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HEALTH: Council demands answers in firing of chairperson

Ousted leader not replaced

BY JENNIFER BROWN
STAFF WRITER

The District Health Council has declined to replace ousted chairperson Dr. Carter Thorne, deciding to wait until more is known about why Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer no longer wants the Newmarket physician in the job.

Council was shocked to learn last week that Thorne and Aurora resident Steven Mills, a retired businessman, did not have their positions on council renewed, as was expected.

Thorne and Mills are trying to get an explanation from the province as to why they were not reappointed.

Minutes of the DHC's corporate planning meeting dated Jan. 5 show council was confident Mills' position would be renewed before the end of the month.

That changed last week when health council executive director Graham Constantine was advised to the contrary and the only explanation provided by the Ministry of Health was "it is the minister's prerogative."

At Monday's regular meeting of the health council, members named vice-chairperson Doris Shirriff of Penetanguishine to act as interim chairperson. They agreed they would

not appoint someone to replace Thorne right away.

Shirriff and fellow member Dr. Rob Madronich of King City were reappointed for another two years when their positions expired last month. Past chairperson John Wilson also received notice he would be returned for an additional two years, but last month he indicated he was not seeking the reappointment.

Local MPPs Frank Klees and Julia Munro both said they don't know why Thorne's appointment on council was not renewed.

"His term of appointment was over and there are other people in the community who have applied to council," said Klees, adding that whoever said Thorne was to act as chair until 2001 made a mistake.

Klees also dismisses any suggestion Thorne's removal from council has anything to do with past correspondence from the DHC to the ministry.

On two separate occasions, the DHC was critical of the province in letters signed by Thorne—once in its failure to follow through on spending promises and again when council felt ignored in the decision to designate York County the site of the new cardiac centre.

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