisory Committee**  
The Uxbridge Historical Centre Museum Advisory Committee shall advise, comment on, recommend and assist Council with specific reference to the operation and management of the Uxbridge Historical Centre (Uxbridge-Scott Museum & Archives) and the delivery of museum services to the community in compliance with relevant municipal, provincial and federal legislation. The Advisory Committee will achieve this purpose by working with Council, Township staff, other Township committees, and related agencies.

**Music Hall Board**  
To advise Township Staff and Council on the operation of the Music Hall in a business-like manner such that the budgets are adhered to, the Hall meets the needs of the various users and the community and to ensure that the building, equipment and furnishings are properly maintained. To actively promote the use of the Music Hall by the community and various users so that the facility is utilised as much as possible.

**Property Standards Committee**  
This Committee, pursuant to the provisions of the Building Code Act, deals with matters related to the Township’s Property Standard By-laws and the Town’s Official Plan. When the owner or occupant of a property in Uxbridge, upon whom an order has been served by a Municipal Law Enforcement Officer, is not satisfied with the terms or conditions of the order, the owner or occupant may appeal to the Property Standards Committee. The Township of Uxbridge Property Standards Committee, in hearing appeals, has all the powers and functions of the officer who made the order and the Committee may do any of the following things if, in the Committee’s opinion, doing so would maintain the general intent and purpose of the Townships By-law and of the Official Plan or policy statement:

1. Confirm, modify or rescind the order to demolish or repair.
  2. Extend the time for complying with the order.
- A minimum of three (3) members who must be available to conduct site inspections of subject properties and be objective, possess relevant education component or equivalent experience and have an open mind in order to fully consider the evidence provided.

**Region of Durham Land Division Committee**  
One Citizen member to be appointed. Qualities associated with an appropriate appointment to the Regional Land Division Committee would include some knowledge of Provincial, Regional and Municipal Land Use Statutes, experience with public speaking, Diplomacy. The position would be similar to our Committee of Adjustment appointees. We ask the following:

1. Please provide a summary of your experience serving on a Board or Committee in an elected or appointed capacity for an agency, board or commission, ratepayer group or similar organization. Include the name of the Board/Committee/Commission, your years of service, and

an overview of your contributions.

2. Please describe your relevant education, occupational background, experience, and/or qualifications, and how your appointment will benefit the Committee.

**Santa Claus Parade Committee**  
Assist with the planning of the Santa Claus Parade.

**Tourism Advisory Committee**  
Given the wealth of cultural tourism attractions, events and the potential economic benefit to the entire municipality, a Tourism Advisory Board has been established as a Committee of Council to pursue this and other related initiatives. The proposed mandate/responsibilities are: completion of a draft Uxbridge Tourism Plan; coordination of the Tourism Ambassador program; liaison and coordination with Region of Durham Department of Tourism and Economic Development and Central Counties; manage data relating to events, cultural sites and media mappings; coordinate and evaluate promotion and marketing of events and sites; managing the execution of the Social Media policy as related to Tourism initiatives; and coordinate the production of brochures and tourism-related signage. We are looking for 6 to 8 members with tourism/event/digital media expertise to join the Board, with some representation from the following stakeholders: Trails Association, Chamber of Commerce, BIA, Agriculture, Culture, Hospitality and Recreation.

**Uxbridge Town Trails Committee**  
This Committee oversees the development of new recreational trails and maintenance of existing trails in the urban area of the Town of Uxbridge. The Uxbridge Town Trails Committee meets 3 to 4 times per year, and includes representation from local conservation authorities, Township Council, township staff, and trail volunteers. Committee members may also sit on additional working groups and assist with trail projects throughout the year. Community residents who are interested in trail development and are able to participate actively in discussions and projects would be most welcome.

**Goodwood Community Association**  
The purpose of this Committee is to make recommendations to Township staff for improvements to the facility and its operation, as well as bring any matters of concern to the immediate attention of staff. This committee will actively promote the use of the Community Centre by the community and various users so that the facility is utilized as much as possible. Meetings are conducted once a month.

**Sandford Community Association**  
The purpose of this Committee is to make recommendations to Township staff for improvements to the facility and its operation, as well as bring any matters of concern to the immediate attention of staff. The goal is to actively promote the use of the Community Centre by the community and various users so that the facility is utilized as much as possible. Meetings are conducted once a month.

**Zephyr Community Association**  
The purpose of this Committee is to make recommendations to Township staff for improvements to the facility and its operation, as well as bring any matters of concern to the immediate attention of staff. This committee will actively promote the use of the Community Centre by the community and various users so that the facility is utilized as much as possible. Meetings are conducted once a month.

# Our two cents

## It's been a heckuva year...

We took a moment to read the *Cosmos* editorial from this time last year, and we were struck by something it said: "If each of us steps into the new year with a resolve to be better, both for ourselves and the world around us, then maybe we'll be able to write a more pleasant editorial this time next year."

The editor must have been having a bad day, because it *was* a bit of a scolding editorial, not terribly Christmas-y. But, in her defense, things were a bit of a train wreck at the time. And now, as we sit here at the bottom end of 2022, we're convinced we're watching the same train wreck as it attempts to chug around a circular track.

Democracy in all its forms is in a precarious state all over the world, no more so than in the United States. For some odd reason, their former president has *still* not been arrested. Russia is still trying to pummel Ukraine, and climate change is a monster that looms larger every day. But these news headlines may not affect every one of us, unlike inflation - a global issue that is reaching into bank accounts and pocketbooks *everywhere*.

Here at home, Uxbridge had a rough year. A tornado knocked the entire township sideways, a fire took out a heritage building right downtown, and we lost an important member of the community when we lost Trinity United Church.

However, rather than focus on all the crazy wackiness that seems to be taking over the world, let's try to put a little positivity out there (and no, that doesn't mean saying "I am *positive* this world is going nuts...").

Be grateful that no one was hurt or killed during or after the tornado. Be inspired by the donations that came pouring in to help those who were affected by the storm. Be mindful of those who were displaced by both the tornado and the fire. Be thankful for the incredible buildings we still have in Uxbridge, and take care of them.

We're confident that 2023 will bring with it the beginning of an upswing in world affairs. Let's bring an attitude of gratitude into the new year, and fill the *Cosmos* with good news stories.

When one of these disappears, A LOT disappears.

Support our local businesses so they can support The Cosmos.

Because without them, we can't continue to deliver the news you want and need.

Your Universe

## The Uxbridge Cosmos

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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., Friday to 4 p.m.

9,600 copies of the Cosmos are published each Thursday in the Township of Uxbridge and delivered by Canada Post.

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## Letters to the Editor

Last week I was a virtual attendee at a morning-long seminar on Bill 23, arranged by one of the prominent Canada-wide law firms. Legal specialists in planning, environment, heritage, development charges and the Ontario Land Tribunal, all made informative presentations in their areas of specialty.

When I clicked the "leave meeting" button, I was left wondering whether this was happening in Canada, such were the many statutory changes, and curbed citizens' rights now made law in Ontario. All as a consequence of the Ford government's legislation, euphemistically called the 'More Homes Built Faster 2022 Act'. Now, ministers of many ministries will have the power to make Orders that cannot be appealed, in legal speak "a powerful instrument."

Indeed.

For example, a conservation authority can be ordered to issue a permit, presumably if it otherwise resists. Further, the CA's have been stripped of their environmental review (watchdog) function.

Citizen participation at the Ontario Land Tribunal will be restricted, and "losing" parties could be forced to pay costs to "winners," which most likely will be land developers.

This new Act was presented under the guise of "to build 1.5 million houses in ten years," yet I very much doubt whether any thought was given as to the building industry's capacity to achieve that objective. This tag is a front for the Ford government to reward its land development supporters, who have taken issue with the checks and balances put in place to prevent unbridled land development.

Finally, these far-reaching changes have been made after a mere 30-day - yes, 30-day - consultation period. And I find myself asking, is this really happening in Canada? The answer is, yes, in Mr. Ford's Ontario it is.

**Tom Fowle**  
**Uxbridge**  
**Former member of the**  
**Conservative Party of Ontario**

In my published letter (Letters to the Editor, Dec. 15 edition), the sentence beginning "Our council certainly played," etc., should be "Our council certainly appears to have played," etc.

My apologies.

**Albert Martin**  
**Uxbridge**

I am writing in follow-up to the Dec. 1, column by Conrad Boyce. Unexpected miracles, especially when they happen at Christmas, are particularly special!

Until I read Conrad's column, I did not know that the choir room at Trinity had survived the tornado completely intact! That, in itself, is absolutely amazing. Until the day that Conrad, Lisa and Jennifer took the time and effort to rescue the treasures that were held in that room, they would have been lost forever.

Like Conrad, I joined the choir at Trinity when I moved to Uxbridge in 1987. For the next 25 years, I continued to sing in the choir under the capable direction of Thomas Baker, then organist and music director. Since 1983, Handel's *Messiah* has been performed biennially at Trinity, with its superb acoustics, sacred ambiance and audience capacity to accommodate

800!

This year will be extremely poignant for members of the Uxbridge Messiah Singers, who for the first time will perform this great work in a completely new venue.

Getting back to Christmas miracles: many years ago, when I was choir librarian, I had compiled a complete list of all the choir music, AND, low and behold, it was still in my computer! Of course, I sent the list along to Conrad.

Although now gone, Trinity United Church will not be forgotten.

**Hilary A. Balmer**  
**Uxbridge**

Today, 14 families should be very worried about their loved one driving while under the influence, because that's the number of drivers the police charged last week.

Every resident in the township should be worried about loved ones travelling on the same road as a driver under the influence of alcohol or pot, because it only takes a second for that driver to miss a person walking, a car stopping, or forget where and what they're doing.

I'm worried because I have two daughters and grandchildren driving on these roads, and a grandson who lost both parents when he was three-years-old to a driver under the influence.

Please speak to your loved one about drinking and driving during this special time of year. Keep this time a time you want to remember as a beautiful memory for your family, and not as a tragedy.

**Bev Northeast**  
**Goodwood**



## Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

### Buyer beware!

Two admissions: I'm probably the world's worst shopper and I know next to nothing about marketing. Having said that, I find I'm becoming increasingly ticked off with the marketing practices of many retailers.

I recently purchased a package of Peek Freans digestive cookies at Zehrs. They were listed at two for \$8. I picked up one. When I went through the check-out (I refuse to use the self-check-out), they charged me \$4.95 for my package of cookies because I'd only taken one. If Zehrs can sell two packages for \$8, why can't they sell one for \$4? It's not as though Peek Freans needs to up its sales: they've been in business for decades. As far as I'm concerned, it's an example of gouging by the food industry.

Elsewhere in this edition, you will find a story about the York-Durham Heritage Railway cancelling its Christmas runs because of reasons beyond its control. That's too bad, but when YDHR turns around and says it won't refund the money many have already doled out in anticipation of those runs, any sympathy I might have for their plight dissolves instantly. Oh, says the YDHR, people can exchange those tickets for their Easter runs. But people didn't shop for Easter runs, they wanted the Christmas experience.

YDHR goes on to say that those who bought tickets should realize YDHR is a charity and the money paid goes to the charity as a "donation." After all, it's all there is the fine print of the terms of purchase. Since the vast majority of passengers on the special train runs come from out-of-town, it's highly unlikely they know YDHR is a charity, and even more unlikely they comb through the fine print to find out they've made "a donation." In my opinion, if YDHR can't deliver the product they've sold, regardless of why, they should be refunding the money.

Talking of refunds, there have been several stories in the news recently about retailers charging people "a restocking fee" for returning purchased goods bought online. I have been in many stores that had a sign reading "No refunds, no exchanges." Fair enough: the warning is right there in front of your eyes. But have any of you seen a similar sign advising you that you will be charged extra for returning a product? I doubt it. It's just another made-up excuse for retailers to gouge the

public.

I am currently in a battle with Rogers. In August, Rogers called me to tell me they were switching me over from the old Compton Communications service to Rogers' service. Rogers bought out Compton a few years ago. This month, I received a bill telling me I owed close to \$350! When I called Rogers (and managed to navigate my way through their endless recorded messages), I finally spoke to a real human being who informed me that I hadn't made a payment since August. When I pointed out that I have paid my bill every month, using the Compton bills that keep coming to my mailbox, the human being told me she had never heard of Compton. Another call a day later elicited the same admission from another "customer service" representative. My bank provided me with a printout of my account since August and it shows I have paid Compton close to \$600 since August. Rogers was unmoved. I drove to Urtica, where the old Compton compound now proudly bears the Rogers sign. The lone Rogers person on site gave me a number to call Compton, which I did. Guess what? The number is not in service, nor is their e-mail account.

So, someone has been taking my payments, Rogers says it's not them and Compton seems to have disappeared. And all Rogers can do is tell me it's my problem and I have to fix it.

And finally, as I pointed out in a recent column, one downtown venue sells chili for \$5 a bowl while another a couple of blocks away charges \$14.50.

That last example is, admittedly, an aberration. The majority of our local retailers and merchants give terrific service with reasonably priced goods and very often with a smile thrown in for good measure. But, thanks to the gougers and the greedy, I have refrained from making any purchases as much as possible over the last few months. And that includes groceries. The last time I did a shop at Zehrs. I came away with just two bags of groceries and a bill for over \$100.

The upshot is, I would never recommend YDHR, Zehrs or Rogers to anyone. But, in the long run, it's futile because they just don't care.

Tell me, am I wrong?



## The Barris Beat

column by Ted Barris

### Getting the Handel on Christmas

About 90 minutes into the Christmas concert at the Baptist Church on Monday night, the conductor signaled his entire choir and solo performers to stand, his musicians to be at the ready. Instinctively, those who knew the music stood in the pews. Then, Tom Baker brought down his baton for the climax of the composition.

"Hallelujah!" the audience and choir sang in celebration together. "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!"

I am not a church-goer. But I still love Christmas traditions, and they include attending performances of George Frideric Handel's masterpiece, the *Messiah*, presented every few years by our own Uxbridge Messiah Singers. Premiered in April of 1792, the work quotes scripture from the King James Bible and, I'm told, fills 300 pages of music manuscript. Astonishingly, Handel wrote the three-act oratorio in just 24 days in 1741 originally for performance at Easter, but during most of its 230-year history, it's most often been featured at Christmas. Indeed, by the end of the *Hallelujah* chorus, we were all singing, "He shall reign forever and ever" and thinking of the Christmas story.

Not since I served as an altar boy in several Greek churches as youngster, have I attended official church services (except for weddings). But that's not to say I haven't benefitted from visits to churches, mosques or synagogues. In 2014, during a tour of the Greek islands, I think I visited every religious building between Venice and Istanbul. But the jewel of them all was Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, where I learned that, in order to avoid religious strife between Christians and Muslims in the country, the Turks turned the mosque into a permanent museum.

Inside St. Peter's Basilica in 2008, I remember stopping beside a pulpit in the middle of the cathedral and looking up at the roof structure placed on an angle above the spot where priests would preach. I learned that the roof acoustically projected the priest's normal speaking voice throughout the entire church – it was known as "a sounding board" and it proved more effective in delivering the priest's words than even a public-address system.

Perhaps my most spiritual moment inside a religious building occurred in 1970 when – as a young broadcaster – I received an invitation to join a small audience inside Trinity College

Chapel at the University of Toronto. When my eyes adjusted to the dim light inside, I noticed that instead of an altar, the sanctuary featured a stage with a small rock band and a cast of singers. A couple of young men stepped up to microphones on the bandstand and introduced the cast of singers and what they referred to as "music history's first ever rock opera." With that, the band played the overture and the opening number *Heaven on Their Minds*.

"What's the buzz? Tell me what's happening," chanted the Apostles.

"What should you want to know? Don't you mind about the future, don't you try to think ahead," sang the featured performer, Jesus.

"Jesus Christ Superstar – tell us that you are who they say you are."

Yes, I had been invited to a sneak preview of a rock music first, introduced by its co-creators – lyricist Andrew Lloyd Weber and composer Tim Rice. And by Christmas that year, the popular music world was all buzzing about their blockbuster recording, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. And the preview all happened in that tiny chapel tucked away on the U of T campus that October afternoon. I guess that's why I've never shied away from attending musical events inside churches. They always seem to deliver their own kind of magic.

So, it was partly the tradition, partly the spectacle, partly the familiar music, but mostly the act of joining an audience during the holiday season that drew me to the Baptist Church on Monday night. Normally, the Uxbridge Messiah Singers have performed Handel's work at Trinity United in Uxbridge. With the tragic loss of the 134-year-old church during last May's tornado, the Messiah Singers needed a new venue, but the show had to go on. In the smaller Baptist sanctuary, I actually sat arm's length from conductor Tom Baker as he led the performance. ("You're all so close," Tom said at one point under his breath.) Still, Maestro Baker milked all four minutes of Handel's classically endless "Amen," to equally endless applause. Then, behind me, a member of the audience summed things up.

"OK, I've seen and heard the *Messiah*," she said. "Now, it's officially Christmas!"

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Pickering, ON L1V 1B4  
Telephone: 905.839.2878  
Email: [Jennifer.OConnell@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Jennifer.OConnell@parl.gc.ca)

# Count birds this Christmas!

*Submitted by North Durham Nature*

Calling all bird watchers! It's that time of year when we count our feathered friends!

It's the National Audubon North American Christmas bird count, when birders everywhere join thou-

sands of people across the country on the roads, in the fields and woods and backyards to look at and count winter birds.

This is Uxbridge's 18th year participating in the bird count, and if you have a bird feeder in Uxbridge or Scugog township, you may be included in the Count circle.

Last year, 53 different types of birds were seen in the Uxbridge circle. This year, a number of northern finches are expected to come down. Have you seen a Common or Hoary Redpoll? What about a Pine or Evening Grosbeak? What new birds will you see visiting your backyard?

Contact Derek at [ndnature7@gmail.com](mailto:ndnature7@gmail.com) for details on how to participate in this year's Uxbridge Christmas bird count.



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Tree Sparrow. Photo by Jay Thibert

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## Book Drunkard 'topped up' by government funds

The Book Drunkard Festival, a popular literary event hosted by local bookshop Blue Heron Books, announced Monday that it has received \$12,500 from the federal government.

The money, which is part of the Tourism Relief Fund, will "revitalize the lone literary festival in Durham Region," said a press release received from Shelley Macbeth, owner of Blue Heron Books, and the Festival's artistic director.

"With a slate of international authors, musicians and chefs on the roster, The Book Drunkard Festival is able to draw an audience from near and far. This past festival saw guests from as far as Timmins, Nova Scotia, Buffalo and Indiana," says Macbeth.

The money, which does not need to be repaid, will "help The Book Drunkard Festival adapt and recover to attract new visitors and drive economic growth in Durham Region," according to the release.

Rebecca Sanger, the executive director for the Festival, points out that Blue Heron Books works in partner-

ship with many area businesses, which means The Book Drunkard Festival is "able to inspire across a broad spectrum of festival-goers - children, sports enthusiasts, foodies, audiophiles - all are delighted!"

The Book Drunkard Festival is a literary festival whose name was inspired by an LM Montgomery quote - "I am simply a 'book drunkard.'" Books have the same irresistible temptation for me that liquor has for its devotee. I cannot withstand them." The Festival began in 2019, aiming to bring top-notch literary talent to the area and encourage visitation from out-of-town.

The federal government's \$500 million Tourism Relief Fund was created to help tourism-oriented businesses and organizations recover from the pandemic and prepare for future growth. FedDev Ontario is delivering nearly \$120 million of the Tourism Relief Fund across southern Ontario to help local tourism organizations and businesses welcome back visitors, recover from the impacts of the pandemic and prepare for future growth.



Wishing you and your family  
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Best wishes for  
this holiday  
season and the  
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# Debut director cuts teeth on iconic musical *Rent*

by Conrad Boyce, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It's a Wednesday evening at the com-

munity centre in Goodwood. The parking lot fills up with cast, crew and orchestra members from the On-Stage Uxbridge production of the

musical *Rent*, due to open at the Music Hall on Jan. 12.

As everyone doffs outdoor gear and goes over choreography notes, director Tanner Ferris, 28, scurries about the floor like a manic crab, laying down green tape so the cast will understand how the various elements of the industrial-looking set - scaffolding, risers, etc. - might impede their movements during the ensemble scenes.

Few, if any, of the company will appreciate that

being in this hall completes a quarter-century full circle for young Ferris. For it was to this place in 1997 that Tanner's parents brought the three-year-old for... a ballet class.

"They decided I was going to be a hockey player," he laughs, "and someone told them that to achieve the balance you needed to get to the big leagues, the best thing for a young lad was dance lessons. And ballet is what was available. Although I played for several years, and still enjoy yelling at the players on TV, hockey just didn't take."

Dance, however, grabbed Tanner big time. He loved everything about it, and although he took classes in every style imaginable, from tap to jazz to modern, hip hop was where he shone, competing across the province. He was accepted into the Etobicoke School of the Arts in the dance program, one of the few males

located on Davis Drive.

On high school graduation, Ferris says it was natural for him to audition for one of the few university dance programs around, at York University. He was accepted. His career, it seemed, was set.

"Then I stopped and took a good look at where I was going," he recalls. "In order to make a living as a dancer, how many other dreams would I have to set aside? Was there another way to share my vision as an artist?"

So he quit school, came back to Uxbridge, doing odd jobs to pay the bills, and began to throw himself into the world of community theatre.

"I learned every job - lighting, sound, marketing. I went onstage, helped choreograph, acted as assistant director. I've been on the board of OnStage for years now, because I needed to understand the decision-making that went into putting together a season, drafting budgets, making it all work."

This long and thorough apprenticeship, extended by the pandemic, finally paid off this winter season. Having developed a strong bucket list of plays he wanted to be a part of, Ferris convinced the OnStage board to let him make his directing debut

...continued on next page

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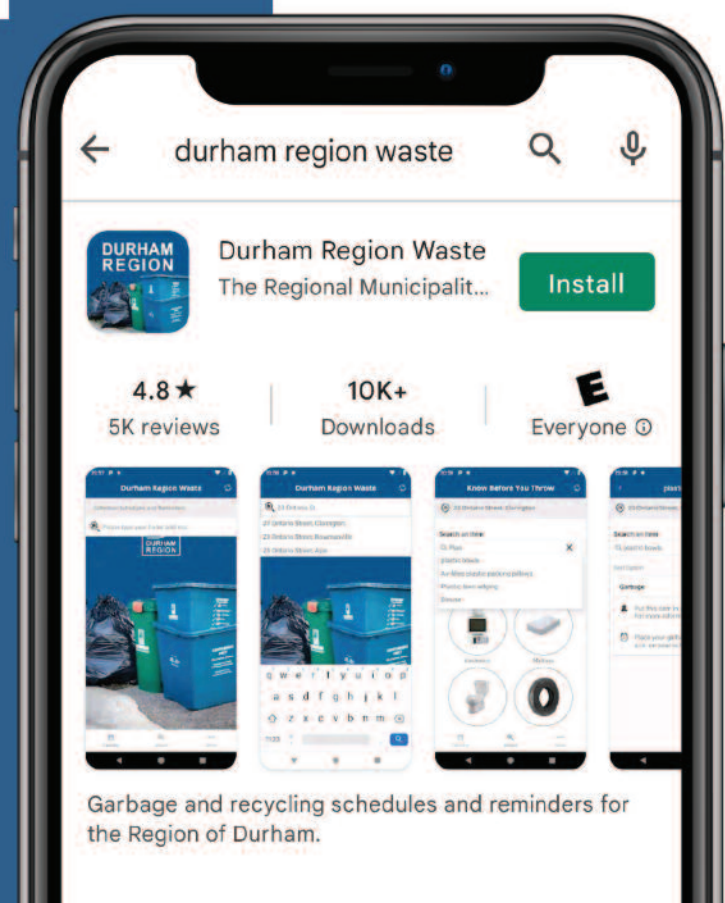
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# Acciaccaferri defeats the Eagles

by Roger Varley

Last Friday's match-up between the Uxbridge Bruins and the Clarington Eagles could be summed up in two statistics: Clarington out-shot the Bruins 45-17; the Bruins outscored Clarington 3-0. That anomaly was the result of an outstanding effort by Bruins goalie Noah Acciaccaferri, who recorded his first shut-out of the season.

Clarington dominated the Bruins throughout the game, limiting the home team to only four shots on the Eagles' net in the scoreless opening period. However, early in the second period, Anthony Lamanna passed the puck right through the Eagles' goal crease to where Quinn Meek was ready to pop it in the net. Ben Schmidt also

received an assist. Near the midway mark, Peter Kerr missed a golden opportunity to convert a pass from Lamanna as his shot sailed past the yawning net. As the period wound down, Caleb MacLeish scored Uxbridge's second goal, assisted by Joshua Czali.

In the third period, Lamanna lifted a beautiful backhanded shot into the net, with Meek and Kerr assisting. Matthew Gordon had an opportunity to increase the score on a penalty shot late in the period, but allowed the puck to dribble harmlessly off his stick.

The *Cosmos* named Acciaccaferri as the Uxbridge player of the game, while giving the nod to Carter Watkins for the Eagles.

The two teams remain tied for first place in the seven-team PJHL

Orr Division, although Clarington has two games in hand. The Little Britain Merchants are in third place, five points behind the leaders but with a game in hand on the Bruins. The other four teams continue to struggle, with the once powerful Lakefield Chiefs mired in the cellar.

The Bruins return to action tomorrow (Friday) night when they host the North Kawartha Knights at the arena at 7:45 p.m. The local lads then get an extended holiday rest, with their next game scheduled against the Knights on Jan. 7. Following that, the Bruins will make a rare Monday night home-stand against the Georgina Ice on Jan. 9 at 8:15 p.m.

## Debating with Rent, from previous page

with the show at the very top of that list - *Rent*.

For those unfamiliar with the musical, *Rent* opened on Broadway in 1996. It's a rock opera sited in New York's East Village during the AIDS epidemic. It took Broadway by storm, sweeping the major Tony awards, and ran for more than 12 years. It's also one of the few musicals to ever win the Pulitzer Prize for drama.

"I first saw it before I was even in my teens," Ferris recalls, "and it was the first time I recall sensing the power of theatre. I knew the characters up there, I knew kids experiencing homelessness, and drug abuse, and sickness. I just appreciated its messages even more as I grew older, the most important one being that you have to take love as it comes, and make the most of every day."

When asked what made him think Uxbridge audiences were ready for the edginess of *Rent*, when neighbouring communities stage safe family fare like *The Sound of Music* and *High School Musical*,

Ferris replied: "I never doubted the audience. The things the show deals with haven't gone away; if anything they're worse. And I knew I would find actors as passionate about it as me."

Ferris says he worried whether he could convince OnStage to let a rookie director tackle such a big project. Fortunately for him, the board said yes, "and I thank them

with his day job in the travel industry weren't enough, Ferris was thrown one more dream curve this winter: the opportunity to perform one of the biggest dancing parts of his career: the title role in Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* ballet. The Uxbridge Dance Academy, under founder Nancy Einsmann, performs the classic every two years, but emerging from the pandemic, were missing a key ingredient.

"Having the opportunity to work with Nancy and in such a spectacular role, I could hardly turn her down. It was so refreshing after eight years away from ballet technique to get back into it. It is funny how much muscle memory is lost in that time. It was a challenge, but with the help of my lively costar, Olivia, I am overjoyed with the progress that has been made. It has been a lot of fun."

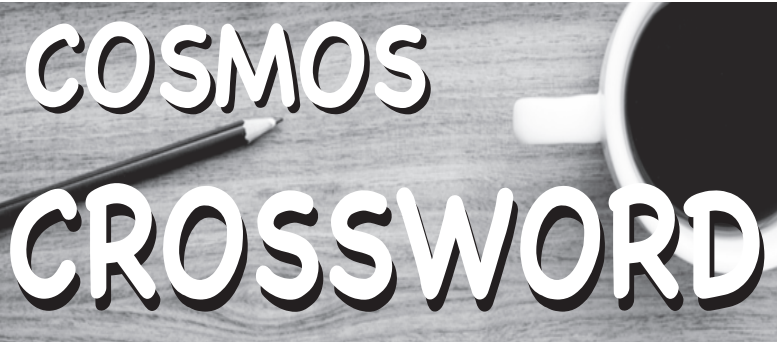
The kid standing in Goodwood Hall 25 years ago would be proud. Tickets for *Rent*, which runs January 12-21, are available online at starticketing.com



Rent director and choreographer Tanner Ferris demonstrates a move for actor Renae Wolsberger at Sandford Hall.

so much, and the decision has already turned out so well. We had an astounding turnout at auditions, and tickets are going well. The audience will love it. It's powerful, sometimes it's challenging to watch or listen to, but it's also hilarious. I'm thrilled with how it's coming together."

As if combining a very complicated first-time directing mission



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- Across**  
1 Male companion  
5 Mandela's org.  
8 Church recess  
12 Breathing organ  
13 "What nonsense!"  
14 Visit  
15 "Tosca" tune  
16 See ya!  
17 Beach crawler  
18 Former Yugoslavia  
20 Response to a captain's order (2 words)  
22 Say...what's up, \_\_\_\_?  
23 Music genre  
24 Study of plants  
27 \_\_\_\_ Josey Wales  
31 Piece of corn  
32 Before to Byron  
33 Type of refrigerant (2 words)  
37 Bring forward as evidence  
40 Articulate  
41 Evergreen  
42 Synchronized light  
45 Loyalty  
49 Rich, crumbly soil  
50 Astrakhan, for one  
52 Soccer score  
53 A single time  
54 G8 member  
55 Eye rakishly  
56 To peep out  
57 ESPN sportscaster, Bob  
58 Evergreen Asian tree
- Down**  
1 Reveal without thought  
2 Continental currency  
3 Liquorish flavor  
4 African republic  
5 Jurisdiction of a monastery  
6 Senate vote  
7 Like a miser  
8 Honour  
9 Prefix with legal  
10 Do in  
11 River to the North Sea  
19 Electrically charged particle  
21 "Yeah, \_\_\_\_!"  
24 Sleeping place  
25 Canoe equipment  
26 Have a go at  
28 Monetary unit of Romania  
29 Circle segment  
30 Tiny  
34 Chemical compound  
35 Hack  
36 Hottie  
37 Brawl  
38 Cease to exist  
39 Fire breather  
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44 Contest  
46 Seating area  
47 It's hard to believe  
48 The first matter, according to scientists  
51 Practice

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# Tornado relief funds released to local charities

by *Lisha Van Nieuwenhove*

Several local and regional organizations recently received almost \$85,000 from the Rotary Club of Uxbridge to support individuals and families most impacted by the tornado that devastated parts of Uxbridge on May 21.

The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) at Community Living Durham North, Feed The Need in Durham, North House, Salvation Army (Uxbridge Branch), and Team Rubicon Canada were all chosen by the Rotary Club because, according to the club, they “continue to play a critical role in alleviating

food insecurity and assisting displaced residents.” Those who were affected by the tornado and are still in need of assistance are encouraged to reach out to these organizations.

In the aftermath of the tornado, the Township of Uxbridge asked the Rotary Club of Uxbridge Charitable Foundation to become the central vehicle to receive and disburse monetary donations to assist those affected.

“Rotary is a trusted partner in our community, and well-equipped to assist. We knew they would be ready to help in any way they could. They didn’t disappoint,” said Mayor Dave Barton.

Donations came from the general public, local businesses, community

partners, and several Rotary Clubs across Ontario.

## Christmas trains cancelled, from page 1

several years ago, when the railway shifted from a volunteer-driven organization to one led by full-time staff. However, board chair Ron Layton said the cancellation decision was ultimately left to CEO Perks.

“It was a heart-breaking decision,” says Perks, “because it took away our two best weeks of the year, and a lot of children and families were disappointed at missing the chance to see Santa on the train. Unfortunately, when you operate a heritage railway, breakdowns happen. Usually they can be repaired within hours, but the strike really got in the way. The no-refund policy recognizes that for us, a lot of the money is already committed in advance, to staff, contractors and supplies. We just hope that everyone will come visit us again.”

YDHR now operates with 8-12 full time staff, depending on the season, and more than 50 part-time staff. Perks says about 85 per cent of those employees live in the Uxbridge area (in contrast to fewer than 10 per cent of its customers). Volunteers still play a large role in many aspects of the railway’s operation, from running the concession to keeping the tracks clear of brush.



Peggy Kennedy, of the Zephyr Public Library, and Bob Archibald display a plaque that commemorates the life of June Archibald. June, who passed away in April, was an active community volunteer and celebrated jam-maker, and is affectionately remembered by many as “an icon in Zephyr.” The plaque will hang in the Zephyr Library, of which June was an avid supporter.

*Photo by John Cavers*



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