

FRANKLY SPEAKING: New Boundaries?

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Remember the Fewer Politicians Act?

One of the cornerstone commitments of the PC Party leading up to the 1995 election was to reduce the size and cost of government. The Fewer Politicians Act made good on the promise that politicians themselves would be part of the downsizing.

The York Mackenzie Riding:
A Casualty of the Fewer Politicians Act

The Fewer Politicians Act came into force on December 9, 1996. It aligned the provincial riding boundaries with the federal ridings, and cut the number of MPPs at Queen's Park from 130 to 103. The rationale was that the reduction of costs, including MPP and staff salaries and office overhead would save taxpayers an estimated \$12 million annually and that additional efficiencies would be realized through common riding boundaries, one election system and common voters' lists.

Little did I know what the practical implications of that legislation would mean to me personally. The result was the York Mackenzie riding, which included Newmarket, Aurora and the Township of King, to which I was elected in 1995, would no longer exist on the 1999 electoral map. I had effectively voted to eliminate my own riding. The downsizing resulted in the Aurora and King areas of my riding being included in the new Vaughan-King-Aurora riding and Newmarket becoming part of the new York North. I would face a dilemma that confronted many of my colleagues across the province ? having to face off against colleagues for nominations as their ridings were carved up or totally eliminated.

The New Oak Ridges Riding

I faced a difficult decision. My friend Al Palladini was the incumbent MPP for York-Centre which included Vaughan and would now include Aurora and King under the new boundaries. My colleague, Julia Munro, was the incumbent for Durham-York which would now include Newmarket in York North. To retain any of the voters I had represented in my first term would mean a nomination contest. One of us would lose. The new Oak Ridges riding was formed by combining sections of three existing ridings. There would be no incumbents contesting for the nomination. I met with my colleagues and offered to run in the Oak Ridges riding, thus avoiding a face-off between us. My only request was that they would lend me their support should I be challenged for the nomination. As it was, I was acclaimed for the nomination and would go on to win the 1999 election and in 2003, the good people of Oak Ridges would honour me with re-election for a third term.

The Oak Ridges Riding:
A Second Casualty of Redistribution

Eight years later, provincial riding boundaries were once again redrawn to address the increase in population in York Region and throughout the GTA. The result was, effective with the 2007 election, the Oak Ridges riding was eliminated and split into two ridings ? Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges-Markham. It was decision time again.

The Newmarket-Aurora Riding

An analysis of the voting results of the 2003 election indicated that the best chances for electoral success for the PC Party from among the three ridings in play, would be in the Oak Ridges-Markham and Richmond Hill ridings. The newly formed Newmarket-Aurora riding showed a PC deficit of more than 2,000 votes. The decision was made that I should run in the Newmarket-Aurora riding in hopes that as an incumbent, I would be able to overcome the odds and that the party would be successful in all three ridings. Thanks to the voters of Newmarket-Aurora, despite the odds, I won the 2007 election and was re-elected for my fifth term in 2011.

New Federal Riding Boundaries for Newmarket-Aurora

In February 2012 the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario was created to once again redraw the federal electoral map.

The result of that exercise is that there will be 14 more federal seats in Ontario, and the new boundaries will have significant impact on Aurora and Newmarket.

Under the new federal boundaries, Aurora will be divided at Wellington Street.

A new federal riding that includes Aurora south of Wellington, Oak Ridges and a portion of Richmond Hill as far south as Major Mackenzie Drive will be called Aurora-Oak-Ridges- Richmond Hill.

The new federal Newmarket-Aurora riding will include Aurora north of Wellington and all of the Town of Newmarket. The next federal election will be based on the new riding boundaries.

No change to the Provincial Riding Boundaries?yet

I have had a number of calls from constituents asking how this change affects the provincial riding of Newmarket-Aurora. It does not.

While previous legislation required provincial boundaries to be changed whenever changes were made to federal boundaries, that is no longer the case.

Separate legislation will have to be passed by the provincial legislature before any changes take place. That is highly unlikely to happen before the next provincial election.

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