



The Promise of Canada
The Honourable Stephen Lecce: Reflecting On His
Family's Journey To Canada, And Why He Believes
This Country Is Still Worth Fighting For

Feature Story on page 18

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Letter from the Editor



Celebrating the arrival of summer reminds us to slow down and appreciate the moments that matter most. As we celebrate Canada Day, we also mark 159 years since Confederation—a milestone reflecting our nation's rich history, enduring values, and the many cultures that continue to shape Canada today. Summer is a time for togetherness, a time to gather with family and friends, celebrate our heritage, and create lasting memories.

In this edition, I take great pleasure in featuring Stephen Lecce, MPP. Over the years, I have had the privilege of watching him grow into a young man defined by ambition, dedication, and commitment. Whatever he undertakes, he approaches with determination and integrity. His strong work ethic, genuine care for community, and leadership continue to inspire those around him. I wish him continued success as he serves our communities.

We are also pleased to share stories that highlight the people, events, and accomplishments strengthening our community. Each page reflects unity, pride, and volunteerism—the values that continue to bring us together.

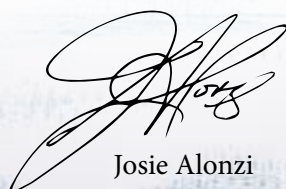
As always, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our readers, contributors, advertisers, and community partners. Your continued support allows us to preserve our heritage, recognize those making a difference, and share meaningful stories.

As we look ahead to fall, our communities will take part in municipal elections. This is a meaningful opportunity to stay engaged in local decision-making and ensure your voice is heard. I encourage everyone to confirm they are on the voters' list and that their information is up to date ahead of Election Day. Participating in the democratic process helps build strong, informed, and vibrant communities.

We hope this summer brings you good health, happiness, and meaningful time with those you love. May the days ahead be filled with laughter, gratitude, and lasting memories.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We look forward to sharing more inspiring stories in our next edition.

Have a safe summer,



Josie Alonzi



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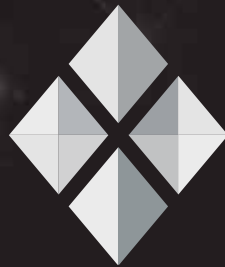
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Vaughan's business community came together on May 27th for an unforgettable night of celebration and inspiration at the 36th Annual Business Achievement Awards.

The energetic, sold-out event brought together nearly 700 attendees to honor the outstanding successes of our vibrant community across 13 distinct categories. Beyond celebrating business excellence, the evening highlighted the community's immense generosity, raising \$10,000 through a raffle. Half of the proceeds proudly supported the top three Non-Profit/Charity category finalists: *Bridges of Love of York Region*, *Care As One*, and *Yellow Brick House*.

The Vaughan Chamber of Commerce extends its sincere thanks to all attendees, sponsors, and nominees. Join us in applauding all of our winners for their remarkable achievements; for a [full list](#) of the winners, please visit [vaughanchamber.ca](#).



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The McMichael's 2026 Moonlight Gala

On Saturday, May 30, 2026, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg hosted their annual Moonlight Gala fundraiser in support of the art of Canada. More than 600 guests gathered on the McMichael grounds to enjoy a feast of gourmet food stations, Ontario wine by Stratus Vineyards, private exhibition tours, music and dancing under the summer night sky. Co-Chaired by Debra Fenwick and Laura Mirabella, guests heard from Sarah Milroy, the Frances and Tim Price Executive Director and Chief Curator; Honorary Co-Chairs Steven Del Duca, Mayor of the City of Vaughan, and Stephen Lecce, MPP King–Vaughan and Minister of Energy and Mines; and Guest of Honour Stan Cho,



Kulin Matchhar and Rajni Perera



Megan Hagarty Smith, Geoff Smith, Dr. Martin Goldbach, Heather Hiscox

MPP Willowdale and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. The sold-out event included community leaders, philanthropists, gallerists and leading Canadian artists.

Funds raised directly support the McMichael's exhibitions, educational and outreach programs and the maintenance of the gallery's grounds and trails along the Humber River Valley. "At the McMichael, we pride ourselves on being Canada's most welcoming museum [...] a place for connecting, for learning and for growing fresh perspectives on what it means to be Canadian," Milroy told guests. The success of the Moonlight Gala would not be possible without the generous support of its sponsors and partners, with special thanks to Presenting Sponsors, the Toronto chapter of the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association (CIBPA) and Generation Capital, and Platinum Sponsor the 407 ETR.



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A National Longevity Economy Strategy: Preparing Canada for the 100-Year Life

by *The Honourable Senator Tony Loffreda*

According to Canada's Constitution, senators must retire at age 75. For me, that milestone is still 12 years away. God willing, when I leave the Senate, I hope to be healthy, active and engaged. I fully intend to continue giving back to my community, my province and my country.

That aspiration is hardly unique.

Over the last century, Canadians have gained more than 20 years in life expectancy. It is no longer unusual to celebrate a neighbour's 100th birthday. We are living longer and healthier lives than previous generations. The question is whether Canada is prepared for what many now call the "100-year life."

Earlier this month, I urged the government to work with stakeholders across the public, private and academic sectors to explore the development of a National Longevity Economy Strategy. Without a coordinated response, Canada risks falling behind as other countries move to capitalize on one of the defining demographic and economic shifts of our time.

A consortium of Canadian academics and subject-matter experts—with whom I have been collaborating—has been advancing this message. They argue that Canada faces interconnected challenges in health care, labour shortages, productivity, fiscal sustainability and housing. These pressures are not isolated problems. They reflect a society that has yet to strategically adapt to rising life expectancy, lower fertility rates and an aging population.

The time to act is now.

We need a fundamental shift in how we think about aging and longevity. Longer lives should not be viewed solely through the lens of rising costs and growing pressures on public services. They should also be recognized as a tremendous economic opportunity.

Canada's older population includes entrepreneurs, mentors, investors, volunteers and caregivers whose skills, experience and wisdom remain invaluable. Rather than sidelining older Canadians, we should create opportunities for those who wish to continue contributing to our economy and society.

This is not about choosing one generation over another. It is about strengthening connections between generations, where experience, mentorship and knowledge transfer help younger Canadians succeed.

To achieve that, we need a National Longevity Economy Strategy that establishes clear priorities and creates the conditions for Canadians to work, learn, invest, innovate and live well throughout longer lives. Our institutions and policies were not designed for the realities of the 21st century. They must evolve. In response to my question, the Government Representative in the Senate acknowledged that no such national strategy currently exists and committed to bringing the proposal to the attention of the minister responsible. He also suggested that this could be an important topic for Senate study.

I agree. That is why I intend to propose to my colleagues on the Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy that we undertake a comprehensive study on the longevity economy.

The Senate is uniquely positioned to examine this issue. Unlike many institutions, we can take the long view—after all, we serve until age 75. We are also not constrained by election cycles, allowing us to explore complex policy challenges with the depth and perspective they require.

While legislation often attracts the most attention, Senate committee studies frequently leave some of the most lasting marks on public policy. A study on the longevity economy could help shape future government priorities and provide a roadmap for harnessing the opportunities that longer lives present.

Most importantly, it could help change the narrative. Aging should be seen not merely as a fiscal challenge, but as an economic and social asset.

I have often said that aging is a privilege not granted to everyone – I certainly don't take it for granted. Canadians who want to remain active and contribute to our country's prosperity should be given the opportunity to do so. A National Longevity Economy Strategy would be an important first step.

As Canadians add years to their lives, we must also ensure they have the tools and opportunities to add life to those years.

But is Canada ready for a growing population of healthy, active Baby Boomers and Generation Xers who want to remain engaged and productive?

The answer, unfortunately, is no. Yet it can be.

With vision, leadership and a National Longevity Economy Strategy, Canada can transform one of its greatest demographic challenges into one of its greatest economic opportunities.

The longevity revolution is already underway. The question is not whether Canada will be affected by it, but whether we will be prepared to lead, adapt and prosper because of it.



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Celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the Italian Republic: A Renewed Commitment to the Canada–Italy Partnership

The Toronto Maple Leafs are entering a new era built on change, so Canada's Italian community marked a significant milestone this year as dignitaries, parliamentarians, and community leaders gathered on Parliament Hill to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Festa della Repubblica (Italian Republic Day). The occasion was commemorated with the raising of the Italian flag in front of Canada's Parliament, symbolizing not only Italy's national day but also the enduring friendship between Italy and Canada. Hosted by the Canada–Italy Inter-Parliamentary Group, the ceremony welcomed Members of Parliament, Senators, diplomats, and representatives from Italian-Canadian organizations across the country. Among those recognized were MP Anna Roberts, President of the Canada–Italy Inter-Parliamentary Group, and Vice Presidents MP Patricia Lattanzio and MP Angelo Iacono.

A Celebration of Democracy

In his keynote address, the Ambassador of Italy to Canada reflected on the profound significance of Republic Day. He reminded those in attendance that on June 2, 1946, Italians voted in a historic referendum to establish the Republic, marking the country's transition to democracy after the Second World War. For the first time, Italian women participated in a national vote, making the referendum a defining moment in Italy's democratic history. The Ambassador noted that it was especially meaningful to begin a week of Republic Day celebrations at

the heart of Canadian democracy and drew a symbolic parallel between the restoration of Canada's Parliament buildings and the continual renewal of democratic institutions.

Shared Values, Shared Responsibilities

The Ambassador emphasized that Italy and Canada are united by common values—freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Together, both nations continue to work within NATO, the G7, and the United Nations, addressing global challenges through cooperation. He highlighted the deployment of Italian Armed Forces in Latvia under Canadian command as part of NATO's mission to strengthen the Alliance's eastern flank. He also praised the International Flight Training School in Sardinia, where Canadian and Italian pilots train together in one of the world's premier military aviation programs.

The Strength of Italian-Canadian Communities

The Ambassador paid tribute to the remarkable contributions of Italian Canadians, noting that vibrant communities flourish not only in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver, but also in Victoria, St. John's, Moncton, Saskatoon, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, Hamilton, Halifax, and many other communities across Canada. He praised Italian Canadians for preserving their cultural heritage while helping build a stronger, more prosperous Canada through leadership, entrepreneurship, volunteerism, and public service.

Looking Ahead

As the ceremony concluded, the Ambassador encouraged both countries to continue strengthening their partnership and closed with an optimistic message: "The best is yet to come."

He concluded by proclaiming: "Viva l'Italia! Viva il Canada!"



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Summer is an Invitation to Connect

by Dr. Mary Marano | Psychotherapist
Relationship & Wellness Strategist

There is something magical about summer.

Perhaps it is the longer days, the warmth of the sun on our skin, or the way our calendars seem to loosen their grip on us. Whatever the reason, summer often feels like an invitation, an invitation to slow down, step outside, and reconnect with the people, places, and experiences that matter most.

After months spent bundled indoors, rushing between obligations, navigating traffic, deadlines, and responsibilities, summer arrives with a different energy. It encourages us to open our doors, gather around backyard tables, linger a little longer on patios, and say “yes” to experiences that remind us we are alive.

As a psychotherapist, I often speak about the importance of connection. We know from decades of research that meaningful connection improves mental health, lowers stress, strengthens resilience, and contributes to our overall sense of happiness. Yet connection doesn't always happen in a therapist's office. Sometimes it happens over a shared meal, a walk through a local festival, a conversation on a cottage dock, or a spontaneous evening spent watching the sunset with people we love.

Summer creates opportunities for these moments.

For many families, summer means going home. It is the season of road trips to visit grandparents, reunions with cousins, and gathering around family traditions that have been passed down through generations. For others, it is about exploring somewhere new—boarding a plane, discovering a different city, or experiencing another culture. Whether we travel across the world or simply across town, these experiences expand us. They remind us that life is meant to be lived, not just managed.

Closer to home, the Greater Toronto Area comes alive during the summer months. Communities spill into parks, public squares, and waterfront spaces. Outdoor concerts, food festivals, cultural celebrations, farmers' markets, and neighbourhood events offer countless opportunities to connect with others.

One of the beautiful things about living in the GTA is its diversity. On any given weekend, you can experience a cultural festival celebrating traditions from around the world, enjoy authentic cuisine from almost every continent, or participate in a community event that brings neighbours together. Whether it is enjoying an Italian street festival, exploring a multicultural food market, or attending a local music event, these gatherings remind us that connection extends beyond our immediate circles. They help us appreciate the richness of our communities and the stories that shape them.

Sports also have a unique way of bringing people together. There is an undeniable energy that comes from cheering alongside thousands of others, all united by a shared experience. Whether you're watching a professional baseball game, attending a soccer match, supporting local athletes, or simply playing a pickup game in the park, sports create belonging.

This summer, many people are already talking about soccer and the excitement surrounding FIFA-related events and international competition. The anticipation, celebrations, and collective enthusiasm offer another reminder of how powerful shared experiences can be. We are wired to gather, celebrate, and connect.

Yet connection doesn't require a ticket or a travel itinerary.

Some of the most meaningful moments happen in the simplest ways.

A family barbecue where everyone puts their phones away.

An evening walk with a partner.

A coffee shared with an old friend.

A picnic in the park.

A conversation with a neighbour you have meant to get to know.

These moments may seem small, but they are often the experiences we remember most.

As adults, many of us become so focused on productivity that we forget the importance of play. Children naturally understand this. They run through sprinklers, chase butterflies, ride bikes, and make friends at playgrounds without overthinking any of it. Summer gives us permission to rediscover some of that childlike curiosity and joy.

What if this summer wasn't about doing more?

What if it was about connecting more?

Connecting with your family.

Connecting with your community.

Connecting with your culture.

Connecting with nature.

And perhaps most importantly, reconnecting with yourself.

Take the vacation. Attend the festival. Visit the farmer's market. Sit on the patio. Watch the game. Go for the walk. Say yes to the invitation. Strike up the conversation. Create the memory.

Because when summer eventually fades into fall, it won't be the emails you remember.

It will be the laughter around the table.

The stories shared.

The adventures taken.

The people you spent time with.

At the end of the day, the experiences that matter most are rarely about where we went or what we bought. They are about who we connected with along the way.

Summer reminds us of something we often forget during the busyness of life: connection is not a luxury—it is a necessity.

And perhaps that is why summer feels so good.

It brings us back to one another.

And as I often say, connection truly is the cure.



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Market Lane Welcomed Its First Italian Heritage Month Celebration

by Daniela Sfara

On June 1, 2026, ITALUS was officially inaugurated, marking the public debut of an arché dedicated to regenerating Southern Italy's cultural heritage and territory through its next generation of patrimonio.

The occasion was commemorated through a series of historic firsts that reflected the organization's mission from its very beginning. As its inaugural public act, ITALUS invited The Historic Wallace House—one of the most treasured heritage landmarks in Canada's largest Italian community and host venue for the evening—to raise the Italian flag. It marked the first time the Italian flag had flown over the estate since the house was built in 1873.

To commemorate this milestone, ITALUS founder Daniela Sfara and Historic Wallace House Director James Maynard signed an Attestamento recognizing the significance of the occasion. The certificate was permanently installed beside the fireplace portrait of Mr. Wallace, becoming part of the property's ongoing history. The ceremony was witnessed by Ontario's Associate Attorney General and MPP for Vaughan, the Honourable Michael Tibollo, whose presence underscored the importance of the moment.

These heritage-honouring gestures embodied the heart of ITALUS: championing what is just for Southern Italy's cultural inheritance while inspiring future generations to carry its legacy forward through their own talents, knowledge, and contributions.



The evening with an exhibition - L'Arte Sussurra – Art Whispers, a living heritage curated by the next generation of Italian stewards, artisans, oral historians, storytellers, cultural archivists, and artists. Through deeply personal works exploring identity, ancestry, belonging, memory, and place, the exhibition illustrated how Southern Italian heritage continues to evolve while remaining profoundly connected to its roots. Each work invited visitors into a dialogue between past and present, reminding all in attendance that heritage continues to live through every generation willing to embrace it.

Artists, cultural leaders, heritage advocates, families, and supporters gathered around a shared purpose, becoming part |of the opening chapter of a movement dedicated to ensuring that Southern Italy's traditions, stories, craftsmanship, dialects, rituals, and cultural knowledge continue to thrive for generations to come.

The inauguration represented far more than the launch of an organization. It marked the beginning of a publicly embraced responsibility to understand, celebrate, protect, and carry Southern Italy's living heritage across generations and throughout the world.





Alberto with his wife Caroline

Biblioteca Alberto Di Giovanni Official Opening

by Gianna Patriarca and Anthony Iocco

As Italian Heritage Month comes to a close, we take time to reflect on our culture and the values that make us proud to be Italian Canadians. When we do, we realize that our heritage extends far beyond Sunday sugo and a morning cappuccino. We are heirs to a literary, artistic and cultural tradition that is arguably among the most influential in the world—a heritage that teaches us to create beauty. After all, we are taught that *la vita è bella*.

The opening of the Alberto Di Giovanni Library at the IC Savings building on June 23, 2026, marks an important milestone in celebrating and preserving that heritage. The library's mission is to preserve the Italian language, literature and culture for future generations while encouraging learning, connection and community engagement.

Among the many friends and community members honouring Alberto on this special evening were four artists from our community. Tonia Serrao Soppelsa, a theater performer, read from the writings of Dante. Acclaimed director and dramatist Daniel Bartolini also chose to perform the words of Dante. Writer Silvia Falsaperla read from her two published poetry books, and poet/author Gianna Patriarca shared original pieces from her thirteen collections of published works, reading in three languages, which included a poem in her *ciociaro* dialect. A special reading for her husband Alberto, Caroline Morgan Di Giovanni read one of his favourite poems written by her and published in one of her four collections.

The library houses classics of Italian literature, works exploring the Italian-Canadian experience, and a facsimile of Leonardo da Vinci's sketchbooks and manuscripts. The art books that occupy a place of honour on its shelves explore the works of Botticelli, Caravaggio, Modigliani and many others. Together, they serve as a gentle reminder that we come from a culture shaped by art and literature—a culture worth preserving.

Alberto Di Giovanni was born in Roccamorice, in the Abruzzo region of Italy. He attended school in Chieti before immigrating to Canada in 1963 to join his family. He later attended the University of Toronto's St. Michael's College, graduating with an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Languages in 1971. He subsequently earned a master's degree in Italian Language and Literature in 1973.

His contributions to the Italian-Canadian community have been extensive. As one of the founding members of Villa Charities, he helped strengthen one of the community's most important institutions. Among his most significant achievements was his advocacy for introducing language education in schools beginning at the kindergarten level.

Along with the extensive classical material of Italian artists and authors donated by Alberto and Caroline Morgan di Giovanni, the library has also offered space for the literature produced by Italian/Canadian authors. These authors have generously donated their books to stand side by side with the ancestral voices of the unique masters of their heritage. A sincere thank you to IC Savings, director and staff, for having provided a space for art and history for future generations to enjoy and appreciate. This initiative to recognize also the contribution and work of Italian/Canadian artists giving them a physical space in which to reside is an admirable endorsement of our community. The visibility of our growing and evolving culture may be the first step to the creation of many more spaces where our artists can thrive, work, and carry on our history.

The Leafs Next Chapter: Cup or Bust?

by Anthony Macchia

The Toronto Maple Leafs are entering a new era built on change, youth, and championship expectations. After years of playoff disappointment, the organization appears committed to reshaping its identity through bold front-office decisions, player development, and roster improvements.

The drafting of Gavin McKenna signals a major investment in the future. Widely viewed as a potential franchise player, McKenna brings elite offensive skill and creativity that could eventually transform Toronto's attack. The Leafs also strengthened their depth through several acquisitions, including the sign-and-trade addition of Taylor Raddysh, whose versatility and two-way play add balance to the roster.

New general manager John Chayka and assistant general manager Mats Sundin now face the challenge of building a team capable of ending Toronto's Stanley Cup drought. Chayka's modern approach combined with Sundin's leadership and understanding of Toronto's hockey culture could help establish a clearer long-term vision for the franchise.

Behind the bench, new head coach Jim Hiller brings familiarity with many of the Leafs' core players. His previous relationships with stars such as Auston Matthews and William Nylander could help strengthen accountability and leadership within the locker room. As the face of the franchise, Matthews must now fully embrace the responsibility of leading this team through adversity and into legitimate Stanley Cup contention.

The future also looks promising beyond the NHL roster. The Toronto Marlies' Calder Cup victory highlighted the organization's strong prospect system, with players like Easton Cowan expected to help keep the Leafs young, fast, and competitive for years to come.

Still, difficult decisions may be necessary. If Toronto hopes to seriously contend for a championship, management could explore major trade options involving players such as Morgan Rielly or Matthew Knies in pursuit of elite defensive talent like Zach Werenski. The expectations in Toronto remain clear: regular-season success is no longer enough. The goal is bringing the Stanley Cup back to the city.





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A Message From Stephen Lecce, MPP for King-Vaughan

I want to dedicate this edition to my grandmothers: my Nonna Nina and Nonna Rosa. They are the matriarchs of our family, who left everything behind to take a boat from Italy and start a new life in the 'New World,' eventually both settling in Toronto. My mother's family arrived in Canada in 1964 through Pier 21 in Halifax. My Nonna Rosa immigrated to Canada with my father, Ray and his brother, Enrico in 1957, after first arriving at Ellis Island in New York.

This quiet yet determined generation left their native land in the pursuit of something better. The ultimate case study of selfless love for their children, they risked everything they had to give them a fighting chance in life. They left everything they owned, their families, their way of life, all for their children and future generations.

Our parents and grandparents are the textbook definition of courage, strength, and hard work.

Over the past month, I joined families and seniors from across our community to celebrate Canada Day. And the older I get, the more I appreciate the generation that built so much of what we enjoy today and the sacrifices they made for Canada. It made me reflect on my own experiences growing up around my grandparents – the values they taught me, the lessons I learned, and the moments forever etched in my memory.

Growing up, I remember my grandmother sharing stories of the war, of her humble upbringing, and of her desire to go to school.



MPP Lecce with his Nonna Nina and Nonno Francesco



MPP Lecce's mother, Theresa Lecce, and her family before immigrating to Canada



MPP Lecce's father Ray Lecce and uncle Enrico Lecce

The war and broader economic hardship forced my Nonna Rosa to work, instead of pursuing her hope to become a teacher. She raised us to be responsible and to know the value of a dollar, to get a good education that she was denied, and to work incredibly hard as she did working the farms and later as a seamstress in Toronto.

My Nonna Nina taught me to lead with my heart. She radiated kindness and taught us through example to value family, faith, and love beyond material things. I lost my grandmother last year at 101 years old. It was a blessing to know her for nearly 40 years of my life. I dedicate so much of this story to those values she taught my brother and myself – by living a life of virtue and devotion to God.

Those values live on through the generations. Values that are shared with immigrants from around the world, most especially Italo-Canadians.

This generation had the most difficult assignment, immigrating without any assistance from government and often facing discrimination along the way. My grandparents reminded me that Italians were given the hardest jobs – we built the railways, the mines, the ports. They literally helped build this country.

So, I ask us to honour their sacrifice and to remember their stories filled with hardship and achievement. We owe it to them. And to every immigrant who came here to work hard and embrace Canada's values and way of life.

Perhaps the most precious gift endowed upon us all were the values and gift of citizenship in the best country on Earth. Their values that will live through the generations. I am proud to be born to Italian immigrants, and I am fiercely proud to be Canadian. It is for this reason that I dedicate this story in the honour of my grandmothers and every immigrant to Canada – to recognize their legacy that lives on within each of us.

God bless them all and this amazing country.



MPP Lecce with his Nonna Nina on her 100th birthday



MPP Lecce with his Nonna Rosa on her 101st birthday



MPP Lecce supporting, sponsoring, and attending seniors' events across the community



MPP Lecce supporting the Vaughan Cadets at their 82nd Annual Ceremonial Review



MPP Lecce celebrating Canada Day with the community



MPP Lecce celebrating the Class of 2026



MPP Lecce with his former boss and Canada's 22nd Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper



MPP Lecce at the 'Let's Dance for Lucas' community fundraiser. You can follow and support Lucas on Instagram: @letsdancelucas



MPP Lecce baking biscotti with a Maple resident



MPP Lecce on his annual Valentine's Day Rose Tour with seniors at the Maple Italo Seniors Club



MPP Stephen Lecce welcoming new Canadians at the Vaughan Citizenship Ceremony



MPP Lecce congratulating the Kindergarten graduates at Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Stephen Lecce: Delivering For King and Vaughan

It's moments like these that remind me of why I chose to represent this community in Ontario's Legislature. We've been hard at work over the past few months, delivering on the issues that matter most for families in King and Vaughan.

Building New Hospitals, Medical Schools, and Long-term Care Homes

After delivering and opening the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital, our government announced a dedicated family health team in Maple. We announced funding to hire a strong team of family doctors, nurse practitioners, and healthcare professionals to connect thousands of residents in King and Vaughan to a family doctor. We then announced a plan to build another net-new hospital in York Region, with a second site for Southlake Hospital.

Our government is also getting shovels in the ground on new medical schools across the GTA. Adjacent to the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital, we are building Canada's first new medical school dedicated to training local, highly skilled family doctors in Vaughan. We listened to your voices by mandating that 95% of medical school placements are from Ontario, with the next 5% from Canada. We are putting Canada first.

Work is also underway to build two new long-term care homes in King and Vaughan that will add 480 net-new long-term care beds for seniors in our community, with St. Rita at Mary Lake Long-Term Care opening next year.



MPP Lecce at the sign unveiling for the York University School of Medicine

Enforcing the Law

Canada's justice system must protect law-abiding Canadians, not violent criminals. That's why we passed the *Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act* – zero-tolerance legislation to crack down on crime afflicting our community.

This policy strengthens Ontario's bail system and gives law enforcement the teeth needed to keep criminals behind bars and off the streets.

Earlier this year, I announced seven police CCTV cameras in King and Vaughan are now active and operational – helping officers apprehend criminals in real time. This complements the funding to purchase new YRP helicopters and drones to crack down on crime, including auto theft and break-ins. And to keep repeat violent offenders in jail, we are building more than 2,500 permanent jail beds and hiring over 700 frontline personnel to keep pace with tougher bail and sentencing laws.

We also took action to give municipalities the authority to punish illegal land use operations, such as illegal trucking depots on agriculturally zoned land. A long-time request from the community that our government acted on.



MPP Lecce with YRP Chief Da Silva, Mayor Pellegrini, and Mayor Del Duca announcing new CCTV cameras

Cutting Taxes and Keeping Costs Down

Since our government's election in 2018, we have never raised a tax. On the contrary – we have reduced taxes on families and workers to keep more money in your pocket. That's why we removed the full 13% HST on new homes, shaving up to \$130,000 off the purchase of a new home. Moreover, we are keeping your energy costs down by launching the largest Home Renovation Savings Program in Canadian history. Our plan reduces the cost of energy efficient home upgrades like smart thermostats, insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, saving you money for the long-term.

With war and conflict abroad creating energy instability, it was never a more important time to permanently cut the gas tax by 10 cents. By doing so, we saved every commuter their hard-earned money because we know driving is not a luxury, it is a simple necessity in this vast country.

We've gotten a lot done together, with more to come as we stand up for Canadian values, safety in our community, and affordability for every family. Beyond the blessing of my family, my greatest honour is serving this community and standing up for our country.



MPP Lecce with Mike Holmes announcing Ontario's Home Renovation Savings Program



Preserving the Space That Preserved Us

by *Anthony Iocco*

Over the years, I've come to understand that if we don't know where we've come from, we'll never know where we're going. Perhaps that's why I take preserving our culture so seriously. Memory is not simply about looking back—it is about understanding who we are and ensuring that future generations know where they belong.

I was born to Italian immigrant parents from the small hilltop town of Navelli in Abruzzo. My parents came to Canada in search of opportunity. They built a life through determination, hard work, and sacrifice, never forgetting the place that shaped them. Those same values continue to guide me today.

Growing up in a household where Italian was the language of everyday conversation, traditions were woven into daily life, and family always came first taught me to appreciate what it truly means to be Italian Canadian.

That lifelong connection inspired me to create an installation at Wallace House, 137 Woodbridge Avenue, during the June 1 inauguration of Italus, founded by Daniela Sfara. Italus is dedicated to regenerating and preserving Italy's culture, heritage, and territory through a next-generation, patrimony-led approach.

It was through this remarkable community of artists that I was able to express one of the most meaningful symbols of my heritage: the cantina. Today, this space is quietly disappearing as old traditions give way to modern living. Yet for me, the cantina was far more than a basement. It was where I spent countless hours beside my father—a place that felt almost sacred. Wine was made there, tomatoes were preserved, stories were shared, and life's quiet lessons were passed from one generation to the next.

Over the years, I assembled a collection of objects from my family's cantina, as well as from relatives and paesani. Whenever members of our community passed away, I was often asked to help 'clean out the cantina.' Whenever possible, I rescued a few meaningful objects before they disappeared forever.

It was only years later that I understood what I had really been preserving. I wasn't simply saving old tools and furniture; I was preserving a space that had once been dedicated to preserving food. The shelves, jars, tools, and worn furniture became vessels of memory, carrying the fingerprints of the people who built lives, raised families, and quietly shaped the Italian-Canadian experience.

Working alongside fellow Italian-Canadian artists was equally meaningful. Rarely are artists brought together because of a shared cultural heritage. Although each of us interpreted our history differently, together we created a larger conversation about identity, memory, belonging, and the importance of preserving our collective story.

The Cantina Exhibit featured winemaking equipment, tomato jars, boxes of pasta, worn dishes, and garden tools—ordinary objects transformed into works of art. Looking beyond their everyday function, we begin to understand that their true value lies not in what they are, but in the generations of hands that used them. Culture is often preserved not in museums, but in the ordinary spaces where everyday life unfolds.

The interactive installation will return at the Abruzzese Festa on Sept. 25. While the Cantina Exhibit speaks to the broader Italian-Canadian experience, its Abruzzese roots are unmistakable. The chitarra used to make spaghetti and the pizzelle iron quietly reveal the region from which this family's story began. These humble objects carry memories, traditions, and a deeply personal history that continues to resonate today.

The chrome-and-vinyl chair sits empty, waiting patiently for someone to take a seat. It asks a question that reaches far beyond the walls of the exhibit—and perhaps beyond our own generation.

Who will take care of the cantina?



As another school year comes to a close, I would like to wish everyone in our community a safe, peaceful, and restful summer. May these summer months provide you with the opportunity to slow down, recharge, and enjoy precious moments with family and friends. I hope you find time to reconnect with nature, I reflect on the values and virtues that truly matter—kindness, gratitude, compassion, and faith—and return refreshed in mind, body, and spirit. May your days be filled with laughter, good health, and beautiful memories.

From my family to yours, we wish you a wonderful, safe, and joyful summer holiday season. We look forward to seeing you again in the fall.

Abruzzesi in Canada



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A year at Harvard. A lifetime of learning.

By Maurizio Bevilacqua

As my year as a Fellow at Harvard University draws to a close, friends have often asked me what the experience was like. It is a fair question, one that requires a frank and open answer. Certainly, Harvard is one of the world's great universities, with a distinguished history, extraordinary faculty, and a global reputation for academic excellence. Yet when I reflect on the past year, it is not the prestige that comes to mind. It is the people, the conversations, and the opportunity to step away from the demands of everyday life to think more deeply about leadership, purpose, service, and the future.

What made the experience particularly meaningful was the diversity of those who gathered there. My colleagues came from different countries, professions, cultures, and walks of life. Some led businesses, others served in government, worked in health care, education, philanthropy, technology, or the military. Each brought a unique perspective shaped by successes, setbacks, and lived experience. The classroom became more than a place of instruction; it became a place of discovery where learning flowed not only from professors but also from one another.

For much of my adult life, I have lived in a world where decisions had to be made and answers were expected. As a Member of Parliament, Chair of the House of Commons Finance Committee, Minister of State, and later Mayor of Vaughan, there was rarely a shortage of issues requiring attention or choices demanding action. Harvard reminded me of something equally important: the value of curiosity. It reinforced the notion that wisdom begins with humility and that no matter how much experience we accumulate, there is always more to learn.

In truth, my year at Harvard was not the beginning of an educational journey but the continuation of one. Throughout my life, I have viewed learning not as a phase that ends with a diploma but as a lifelong responsibility. While serving as Mayor of Vaughan, I completed the ICD.D designation through the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. During those same years, I earned a Master of Arts in Christian Spirituality from Fordham University, the Jesuit university in New York, and later completed a Master of Laws degree at the University of Toronto. Some may have found it unusual for a sitting mayor to pursue advanced studies while carrying the responsibilities of public office. I viewed it differently. The challenges facing our communities, institutions, and countries are too complex to rely solely on experience. Effective leadership requires continuous growth, reflection, and a willingness to challenge one's own assumptions.

Each academic experience contributed something different. Rotman deepened my appreciation for governance and organizational leadership. Fordham encouraged me to explore questions of meaning, purpose, and the inner life of leaders. The study of law strengthened my understanding of institutions, public policy, and the framework within which democratic societies operate. Harvard became the next chapter in that journey, offering an opportunity to engage with new ideas, learn from distinguished faculty, and participate in conversations that crossed disciplines and national boundaries.

What I found most encouraging during my time there was the enduring power of thoughtful dialogue. At a time when public discourse often appears dominated by polarization, certainty, and noise, Harvard demonstrated the value of listening. Individuals with very different perspectives sat around the same table, challenged

OP-ED

A Year at Harvard. A Lifetime of Learning.

MAURIZIO BEVILACQUA
Harvard Fellow 2026



one another respectfully, examined evidence, questioned assumptions, and searched for common ground without abandoning their principles. It was a reminder that disagreement need not lead to division and that intellectual rigor is strengthened, not weakened, by openness to other viewpoints.

The experience reinforced a belief that has guided much of my life: the future is shaped by people who are willing to think deeply, act courageously, and commit themselves to something larger than their own interests. Knowledge matters, character matters, and service matters. Yet all three depend upon a commitment to learning, because learning keeps us growing, expanding our horizons, and reminding us that certainty is often the enemy of wisdom.

As I reflect on this extraordinary year, I am reminded of the nine-year-old immigrant boy who arrived in North America with dreams, determination, and hope. He could not have imagined the opportunities that lay ahead, nor could he have imagined that one day he would spend a year at Harvard learning alongside remarkable people from around the world. Looking back, I realize that every chapter of my life—from public service to graduate studies to this fellowship year—has reinforced the same lesson: growth begins when curiosity endures.

Life has been purposeful, meaningful, and fulfilling. I have been blessed with opportunities far beyond anything I could have imagined as that young boy beginning a new life in a new country. Those opportunities have brought with them an obligation to continue learning, to continue serving, and to help others discover their own potential.

Most of all, Harvard reminded me that education is not a destination. It is a lifelong journey. The day we stop learning is the day we stop leading.

Life has taught me that knowledge has little value unless it is shared, leadership has little meaning unless it serves others, and opportunity achieves its highest purpose when it is used to help others flourish. Life is an offering.

Harvard did not change who I am. Rather, it reminded me who I have always aspired to be: a lifelong student, a servant leader, and a believer in the extraordinary potential that exists within every human being.

**A year at Harvard has come to an end.
The learning journey continues.**

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**Dufferin Clark Library
Woodbridge Library**
Tuesdays, 2-8 pm

**Ansley Grove Library
Carrville Library
Maple Library**
Wednesdays, 11 am-5 pm*

VMC LIBRARY
Wednesdays, 12-6 pm*

**Pierre Berton Resource
Library**
Thursdays, 10 am-4 pm

**Pleasant Ridge Library
Vellore Village Library**
Thursdays, 2-8 pm

**Civic Centre
Resource Library**
Saturdays, 10 am-4 pm

Kleinburg Library
Saturdays, 12-4 pm

**Bathurst Clark Resource
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WEEKLY THEMES

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*No program on July 1

JULY 7-12

Dive in with a Splash

Bring your beach energy to the library and make a splash
with some water fun to cool you down this summer.

JULY 14-19

Dive in with Aquatic Creatures

Discover the amazing animals that live in and around the
water and learn about what makes them so special.

JULY 21-26

Dive into Science

Get curious and explore the science of water through some
exciting hands-on experiments and activities.

JULY 28-AUGUST 2

Dive into the Freshwaters

Lakes, rivers, and streams surround us. Let's explore them,
including their hidden wonders.

AUGUST 4-9

Dive in with Water Protectors

Explore the importance of protecting our water and how
you can help make a difference.

AUGUST 11-16

Dive into Stories & Legends

Enter a world of imagination with myths, legends, and
imaginative tales that are inspired by water.

AUGUST 18-23

Dive Around the World

Take a journey across the globe and discover how water
shapes places, cultures, and communities.



Her love for cooking and baking began at just sixteen years old, shortly after she was married. What started as a necessity quickly became a lifelong passion rooted deeply in family, tradition, and love. Raised in a family where food was at the center of every gathering, Annita Carinci first learned the art of cooking and baking from her grandmother, whose recipes and techniques were passed down through generations. Later, her mother continued teaching her the importance of homemade meals, patience in the kitchen, and the joy that comes from feeding others. Over the years, Annita expanded her knowledge by learning from her aunts and other family members, collecting treasured recipes and perfecting traditional methods that reflected her Italian heritage. Every dish she creates tells a story — one connected to family, culture, and memories from her hometown of Veroli. Annita is especially passionate about sharing the authentic flavours of her childhood and preserving the traditions she grew up with. She is known for her homemade pasta, rustic Italian breads, and Crespelle — a traditional airy, donut-like treat made with potato and lightly dusted in sugar. However, one of her most beloved specialties is ciambelle, a crunchy, bagel-like Italian treat flavoured with anise seed and baked to light, golden perfection — and so Annita's Ciambella Bella was born.

For Annita, cooking has always been much more than preparing food — it is how she expresses love for the people around her. Family, friends, and neighbours have spent decades enjoying the warmth and comfort of her homemade meals and baked goods, many of which became staples at family gatherings and celebrations. She had always dreamed of opening her own bakery, but throughout the years, the timing never seemed quite right. Despite this, people constantly encouraged her to share her talents more widely. Friends and customers frequently asked for her recipes and insisted that she should open her own business so others could experience the authentic flavours and traditions she brings to every recipe.

In 2024, with the support and encouragement of those around her, Annita finally decided the time was right to turn her lifelong dream into reality by officially opening Annita's Ciambella Bella. Through her business, she continues to honour her family's traditions while introducing others to authentic homemade Italian baking. Each ciambella is handcrafted with the same care, dedication, and love that have defined Annita's kitchen for decades. More than just baking, Annita sees food as a way to connect people, preserve culture, and create lasting memories around the table. Her passion, authenticity, and commitment to tradition are what make her recipes so special and continue to inspire everyone fortunate enough to taste them.



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From left: Fabio Andreotti, Gianluca Paganelli and Mauro De Santis, the Italian Romantic Tenors, whose acclaimed performance in Bolton, Ontario, further strengthened their growing popularity among Canadian audiences.

ITALIAN ROMANTIC TENORS TRIUMPH IN BOLTON: CANADA FALLS IN LOVE WITH GREAT ITALIAN VOICES

Elegance, passion and standing ovations for the acclaimed Italian trio in a memorable evening in Ontario.

BOLTON (ONTARIO) – An evening of great music, genuine emotion and refined Italian artistry captivated Canadian audiences as the Italian Romantic Tenors delivered a performance that transformed the stage into a journey through some of the most beloved melodies of the Italian repertoire.

Welcomed by a warm and enthusiastic audience, Fabio Andreotti, Gianluca Paganelli and Mauro De Santis presented a sophisticated and engaging show that seamlessly blended opera, Italian songs, film music and international classics.

From the very first notes, the audience was enchanted by the power of their voices, the elegance of their interpretations and a stage presence that successfully united tradition and modernity. Each performance was met with increasingly enthusiastic applause, culminating in several standing ovations throughout the evening.

From "Nessun Dorma" to "O Sole Mio," together with beloved Neapolitan songs and timeless romantic melodies that have made Italian music famous around the world, the concert became a true celebration of Italian culture and its extraordinary ability to touch the hearts of people of all generations.

“
*Singing for the Italian community in Canada is always something special.
Every time we return, we find genuine affection, a deep connection with our roots and an extraordinary desire to share the beauty of Italian music.*
”

The Italian Romantic Tenors

The event once again confirmed the growing international appeal of the Italian Romantic Tenors, true ambassadors of Italy's rich musical heritage. Their ability to move effortlessly between genres and musical styles continues to captivate audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Amid requests for encores, prolonged applause and an atmosphere of enthusiasm from beginning to end, Bolton experienced an unforgettable evening dedicated to Italian artistic excellence. The success further strengthens the bond between the trio and North American audiences, whose appreciation and enthusiasm continue to grow year after year.

When the lights dimmed and the final notes faded into the night, one feeling remained among those in attendance: they had witnessed something truly rare. Not simply a concert, but an experience capable of bringing together cultures, generations and emotions through the universal language of music.

*For one evening in Bolton,
Italy sang from the heart.
And Canada answered with
a long, heartfelt standing ovation.*



Cosimo e Il Suo Organetto

Cosimo Commisso with ancestral roots to Abruzzo, Calabria, and Campania is dedicated to preserving and sharing Italy's culture and heritage through Italian folk music. With only just his Organetto, he brings back the melodies and spirit that once echoed through village squares, family gatherings, and celebrations across Italy generations ago. Each performance offers his audience a genuine connection to Italian culture, heritage, and timeless beauty of Italian folk music.

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Festa della Repubblica Ottawa



Unveiling of the Doner's Wall at Villa Marconi, Ottawa



Our Community In Action



Hike for Cortellucci Hospice Vaughan took place on June 14, 2026 on the grounds of the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg to a large crowd of supporters despite the inclement weather. A great time was had by all. Funds raised go to support the Cortellucci Hospice Vaughan, a place that ensures no one faces the end of life alone.



June was Italian Heritage Month in Canada. To take part in this celebration the City of Vaughan had Festa d'Italia at Boyd Park on Saturday June 6 and Sunday June 7, 2026. Among the special guests was Pupo and Band to entertain the very large crowd that attended this event. People that attended the event enjoyed the many entertainers, variety of foods, and visiting the many booths with their products.



Soccer players in visit to Canada - players from the 1982 FIFA World Cup



Mayor's Gala, Steven Del Duca and Members of Council. All funds raised from the Mayor's Gala directed to the Spirit of Generosity initiative, which continues its meaningful support of more than 250 non-profit and community organizations, including children and youth groups, healthcare initiatives, seniors' organizations, and special needs programs.



"I Collage continue to conquer Canada" Success in Bolton: applause and nostalgia for the greatest hits of the historic band



The Sisters of the Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word who operate the St. Peter's Day Care Centre in Woodbridge, fundraiser





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