

# NEW BORDERS PROPOSED FOR ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

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Change is on the table for local democracy, and it could have a huge impact on the way you're represented.

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has proposed a new electoral map that includes a new district for Halton and the redrawing of local boundaries. The change is the result of the region's steadily growing population and rules set out in the constitution that require federal electoral boundaries to be reviewed after every 10-year census.

Under the new proposal, Halton would have six districts: Burlington Lakeshore, Burlington—Milton West, Georgetown—Milton East, Oakville Lakeshore, Oakville North and Wellington-Halton. It represents a dramatic shift for many of the region's ridings and creates new groupings for several communities that have never before been put together. Notably, both Burlington and Milton are being split into separate ridings.

Kyle Hutton, a concerned Halton resident and self-described election nerd, said he believes the proposal unnecessarily breaks up communities.

"They've decided this is how we must accommodate both growth and the current population quota and this is how we think it's best to do it. And they've done this throughout Ontario where in some places they haven't shifted it too much — like Hamilton is basically the same. But in places like Halton or London, they've created these massive rural, urban ridings that don't seem to reflect the communities that they're drawing the boundaries for," said Hutton.

The proposed boundary changes for the more rural riding of Wellington—Halton Hills are less dramatic. The riding would become Wellington-Halton and would add portions of Guelph to bring it closer to the province's desired population for the rid-

ing.

Michael Chong, the MP of Wellington—Halton Hills, said he respects the work of the commission.

"Unlike the U.S., Canada has an independent commission — free of partisan interference — that determines new federal electoral district boundaries every decade based on the most recent census data. This ensures each district has roughly the same number of people and each vote roughly the same weight, upholding the constitutional principle of representation by population," said Chong. "I respect the work of the independent commission and look forward to its final report."

Under the proposed changes, the Brant Hills neighbourhood in Burlington would now be part of the newly created Burlington—Milton West riding. That would mean, Brant Hills residents would now be represented in the same riding as roughly half of Milton and a large section of rural Burlington and Milton.

The problem that can create is the communities of Milton, Burlington and the surrounding rural areas tend to have different problems and priorities. The fear is representatives would be less able to properly support their constituents as a result of their needs being so drastically varied.

In establishing new boundaries, the commission considers a number of factors, including the historic pattern of the boundaries, geographic size and community identity. It also attempts to create ridings with populations as close to 116,000 as is feasible.

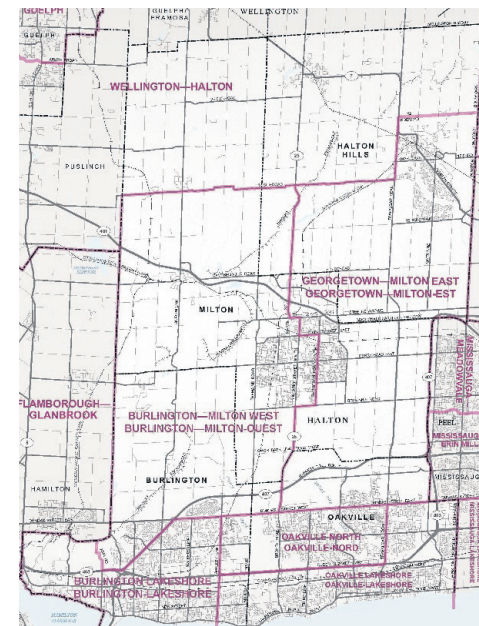
Burlington MP Karina Gould said what concerns her most about the proposal is the movement of Tyandaga and Brant Hills into the new Burlington—Milton West riding and moving Elizabeth Gardens to the Oakville Lakeshore riding.

"The Electoral Boundaries Commission has one sole focus: try to make the ridings in Ontario as numerically proportional as possible. That goal is fine and you



Graham Paine/Metroland

Left: Kyle Hutton is concerned about proposed changes to federal election boundaries in Halton. Right: The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has proposed a new electoral map that includes a new district for Halton and the redrawing of local boundaries.



FEBC illustration

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In a column, Milton MP Adam van Koevorden wrote about the proposed changes, and encouraged residents to have an active role in the upcoming decision.

"Democracy is hard work requiring constant effort and engagement of our communities. If you're interested or have concerns, I hope you will consider taking an active role and making sure the commission hears your voice," said van Koevorden.

For those who would like to take part, a live public hearing will be held at Milton's FirstOntario Arts Centre on Oct. 12 starting at 6:30 p.m. Written submissions may be filed with the commission until Oct. 29.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: We felt like the proposed electoral boundary change wasn't getting the attention it deserved so we wanted to share what local experts and officials had to say about it.*

don't want to have ridings that are wildly different in population size, but they kept to a strict +/-10 per cent of the target population, whereas the legislation stipulates +/-25 per cent for the exact reason as to keep communities whole. The commission failed to take into consideration how communities exist, live, and access services and amenities," said Gould.

For example, a resident in Burlington's Brant Hills who wished to speak with their MP would likely need to travel to Milton to visit their office.

Any changes to electoral districts will not come into effect until at least April 2024.

Anyone interested in learning more is encouraged to visit the redistribution website at [www.redecoupage-redistrib](http://www.redecoupage-redistrib)

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