



## **STAFF REPORT**

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**Meeting Date: September 12, 2022**

**Title: Possible Redistribution of Federal Ridings Advocacy**

**Prepared By: Allyson Euler**

**Department:** Administration

**Report Number: Administration-2022-032**

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### **Recommendation:**

Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Ontario has proposed a new electoral map that would cut the number of federal election districts in northern Ontario from ten to nine; and

Whereas the Constitution of Canada requires that the federal elector districts be reviewed every ten years; and

Whereas the most significant change would see the two largest ridings in the far north, Kenora and Timmins-James Bay, amended and combined into one massive riding called Kiiwetinoong-Mushkegowuk, spanning from the Manitoba border to Quebec, and Kenora's current riding boundary readjusted dramatically and combined with Thunder Bay-Rainy River with further significant changes to the Thunder Bay-Superior North and Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing boundaries; and

Whereas the land mass size of the new Kenora-Thunder Bay-Rainy River riding would make it virtually ungovernable, and ultimately infringe on the democratic rights of northerners; and

Whereas our region has diverse and unique interests which are quite different from one another and deserve adequate diverse representation in Ottawa; and

Whereas the legislation would in fact support, according to the population quota to be applied by the Commission, a reduction of two, but the commission has recommended one; and

Whereas the Kenora District was deemed an “extraordinary circumstance” in 2012 during the last boundary review, and because of which it was not revised at that time.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that Council of the Corporation of the City of Dryden strongly opposes the proposed reduction of Northern ridings and representatives; and further

That the City of Dryden calls upon the Federal Electoral Boundary Commission to consider the vast land mass that already exists within our electoral boundary and refrain from extending any boundary which reduces northern ridings and representatives; and further

That further consideration be given to the uniqueness of Northwestern Ontario, especially smaller municipalities in the north and expanding this boundary provides for further imperiled and underrepresented by so few seats; and further

That copies of this resolution be forwarded to Eric Melillo, MP Kenora Riding, the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario, the Kenora District Municipal Association, the Rainy-River District Municipal Association and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association.

### **Background:**

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Ontario has proposed a new electoral map that would cut the number of federal election districts in northern Ontario from ten to nine.

The Constitution of Canada requires that federal electoral districts be reviewed after each decennial (10-year) census to reflect changes and movements in Canada's population. The Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act sets out the non-partisan commission's mandate to redraw electoral lines across the country. In 2022, it must generally aim to meet a population quota of 116,590 in each electoral district. Population data is a key consideration in the drawing of riding boundaries, and the North's population continues to grow at a much slower pace than the rest of the province.

### **Discussion:**

The current federal redistribution process began in October 2021. It is led by independent commissions working separately in each province to establish electoral boundaries. The Chief Electoral Officer is tasked with applying the representation formula found in the Constitution to determine the new allocation of seats. Elections Canada is also responsible for providing administrative and technical support to the commissions.

On June 23, 2022, Parliament amended the Representation Formula, which determines the number of Members of Parliament (MPs) to be assigned to each province. The new legislation ensures that every province retains, as a minimum, the same number of MPs

that it had assigned during the 43rd Parliament elected in 2019. Using the new formula, the Chief Electoral Officer has recalculated how many MPs each province will be assigned.

The decennial redistribution for the 2020s will exceptionally require two Representation Orders, one for Quebec and another that will cover the other nine provinces. The new electoral districts will apply, for each province, in the first general election held at least seven months after their respective Representation Order is issued.

The most significant change is that of our area which recommends that the Kenora riding be merged into Thunder Bay-Rainy River, creating a much more widely spread-out riding as the Kiiwetinoong-Mushkegowuk riding and has been proposed to represent the vast majority of Ontario's Far North, stretching from the Manitoba border to the James Bay coast and the Quebec border to the east.

According to Elections Canada, the current Thunder Bay-Rainy River riding has a population of 82,805, while the riding of Kenora has a population of 62,656. The new Kiiwetinoong-Mushkegowuk would have a population of about 36,325. Kenora-Rainy-River would have 101,097 and Thunder Bay-Superior North would be 99,035. The average riding in Ontario has 111,145 residents, though under the proposed boundary changes, that would grow to 121,527.

Even with one less electoral district, each riding in northern Ontario would fall below that quota. The size of the new Kenora-Thunder Bay-Rainy River riding would make it virtually ungovernable, and really infringe on the democratic rights of northerners.

If the plan of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario becomes final, the region will have only nine seats in the House of Commons, compared with 12 seats in 1974. These changes have significantly impacted northern Ontario and will continue to if this change is made.

Northern Ontario is unique, and so is every community in Northwestern Ontario. To combine the ridings means Kenora and Dryden will lose access and interaction with our MP as the jurisdiction will simply be too large and, the people in the Kenora area have different interests from people in Thunder Bay.

During the last redistribution, in 2012, the electoral boundaries commission said that if it applied population formulas strictly, the North would have only eight seats. But it took feedback into account and decided that it should retain 10 ridings because of its vast geography.

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario is holding public hearings, in person and virtually, to gather comments and feedback on the proposed boundaries and electoral district names. In order to participate, you must complete a Public Hearing Participation Form. The Commission has set September 25, 2022 as the date by which the Public Participation Hearing Form is to be filed.

A submission may be made in writing as an alternative to appearing at an in-person or virtual hearing. The public hearing for Kenora will be held on October 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the Douglas Family Art Centre, or alternatively the virtual session will be held Wednesday, October 26, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. but you must register by September 25<sup>th</sup> to attend.

**Financial Implications:**

Not Applicable