

KEVIN ASHE SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

DURHAM - With the announcement earlier this year that current Regional Chair John Henry will not be returning. Rumors began to circulate on who would become the next regional chair. One such candidate that hit the rumor mill, was that of Pickering Mayor Kevin Ashe. His name circulated in various circles and has become the Rumor of the day when it comes to who will take the helm after Henry. In a social media post. Kevin Ashe came out to clarify the rumors. He stated: Lots of rumors going around about an appointment as Regional Chair. That is all they are ...rumors. I have not been offered any such appointment and I plan on seeking reelection as Mayor of Pickering. The Ford government is moving to take direct control at the top of some local governments in Ontario, offering its appointees enhanced powers and shrinking the size of two councils. The new Better Regional Governance Act, tabled by Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob Flack on Thursday, will allow him to appoint regional chairs, give those appointees additional powers and streamline both Niagara and Simcoe. Eight of the province's biggest regional governments in Ontario will have their leaders directly appointed by the province, a move designed to "ensure more efficient,

streamlined regional decision making." Those appointees will be given what the province is calling "strong chair" powers. The following statement was being issued on behalf of John Henry, Regional Chair and Chief Executive Officer for The Regional Municipality of Durham: "Today, the Province made a fundamental change to how Regions are governed in Ontario. Moving forward, Regional Chairs will be appointed by the Province, not elected by the residents of Durham Region as they voted for in the 2010 referendum. I am disappointed by this decision. Serving as Durham's elected Regional Chair has been a great honor of my career, and together we've had great success. Over the past eight years, the Region of Durham has effectively planned and delivered major regional services and co-ordinated growth and infrastructure across municipal boundaries in a way that reflects the needs of our diverse urban, suburban and rural communities. I believe the changes being implemented by the Province are a disservice to our vibrant communities and our residents who deserve a direct voice in choosing their leadership. I am deeply grateful for the trust and support of our residents throughout these many years. While my role as the elected

Chair is coming to an end, my commitment to this community is not. I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Durham in a different capacity and contributing to the growth and success of our Region in new ways. Durham Region will always be my home, and I remain deeply proud of all that we have accomplished together." "Regional municipalities are a core part of local governance and deliver essential services funded by property taxpayers. Regional leadership needs to be accountable. Chairs should either be directly elected or chosen by their elected peers," said Ontario Liberal Critic for Economic Development, Tourism, Culture and Sport and Ajax MPP Rob Cerjanec on the upcoming changes to municipal governments. "If the province believes regional structures are no longer working, it should commit to a formal review of regional governance every decade. One that reflects where people live and what they need informed by local input, instead of top down from Queen's Park," the MPP said. "If the province wants to reduce the burden on property taxpayers and fix service delivery, start by delivering the services that were dumped on municipalities," he said. In another rumor mill and taken as an April Fools joke — that was published online. It stated: Sources with knowl-

edge of provincial discussions say the government of Doug Ford is preparing to appoint Jamil Jivani as Durham Regional Chair, a move that would extend Queen's Park's recent pattern of installing high-profile figures in key municipal leadership roles. While no formal announcement has been made, multiple sources describe the decision as "effectively settled." If confirmed, the appointment would mark a significant shift for Jivani, who currently serves as MP for Durham, and would place a politically connected figure at the helm of one of Ontario's fastest-growing regions. The Regional Chair oversees a multi-billion-dollar budget and plays a central role in coordinating planning, infrastructure, housing, and policing across municipalities including Ajax, Oshawa, Whitby, and Pickering. The Ford government has increasingly taken a more assertive role in municipal governance, particularly in regions facing acute housing and infrastructure pressures. Appointing a Regional Chair—rather than relying on local selection processes—would align with the province's broader emphasis on accelerating decision-making and ensuring alignment with provincial priorities. Durham Region, in particular, has become a focal point for growth targets tied to Ontario's housing strategy, as well as for transit expansion and infrastructure investment. Sources say Jivani's appointment is viewed within government as a way to "tighten the connection" between provincial objectives and regional execution. Critics, however, are expected to raise concerns about the continued centralization of authority at Queen's Park and the erosion of local decision-making autonomy. The province has not publicly commented on the speculation. The Better Regional Governance Act, 2026 that would make a number of changes to the way regional governments function in some of Ontario's fastest growing regions. These changes would support lower costs for municipal taxpayers and better alignment between regional decision-making and shared provincial-regional priorities. The proposed changes include giving the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing the power to appoint upper-tier council chairs in eight fast-growing regions and granting these council chairs "strong chair" powers to help them deliver on government priorities, such as housing and infrastructure. The proposed legislation would also reduce the cost of government. The move by the Ford government to control seven regional municipalities and a county has been described as the province "installing cronies to run regional councils".

So far, Mayor of Pickering Kevin Ashe has a proven track record as a local politician. Kevin George Ashe born in 1962. He has been mayor of Pickering since 2022. As mayor, he also sits on Durham Regional Council. Ashe is the son of George Ashe, who was the first mayor of Pickering. The family moved from the Ottawa area to Pickering in the 1960s. Ashe served as a trustee on the Durham Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board from 1985 to 1997. He was first elected to the school board in the 1985 municipal elections. He was re-elected

in 1991, and 1994. He became chair of the board in 1993. Ashe ran for the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario in the 2007 Ontario general election in the riding of Ajax—Pickering. He defeated Ajax councillor Shaun Collier for the nomination. In May 2024, Ashe asked the provincial government to revoke a minister's zoning order from 1972 in order to build homes next to the Pickering Airport Lands, an area that had been set aside by the federal government to build an international airport, but was later shelved.

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