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Ontario NDP Caucus · Groupe parlementaire du NPD de l'Ontario

October 20, 2022

Chair, Hon. Justice Lynne C. Leitch
Dr. Karen Bird
Peter John Loewen
Ontario federal electoral boundaries commission

VIA email - ON@redecoupage-federal-redistribution.ca

As Provincial Members of Parliament representing Northern Ontario residents, we are writing to you today to strongly oppose the reduction of electoral districts in Northern Ontario.

As you may be aware, after the last federal electoral boundary changes came into effect, the Government of Ontario did not adopt all of the changes enacted by the federal Parliament. While Ontario did adopt the federal boundaries South of the French River, the Ontario Government recognized that Northern Ontario would be underrepresented with only the 10 seats that the federal model afforded. As a result, Ontario added three seats in the north, primarily to give better representation to two communities of interest and identity: Franco-Ontarians and Indigenous Peoples.

By contrast, the recent proposal put forward by your Commission represents a significant step backward from the acknowledged needs of Northern Ontarians – needs that were formally recognized and agreed upon by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. As a result, we strongly urge you to reconsider the diminution of electoral districts in our region.

Allow us to highlight just three of the reasons for enhancing Northern representation.

First, and most obviously, many of the existing ridings in Northern Ontario are already larger than European countries, a situation that will only be worsened by the expansion of new regions to service. Because public transportation, cell phone coverage and internet access in Northern Ontario is limited, enlarging the size of Northern ridings makes the provision of equitable services to all constituents nearly impossible for elected representatives.

Moreover, the courts have ruled that representation in Canada's democracy is not based merely on population but on regions of interest, and the right of citizens to engage with their elected representatives. By reducing the number of electoral districts in our region, the Commission is undermining this right and diminishing participatory democracy.

Finally, the issues in Northern Ontario are significantly different from the issues facing the urban south. The proposal to diminish Northern Ontario's voice in Parliament will have a detrimental effect both on regional development, and the aspirations of Francophones and Indigenous communities.

For all of these reasons, we urge the Commission to reconsider the proposed federal boundary changes for Northern Ontario, and to refrain from reducing the number of northern ridings. Our regions voices and concerns need to be amplified, not silenced.



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Sincerely,

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