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Changing Faces: York Region Governance from 1792 to the Present



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[COURT HOUSE (1827-1853),
King St. E., n.w. cor. Church St.] 1835.
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John Graves Simcoe, first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada

In 1791 Upper Canada was created by the Constitutional or Canada Act passed by the British Parliament. On July 16, 1792, John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, issued a proclamation dividing Upper Canada into 19 counties including York County.

York County was created as an electoral division within the larger administrative region of the Home District with representation in the government of Upper Canada.

From 1791 to 1841, local affairs in the Home District were administered by a District Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace, comprised of justices of the peace. These courts met quarterly to try legal cases and to oversee the administration of the area.



Franklin Jackes, first Warden of York County

In 1841 the Act of Union introduced representative local government. York County continued as a political unit within the Home District, and the Home District continued as part of Canada West.

All existing districts were incorporated and administrative powers were exercised by a district council. Each council was comprised of a warden (appointed by the Governor) and elected councillors representing the various townships in the council. Edward Thompson was the first Warden of the Home District.

The Home District was abolished under this act and the County of York became a municipal body.

The first meeting of the new County Council took place in the Court House in the City of Toronto on Monday, January 28, 1850. Franklin Jackes Esq., Reeve of the Township of York, was elected Warden.

In 1867 with Confederation, Canada West became the Province of Ontario. The internal structure and responsibilities of the County of York soon began to change to keep pace with continued population growth.

By 1842, the population of the County (including the current York Region, Toronto and other municipalities) was 45,811. It had doubled by 1861 to 104,495; and grew to 566,885 by 1921.



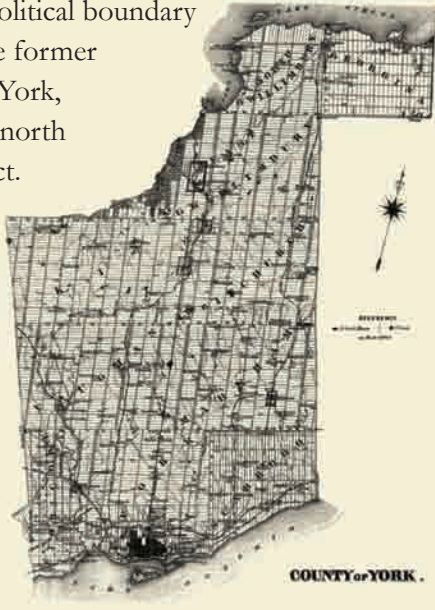
Home district seal

On March 11, 1848 the united province of Canada was granted responsible government. The Baldwin Act of 1849 gave counties the role of an upper tier municipality.

It took less than 30 years to more than double again by 1951 to 1,176,622.

In 1954 the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was formed by separating out the towns and townships south of Steeles Avenue into a new municipal government.

This new political boundary bisected the former County of York, leaving the north “half” intact.



On June 26, 1970, the provincial legislature passed Bill 102 An Act to Establish the Regional Municipality of York, coming into force on January 1, 1971.



First official regional seal

The first by-law passed by the new Regional Municipality of York at its inaugural council meeting was by-law A-1-70-1 A by-law to adopt a Corporate Seal.

The Region is governed by York Regional Council, which consists of the Regional Chair and 20 elected representatives (nine Mayors and 11 Regional Councillors) from each of its nine local municipalities.

The head of council is referred to as the Regional Chair and CEO.

The Board of Highway Commissioners was a joint commission established in 1911 to create a system of paved roads within the County of York. It was composed of five members: two from the County of York, two from the City of Toronto, and one from the province of Ontario.

On February 10, 1916, York County passed by-law 1185 “To Adopt a System of Suburban Roads Throughout the County.” In 1918, by Order-in-Council, the name was changed from Board of Highway Commissioners of York to The Toronto and York Roads Commission. Over time this Board took on the roles of both constructing and maintaining the County Roads System. The Toronto and York Roads Commission was dissolved in 1971 with the passing of the Regional Municipality of York Act.



Toronto and York Roads Commission Garage



Garfield Wright



Bob Forhan



Anthony Roman



Eldred King



Bill Fisch

From 1850 to 1970 there were 109 different Wardens of the County of York as Wardens were generally appointed for just one year. Each outgoing Warden of the County of York was presented with the gift of a cane at the annual Warden's Banquet in November. The cane in our exhibit was presented to E.M. Legge in 1932. These canes were inscribed with their name and the dates of their term as Warden.

With the creation of The Regional Municipality of York in 1971, the position of County Warden was replaced with the position of Chair of Regional Council. Garfield Wright of East Gwillimbury was elected as the first Chair.

There have been five different Chairs of the Regional Municipality of York from 1970 to 2008: Garfield Wright, Bob Forhan, Anthony Roman, Eldred King and Bill Fisch. The current Chairman, Bill Fisch, has served as Regional Chair since 1997.



RESOURCES

Archives of Ontario, Online Exhibit:
The Changing Shape of Ontario
www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/exhibits/maps/index.html

The Canada Yearbook, The Official Statistical Annual of the Resources, History, Institutions and Social and Economic Conditions of the Dominion. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Yearbook (CYB) Collection, Statistics Canada,
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McGill University,
In Search of Your Canadian Past:
The Canadian County Atlas Digital Project,
digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/default.htm

Regional Municipality of York,
York Explorer
maps.york.ca/yorkexplorer/default.jsp

Regional Municipality of York,
Heritage Directory,
www.york.ca/Departments/Corporate+Services/Regional+Clerk/Heritage+Directory.htm

Toronto Public Library, Canadiana Collection,
Ontario Local History Collection,
www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/uni_can_local.jsp

Townships and Towns of Upper Canada,
www.uppercanadagenealogy.com/townshipsS.html

York County Maps & Facts,
Historic York County,
www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~onryrbogs/ref_100.htm