

YRP's Rouse hailed as 'picture of professionalism' upon retirement



Robertson Rouse wanted to be a police officer before he could even articulate why.

But, the 'whys' were quickly answered over his nearly four decades of service with the York Regional Police: 'passion for the community, equity and inclusion in all its forms.'

'I knew that it had something to do with seeking justice and preventing harms in the community,' said Rouse last week at the Aurora Armoury. 'Unfortunately, some of those times even came from those who were sworn to protect us. However, I knew that society could be a better place, a safer place, and I wanted to contribute to that cause.'

The Aurora Armoury was the scene of a fond farewell to Deputy Chief Rouse last Thursday night as he was joined by family, friends and colleagues to celebrate his retirement.

Rouse began his service with the York Regional Police (YRP) 36 years ago and served in a number of departments and districts before being appointed Deputy Chief in 2018, where he oversaw operations.

In a tribute to the outgoing Deputy Chief, YRP Chief Jim MacSween spoke of first meeting Rouse when they served in the same platoon in 1989. MacSween recalled Rouse's work as a detective serving in the Sex Assault bureau, a stint on secondment with Ontario's Ministry of the Solicitor General, and his role as Superintendent of Staff Services.

'The impact Robertson has had on our organization and the community can't simply be summarized by job positions and accolades,' said Chief MacSween. 'Robertson has had many letters of commendation in his personal file stating his dedication and commitment to teaching and interacting with youth in York Region. He has been recognized for the kindness he has demonstrated to victims of crime. He has been recognized by the City of Markham and the Markham African Caribbean Canadian Association for the tremendous amount of work that he has done with these community groups and many others. He has been presented with Black History Month awards and recognition of being an outstanding role model in the community and in our organization, and he has been recognized with the Gold Medal for Human Rights and Race Relations, an amazing award.'

He travelled to Jamaica in 2007 to assist in the building of an orphanage and was part of the clean-up crew when our first peer support house was opened on Davis Drive in Newmarket. For those of you who don't know, a lot of the wellness programs we have here today is in thanks to a lot of the work Robertson helped lead. He served for many years on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Committee, the first event being held at #5 District before expanding to welcome over 1,000 people to this truly outstanding event. He served as the Chair of the YRP Black History Month committee for many years. On top of all that, his friendship and very wise counsel is what I will remember best about Robertson.

Since MacSween took over as Chief in May of 2020, challenging times lay ahead in the world of policing.

At YRP, we listened and worked collaboratively with our community partners on coming to terms with the tragic murders of Black people in the United States, including George Floyd and many others. Robertson has been a calm and steady presence. Robertson has a true gift for working with our community. He is an exceptional listener and a firm believer in allyship with all of our partners. He has a talent for knowing when to lead and listen, and the incredibly insightful observations he is able to provide have guided our ECT (Executive Command Team) and myself through some very challenging times.

Among the supporters who stepped up to the mic to pay tribute to Rouse was Wayne Emmerson, Chair of the Regional Municipality of York, who spoke in his role as Chair of the Police Services Board.

For more than three decades, Deputy Chief Rouse has been dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of the community and residents, he said. His tremendous contribution to the York Regional Police has been recognized with countless awards and accolades, including Human Rights Relations Centre Gold Medal for outstanding contributions with race relations and the Order of Merit for Police Forces. As a strong, approachable and community-centred leader, Deputy Chief Rouse has helped position York Regional Police as one of the leading forces in Canada while at the same time tirelessly working to promote diversity and equity in our communities. It has been an honour and a privilege to work alongside Deputy Chief Rouse. And our residents and communities are stronger and safer thanks to his contributions.

Responding to the tributes, Rouse paid tribute to his family, friends and colleagues for their support along the way and wished, may the wind be forever at your back.

The thought that I could do something to bring about improvement in the community was an epiphany that changed my life and I wanted to play a bigger and bigger role in bringing about those improvements, he said. In my 36 years of policing in York Region, I have seen many different leadership styles and various degrees of passion and compassion. Each of those styles taught me to refine and define my own leadership. I learned early that my leadership was not about me, it should not be about my ego. It had to be about York Regional Police and the policing profession more broadly - not the rank that I hold.

I am going to miss the people who so passionately work to make York Regional Police a better place. This is a noble endeavour. I have no doubt that this organization will go on to greater and greater heights and equally anticipate learning about its future achievements.

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