

## Region could begin process to replace Chair next month

The Region of York could fast track the process to replace Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson, potentially being able to tap a successor by mid-December.

The long-time Regional Chair announced his retirement earlier this fall, which will take effect at the end of this month.

Reviewing the replacement process at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting, Regional Staff left the door open to expediting the process to find a replacement amid concerns Premier Doug Ford could step in and appoint a replacement unilaterally.

A seat becomes vacant when a member resigns in writing to the Clerk, said Markham Regional Councillor Joe Li at Thursday's meeting. Once the seat becomes vacant, the Council must declare it to be vacant at its next meeting.

There is a rumour on the street that Premier Doug Ford is going to step up again and appoint a new Chairman with some likening it to direct interference in our democratic process. Contrary to the report we just received, it looks like a member of Regional Council will not be allowed to elect our new Chairman either publicly or by secret ballot.

Making his case, Regional Councillor Li referenced a decision made by the newly-elected Progressive Conservative government in 2018 to reverse a decision made by the previous Liberal Wynne government to allow residents to directly elect the Chair.

I am a Conservative and I am saddened to see what Premier Doug Ford did reversing the elected chair resolution passed by the previous Liberal government under Kathleen Wynne. My question today is, are we still living in a [democracy] like Canada that we can exercise our right as outlined in the Regional Procedural Bylaw allowing the members of Regional Council to elect or appoint our new Chairman?

Chair Emmerson advised the Councillor not to buy into rumours and reiterated that as far as he was concerned the process would continue as outlined by staff in a report to lawmakers.

Presented by Regional Clerk Christopher Raynor and Dino Basso, Commissioner of Corporate Services, the report said that Emmerson will formally tender his resignation on November 29, triggering a process that would see a replacement selected by February if not sooner.

Using the current schedule, Council can declare the seat vacant at its meeting on December 19, 2024, and undertake the appointment process at the next Council meeting on January 30, 2025, they said. However, there is no minimum period of time for which the seat must remain vacant and Council could choose to complete the appointment process before the end of the current year. In that case, Council could take advantage of the time already set aside for Regional business and slightly adjust the calendar.

A meeting, they said, could be scheduled for December 5 for Council to declare Emmerson's seat vacant and then undertake the appointment process on December 12, 2024.

This provides a good balance between speed and public notice, they continued. It also ensures certainty for Council prior to the end of the year and minimizes the period for which an acting chair is required. Regardless of how Council schedules its business, there will be a short transition period between the Regional Chair's resignation date and the new Chair's appointment date which would be bridged by an Acting Chair. Under current authorities, the Acting Chair will only be able to take over presiding at meetings and associated activities, such as signing bylaws and minutes.

**By Brock Weir**