

York Region's Deputy Chief lets his deeds speak on retirement



By Brock Weir

Members of the York Regional Police live by the motto "Deeds Speak" and that is exactly how Deputy Chief Bruce Herridge would like to be remembered as begins his retirement.

Herridge was feted by friends, family, and colleagues accumulated over his 40 years with the local police force at a special ceremony held at the YRP's Aurora headquarters on Thursday night.

Speaking to the full crowd of people on hand, he recalled an early mention of him in a Sudbury newspaper where he played hockey for his high school team. The reporter at the time had accompanied the team home on the bus after a particularly meaningful victory.

"He did his talking on the ice," reported the local newspaper.

"That is how I would prefer to leave this celebration, knowing what I have done in this organization stands on its own merit and is, in some cases, etched into the history of the York Regional Police," said Herridge. "On the ice, there were team leaders; behind the bench there were coaches and trainers, and in the stands were fans and supporters who believed in the team, who had nothing but the highest hopes for the team, not for one player, not for one moment, but for the entire hockey experience that season."

The same can be said, he added, of the York Regional Police.

Thursday's ceremony was a time of celebration, not just reflection, as members of the Force teamed up with heads of police organizations, members of York Region's Police Services Board, along with friends and family to pay tribute to their outgoing deputy.

Saluting his deputy, York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe recalled not just a personal friendship, but Herridge's efforts to ensure the York Regional Police were at the forefront of technology, advocating for new systems to keep the YRP ahead of the curve.

"He brought his innovation, inspiration, and drive to our service, as well as his well-rounded education," said Chief Jolliffe.

Herridge's work went well beyond the confines of police headquarters or on a particular beat, he said, extending to over 16 years work with Southlake Regional Health Centre, most recently serving three terms as chair of the Southlake Board of Directors and as past chair of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation, chairing the York Region Children's Aid Society, and being a key player in the success of Big Brothers Big Sisters of York, as well as Special Olympics, having been an important driver in the Ontario Summer Games which took over York Region this year.

'There is no question that Bruce has been a great pillar in our policing community,' said Jolliffe. 'Perhaps Bruce's most brazen manoeuvre was when we were in Philadelphia together [for a conference] and he suggested we had an entertainment choice. We could either attend the Flyers' game, or a speech given by our very dear friend Julian Fantino. We had never seen the Flyers before.

'It was with great pleasure I learned Bruce has been appointed the new director of the Ontario Police College, effective this January. I can think of no better place for Bruce [to spend his retirement] than to continue the long-standing commitment to learning, training and technology that he has always been committed to.'

As Chair of the York Region Police Services Board, Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti said he has come to see the positive influence Herridge brought to the force through his commitment to policing, community safety, and particularly advancing community safety through technology and education.

'You have been an outstanding mentor to many young police officers and a source of guidance and strength to many recruits who come through our doors, along with the entire team,' he said. 'Your impact and leadership extends beyond York Region. Louis Armstrong said, 'musicians don't retire; they stop when there is no more music left in them.' I think this philosophy really applies to Bruce. I am not sure about your music, but you have a lot more mentoring and a lot more inspiring to do with many young recruits.'

Looking back over the past 40 years, Herridge said he leaves with many fond memories of the force, having 'derived so much satisfaction' from working with the organization.

'Almost without exception, it is the people involved with those day-to-day conversations and activities that have made my career so memorable,' he said. 'Great organizations don't just cruise along. They continually work hard to reinvent themselves and be more efficient and responsive, and generally be the best they can be. Without exception there is always some type of oversight [and] I am indebted to the many people who have provided guidance to the YRP and, by extension to me, whether as a board member, a municipal, regional, or federal politician, or simply as a community leader.'