

Retired Police Chief Jolliffe tapped as next York Regional Chair

The Ontario Government has tapped retired York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe as the next Chair of the Regional Municipality of York.

The move was announced by Paul Calandra, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, on Monday.

Jolliffe is expected to begin his term on January 1, 2025, following the retirement of long-time Chair Wayne Emmerson, which came into effect this past Friday.

"[Jolliffe's] decades of strong executive leadership, strategic management and focus on safety make him well-positioned to be the Region's next chair," said Calandra in a statement. "Municipalities are critical partners in supporting the growth Ontario is seeing and making our communities the best places to live, work and raise a family. That is why we need strong leadership in place to help deliver critical services that residents and businesses rely on every day."

"Born and raised in York Region, Jolliffe is no stranger to serving its residents. He joined York Regional Police in 1981 and because of his steadfast commitment to keeping the Region safe, he was appointed Chief of Police in 2010. Over his long career in public service, Jolliffe has won numerous awards, including Officer of the Order of Merit for Police Forces; both the Queen Elizabeth II Gold and Diamond Jubilee Medals; the Order of the City of Vaughan; the Public Service Award from the Transformation Institute for Leadership and Innovation; and a Character Community of York Region Lifetime Achievement Award. I look forward to working together as we move forward on our shared priorities, including building homes and safer communities."

Emmerson's time as Regional Chair came to an end on November 29, with colleagues paying tribute to the former mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville at the Regional Council meeting held the previous morning.

"I want to congratulate Eric Jolliffe on being named Chair of the Regional Municipality of York," said Mayor Tom Mrakas, Aurora's Regional representative, in a December 2 statement. "Eric's appointment by the Ontario Government is a fantastic decision that I warmly welcome, as Eric is a proven public sector leader with a strong track record of making government services more responsive to the needs of community members."

"The Regional Chair plays a crucial role in providing leadership and key recommendations to Regional Council, helping ensure Council decisions, as well as regional policies and programs, are being executed efficiently and serving the best interests of the entire Region. I have known Eric for years through his commitment to consensus building, transparency, accountability, and financial integrity. I've also seen him strongly advocate for innovation in the deployment of government services, including his ongoing efforts to modernize policing across Canada."

"Eric's work has undoubtedly made him one of York Region's most highly-respected leaders, and he has been recognized by many diverse organizations, including PFLAG Canada/York Region, the Transformation Institute for Leadership, and the National Ethnic Press Media Council of Canada. Eric's leadership and wisdom will be of great benefit to Regional Council and all York Region residents, and I look forward to working closely with him."

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini, had a different point of view, telling the King Weekly Sentinel that Jolliffe's appointment was an "over-reach" by the Province.

While he says he has great respect for Jolliffe, and even spoke to him about the appointment, Pellegrini pointed out he doesn't live in York Region and isn't a politician.

"How can you represent the people of York Region when you don't live here?" Pellegrini asked. "York Region has a specific process to select its Chairman and CEO, along with accompanying policies. Typically, the Regional Chair is voted in by sitting Regional

Councillors. Policies indicate the regional chair must be a ?resident of the Region or the owner or tenant of land in the Region or the spouse of such owner or tenant.?

Pellegrini says he has a fundament problem with the Province usurping the Region's authority. This is ?cronyism,? he said.

As Emmerson's time at the helm came to a close, Regional Staff were in the midst of drafting the process of how Regional Council would select his replacement, as members voiced concerns the Province would make the appointment unilaterally.

The Province's decision has made those discussions moot.

?The Regional Municipality of York acknowledges receipt of the letter from the Province of Ontario regarding the intent to appoint Eric Jolliffe as the new Chair and CEO of York Regional Council,? said Patrick Casey, Director of Communications for the Region of York, in a statement.

?The Region looks forward to the next steps in this appointment process.

?Ensuring the effective governance and continued success of York Region is a top priority as we work together to achieve the Region's goals and meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders. The Region is eager to continue supporting Regional Council as it pursues its work of building a strong, vibrant and inclusive York Region.?

With files from Mark Pavilons

By Brock Weir