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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Abramovich Re-Elected Regional Speaker

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Chukotka lawmakers on Tuesday unanimously re-elected billionaire Roman Abramovich as their speaker for a five-year term, the region's official web site reported.

Abramovich garnered 92 percent of the vote in the March 13 elections to the Chukotka legislature, showing the best result among all independent candidates who ran in the 3,300 local polls nationwide that day.

United Russia holds seven of 12 seats in the new Chukotka legislature. A Just Russia and the Liberal Democrats have one each, while the remaining three went to independents, Chukotka.org said.

Abramovich's re-election came as no surprise, as he governed the Arctic region from 2001 to 2008 and is fondly remembered by locals for his generous investments. He voluntarily resigned from the job but proceeded to win a seat at the regional legislature.

Abramovich, 44, a close ally of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, was ranked Russia's ninth

richest man on a Forbes list released this month, with his wealth estimated at $13.4 billion.

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