

Emmerson selected to lead Regional Council for 2022-2026 term

Regional Councillors have picked Wayne Emmerson to once again lead the upper tier of government for the 2022-2026 municipal term.

Regional lawmakers selected Emmerson for a third consecutive term at their inaugural meeting where the former Whitchurch-Stouffville mayor faced a challenge from Regional Councillor Joe Li of Markham.

Councillor Li's nomination was put forward by fellow Markham Regional Councillors Jim Jones and Alan Ho.

Emmerson's nomination came from King Township Mayor Steve Pellegrini and Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt.

"The last eight years I have been honoured to serve as your Chair," said Emmerson following his nomination. "We have accomplished a lot, as I look back: the most money ever put in for road construction in the history of the Region of York, we have a new subway coming to Yonge Street in the cities of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. We recently completed a Regional Official Plan, a DC bylaw which had no objections going forward, and then the completion of the Vaughan subway.

"We have done a lot and I am very proud of that. We did very well during a pandemic that none of us sat in these chairs and wanted to do, but did. You all rose to the challenge to make sure our residents were safe going forward, but the pandemic is not over. We need to continue to be on guard going forward."

Emmerson received 14 votes from the Regional Council to Li's 7. Locally, Emmerson received the support from Mayor Tom Mrakas, who is Aurora's sole voice at the Regional table.

Taking his seat, Emmerson said Regional Council had "a lot of work cut out" for them over the next four years.

"We enter this term of Council at a time of global economic uncertainty and in the face of a recession," he said. "Interest rates are rising and life is becoming increasingly less affordable for our residents. This means more and more families will rely on us for essential programs and services. York Region has declared a housing affordability crisis and we must work with all levels of government to address this crisis in a way that makes sense for our communities and maintain a level of fiscal responsibility. While the task may seem daunting, our Council has a [strong record] of working with all levels of government to advance the priorities of our residents.

"The issues of affordable housing, broadband connectivity, development, transportation and growth will continue to be top priorities for our residents. It is our job to continue working towards these critical issues while also collaborating with other levels of government to address the post-pandemic recovery in our communities, global economic inflation and other important areas of focus. We need to come together now more than ever. We need to agree to disagree but we need to work for the best interests of our residents."

In his remarks opening his second term at the Regional Council table, Mayor Mrakas thanked his family and his team for their support, as well as the support of Aurora voters who put their trust in him.

"The Region is in excellent hands under your leadership," Mrakas told Emmerson as his fellow Regional Councillors looked on. "To my colleagues, I say congratulations and I look forward to working together this term with all of you to get things done for the residents of York Region."

By Brock Weir
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