

PROPOSED ELECTORAL RIDING REDRAW GETTING MIXED REACTIONS

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The proposed redistribution of the federal electoral districts has drawn a mixed community reaction — largely negative.

The proposed changes would divide Halton Hills between the districts of Georgetown-Milton East and Wellington-Halton, separating Georgetown and Acton as a result.

"We don't want the urban sprawl. It's a sleepy little hollow that wants to stay this way," said Ruth Rocheleau, who has been a Georgetown resident for about two decades.

Rocheleau fears merging with larger urban settings would compromise the area's "country-like lifestyle."

"It will just become another Brampton, another Scarborough, or something, and I don't want that," said Christel Weindl, a town resident for about five years.

Weindl said she has seen a constant increase in the area's crime rates and worries the proposed redistribution would further the issue.

"These days, (it seems) every day there is a stabbing, there is murder," said Weindl. "When I was younger, if there was a murder people talked about it for

months. Look at what has happened," she added.

Town council wrote a letter to the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario requesting a reconsideration of the proposed riding redraw.

Sent on Sept. 9, the letter reads: "The proposal of two districts would be especially damaging to the interests of the voting population within the town," adding, "that will contribute to cynicism and lack of participation at the polls."

"I just hope that they don't split Halton Hills — that's my biggest concern," said Mayor Rick Bonnette. "It will confuse people."

The town should be kept together for many reasons, Bonnette said.

"We've worked so hard to become one town after 48 years of amalgamation. We share the same police, the same school boards, hospital and health care," Bonnette said.

Furthermore, when dealing with provincial issues, Bonnette said the town would have to connect and consult with two MPPs instead of one. He believes this would elongate procedures and also cause confusion among residents seeking provincial services who may be unsure which riding they fall under.

A four-year Georgetown resident, Marc Pearce, who appreciates the "closeness of the community," doesn't think the proposed change would have a substantial impact.

"It's primarily for electoral purposes. So, I don't see how it would affect anything much. Over time people would settle into it," said Pearce.

While lack of familiarity with politicians of a different riding, changed proximity to voting stations and location accessibility for disabled seniors are some concerns that crossed Pearce's mind, he said, "most people only think about the electoral process when the election is coming up."

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

"Due to population changes, 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.

The federal electoral boundaries are reviewed after every 10-year census. Any



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Marc Pearce doesn't feel the proposed federal electoral boundary redistribution will significantly affect the town.

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

For more information, visit the federal redistribution website.

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