

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act

of Nickel Centre, the east side of the community of St. Charles and surrounding townships. I can only compare this situation to the Mayor of Toronto having to argue that the CN Tower is part of Toronto, or the Mayor of Montreal arguing that the Olympic Stadium is in Montreal, or the Mayor of Ottawa having to convince others that Parliament lies within the national capital. This is no exaggeration or histrionics, Mr. Speaker. Nickel Centre is as much a part of Nickel Belt as is Walden, Valley East, Onaping or Whitefish, where I reside.

Mr. McGrath: All aboard.

Mrs. Erola: Come aboard! We would love to have you but there are no fish there, unfortunately.

St. Charles, Mr. Speaker, has been placed in what can only be described as a totally ludicrous situation. On one side of the street a person who needs to contact his or her federal representative would, as is now the case, come to my office in Sudbury, while his neighbour on the other side of the street would have to go to Kirkland Lake, a locality, pleasant as it is, as different in makeup as Calgary is to Sudbury.

What I find most surprising, and I must say disturbing, Mr. Speaker, is that in the original redistribution proposal, Nickel Belt was threatened with the loss of the town of Onaping Falls. We dealt with that through proper channels. This community is not only bonded to the Nickel basin communities by reason of geography and commerce, but is actually a member of the regional municipality of Sudbury.

This proposal to lop off a limb of the Sudbury tree was vigorously and vehemently opposed by me and hundreds of concerned parties from the entire region. We made our representations very forcefully and I am pleased to see an obvious absurdity has been corrected. However, you can imagine my surprise when the changes were unfolded and I was faced with an identical situation by the proposal to take the Town of Nickel Centre to a patently unnatural electoral family.

● (1420)

Nickel Centre, like Onaping Falls, is also a member of the regional government, with all the attendant interlocking services which governments of a region offer. While Nickel Centre, I might add, takes pride in its individual character, it is nevertheless an integral component of the regional municipality with its focus being the City of Sudbury. It looks to the Sudbury population centre for its commercial interests, its transportation needs, its media coverage and information systems.

To suggest that the people of Nickel Centre should or could cut themselves out of the Sudbury basin orbit and then develop an arbitrary affiliation with the riding of Timiskaming, with its nucleus in Kirkland Lake, is really quite silly to the residents of the area. It would be laughable if it were not such an affront to the years of traditional association these citizens cherish with their fellow citizens in the other Sudbury basin communities.

I am quite sure that the designers of this anomaly could not have done so deliberately, having an awareness of the on the street impact which such a change would create. I point now to another town, that of St. Charles.

[*Translation*]

As far as St. Charles is concerned, Mr. Speaker, I must say that a community divided is a sad sight to see. As I pointed out earlier, this proposal means that this community and its neighbours, in a relatively isolated area, will be divided in two and forced to seek political representation in two geographically separated areas, namely Kirkland Lake and Sudbury. In addition to the inconvenience to residents in the eastern part of the village, the entire community is affected by this confusing situation.

[*English*]

While this suggested alteration may have been made in a well meaning way, I urge the commission to look more closely at its implications and to restore the cloven Town of St. Charles in its original fullness and vitality to the Nickel Belt constituency.

A point I must make, Mr. Speaker, in this discussion, and the reason I am here today defending my constituents on the more vulnerable outer flanks of Nickel Belt, is that there is an apparent disproportionate allocation of population among northern Ontario ridings. The reason Nickel Belt has been nibbled at in various redistribution schemes—and I might add this is not the first crack—is that my riding has the largest population base of the northern Ontario ridings, and Timiskaming to the northeast has the least. Consequently, when the commission went shopping for more electors, it was obvious that I was the prime candidate.

I suggest to the commission, Mr. Speaker, that the allegedly inadequate population base in Timiskaming, which has prompted the quest for electors, is a skewed and inaccurate picture of the current population figures in my neighbouring riding of Timiskaming. It is my honestly held belief, and I feel this belief is shared also by the current sitting Hon. Member for Timiskaming (Mr. MacDougall), that the 1981 census was taken at a time of abnormally low population levels, in a territory which is cyclically prone to fluctuation due to the boom and bust of the mining cycle in that area.

I will argue that the population today is substantially greater than it was at the time of the census, and I will go even further to suggest that before the next election or the implementation of redistribution, whichever comes first, I know that the measures of this Government to maintain and expand the industrial, commercial and agricultural base of Timiskaming will continue to bear results, and Timiskaming's population will increase accordingly.

I would add, Mr. Speaker, that while one may expect the most populous riding to be picked on when it comes to justifying the continued existence of a riding, or creating a new riding configuration, the population figures of my riding do not exceed by a remarkable amount those proscribed by law. I will be very specific. The Electoral Boundaries Readjustment