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Fisch likely to lead region, again

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

Despite an annual stipend of \$134,550, plus use of a leased vehicle, the list to become York Region's top bureaucrat is a short one.

In fact, unless there's a dramatic and unforeseen — turn of events, Bill Fisch will be acclaimed as the region's chairperson for the second consecutive term at a ceremony tonight.

As of yesterday, Fisch was the lone person to register his candidacy with the regional clerk's office in preparation for the inaugural council meeting at York Region headquarters in Newmarket at 7 p.m.

SHOW OF HANDS

If an opponent steps forward, the region's nine mayors and 10 regional councillors will turn to a show of hands to fill the three-year term.

Although the position of regional chairperson is open to any voting-age resident in York Region, a candidate must be nominated and seconded by members of council in order to be considered.

"No, I'm not really surprised that someone else hasn't stepped forward," Fisch said in an interview Tuesday. "I believe I have done a pretty good job the last three years and I want to continue in the job."

"I think I have pretty strong support from members of council. All members of council are elected and are happy in the positions they have."

However, the region's former chair-



BILL FISCH: Regional chairperson says he's done a pretty good job and wants to continue his work.

person believes it's time York Region residents were given the opportunity to fill the position themselves.

For the first time, the job for regional chairperson was included on the ballot when voters in Halton Region cast their vote in last month's municipal election.

"There's no question about it, the chair of the region should be elected by the populous," stressed Eldred King, who held the job in York Region for five straight terms. "I'm sure that's going to happen over the next few years."

Three times King was acclaimed to the post. In his first bid for regional chairperson, he defeated former Richmond Hill mayor Al Duffy and in late 1994, downed Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson.

"The way it is now, it's difficult for someone to come in who has not been involved in a municipality and how it works," King added.

"Unless that person is extremely popular and well-known, they wouldn't really stand that much of a chance."

Three years ago, Fisch defeated Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell and Georgina Mayor Rob Grossi to assume the mantle following King's retirement.

NO CHALLENGERS

Before the Nov. 13 election, both said they had no intention of challenging Fisch for his job. Grossi did not return a phone call this week from a reporter inquiring whether he had changed his mind after losing his mayor's job to Jeff Holec in a close battle.

Meanwhile, Fisch doesn't believe the current rules to elect a regional chairperson favour the incumbent in the least.

"It's a double-edged sword," Fisch said. "When you do a good job, people you work with every day will know it. When you have not, there are certain reservations."

"The job you do just can't be hidden." And King said no matter how the job is awarded, the successful candidate must balance the direction of council against the needs of the residents.

"You still have to be aware of the public pulse, regardless of the people that elect you," he said.

"You have to be prepared to comment for the total population of the region."

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