

WHAT WILL THE REGIONAL MANAGER DO NOW THAT THE REGION WILL CREATE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

The Regional Council has overwhelmingly voted to look in to the "processes necessary to hire an Auditor-General starting in 2027". What does this mean? Another layer of bureaucracy. This new office will oversee all operations and main mandate will be to cut waste. Regional councillors voted in favour of creating the independent position at their meeting Wednesday, February 25. The motion carried by a vote of 21-5. Three council members were absent. Auditor General offices provide independent oversight to municipal councils. They're responsible for conducting performance, financial and compliance audits to ensure value for money, identify any

inefficiencies and and maintain accountability. The Region of Durham has faced severe criticism over the consistently high rate of property, water and sewage taxes it collects year after year. Property taxes alone garner more than \$1 billion a year for the region. The region has also been criticized for spending on upgrades such as a million dollar revolving door and expensive kitchen equipment. Council have asked staff to report back about a proposed Terms of Reference, governance structure, reporting relationship and plan to establish an Auditor General's office. The report will include recommended authorities, the mandate, scope of audits and any by-law or procedural

changes that would be required. The budget for the office and staffing requirements will be considered by council during their 2027 budget process. It comes after a tumultuous 2026 budget process at regional council that eventually saw them settle on a 4.8 per cent property tax increase. Durham Region has consistently announced among the highest increases over the past few years, at times, over and above the set ceiling. 2026: 4.8% (against an announced cap of 3.5%) 2025: 7.4% (against an announced cap of 4.9%) 2024: 7.5% 2023: 5.2% The councillor at the Regional Council, members voted 21-5 to direct regional staff to start

working through the processes necessary to hire an Auditor-General starting in 2027. Those who opposed the direction to move towards an Auditor-General were Chair John Henry, Mayor Dan Carter (Oshawa), Mayor Shaun Collier (Ajax) and Councillors Bob Chapman (Oshawa) and Bruce Garrod (Uxbridge). Three members of council were absent: Mayor Michael Jubb (Brock), Mayor Dave Barton (Uxbridge) and Brock Councillor Cria Pettingill. This new position is estimated to be paying well over \$250,000 a year with full benefits according to leak reports. The position is something that is an example of the waste of taxpayers dollars.

This new position will be another way to be able to justify the tax increases year after year. Elliot LeBlanc, said. "I have no choice to pay taxes. What has happened here today is Another example of how out of touch politician have become." George Sterline, "I can't believe that during such harsh economic times. Regional council would vote on spending instead of serving the public. This is shameful." Online comments included: Dave T - I am shocked that the region voted to spend more money. Good thing this is an election year. I think it is time to clean our local swamp from all these people that so far out of touch with the common tax-

payer that they would insult us by spending instead of putting pressure on the CFO to look for wasteful venture. Clare H posted - I am a single mother about to loose my house. I can barely put food on the table. Community resources are stretched thin to the point that days pass and I go without food so my child may eat. This is not right. I do not care how any politician justifies it. Craig R. Stated: I can understand the logic behind the decision to bring in a person to be in charge of monitoring waste and implementation of saving measures. The only thing I have a problem with is that they chose to do it now. Luckily it won't surface till 2027 and maybe it will get reconsidered.

Ajax explains why it ended Durham Distillery lease

The Town of Ajax has clarified that it had entered into a lease agreement with Durham Distillery to support the establishment of a fully operational, end-to-end distillery "... [25 Mill Street] shall be used and occupied only for the purpose of distilling and sale of spirits which includes without limitation the distillation, preparation for sale, bottling and labelling, packing and shipping, the sale (import and export) and marketing of spirits, the barrel aging (and otherwise) and storage of spirits... The objective was to support a startup and help grow a local business to strengthen the vitality of Pickering Village, it said. This partnership was intended to bring long-term economic activity to the area – not simply retail sales, but a fully functioning production facility contributing to local growth, it added.

Here is Durham Distillery's statement.

Here are some of the town's answers: What was the term of the initial lease?

The initial lease term was three years, running from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2024.

Why did the town move to a month-to-month tenancy in January 2025 rather than renewing for another three years?

The town did not renew the lease due to serious and ongoing non-compliance with the lease agreement.

Specifically:

The tenant did not meet the core requirement of operating a fully functional distillery as outlined in the lease.

The facility was primarily used for retail sales, which did not align with the agreed-upon end-to-end distillery operation.

The tenant's operations were not in compliance with the Ontario Building Code and the Ontario Fire Code.

The tenant continued to bring in its product from another small batch distillery location outside of Durham Region.

Rent and tax payments were inconsistent.

As of the end of 2025, \$30,000 in unpaid rent and taxes is owed to the town.

Throughout the initial term and the month-to-month tenancy in 2025, town staff — including Fire and Building officials —worked with the tenant extensively to support the startup of a small batch distillery, including plans for specialized infrastructure and safety requirements necessary to operate the distillery properly. Despite these efforts, the distillery never materialized. Given these factors, the town acted responsibly and in the public interest by declining to renew a long-term lease. Why did the town formally provide legal notice to vacate the premises?

The town issued formal legal notice to the tenant on January 5, 2026, providing the tenant with thirty days to vacate the premises and allow the town to regain possession of the property. This step allows the Town to: Protect public assets and taxpayer interests. Reassess the facility's condition and operational readiness. Evaluate future opportunities that align with the Town's economic development objectives. Did the town confiscate the tenant's possessions? No. The town advised the tenant that it may still access the property to retrieve all its possessions, including equipment and products, by making mutually agreeable arrangements to do so.

Legion
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