

Life stories

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Bill de Peuter was positive, selfless resident

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On July 9, Bradford West Gwillimbury lost one of its most instrumental figures.

Bill de Peuter — the last mayor of Bradford, and the first of the amalgamated Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury in 1991 — was diagnosed with meningitis before he passed away at the age of 81.

Growing up in Almkerk, Netherlands as the oldest of 13 children, de Peuter was eager to start a new life in Canada following some very major and devastating flooding in 1953.

In May 1954, de Peuter, his siblings and parents, John and Catharina, chose to settle near the Holland Marsh in Springdale, experiencing the impact of Hurricane Hazel only months later, uprooting the family's home from its foundation and causing it to float near an area along Hwy. 400.

Though the terrifying storm proved a challenge for the new Canadians, the de Peuters chose to rebuild their life within the community they now called home.

In 1957, de Peuter met the woman of his dreams, Rita, to whom he was happily married for 57 years. The two lived in the marsh for a 18 months after getting married, eventually choosing to move into the small, bustling town of Bradford.



Bill de Peuter was the last mayor of Bradford and the first of the amalgamated Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury.

Staying connected to the community was key for de Peuter. In the early 1960s, he joined his brothers and dad in opening a painting business — John de Peuter and Sons Ltd.

His involvement also extended beyond the family business. de Peuter was passionate about his presence with the Rotary Club of Bradford and served with local police services boards, the Hol-

land Marsh District Christian School and his church council — kick starting a boys' club.

"It was his way of getting some male bonding time, since he had five daughters at home," daughter

Cathy explained.

It was in the fall of 1978 that he decided he could make a big difference in the community and chose to begin his political career.

He first ran for public office in Bradford and was elected as councillor. In 1983, he stepped into the position of deputy reeve, followed by mayor of Bradford in 1986, where he became BWG's first mayor and served his term until the following election.

Unfortunately, the early 1990s brought on illness for de Peuter. In 1994, he was diagnosed with kidney failure. Thankfully, he underwent a successful transplant surgery once it was discovered his sister, Cathy, was a positive match.

Following that, de Peuter retired from the family business to focus on an active life through other community initiatives. With vast knowledge of construction, he put himself to work in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to assist with flood recovery in 2008.

It was just one of the many positive and selfless acts de Peuter took part in throughout his life.

In his remaining years, he spent time traveling between Bradford, Barrie and the family winter residence in Florida until he returned home in January for the last time.

de Peuter is survived by his wife, Rita, five daughters, four sons-in-law, 15 grandchildren, one great grandson and 12 siblings.

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"Adored by children, universally respected and an inspiration to her peers, Mrs. McCluskey was a tireless volunteer, quick to deflect the praise heaped on her."

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