

Norton expected to resign today, ending 20 years in the Legislature

By Robert Whereatt
Staff Writer

House Speaker Fred Norton will end more than 20 years in the Minnesota Legislature at noon today when he submits his resignation to Gov. Rudy Perpich.

Norton, 58, is expected to step down about two hours before the House and Senate convene in a special session to consider a bill that would help Minnesota corporations fend off hostile takeovers.

Rep. Robert Vanasek, DFL-New Prague, his caucus's choice to succeed Norton, is expected to be elected to the speakership today and to preside over the special session.

House DFLers are likely to have to deal with another resignation from their ranks this summer.

Rep. Jerry Schoenfeld, the assistant majority leader from Waseca, is expected to resign by September to accept a job as director of the Rural

Development Board in the Department of Trade and Economic Development.

Schoenfeld confirmed Wednesday that he has been offered a job and that he expects to accept it. His name already appears as director of the new board on the department's internal organization charts.

The board was created by the 1987 Legislature. It will establish investment policy for rural development under a new program designed to encourage economic growth outside the metropolitan area.

Norton's resignation is prompted by his appointment to the Minnesota Court of Appeals by Perpich, effective July 1. He said he will make his resignation now to avoid any possible conflict of interest if the anti-takeover legislation becomes involved in a court challenge.

"By resigning completely, I obviously have no authority and can have no conflict," he said yesterday. "I can

see something like this (anti-takeover legislation) getting into our court."

Perpich will call a special election to fill the vacancy in Norton's District 65A seat. There are at least six declared DFL candidates for it. The DFL has scheduled an endorsing convention for July 12.

Independent-Republicans are expected to field a candidate for the seat, which has not been without its incumbent for two decades. The district is an economically and ethnically diverse one that takes in the Crocus Hill-Summit Av. area, part of Frogtown and the Selby-University area.