

Fire Chief's funeral set for Tuesday at Ray Twinney Complex



The community is remembering the life of service led by long-time Central York Fire Services Chief Ian Laing.

Central York Fire Services (CYFS) announced his passing in a statement on the morning of Thursday, November 30, stating he had died peacefully in his sleep overnight.

Lang, 71, was born in Scotland and came to Canada at the age of 4. He had served as Chief of the CYFS, which serves Aurora and Newmarket, since 2010 and was instrumental in expanding the service to meet the needs of two rapidly-growing communities.

"It is with a heavy heart that I share the news of Fire Chief Ian Laing's passing," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "Chief Laing served our community with dedication and courage, leaving an indelible mark on our Town. We are forever grateful for his leadership and commitment to public safety and keeping our community safe. Our thoughts are with Chief Laing's family during this difficult time."

Newmarket Mayor John Taylor, in the same statement, said it was a "sad day" for the CYFS, both communities, and the entire firefighting community.

"The Fire Chief dedicated 48 years of his career to fire services, and 14 years as the Fire Chief for CYFS," said Mayor Taylor. "Beyond CYFS, Chief was a leader in his field, providing mentorship, guidance, strength, and support to many across fire services as the Regional Fire Coordinator for York Region. Most importantly, he was a dear colleague and friend who will be greatly missed. Chief Laing was and will always be an integral part of Central York Fire Services."

Flags in public spaces across Aurora and Newmarket were lowered Thursday morning in his honour and will remain so until after his funeral on Tuesday, December 12, which will take place at 1 p.m. at Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex.

Laing began his life of service when he joined Mississauga Fire in 1975, where, upon his departure in 2009, he had risen through the ranks to Assistant Deputy Chief.

"Chief Laing's fire services peers will remember him for his love of running rescues, being on the auto extrication team and participating in competitions," said the CYFS. "In his personal time, he enjoyed rides on his Harley motorcycle and going on road trips with his wife. Ian Laing truly loved the fire service."

?Among many of the Fire Chief's accomplishments, his greatest source of pride was the construction and opening of CYFS Station 4-5 ? the first jointly-build fire station in the Towns of Aurora and Newmarket, which opened in 2022. This state-of-the-art facility not only helped CYFS respond to emergencies faster but also provided enhanced training and opportunities for staff to strengthen their physical and mental health.?

COMMUNITY LEADERS PAY TRIBUTE TO CHIEF IAN LAING

MP TONY VAN BYNEN, NEWMARKET-AURORA

?I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Chief Ian Laing ? my condolences to his family and to his family of firefighters. My relationship with Chief Laing dates back to my time as mayor and has continued to this day, a relationship that I truly treasured. Chief Laing served our community with dedication, pride and an unwavering commitment to excellence. I know Chief Laing took great pride in the building and opening of Station 4-5, the first fire station built by CYFS under the joint relationship of Newmarket-Aurora. But I also know, the Chief took great pride in all of his CYFS people and the community they served. Chief Laing was the consummate fire fighter ? dedicated, proud of his chosen career and absolute in his resolve to provide his community with the absolute best service. I will miss the sparkle in his eyes and the stories told by a gentleman I was proud to call a friend.?

MPP DAWN GALLAGHER MURPHY, NEWMARKET-AURORA

?I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Central York Fire Services Fire Chief, Ian Laing. Chief Laing had a phenomenal career with Ontario's Fire Services starting over 48 years ago in Mississauga. I recall chatting with the Chief on a tour of the new headquarters and he told me how 'back in the day, they did not have all the equipment they have today.' That always stuck with me as I thought of the Chief as a brave firefighter, a well-respected leader, the voice of reason and authority. He deeply cared for his team, and always advocated for supports that would help them save lives. To his wife, Deb, and his entire family, my most sincere sympathies to you all. Thank you for sharing your firefighter with our community members. Thank you for your unwavering support of the Chief. Without your support, the Chief would not have been able to make the difference that he made in serving Ontarians for a near half century. To the entire Central York Fire Services team, my condolences go out to each and every one of you. I know that the Chief was the heart of CYFS. I would like to think that his spirit will live on with all of you. Thank you for being the brave and fearless leaders in our community. Chief, when I received message of your passing, I was in the Chamber. I made a point of order and advised the members of the legislative assembly of your passing and thanked you for your service to this great province. May you rest in peace and may light perpetual shine upon you.?

RACHEL GILLILAND, AURORA WARD 2 COUNCILLOR, CHAIR OF THE JOINT COUNCIL COMMITTEE OVERSEEING CYFS

?Chief Laing was a salt of earth gentleman, who wore his heart on his sleeve and always had a smile on his face. Professionally, his number one priority was ensuring the community was safe. He was always on the pulse of what was going on in the fire stations to ensure his staff was taken care of, the right equipment was readily available for emergencies, welcomed new recruits, celebrated our veteran heroes, and collaborated alongside many Mayors and Councillors to ensure the budget was on point. One of his greatest prides was his involvement in the construction of the new CYFS Station 4-5 that opened successfully in 2022. Located on Earl Stewart Drive, this station provides emergency response and top of the line training to serve both Newmarket and Aurora. As chair of the Joint Council Committee, he treated everyone with the utmost respect, and I am grateful for his guidance and support in this role. He was a true leader and mentor for many across several firefighting services and will be sorely missed by all. On behalf of the JCC, we offer our sincere condolences to the family, dear friends, and colleagues. May you rest in peace.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter