

Who will be

Warden George Boycott.

is ready to pass on

the chain of office

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NORTHUMBERLAND — Warden George Boycott says his sense of humour was perhaps his most important asset during the one-year term which wraps up early next month.

"I think I injected a sense of humour," he says.

The animosity between councillors is gone and "that makes it a lot easier to get things done."

During the warden's banquet held several weeks ago in his honour he joked: "I think that the greatest characteristic a Warden can possess in these challenging times is a sense of humour. To take everything too seriously would probably result in some permanent damage to one's soul."

When Warden Boycott slipped on his chain of office about a year ago he was the first in his position to preside over the down-sized county council with just 13 representatives, cut down from almost double that number in past years.

While there were fewer politicians, the 13 municipalities came to the table with different agendas and didn't always pull together.

By mid-term more co-operation was apparent in many areas but some, like waste management, still remain contentious.

"The Corporation of the County of Northumberland is a big business with 69,000

stakeholders (residents), 13 county councillors, 324 employees, four unions and a budget of \$48.2-million," he said.

"The increase of \$12.7-million over last year's budget was caused by the downloading of social assistance, public housing, public health, ambulance an property assessment. In addition, our county has taken over highways 28, 30 and 45 and received \$14.2-million from the province which is now carefully invested, earning interest."

With a dozen years in municipal politics, Mr. Boycott says handling the downloading of provincial services onto the lower governmental tier was,

by far, the top challenge of his term as Warden.

Another was the issue of pay equity for county staff.

Left dangling for several years, the province forced its completion and it will result, once finalized by the province, in a \$.53-million payout for about 15 people and an on-going annual salary increase of about \$170,000 for 57 people, including

those who work at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) near Grafton.

The county's garbage-sorting plant, referred to as "the MURF", plus waste collec-

tion in general has been a major challenge, continued Warden Boycott.

In the past it has been handled jointly by the municipalities and the counties "but you can't run a MURF as a sort of co-op," he says.

A new county-wide bag tag system is in the process of being implemented and will be followed by a new garbage pick up scheduled.

Among the toughest challenges faced throughout the year was Warden Boycott's need to keep his cool.

"I find it difficult to be



PHOTO BY VALERIE MACDONALD

TAKING HIS PLACE IN HISTORY: Out-going Northumberland County Warden George Boycott gets ready to pass over his chain of office as he sits behind the antique table at the county headquarters where the Baldwin Act of 1849 — which set up municipal government in Ontario — was signed. The election for the new warden is set for 10 a.m. on Dec. 9.