



History of Regional Council

Inaugural Meetings

1842 to 2010



Introduction

The inaugural meeting is the first meeting of Regional Council in the new term of office. It is now held every four years to coincide with the term of office stipulated by the Municipal Act. The evolution of inaugural meetings in York Region reaches back almost 170 years.

The following paragraphs outline the evolution of inaugural meetings in York Region.

Home District

The first inaugural meetings can be traced back to the origins of municipal government in Ontario in the 1840's. The original statutes of the United Provinces of Canada established the legislative basis for electing the Warden and holding the first meeting of County Council each year.

The Home District was the predecessor to York County and York Region. It covered an extensive area that now includes York Region, the City of Toronto, parts of Durham and Peel Regions and Simcoe County (up to Orillia).

The first meeting of the Home District was held at the Court House in the City of Toronto at noon on February 8, 1842. There were 51 members, many of whom would have ridden into Toronto by horse and carriage. The meeting lasted six days.

The first action at the meeting was the Acting Clerk reading in the Commission from the Governor-General appointing the Warden. The Warden then addressed Council. Items the Council considered at this first meeting included establishing procedural rules, appointing a Clerk and a Surveyor of Roads, appointing Members to Committees and permitting prisoners sentenced to hard labour to work on public streets.

York County

Part of the Home District became York County in 1850. York County included the current City of Toronto and York Region within its boundaries.

Meetings of the new County Council were governed by the Municipal Corporations Act (12 Vic., Cap.81) that was passed by the Upper Canada Parliament in 1849. Section XXXV provided that the municipal council of each county at their first meeting on or after the fourth Monday in January

of each year, was to choose from amongst themselves a County Warden who was to thereafter preside at all meetings of the county council.

The first meeting of York County Council was held at the Court House in Toronto between January 28 and February 5, 1850. It lasted for eight days, including a Saturday. The Clerk read the names of the newly-elected members who then took

their seats and proceeded to elect Franklin Jackes, Reeve of the Township of York, as York County's first Warden. (Interestingly, in May, 1842 a Home District Committee chaired by the same Mr. Jackes had brought forward a new corporate coat of arms that is still used by York Region today.)

By 1859, the legislation provided that the first meeting was to be presided over by the Clerk and consist of the declarations of office and qualification of each council member, followed by the election of a Warden as the Head of Council. The statutes of the then united Province of Canada expanded on this by adding a section outlining the format for the declarations of qualification.

The council minutes show that by 1870 the first meeting of County Council consisted of the election of the warden, declarations of office, a speech given by the new warden,

and choosing the committee representatives. There was very little ceremony involved.

More ceremonial aspects would be added. Fifty years later, at the first County Council meeting of 1920, the new Warden was escorted to his chair by his mover and seconder. A prayer was added in 1937, with Council's Procedure By-law providing that the officiating clergyman was to be chosen by the Warden of the preceding year. The procedural rules also included the singing of the national anthem at the first meeting each year.

In 1940 the retiring Warden opened the first session of County Council by addressing council before the Clerk took the chair to elect the new Warden. In 1941 the outgoing Warden R.E. Bales, who was an officer of the Queen's York Rangers, established the tradition of starting with a prayer then having the Queen's York Rangers deposit their Colours at the beginning of the meeting.



Franklin Jackes, first Warden of York County

On January 1, 1954, York County was split so that it comprised what is now largely York Region. Lands to the south of York County now formed the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (which is now the City of Toronto).

The term “Inaugural” was first used in 1963. It referred to the first meeting of County Council in January at which the warden was elected. At this time the oath of office was oral and did not have a written document to accompany it.

York Region

The first inaugural meeting of the Council of The Regional Municipality of York took place on October 14, 1970, in the auditorium of Bayview Secondary School in Richmond Hill. This meeting was opened by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable W. Darcy McKeough. It was then presided over by Garfield Wright, the Region's first Chairman, who had been previously appointed by the Province. There was a prayer of invocation but there was no election and no swearing-in ceremony.

The practice of depositing the colours of the Queen's York Rangers continued until the mid 1980's when pipers from the York Regional Police provided ceremonial duties such as piping and the presentation of the colours.

Members of Council took their written statutory declarations of office and oaths of allegiance until 2000. In 2003, the need to take an oath of allegiance was taken out of the Municipal Act, 2001, and replaced by a declaration of office that now includes a statement of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Inaugural Meetings Today

The Inaugural proceedings are now largely established by a Regional by-law. The first York Region Procedural By-law to define proceedings of the inaugural meeting was passed in 2001. All the preceding by-laws to govern the proceedings of council addressed the election of the Chairman but did not address matters such as the date, location and proceedings of the first meeting. They also did not use the term inaugural. An updated version the Procedural By-law is now used. It forms the basis for the following proceedings that are used at inaugural meetings today:

- Regional Police Piper
- National Anthem
- Prayer of Invocation
- Filing of Members' Certificates of Election and Declarations of Office
- Oral Recitation of Members' Declarations of Office
- Election of Regional Chair
- Swearing-in ceremony for Regional Chair
- Address and introductions by Regional Chair
- Introductions from Members of Council
- Introduction of Senior Management
- Confirming Bylaw
- Adjournment

The Inaugural Meeting held on December 9, 2010 will be the sixteenth in the history of York Region.

