

Fantino named new chief

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hundred years or so. Bryan Smith of Environment Canada told us early in the year that "this is the warmest February here since we began to keep records in 1840."

On those few occasions when we weren't preoccupied with the weather in 1998, it's likely we were following the chronicle of the York Regional Police force.

Topping a year jammed with police-related news was the appointment of a high-profile police chief. Julian Fantino, who was chief in London, was named the new York Region chief in June.

Fantino arrived here in a flood of high expectations, promising to end the turmoil surrounding the police force over the retirement of former chief Bryan Cousineau and subsequent breach of trust convictions against him, reports of low morale among the rank-and-file and a bitter feud between police union chief Paul Bailey and police board chairperson Eldred King.

"Let me put it to bed once and for all," said Fantino. "There's a new leader, new vision and we don't dwell in the past. There's no point in even talking about it any more. It matters not to me."

Eldred King, who made 1997's newsmaker list last year when he retired after 13 years as chairperson of York Region, makes this year's list as a very active retiree.

Shortly after his retirement, which included stepping down from the police commission and the GO Transit board, King returned as chairperson of both boards.

When asked about his short-lived retirement, he snapped, "Am I supposed to fold up and die? Apparently, you think I'm out to get whatever I can, which is so wrong. We all have a responsibility in this world — it's to look after others as well as ourselves. That's what I choose to do. If I feel I can offer something, I will do that."

In November, though, King again retired from the police board, but had little to say about his reasons.

"It'll just drag up things that are in the past. It'll just give (police union president) Paul Bailey another chance to say things about

me." One of the year's most notable newsmakers was Markham Mayor Don Cousens. The former Tory cabinet minister was one of the most vocal critics of the Mike Harris Tories on a number of fronts — including his efforts to get all GTA mayors to march on Queen's Park in a property tax protest.

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— Don Cousens

"Does it take a death in the emergency room to realize there's a crisis in health care? Does it take the death of small business for the province to understand we have a tax issue?" he railed at a meeting of GTA mayors in October.

Another newsmaker who refused to toe any party lines was Bryon Wilfert, area MP.

He was one of only two Liberals to support an unsuccessful motion to allow MPs to display flags in the House of Commons, following an attention-getting ploy by Reform members.

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— Eldred King

Wilfert distanced himself from Reform and admitted the whole issue, touched off when a Bloc Quebecois MP complained there were too many Canadian flags in the Olympic village in Nagano, was ridiculous.

"It was outrageous. You can never have too many Canadian flags on display where our national athletes are competing," he said. Athletics of a different kind were at the centre of a precedent-setting case that occupied the provincial court house in Newmarket for an eight-month period in 1998.

The trial of Terri-Jean Beford — AKA: Madame de Sade — whose cosy, whip-filled Thornhill home was raided by police in 1994, began in April with Beford claiming her dominatrix business was not the same as prostitution.

She was supported in this by a York University professor. When Shannon Bell, who testified as an expert on sado-masochism, was asked for scientific proof of her statements, she replied, "I've been around."

The judge disagreed and, in October, found Beford guilty of running a common bawdy house, fining her \$3,000.

1998 also saw the arrest of a Woodbridge resident in connection with what police described as a 30-year-old international crime ring.

Alfonso Caruana was among nine Canadians arrested in a series of early morning raids by RCMP, OPP Toronto, Peel and York region forces.

Caruana was charged with drug trafficking and conspiracy in connection with a worldwide drug smuggling and money-laundering operation.

"If organized crime was a game of hockey, Mr. Caruana would be Gretzky," said RCMP Insp. Ben Soave.

And as usual, the year also had its share of tragedies, none more shocking than the April death of an eight-year-old Stouffville girl attacked by a neighbour's dog. Courtney Trempe bled to death after being mauled by a bull mastiff. An inquest into the tragedy gets under way early in 1999.

Other highlights of the year: Curtis Joseph, whose hockey career began as a youngster in East Gwillimbury and advanced to St. Louis and Edmonton, is back in York Region, having signed to backstop the Stanley Cup hopes of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

York Region's former engineering commissioner, Bob Hodgson, won an \$880,000 libel lawsuit against The Globe and Mail.

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