

# 180 YEARS

OF COUNCIL INAUGURAL MEETINGS



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## WHATS INSIDE?

Home District.....	3
York County.....	4
York Region .....	5
Traditions .....	6
Meetings Today .....	7

The Inaugural Meeting is the first meeting of York Regional Council in the new term of office. It is held every four years to coincide with the term of office stipulated in the Municipal Act, 2001. The evolution of inaugural meetings in York Region reaches back more than 175 years from the early 1840s, at the inception of municipal government in Ontario.

**The Inaugural Meeting on November 17, 2022 is the nineteenth in the history of York Region.**

Portrait of Edward William Thomson (1794-1865) First Warden of the Home District 1842-1846. Courtesy of the Toronto Public Library.

# HOME DISTRICT

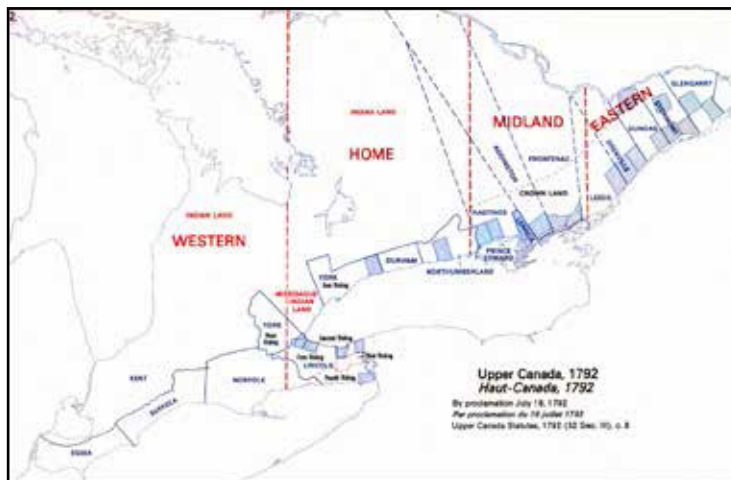
In 1788, four Districts were created, of which one was the Nassau District, which included the western Lake Ontario and Niagara areas (South-Central Ontario); the District was renamed Home District in 1792.

In 1841, the Act of Union introduced representative local government. York County—one of nineteen counties that made up Upper Canada since 1792—continued as a political unit within the Home District, while the Home District continued as part of Canada West.

The first quarterly meeting of the Home District Municipal Council was held at the Court House in the City of Toronto on Tuesday, February 8, 1842, attended by 51 members, many of whom travelled into Toronto by horse and carriage. The meeting lasted six days.

The first item on the agenda was the reading of the Commission, during which the Lieutenant-General of the Province of Canada appointed Edward William Thomson as Warden of the Home District. Mr. Thomson then addressed Council and the Warden

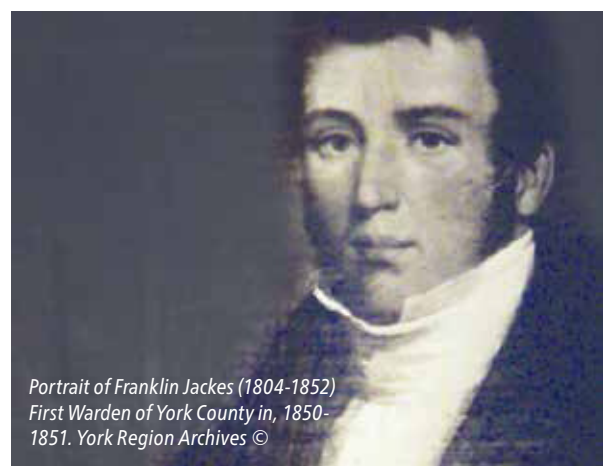
submitted a draft of rules and regulations to govern Council. A Committee was appointed to review the rules and report back to Council. The first meeting of the District Council was modest and had no ceremonial formalities.



Upper Canada 1792. *Economic Atlas of Ontario*, W. G. Dean, Editor; G. J. Mathews, Cartographer, 1969. Courtesy of the Archives of Ontario.



TORONTO 1927 York County Council. Courtesy of  
SECURITIES Panoramic Camera Company, Toronto.  
COMPANY



Portrait of Franklin Jackes (1804-1852)  
First Warden of York County in, 1850-  
1851. York Region Archives ©

With the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act, a two-tier system of municipal government was established in 1849 and District governments were abolished. County governments took on the responsibilities of the District governments and York County Council began meeting in 1850. At this time, York County was comprised of the current City of Toronto and York Region boundaries.

Meetings of the new County Council were governed by the Municipal Corporations Act (12 Vic., Cap.81), of which Section XXXV mandated that the Municipal Council of each county would hold their first meetings on or after the fourth Monday of January each year and select from their Council a County Warden to preside over all meetings of County Council. York County Council's term was one year and a Warden was elected for each term.

The first meeting of York County Council was held at the Court House in Toronto for eight days between January 28 and February 5, 1850. The Clerk presided over the Chair and 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. Mr. Jackes then took the chair and addressed Council

and the meeting was adjourned. Mr. Jackes took an oath of office before the Chief Justice of Her Majesty's Court of the Queen's Bench and provided the certificate during the second day of the meeting.

Interestingly, in May 1842 a Home District Committee chaired by Mr. Jackes introduced a new corporate coat of arms that is still used by York Region today.

By 1855, the first meeting of Council would require that all council members file their Certificate of Qualification with the Clerk, followed by the appointment of the Warden and his address to Council. At the first County Council meeting of 1874, the tradition of the new Warden being escorted to the Chair by his mover and seconder began. The meetings continued to have few ceremonial formalities.

#### **More ceremonial formalities would be introduced in the following years:**

- In 1936, a judge would be present to administer the oath of office during the first meeting.
- A prayer was added in 1937, with Council's Procedure Bylaw 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 started to open the first meeting of County Council by addressing Council before the Clerk was called to conduct the election of 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 having the Queen's York Rangers deposit their Colours at the beginning of the meeting.
- In 1955, wearing the Warden's cap and robe was introduced during the first meeting where the mover and seconder would assist with putting these items on the Warden before escorting him to the chair.

1970 Inaugural Meeting of York Regional Council, Minister of Municipal Affairs Darcy McKeough presenting a framed copy of Ontario legislation creating York Region to Regional Chair Garfield Wright. Ted Leonard Collection, York Region Archives ©

# 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. The Honourable Darcy McKeough, Minister of Municipal Affairs, called the assembly to order and introduced the Region's first Chair Garfield Wright, who was previously appointed by the Province.

Mr. Wright addressed council, leaders from Queen's Park, then Metro Toronto and guests. A framed copy of Bill 102, an Act to Establish the Regional Municipality of York was unveiled and presented to Garfield Wright that night. A prayer of invocation was held and the Province appointed Mr. Wright as Chair with neither an election nor a swearing-in ceremony.

The practice of depositing the colours of the Queen's York Rangers continued until the mid-1980s when 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.

The last time there was a change in the Regional Chair was at the Inaugural Meeting of 2014 when the current Regional Chair, Wayne Emmerson was elected by Members of Regional Council.



1991 Inaugural Meeting of York Regional Council, York Regional Police piper leading the procession into Council Chambers. York Region Archives ©



1970 Inaugural meeting of York Regional Council. Ted Leonard Collection, York Region Archives ©



2014 Inaugural Meeting of York Regional Council, previous Regional Chair Bill Fisch placing the chain of office on new Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson. York Region Archives ©

1970 Last York County Council Meeting, Warden of York County Gordon Cook passing on the Chain of Office to Regional Chair Garfield Wright. Ted Leonard Collection, York Region Archives ©

# TRADITIONS

The term "Inaugural" was first used in 1963, referring to the first meeting in January at which a Warden was elected. The Chain of Office was presented for the first time on the Return of the Colours to The Queen's York Rangers in 1966, and it became a part of the Inaugural Meeting in 1967, at which the tradition of passing it to the next Warden (now Regional Chair) continues today.

At the last meeting of York County Council, Gordon Cook (Warden) passed on the Chain of Office to the Regional Chair Garfield Wright, symbolizing the transition from York County to York Region. This was the last time the Warden's cap and robe were worn. This tradition ended with the dissolution of York County Council.



2015 York County Warden's ceremonial cap and robe (1955-1970). York Region Archives ©



2018 Inaugural Meeting of York Regional Council - Presiding Officer and Regional Clerk Chris Raynor placing the Chain of Office on Regional Chair Wayne Emerson. York Region ©



1962 Inaugural Meeting of York County Council, Reeve Norm Garriock and Reeve William Hodgson escorting William Sellers to the Warden's Chair. Ted Leonard Collection, York Region Archives ©



1964 Inaugural Meeting of York County Council, Reeve Joseph O. Dales and Deputy Reeve Jesse Bryson preparing Albert Rutherford with Warden's cap and robe. Ted Leonard Collection, York Region Archives ©

# MEETINGS TODAY

The Inaugural proceedings are now largely established by a Regional bylaw. The first York Region Procedural Bylaw to define proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting was passed in 2001.

**An updated version the Procedural Bylaw forms the basis for the following proceedings that are used at Inaugural Meetings today:**

1. Procession into Council Chambers led by York Regional Police
2. National Anthem
3. Land Acknowledgement and Regional Clerk's Remarks
4. Filing of Clerk's Certificates of Members' Declarations of Office
5. Meeting Called to Order
6. Members' Public Recitation of Declarations of Office
7. Appointment of Regional Chair
8. Swearing-in Ceremony of Regional Chair
9. Regional Chair's Introductions and Inaugural Address
10. Introductions from Members of Regional Council
11. Chief Administrative Officer's Remarks and Introduction of Senior Management
12. Confirming Bylaw
13. Meeting adjourned



2018 York Regional Council Inaugural Meeting, Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson addressing council, staff and guests. York Region ©

For more information please contact the  
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