

# King of Whitchurch-Stouffville

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

**E**ldred King ruled Whitchurch-Stouffville with an iron fist and didn't waste a penny, according to longtime friend Jim Thomas.

Mr. King died Friday of stomach cancer. He was 84.

"He was tough. I'd say the most rigid mayor Whitchurch-Stouffville ever had. He ruled with an iron fist. He accepted no nonsense," Mr. Thomas said.

Mr. King's York Region political career began when he was appointed school trustee for the Town of Markham and then as councillor in Markham.

Mr. Thomas first got to know the former Whitchurch-Stouffville Ward 6 councillor (1972 to 1976) and mayor (1978 to 1984) while Mr. King was in charge of the municipality and Mr. Thomas was the editor of the Stouffville Tribune.

The two would meet once a week in Mr. King's office, where nothing said was off the record.

"I really appreciated that," Mr. Thomas said. "I won his friendship. If you got on the right side of him, great. If you didn't, watch out."

Former councillor Wilf Morley heard about Mr. King's reputation but said he never experienced any problems.

"He was the first one to pat you on the back when you acted as a good councillor," he said.

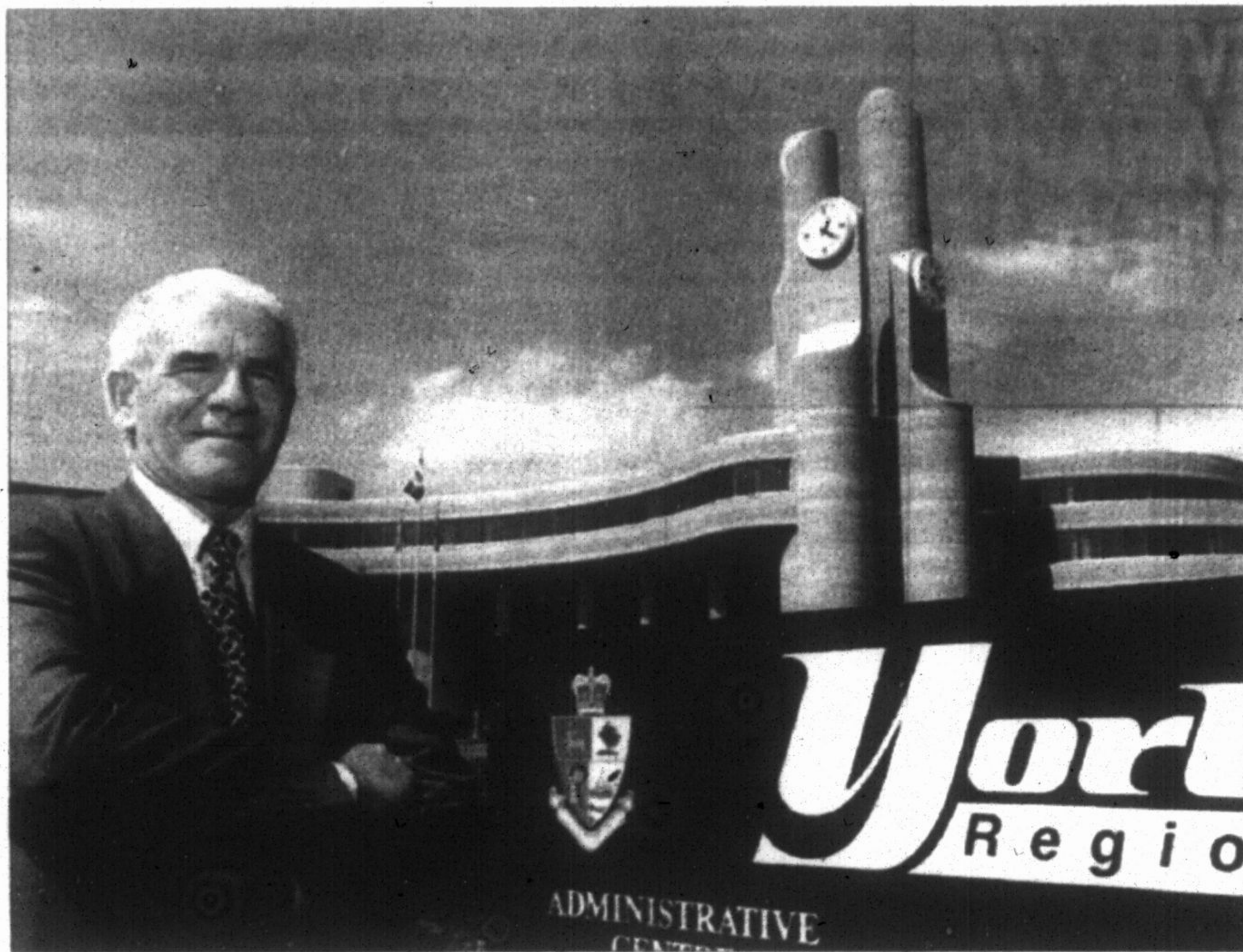
*'He was the first one to pat you on the back when you acted as a good councillor.'*

Of the three mayors Mr. Morley worked under as a councillor, he said "(Mr. King) was the best one."

"I enjoyed working with him. He was a farmer at heart," he said. "He was a very, very astute man with figures and accounting procedures."

Mr. Morley said he was straightforward, honest, made quick decisions, knew people by name and was well respected.

Mr. Thomas said Mr. King was a



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Eldred King is being remembered as a tough but fair politician this week. The extension of Hwy. 404 and the region's blue-box recycling are being credited to the former mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville and York Region chairperson.

"strong Conservative" but several of his municipal councillors were NDPs. He also noted this was the first time provincial and municipal politics collided.

"Eldred became very frustrated with that," Mr. Thomas said. "He had no patience with people who used political leanings to gain their (way)."

Mr. King became York Region's chairperson in 1984.

He held that post until he retired in 1997.

During his tenure as chairperson, Mr. King oversaw a number of initiatives, including the adoption of the first York Region official plan and the establishment of the York Region Non-Profit Housing Corporation. He also advocated for the

extension of Hwy. 404 beyond Davis Drive and the expansion of the blue box recycling program, according to the region's media release.

"During his time in public life, Eldred King displayed an unfailing commitment to the welfare of our residents and the betterment of our community," said York Region chairperson and CEO Bill Fisch in a release. "Eldred's vision and leadership for our region established the strong foundation needed to create a thriving, diverse and dynamic municipality that has become one of the most successful communities in Canada."

Flags are flying at half-mast across the region, including in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Mayor Wayne Emmerson led

Tuesday's town council meeting in a moment's silence.

"Eldred was a dear friend and a man who should be remembered for his honesty and respectable governance," Mr. Emmerson in a media release.

"His tireless dedication to York Region and Whitchurch-Stouffville specifically, is immeasurable. He helped lay the foundation for the outstanding community in which we live and work today. He will be greatly missed."

Mr. King wasn't born into politics. He was a fifth generation farmer.

In the 1950s through to the 1970s, Mr. King bred and raised award-winning cattle, including at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

► Photographs from the Eldred King years. See page 8.

Once he retired from politics, he returned to farming.

"You can take the boy off the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the boy," Mr. Thomas said.

His sons Rodney, Jeffrey and Jan didn't follow in their father's political footsteps. Rodney and Jan and their families own Stouffville's Tim Hortons.

Mr. Thomas, a regular at the Main Street Tim Hortons, recalled about 10 years ago seeing Mr. King outside the eatery at 5 a.m. cleaning up garbage but never inside having a coffee.

Mr. King is also survived by his wife of 53 years, Beulah. He met her at a Markham street dance. The pair also partnered on the ice.

"He was a marvelous skater," Mr. Thomas said, adding when people saw the couple take to the ice at the old Stouffville Arena "everybody more or less stopped or got off the ice to watch them."

"Whatever he took on, he did with zeal and zest," Mr. Morley said.

Mr. King's career has been memorialized in the Eldred King Woodlands in the York Region forest in Whitchurch-Stouffville and the region's Eldred King Gardens in Newmarket.

*'You can take the boy off the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the boy.'*

Hundreds paid tribute to Mr. King during visitations at the Dixon-Garland Funeral Home in Markham Monday and Tuesday.

His funeral service was held yesterday at Stouffville United Church.

With files from Jim Mason and Torstar News Service

► Editor Jim Mason on Eldred King's costume changes. See page 6.

WORLD CLASS EVENTS  
UP CLOSE & PERSONAL!

**LEBOVIC**  
CENTRE FOR ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT  
NINETEEN  
ON THE PARK

Call (905) 640-2322 or visit  
www.nineteenonthepark.ca



**THE MONKEY BUNCH**  
2011 JUNO NOMINEE - CHILDREN'S ALBUM OF THE YEAR  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23 / 2PM "Zany enough for the kids, with the inventiveness to charm adults." (Eye Weekly)  
\$20 regular / \$17 subscriber / \$10 student



**YUK YUK'S ON TOUR**  
PROCEEDS TO TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE'S UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27 / 8PM Get a group together for an evening of roaring laughter and great fun!  
\$20 regular / \$17 subscriber Restricted to 18+ audience



**SUSAN HOEPPNER** FLUTE  
**SIMON WYNBERG** GUITAR  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2 / 7PM  
"She plays her golden flute with cool confidence" NEW YORK TIMES  
\$25 regular / \$21 subscriber / \$13 student