

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Port Hawkesbury, NS – November 12, 2025

Stephen Long Leads Effort to Honour Grandfather Austin Letcher Sr. with New Dedication Monument at Hemlock Trail Head

The Town of Port Hawkesbury is proud to announce the installation of a new dedication monument at Hemlock Trail Head, honouring the memory of Austin Letcher Sr., a fallen Forest Ranger from the community.

This project was made possible through the unwavering dedication and involvement of Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton and Stephen Long, grandson of Austin Letcher Sr., who played a central role from concept to completion.

Honouring a Local Hero

On June 6, 2023, Stephen on the advice of Mayor Chisholm-Beaton presented to Port Hawkesbury Town Council regarding his grandfather, highlighting Austin Letcher Sr.'s service as a Forest Ranger in Inverness County from 1947 to 1967 and his ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

Stephen noted that his grandfather is already recognized:

- On the Forest Ranger Honour Roll on the Nova Scotia website
- At a monument in Shubenacadie
- At the Canadian Police and Peacekeepers Memorial in Ottawa
- At the Fallen Peace Officer Monument in Halifax's Grand Parade Square

During his presentation, Stephen asked Town Council to consider a way to honour Austin Letcher Sr. in his hometown, suggesting a dedication tied to the Port Hawkesbury Trails to reflect his grandfather's love of nature and conservation.

Planning and Collaboration

Over the summer and fall of 2023, Stephen and Mayor Chisholm-Beaton began working on a plan to revitalize the Stora Centennial Trail system, with the goal of making it fully accessible and dedicating it to Austin Letcher Sr.

As the project progressed, it became clear that the original timeline would not be feasible due to the needs of Stephen's aging aunts. The plan was then revised and submitted to Council, proposing instead a boulder monument and the dedication of the Strait Trail System in Austin Letcher Sr.'s honor. This revised plan was approved by council on October 1, 2024.

After the approval, Long collaborated closely with the Mayor and key Town staff - Melissa Warner, Gordie Snook, and Terry Doyle—ensuring that every decision reflected both the family’s wishes and the community’s vision.

Stephen was instrumental in all aspects of planning and implementation, including:

- Selecting the monument design
- Creating the monument photo and designing the plaque
- Assisting with site location
- Coordinating with Town staff on event planning, press materials, and the unveiling agenda

Unveiling Ceremony

On October 18, 2025, Stephen served as a key speaker at the unveiling ceremony and introduced Austin Letcher Sr.’s youngest daughter, Shirley Letcher Hillier, to share her reflections.

Stephen’s hands-on involvement throughout the project—from initial concept to event execution—was critical to its success and ensured that Austin Letcher Sr.’s legacy is honored in a meaningful and enduring way.

Mayor’s Comments

Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, Mayor of the Town of Port Hawkesbury, states:

“Honouring the memory of Austin Letcher Sr. has been a meaningful journey for our community, and it would not have been possible without the dedication and vision of his grandson, Stephen Long. Stephen’s passion for preserving his grandfather’s legacy and his hands-on collaboration with Town staff were instrumental in bringing this project to life. The new monument at Hemlock Trail Head not only celebrates the service and sacrifice of a remarkable Forest Ranger but also connects us to our shared history and the natural spaces Austin Letcher Sr. devoted his life to protecting. This project is a true example of what can be achieved when family, community, and local government work together to honour the past for future generations.”

Media Contact

Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton
Town of Port Hawkesbury
609 Reeves Street, Port Hawkesbury, NS B9A 2R7
bchisholmbeaton@townofph.ca
Tel: 902-625-1800