

York Regional Police headquarters dedicated to former Regional Chair Fisch



By Brock Weir

After over 20 years in the public service, there isn't much left that can shock Bill Fisch ? but the York Regional Police found just the thing.

Mr. Fisch, who served as Chair of the Regional Municipality of York for nearly 20 years before announcing his decision not to seek re-election prior to last fall's municipal election, says he was ?shocked, stunned and surprised? when he learned of the YRP's decision to dedicate their Aurora headquarters in his honour.

?I am still a little stunned about it,? said Mr. Fisch at the recent dedication ceremony held on the steps of the Don Hillock Drive facility before an audience of family, friends, and colleagues. ?This is truly a highlight of my career.?

For Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, who serves as Chair of the Region's Police Services Board, the decision to dedicate the building in Mr. Fisch's honour was multifold.

?I think the most important reason was his incredible commitment and dedication to community safety and ensuring the Police Services in our Region was the best in our province, in Canada, and indeed in North America,? said Mayor Scarpitti. ?To say he vastly contributed to the success of the police service is really an understatement.?

His leadership on the Board was integral to enhancing the role of civilian police governance well beyond York Region, he continued, particularly in defining the term nation-wide.

?I know there have been a lot of questions about [police governance] over the last few years, but I can say you only needed to see Bill Fisch in action around the boardroom table and you would begin to understand what great governance was all about.?

These efforts included advocacy for changes in regulations governing access to medical marijuana and an emphasis on funding to combat guns and gangs. He was also instrumental in finding community partners to make the Community Safety Village in Whitchurch-Stouffville a reality, along with Yellow Brick House and the upcoming Belinda's Place shelter for women.

?Your impact will be felt for many years within this organization,? said Mayor Scarpitti.

For Police Chief Eric Jolliffe, the dedication of ?The Bill Fisch Centre for Police Excellence? was a historic moment for the organization. Mr. Fisch's commitment to the police, he said, has resulted in York Region being ?one of the safest communities in Canada, one of the best-run and most respected communities.?

"I can tell you as the Chief of Police, to be able to stand up and speak about how safe York Region is is a very proud moment for me," said Chief Jolliffe.

The relationship between Mr. Fisch and Chief Jolliffe runs deeper than simple interaction around the political table. They also served as co-chairs of the Provincial Special Olympics when the games were hosted in York Region in 2013.

"We raised over \$1 million for those games and, probably more important, we left a lasting legacy here in York Region," said the Chief. "We ensured that \$300,000 would remain here for Special Olympics here in York Region. As a member of the Police Services Board, Bill's leadership and guidance directed the success of this police service for almost 18 years.

"Security, safety and the quality of life have been top priorities for Bill in all his roles and what stands out for me is his proven track record to bring people and organizations together to address the most important community needs. He had always encouraged and modelled the importance of partnering with community organizations and encouraged York Regional Police to do the same. As a result of his ideals, guidance and expectations, York Regional Police has evolved as an organization that truly, truly makes a difference in its community."

Casting an eye over the metallic letters that now bear his name, Mr. Fisch said he accepted the honour "with humility and pride." When he first entered the public service over 20 years ago, he did so with an eye of ensuring the local police service was the best in Canada "an objective he says he is confident "without any hesitation" has been achieved.

"We should be proud of what we have accomplished and I am very proud to see my name here," he said. "I am very proud the Chief will pass my name every day. I am very proud to say we have worked so hard to achieve the goal we set out to achieve. I want to give all of you a big hand for what you have accomplished over the last 20 years. I am very proud to be a part of it."