

Dignitaries salute Humfryes upon retirement after more than 30 years in frontlines



More than 100 people filled the bays of the Central York Fire Services' Ian Laing Headquarters on Wednesday afternoon to pay tribute to long-time Aurora firefighter Brad Humfryes, who is retiring after more than 30 years on the frontlines.

Representatives from all levels of government, from both Aurora and Newmarket, were on hand to salute Humfryes in a presentation that was both poignant and sometimes tongue-in cheek.

"Congratulations on an incredible career first with the Aurora Fire Department and then Central York Fire Services for Aurora and Newmarket merged fire services in 2002. From what I understand, as a boy he used to watch the fire trucks go up and down the street, sparking a life-long passion for trucks and firefighting," said Mayor Tom Mrakas, who said he was proud to know Humfryes as a friend.

"Your legacy is one of selflessness as you showed an unwavering commitment and willingness to face danger head on to service people, our residents. You should be incredibly proud knowing you made our community safe, stronger, and we're very grateful to your service."

Newmarket Mayor John Taylor echoed these sentiments, noting that "thank you is not a big enough word for what you have done in 33 years and what your colleagues have done."

"I want to pause and stand back for 33 years, you put yourself out there week in and week out in some circumstances you'll never forget and some of us here will never experience," said Mayor Taylor. "I too hope you have a fantastic retirement. I think it is going to be a great time for you. My piece of advice would be you've put your communities first, your people first, now it's time to take that hard work, energy, dedication and commitment and direct it all towards Sandra," Taylor concluded, referencing Humfryes' wife Sandra, who served as an Aurora councillor for 12 years.

The former councillor was a through-line in many of the speeches, often to great humour, as colleagues and friends looked ahead to all retirement has in store for them.

"Firefighters are often under-appreciated," said Ward 2 Aurora Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who serves as Chair of the Joint Council Committee, which oversees the Central York Fire Services. "The bravery and courage it must take to do their job is amazing. So, when a firefighter retires, they deserve all the thanks and the best wishes we can give. It also takes a special kind of courage to go into a burning building and save lives. Brad Humfryes, you have that courage and we are so thankful that you did so for 33 years."

?On behalf of JCC, thank you, Brad, Sandra and your family for your unwavering dedication and contribution to our community, ensuring we are kept safe. Congratulations and enjoy your well-deserved retirement and congrats on being able to love Mondays again like it's a permanent weekend.?

Being able to love Mondays again was no joke. Indeed, Humfryes previously remarked he was looking forward to not having to wake up ever again to an alarm clock. This was reiterated quite literally by Humfryes at the ceremony when he took an alarm clock out of his bag, placed it on the floor near the podium, and smashed it to bits with his heel ? to the laughter of friends, family, and, in particular, Sandra.

?When I was meeting Brad's friends for the first time? he was gone, I thought, Okay, where's Brad? Eight, nine, ten, eleven? he doesn't show up,? she said, underscoring his dedication to fire services shown early in his courtship when he dropped everything to respond to a call. ?I realized it is truly a calling and I am really proud of him ? and I'm proud of all of you firefighters, Captains, Platoon Chiefs, Chief? It's not an easy job, it's a calling. It's a family? and I want to thank you for welcoming me into that family, and Brad for everything you do for our family. You're a great guy!?

By Brock Weir