

## Firefighting training centre will improve service close to home, Province-wide



Central York Fire Services' Ian Laing Headquarters is set to become a training hub for firefighters.

The Provincial Government last week announced funding of more than \$865,000 for the Headquarters, formerly known as Station 4-5 on Earl Stewart Drive, to realize a new state-of-the-art training facility that would bring out the best in firefighters close to home, as well as across Ontario.

The funding was announced by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy on October 3. She recalled first visiting the building with late Fire Chief Ian Laing, after whom the building was dedicated last month, who drew her attention to a few things key things left out of the project's budget that would help it achieve its full potential.

“The construction of the new training structure will not only enhance CYFS' capacity to train future leaders in fire and rescue services, but it will also ensure that our community is prepared to meet the ever-growing demands of emergency response,” said the MPP. “Investments like these will provide hundreds of aspiring firefighters with the tools and the knowledge they need to succeed, to be safe in this kind of profession. We want to ensure that our firefighters are all ready for the challenges that they face. That is what they deserve and this is what their loved ones expect from our government.

“We know that every second counts in an emergency. With this new [training facility] we are strengthening our local fire services' ability to train internally and locally, saving time, resources, and ultimately lives. Ontario is proud to invest in these brave men and women and in the resiliency of our communities they serve.”

The funding for this project, she noted, came from the Province's Skills Development Capital Stream, supporting skilled trades, including emergency response services.

Thursday's announcement was greeted warmly by the Mayors of Aurora and Newmarket, the two communities served by the CYFS. Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas said it was “hard to understate how critical” it is for firefighters to get the best hands-on training possible.

“That's precisely what this new state-of-the-art facility will allow Central York Fire Services to do right here in Aurora,” he said. “Establishing the CYFS as a true leader in rescue training also ensures our communities are going to continue attracting the best and brightest in the field, individuals who want to be part of the fire services' top-notch facilities, training programs and opportunities for career advancement. This is ultimately going to make our communities safer places with firefighters and recruits better equipped to serve residents.

?The prospective of Central York Fire Services becoming a real training hub in the Province is very exciting and is truly reflective of the way CYFS continues to modernize.?

Added Newmarket Mayor John Taylor: ?This is an important step forward because this is truly an investment. This is not a cost to anybody, this is an investment. We're spending dollars right here together? to ensure the best training we can provide to our fire services. The firefighters are willing to walk into a house on fire on our behalf; they better be ready to make sure they get everything they need to be fully trained and fully prepared, and when they're fully trained and fully prepared, it's a win-win because they're not just safer, they're more prepared for their jobs, [and] they are able to do a better job to keep our communities safe.?

The CYFS is governed by the Joint Council Committee (JCC), which comprises Council members and municipal staff from both Aurora and Newmarket. At last week's announcement, JCC Chair Councillor Rachel Gilliland (Aurora ? Ward 2) said communications, problem solving, spatial awareness, social confidence, time management, physical fitness and first aid are critical skills in firefighting and training and practice is key.

?Investing in these state-of-the-art training facilities is an integral part of keeping our communities safe, by preparing our firefighters to save the lives of others and protect their own wellbeing,? she said.

Added CYFS Chief Rocco Volpe: ?The new training structure will provide firefighters with the training opportunities to better protect and serve our communities?and help us prepare more effectively in times of need. Looking ahead, we envision this structure as more than just a training structure for the CYFS, we see it as an opportunity to build partnerships with private organizations and other emergency services, creating a hub for collaboration and sharing.

?At CYFS, we are committed to excellence and this new training structure will play a key role in helping us fulfil that commitment.?

**By Brock Weir**