

Central York welcomes six new firefighters at graduation ceremony



Central York Fire Services welcomed six new members to its team serving Aurora and Newmarket last week at a special ceremony held at the new fire hall on Earl Stewart Drive.

Taylor Dallas, Lindsey Hoffman, Chris Sargent, Bailey Van Praet, Jacob Watson, and Trevor Fulcher were celebrated on Thursday evening by their family, friends, team, and by dignitaries including area MPs Leah Taylor Roy and Tony Van Bynen, and Councillors Rachel Gilliland (Ward 2) and Wendy Gaertner (Ward 3).

Watson, who was unanimously selected by the new recruits as class valedictorian, said the CYFS had "made the dreams of six kids come true."

"Allowing us the opportunity to not only join the family of one of the best fire services in the Province, but at the same time being welcomed into two fantastic communities is something we will be forever indebted to you for," he said. "The training staff here at CYFS are some of the best if not the best training officers I've ever had the pleasure to learn from and work alongside. From all of us in the Class of 2023, thank you.

"We all dreamt of the day we got the phone call informing us that we had achieved our dream of getting hired. This was closely followed by something of an anxious waiting game wondering who you're going to be spending the first few months of your career with, wondering if everyone will fit in, wondering if the group will work well together, and most importantly if we will have fun doing it? Everyone clicked right away."

The June 8 ceremony was hosted by Deputy Chief Rocco Volpe who said the recruits completed an "intense training program" and graduate "equipped with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to respond to emergencies, protect lives and property, and uphold the values of Central York Fire Services to serve with professionalism, honour and integrity."

Volpe also shared a written message from Chief Ian Laing, who said "It's not what you do, it's how you do it. It's not what you see, it's how you live it."

"Thank you to all those who have attended tonight to celebrate the graduation of our six newest recruits. I am very proud to be the Chief of such a progressive fire department and with the support of JCC and Councils of Newmarket, we are building an ongoing organization that is dedicated to protecting the lives and properties of our communities.

"These are exciting times. We are coming up to our one-year anniversary in our newest fire station. This is the first recruit class that has been trained in our new fire headquarters. There are always challenges when you move into a new facility, however our team has

always pulled together to make the transition as seamless as possible. For the first time in our existence, the training division is housed in the same building as the chief officers. I have been exposed to the recruits more than any other group we have hired since 2010 and I cherish every moment of it.?

Joining in the congratulations, MP Van Bynen (Newmarket-Aurora) said he was 'honoured and pleased to be there,' noting the grads' achievements were completed through 'hard work, excelling at training opportunities, and constantly demonstrating that you are the best of the best.?'

'Being invited to join the CYFS is an honour but one that comes with huge responsibilities. You're joining an exceptional fire department, one with great leadership, outstanding teams that are committed to providing our community with exceptional service. You're joining a team on the cutting edge of technology and training, equipped with the tools that allow our community to feel safe and supported in any situation.?'

In her congratulations, MP Taylor Roy (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill) said she appreciates the CYFS at a very personal level as well, as they saved the life of her husband after a serious heart attack at their Aurora home last year.

'What you're doing, the job that you're taking on here, is so important to our communities and I hope that you're very proud of your accomplishments and what you do for us,' she said. 'To all the families and friends of these new recruits, thank you for supporting them. Thank you for being there and allowing them to take on this role, which is one of great bravery, service and compassion. It means a great deal to our communities.?'

Added Councillor Gilliland: 'All of you must be very, very extraordinary individuals to endure nine weeks of this very tough life skill training to help protect us in the community. Much respect to the hard work that you guys and gals do to be here today. You will begin your journey to protect and serve our community in ways that we, our community, cannot thank you enough.?'

Additional words of congratulations were sent in via video by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, and Mayor Tom Mrakas.

'Only a select few make it this far. You should each be very proud of how far you have all come. In addition to congratulating you, I also want to thank you for your dedication to serving our community,' said Mayor Mrakas. 'You have answered the call of public service and made a commitment to protect our residents. I also want to thank the families and new recruits who have provided their support and guidance throughout this journey. You have all helped create strong, more talented frontline heroes and you should be very proud.?'

By Brock Weir
Editor
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