

Electoral Boundaries

the country. The commission apparently has ignored community of interest, concentrating on population to compile new ridings.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the editorial concludes:

Federal elections may be a long way off and the decision to change boundaries may seem unimportant at this time, but the situation will change when this area is overshadowed by a Brampton giant in the next trek to the polls. Let Georgetown district remain in Halton, a riding with which we have always held political, community and cultural ties.

The other Georgetown weekly newspaper, the *Herald*, reported that a non-partisan group of interested citizens was formed to oppose the loss of their area. A petition was circulated to obtain hundreds of signatures opposing the redistribution. The results of this petition, at least several hundred citizens' names protesting the commission proposal, have been forwarded to Mr. Nelson Castonguay, the Representation Commissioner of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Halton Hills Mayor Tom Hill contacted each of the political parties in town urging them to take an opposing stand on this issue and voice their concerns. Plans included the organizing of a committee of representatives from the chambers of commerce and service clubs in the area in charge of collecting and researching material for a second brief to be presented to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, stating the specific facts. Regional government put Halton Hills together and now the Ontario Commission is splitting it right down the middle at No. 10 sideroad, casting the Georgetown area adrift to an unfamiliar territory, the mayor contended.

These and other area papers, such as the *Acton Free Press*, reprinted the redistribution map along with a report of Mayor Hill's fight against the changes. The mayor said that perhaps Erin township should be returned to Wellington, as it was for years, but certainly Acton should not be split off from the rest of Halton Hills. Mayor Hill said he thought they had already submitted a strong brief based on population, assessment and community interests when the first boundary change was proposed, but it did not seem to do any good.

Last summer when the commission first proposed riding boundary changes for Halton, the proposals included Georgetown and Northeast Esquesing with Caledon, Vaughan and King townships to form a riding called Halton-Peel with a population of 66,700. Mayor Hill and I, along with Halton regional chairman Allan Masson, petitioned the commission to rescind their proposal, but to no avail. "Now we have to work to the best of our ability to try to persuade the commission to keep Halton, without Erin, the way it is and keep Halton Hills together", the Mayor stated. He said that interested citizens backed by the three political parties must band together to achieve this goal. Mayor Hill furthermore placed an "Important Message" in the local paper urging all Halton Hill residents to sign the form at the Bottom and send it immediately to his office.

However, in spite of all these considerations, what of this sole concern of the commission for riding population limits? Let us examine the figures. According to the 1971 decennial census, Halton had a count of only 82,679, well within the upper limit of about 102,000 even before losing a few thousand people from the Erin area. By contrast, the Brampton electoral district now has a greater population of

91,897 people, over 9,000, or 11 per cent, more than Halton, with Brampton growing even faster than Halton. The total voting count listed for Georgetown in 1974 was only about 10,000. Therefore, to leave Georgetown in Halton would only reverse the present count between the two proposed ridings and leave them both within the reasonable dimensions. At that Brampton, with the lower population, would be growing faster and would probably catch up to Halton by the next revision. Why, then, the urgency to rob Halton to pay Brampton? Does it make any sense at all? None that we in Halton can see.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the only thing which makes sense to the people of Halton is to leave Georgetown in Halton regardless of the population figures. Haltonites are apparently not complaining about how well they have been represented in the past, and their MP is not complaining about the workload. Failing such a sensible and acceptable move, the second and less preferable option would be to leave Halton Hills, including Acton, intact and let it join Brampton in a new riding called Halton Hills, Brampton, leaving Oakville and Milton together to form a small but fast growing riding still called Halton.

If the commission cannot accept either of these first two sincere and serious proposals, both of which are considered more sensible and acceptable than their own, then in my opinion, and undoubtedly in the opinion of those I represent, there is only one course left for them to follow as honourable men; that is, they should fold up their tents and steal away into the night. They should resign their posts and either permit new officials to be appointed or leave the federal electoral boundaries unchanged for Ontario for the present time.

● (1630)

The people of Halton realize that the last suggestion is a drastic one. However, in our minds it is no more drastic than the artificial proposal which the commission seems determined to inflict upon us and on the present system in general. We cannot register too strongly our complete disapproval of the commission's present position and whatever rules of the Electoral Boundaries Act they may feel contribute to that position. We would be more than pleased to meet with them again if they were willing, and we urge representatives of other governments in this area to make themselves available, including the Ontario provincial government.

Whatever the outcome, Mr. Speaker, the people of Halton Hills will never accept in their hearts being separated from each other, even just in federal matters.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should like to compliment the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Ontario. In my opinion it has handled a difficult job in a fair and meaningful way. Some of the comments made yesterday and today by hon. members on the government side in respect of redistribution in Ontario approach the irresponsible. Let us remember that the ridings which we are now representing are based on 1961 census figures—15 years ago.

An hon. Member: No, 1971.

[Mr. Philbrook.]