

Emmerson retires as York chair

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal JournalismInitiative Reporter

Long-serving York politician Wayne Emmerson will retire as regional chair and CEO. Emmerson made the announcement at last week's regional council meeting. He's leaving effective Friday, Nov. 29. "This has been a very difficult and personal decision, but the right one and at the right time for myself and my family," he said. "When I first started in politics almost four decades ago, I could not have imagined this incredible journey. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve residents both locally and Regionally, first as a ward councillor and then as Mayor in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. In 2014, I had the honour of becoming the York Region Chairman and CEO and I am incredibly proud of everything we have accomplished over the past 10 years. Our successes are not ours alone, but the result of our collective commitment and desire to make our communities better places for all. I extend my gratitude to my colleagues on Regional Council – both past and present – our Regional staff, the provincial and federal governments and the many countless partners who have been a part of this very rewarding experience. As I move toward a new chapter in my life, I look forward to spending more time with family and focusing on personal priorities. The clerk will bring a report to the Nov. 7 Region Committee of the Whole meeting, outlining the procedural process and proposed timelines for appointing his successor. Chairman Emmerson is a fifth-generation resident of York. He was re-elected to a third term as Chairman and CEO for the 2022 to 2026 term. Emmerson has more than three decades of political experience, including his role as Mayor for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for 17 years. Focused on getting results, his experience and leadership is well-respected across York Region and all levels of government. As Chairman and CEO of York, he is committed to ensuring the region remains a destination of choice for residents to live, work and play. Throughout his tenure at the helm of regional council, Chairman Emmerson has continued to support and advocate for Regional Council's top priorities, including safe and reliable transportation options, a vibrant and thriving local economy, broadband connectivity, affordable housing and community safety. Emmerson is dedicated to making significant progress towards building the kind of communities we want future generations to inherit. Part of this progress is through the 2017 launch of the new TTC Line 1 Subway extension into York Region, a monumental moment for York Region's residents who welcomed the first subway network outside of the City of Toronto in 40 years. In 2021, Chairman Emmerson championed a historic 40% federal capital funding commitment for the Yonge North Subway Extension, paving the way for York Region to move forward on this top transportation priority. An infrastructure project of this magnitude will bring thousands of jobs and additional housing options for more than 85,000 residents. It will continue to support the economic vitality of communities and help address gridlock and achieve our commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2051. The Chairman's pledge to offer stronger broadband now and for the future resulted in the establishment of YorkNet, a Region-owned corporation that plans, builds, operates, manages and maintains a high-speed, dark fibre network across York Region. Bolstered by a \$63 million federal investment, YorkNet will further expand the Region's dark fibre network to more than 5,000 underserved homes and businesses during this term of Council. Through strong leadership and advocacy for the residents and businesses of York, Emmerson is continuing to build a Region residents want to live in, businesses want to invest in and future generations want to call home. His leadership provides a long-term outlook for York Region and aims to encourage and celebrate the efforts of residents and our local cities and towns. This includes York Region's continued success with waste diversion programs by diverting more than 90% from landfills, setting out a course of action to best support the aging population over the next 10 to 20 years with the vital Seniors Strategy and putting the tools in place to enhance community safety and well-being. In his capacity as Chairman CEO, he is an ex-officio member of all regional committees. He is Chair of the York Regional Police Services Board, CEO of the York Region Rapid Transit Board, Member at large of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and Co-Chair of Toronto Global. Emmerson has also served as a board member for several organizations, including Markham-Stouffville Hospital, GTA Mayors' Committee, the Greater Toronto Services Board (2001) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Working with York Regional Police, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, various celebrities and other community agencies and organizations, he was instrumental in the development of York Region's Community Safety Village, a nationally recognized interactive educational facility where children learn about fire, traffic and personal safety. In 2012, Chairman Emmerson was honoured with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. This commemorative medal serves to honour his significant political contributions. Prior to becoming Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor in 1994, he was a Town Councillor from 1988 to 1994. Chairman Emmerson is the sixth Chairman and CEO in the 53-year history of York.