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SP-31

ISSN 1710-9477

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 26 November 2015

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 26 novembre 2015

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Electoral Boundaries Act, 2015

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2015 sur les limites
des circonscriptions électorales

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Clerk: Valerie Quioc Lim

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL POLICY

Thursday 26 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Jeudi 26 novembre 2015

The committee met at 1300 in committee room 2.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES
DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jagmeet Singh): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome and thank you for being here. The Standing Committee on Social Policy will now come to order. Although I am the vice-chair of this committee, I will be asking my colleague to chair, because I am the critic for the third party on this bill. With your leave, I will now ask my colleague Ms. DiNovo to chair the remainder of this meeting. Thank you so much.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, Mr. Singh. I'm delighted, completely delighted.

Good afternoon, again. We are here for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act.

I would like to remind members that pursuant to the order of the House, at 2 p.m. today I shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved at that time. I shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a).

Bill 115 consists of three sections and five schedules. Because the substance of the bill is in the schedules, I suggest that we postpone consideration of the three sections and deal with the schedules first. Do we have unanimous consent to proceed that way? Agreed? Okay, thank you.

I also propose that consecutive sections with no amendments be grouped together, unless any members

would like to vote on a section separately. Any comments or questions before we proceed?

So we're going right to schedule 1 of Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act. Shall schedule 1, sections 1 through 5 carry? Carried.

On schedule 1, the 11 electoral districts, I understand we have an amendment proposed by the third party, number 1. Mr. Singh.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes, I'd like to read this in. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I move that the electoral district of Nickel Belt, as set out in the schedule to schedule 1 to the bill under the heading "3. Nickel Belt", be amended by striking out "All of the territorial district of Sudbury excepting those parts described as follows:" in the portion after the heading "Secondly:", and substituting "All of the territorial district of Sudbury excepting those parts described as follows other than that part forming the reserve of Wahnapitae"

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Any debate? Yes. Ms. McGarry.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much, Chair. I've looked at it carefully, and I understand that in this proposed bill that we are looking at keeping 11 ridings provincially, as opposed to the current 10 ridings federally. In looking at the overall reason why we're going to look at boundary changes, I would recommend voting against this motion. Part of the reason is that making that change would be inconsistent with the intention of maintaining the existing provincial northern ridings in their current form. From my understanding one of the reasons that we're going to move to align the provincial boundaries with the federal boundaries is that it's the most reasonable to do in terms of cost. This would be against that.

We continue to think that the fairest and most cost-effective approach is to adjust the Ontario provincial boundaries to the 111 new southern federal ridings and to maintain the existing 11 provincial northern ridings in their current forms. Further changes to Ontario's provincial electoral boundaries could be considered in the future, based on population and shifts in growth, as well as other factors.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: The Wahnapitae First Nation is currently in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. The reason that both the member from Nickel Belt and myself, as the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, and most importantly Chief Ted Roque and the Wahnapitae First Nation, have requested this change is because their community of interest is not in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. They are on the other side of Lake Wanapitei. So for the residents of the Wahnapitae First Nation to get to my closest constituency office, it is a five-hour drive through two other ridings, and one of those ridings is Nickel Belt. With the federal boundaries, they are in Nickel Belt.

So it's very confusing not only for a lot of people but, most importantly, for the residents of the Wahnapitae First Nation. Their community of interest is in the riding of Nickel Belt. They have to drive through the riding of Nickel Belt to get to the riding they're now in because there is a physical constriction called Lake Wanapitei. They have to drive all the way around Lake Wanapitei.

It would make much more sense, from an economic point of view, but also, most importantly, from a representation point of view; and specifically because they are a homogeneous group.

The Wahnapitae First Nation has requested this change. From all practical points of view, this makes a lot of sense.

The reason we are putting this amendment forward right now is because with this act coming forward, we can actually do this. All the parties agree.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? Ms. McGarry.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I certainly understand that. I think, along with motion number 2, it would selectively alter the boundaries of two of Ontario's 11 northern ridings. I understand the distances up there. I've driven through your lovely riding. I know that those kinds of things are an issue.

When you look at fairness—that's what we're trying to do here. I know this is a particular issue with this particular group, but if one change to the northern boundaries is made, other changes would have to be considered. From what I understand, there weren't a lot of amendments or requests that came in regarding this.

What worries me a little is that—if this was the only group that this would matter to, that might be an issue. But if we made the change to this particular group, it would open the floodgates to others that may want to align themselves with other areas and change their boundaries as well. Overall, that might get us into some controversy with pitting one community against the other.

I know that we need to move forward on this particular bill to ensure that around the next election, we've got things in place for our boundaries. As I said before, further changes to the boundaries could be considered in the future, based on the population and shifts in growth, as well as some of the other factors. But again, I just

want to say that opening the door to many others in the bill at this particular point doesn't seem fair to me.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Hardeman, further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I didn't get the opportunity to attend all the public hearings and presentations to this bill, but I did hear the part from the elections officer of Ontario. His concern was in fact exactly what the parliamentary assistant was talking about—the fact that we have changed, from the original inception, from them all being contiguous with the federal ridings. We have added and left one extra one in northern Ontario. From 10 years ago to now, that's exactly the same place we're in today. We're having one more riding in northern Ontario than the federal ridings are going to be.

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But then he went on to say that that creates a challenge in northern Ontario, too. Obviously, just because you've decided to keep one more than the federal doesn't mean that the boundaries of those 11 should not be changed; it means you should review that each time. You have the boundary adjustment commission doing it federally. If we're not going to be consistent with the federal one, we should at least look at that and say, "Is the population being well-served by the boundaries of the 11 that are there, as opposed to by the number?"

If you took the federal ones, it's strictly by the number. But then, they would review the population in each one and the jurisdiction and, in this case, the community of interest, and they would look at this almost automatically and say, "Well, that makes good sense. The people can't get to the centre of operations of the riding that they're in, yet right across the lake there's another riding that they could be part of." It doesn't distort the population. It seems like a perfect time to do this.

Now, the parliamentary assistant's comments about it opening the floodgates—I would hope that it does open the floodgates, so 10 years from now every place where something like this is needed, the people will come forward and say that it's possible to correct it. Up until now, nobody realized that it was possible to correct it, so we have such a major problem, where it's putting a community totally apart from their normal community by this law.

We can fix it here today. Incidentally, that's why we're here: to make this work better. If we have to take it exactly the way it is because not enough people asked for it or we weren't prepared for it, then why are we having public hearings and why are we having this debate? Why didn't we just say, "We're going to leave everything in the north the way it is and we'll go with the federal ones in the rest of it?"

We're here because there is an opportunity to make it work better. I think that's what we should be doing and I would ask them all to seriously consider looking at it and saying, "This is going to make it better for these folks." It's not going to make one iota of difference to anyone else in the province. There may be other ones in northern Ontario that want that, but denying this one just because

we haven't gotten proposals to fix all of the other ones that may or may not be there I think is a mistake.

I think we should move on this one and, hopefully, 10 years from now, every boundary that needs changing—they will all be here to put their case forward as to why. Even though we all agree that we're going to keep 11 seats there, let's make sure they're designed in the most cost-effective and most congenial way that we can do it for the people who are there.

It's not going to impact how governments are elected. It's not going to impact anyone in southern Ontario. That's why it didn't make any difference to the people in southern Ontario when we, as a province, decided to have 11 ridings in northern Ontario, rather than the 10. We all accepted that was the right thing to do. I think, today, the right thing to do is look after this reserve so that it can go into the riding that is more receptive to their community.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I have a speakers list now: Mr. Vanthof, then we'll go to Mr. Berardinetti and then to Ms. McGarry. Mr. Vanthof.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Chair. I'd just like to put a couple of things on the record regarding the floodgates. I hear you. The floodgates should open for every community that can prove—for the members of that homogenous community, the Wahnapitae First Nation, the only way to get to the riding which they're in is to physically drive five hours through two other ridings. I would ask every other riding and any of the members here who have parts of their ridings where you have to drive five hours through two other ridings—they should also be here requesting, on behalf of their constituents, to be better served by their electoral boundaries.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Berardinetti.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm listening to the debate and I think that both opposition parties are making some valid points. I just have to put this on the record.

I started in 1988 as a politician, like an old politician—I'm an old man. I started in 1988. I had a ward in Scarborough. It was called ward 4 in the city of Scarborough. It had about 25,000 people. My ward was a narrow strip that went all the way south to St. Clair Avenue and all the way to the 401 in Toronto, between Birchmount Road on one side and Midland Avenue—so a small, narrow strip. The bottom part provincially was Scarborough West, and it was represented years ago by Mr. Lewis, the former leader of the NDP, and then it was represented by other people as well. Scarborough Centre was part of it, and then they had Scarborough–Ellesmere, it was called; it was a strange name, but it's gone now.

We had three different provincial representatives, and I was the city representative for Scarborough. We had at least—I think—two federal ridings in my area; they used to overlap. What happens is, there's always electoral change. When the city of Toronto became this megacity in 1997—I was elected—an interesting thing happened. We had 57 members on our council—the mayor and 56. We asked for one more for East York, and Mr. Harris and the Conservatives were willing to do that.

But I remember before Mr. Harris got elected and became Premier, he put a flatbed truck in front of Queen's Park here, and he put a lot of chairs in front—I don't know the number, 17 or 23—and he said, "If I get elected, I'm going to get rid of X number of seats." And to prove the point, the flatbed truck started moving out of the south part of the building here, and Mr. Harris said, "Like that, I promise to get rid of these seats." I think Mr. Hardeman is more experienced than I am; I don't know how many seats, but I defer to him as he's probably the most senior member present here today.

We've had electoral reform. I was sitting on the megacity when, on a Thursday afternoon, getting a drink at a council meeting, the Minister of Municipal Affairs at that time, Tony Clement, phoned the mayor, Mel Lastman, and said, "You have to reduce your council from 57 to 44 representatives." He said, "Either you do it, or we'll do it."

I was made chair of a committee, and we basically had to get rid of 13 city ridings. Since I was the chair of the committee, people were not happy: They were trying to run boundaries through people's backyards and through creeks, whatever, to keep the strongholds when we redrew the boundaries. We did it the right way at the time, in 2000, and that was by putting two city councillors in every federal riding. Now that's changed over time, because the ridings—the changes in the south as well—so now in my provincial riding, I have three city councillors, not two. This happens; we've seen it. They do the change federally, and every time period that they do it, the boundaries change.

I think the government wants to have proper representation. People were really upset at the city of Toronto when we had to get rid of those 13 seats. I was upset when Mr. Harris removed a number of seats here. We're doing something which I think is good: We're following the federal boundaries here provincially, but we are keeping a seat in the north.

People would say, "Well, why are you doing that? That's illogical," because if you allow that to happen, then maybe we should allow an extra seat in Toronto. Toronto may want one, then Ottawa may want one, and then Sudbury may want one. I think the message here is that we're putting—we keep one extra seat in the north, and we're doing that here today.

There's a valid point that was put forward by Mr. Vanthof—I just call him John—and Mr. Singh regarding this riding. There's going to be more electoral reform in the future, and I'm sure that probably that will happen eventually. I may not be a politician at that time, but the changes happen. They start federally, and we try to follow them. Then the cities change as well. I think I'm going to support the government on this, and oppose this motion.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Ms. McGarry.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I've listened carefully to the debate, and certainly I do recognize some of the challenges of this particular area, but again, I go back to

my original point that it would selectively alter the boundaries of two of Ontario's 11 northern ridings. As I said, I know the member from Oxford was talking about people who may be wanting to open that up too and change their boundaries to make sure that they have the same access to our decision to alter the boundaries as this particular group.

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I go back to the point that it's just this one group that has come forward to ask on this, and there may be many others. The commission has done its works over a long period of time. We've looked quite carefully at the boundaries up there, trying to maintain the 11. I just feel that opening the floodgates to other requests to alter the boundaries may indeed happen, but at this particular time it may not be appropriate. That could go into the next round of looking at where the population changes have occurred and where it makes most sense for folks in the north, especially with the long drive to go.

But I'm just concerned that this would be seen unfairly by some of the groups that didn't come forward to ask for this, recognizing that this particular group may get what they wanted if we were to adopt the NDP motion, but others may say, "Well, why not us? We have the same issues in our community. Why can't we do it?" We've already made the decision going forward, and that, to me, would be unfair.

We continue to think that the fairest and most cost-effective approach is to adjust Ontario's provincial boundaries, to adopt the 111 new southern federal ridings and maintain the existing 11 provincial northern ridings in their current form. This doesn't mean that, moving forward, if this bill is to pass, we won't find some of those groups and maybe put together more of a robust list of folks who want to look at changing their riding boundaries in the future and do it all en masse. This, to me, just opens the door to a bit of unfairness.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Singh is next.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We're keeping a list, so you're on it. No worries.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Okay.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Okay. Let's just be really clear and straight up. There's a whole portion of ridings that are going to mirror the federal ridings, including new ridings. No issue there; no one's raised any concerns around that. In the north, we're maintaining an extra seat. No issue there, and no one's disputing that.

In one specific instance, there is a community where the entire community is homogenous and they've said very clearly, "We want this change." The change is the following: As it stands right now, geographically they cannot get to their representative unless they drive through two ridings in a five-hour drive. That's all that's in dispute right now. One community has to drive through two other ridings for five hours. We're not saying that we need to reduce the number of seats in the north. No one's saying that. We're not saying that we

should change the boundaries in the south. No one's saying that. One community needs a change. They've asked for the change.

To Ms. McGarry's point about the floodgate and fairness: If no other community asks for a change, it's very hard for them to then say, "It's unfair to us." They didn't ask for the change. This is the one amendment we have in this entire debate process. If we can't show that changes can be made, how would any community know in the future to bring forward their concerns? This is a great opportunity for us to show leadership and say, "Yes, you can actually raise concerns about the effectiveness of your boundaries, and elected officials will listen." If you don't accept this, then people will say, "There's no point in us raising any concerns, because no one's going to listen to us anyways."

We have a legitimate concern. It makes sense. We don't want this one reserve to drive five hours through two ridings to be able to reach their representative. It doesn't make sense. They should go to their nearest representative. They're asking for this change. It's one change. It's not going to hurt anybody. It's not going to impact anyone negatively. It's actually only going to help, and it only makes sense to support this.

None of the arguments proposed by the government make any sense at all. I'm implore you to give me a reason that actually has some sense to say, "No, we can't do this." There's no sensible reason to deny this claim. To suggest that if they do this it's unfair to others doesn't make any sense. It's not unfair. Other communities can come forward when they have an opportunity. Now that they know that it can be done, they will come forward. This is the only community that's come forward. This is the only amendment we have. To allow this to happen is the right thing to do, and then other communities can say, "Hey, we can make changes in the future." That's great.

But why should we put this change on hold just because we want to say we have to fix the entire system in the north, or the entire system, and people might come in and have changes? That's great if they come forward with changes. Let's encourage that, so we have the most efficient riding system in the province or in the country.

I think this is a very sensible amendment. It's a request that is logical. It would benefit a community. They're asking for this amendment. I can't see any argument that makes sense to deny this amendment.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I think we're missing the point of how we got here. I may be the only member of the committee who was here when this process started when, in fact, we had the first riding redistribution where we became coterminous with the federal boundaries. At that point, it was decided that we would stay that way. We would not have to pass a new law after each riding redistribution; we would just automatically pass a resolution to accept the federal boundaries.

In 2003, during an election process, the party presently in power and coming into power in that election said that

they would never reduce the number of ridings in northern Ontario. So when the next riding redistribution came up, the federal one went to 10 ridings in the north, so then we had to have this process.

I think the government members need to understand this process that we're doing today is the provincial riding redistribution process. It's where we are not coterminous or consistent with the federal boundaries. We can wait 10 years when they do it again and we can have the same discussion, or we can make this be the one time that these people have their problem addressed, because they say there's a problem. It's not a federal problem, so when the federal government did the redistribution discussions, this didn't come up because this was already done in theirs.

Now, when it comes here and we're doing the provincial part of it because we're not consistent with the federal one anymore—this is strictly for the province and this is a change that needs to be made this time. Now, next time there may be more. Next time, it might even be that somebody wants to change the number of members in the north. That may be true. It would be this process, this meeting, where that would take place.

So I think we're losing sight of the fact that why we're here is not to rubber stamp the federal one, because ours is different. What we need in ours, which the federal government decided a long time ago—it's rather interesting, too. I just want to point out that when the federal government put this with the other riding, they didn't do it because they were increasing the number; they were actually decreasing the number of members, and they moved it over there. We're not talking about decreasing the number of members; it's just that that's the community. Even with fewer members, that's the community that this community fits with rather than the one where they presently are.

I think we're hiding behind a false screen when we're saying, "Well, maybe next time we can do that, but right now we're just here to rubber stamp what we've always had," because this is the only opportunity these ridings in the north will have to have input in the boundary adjustment.

The member mentioned the ones in the 905. The study this time made major changes, not because they didn't like the representatives or anything, but it was to do with proper representation. So we've got more ridings. But the federal government did it in the north, too, but we didn't.

All this is saying, and I think the Attorney General critic made it quite clear: All we're doing is doing our part for the boundary adjustment in northern Ontario because this makes good sense for the people. It has no impact on others, but it's doing the boundary adjustment in the area where the federal government didn't do it for us because we're not consistent with them in the north. I just can't see any justification—at least I haven't heard any from the government side—that would say that we shouldn't do this today if these people want it.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Vanthof.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Oxford made many good points, and one in particular: I think we all

agree that we'll leave the extra riding in northern Ontario. The argument that we're making is that northern Ontario isn't static. So while there are changes being made in the south to reflect the communities, what the government is saying is that, "Well, we're keeping that extra riding so nothing else changes in northern Ontario." That's what drives northerners nuts. We're actually putting forward something that makes sense: 100 people in the Wahnapitae First Nation—I don't know how big Lake Wanapitei is, but you certainly can't swim across it or boat across it in half a day. It's a physical divider between them and the rest of the riding. It's five hours to get to the next person, in Timiskaming—Cochrane.

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This government is saying, "Well, maybe next time." Well, how? Why can borders in the south be fluid, and people actually take some time to see how they would make the most sense, but yet in northern Ontario it remains static? Because, you know what? We're just token northerners. People really don't care.

We have a meeting here with the First Nations, in this same building, and at the same time, this government is denying the Wahnapitae First Nation the right to be adequately represented in this province because, "We haven't really taken the time to look into it." That's basically what you're saying. It's unfathomable that while you say you care about First Nations, we're giving you an opportunity where there is a First Nation that is basically stranded in the wrong riding—and it's not about me getting to that riding. It's about those people being served in the riding where they are residents. The way they are now, they are not adequately served.

It's unfathomable that you sit there and say, "Well, you know, the ridings"—and Mr. Berardinetti made a good point about how the ridings are fluid, and you change as a community changes—great point. Why isn't that allowed in northern Ontario? Why is everything static?

My last point: It drives people in the north crazy because when we hear comments like this, deep down, we know that we're not really part of the province, because we're not afforded the same opportunities as other parts of the province. That, in the long term, has got to stop.

Today, we could make a decision that actually serves the people, serves this First Nation, and it wouldn't impact anyone else in the province.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? Ms. Mangat.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I do recognize what the member from—

Mr. John Vanthof: Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: —Timiskaming—Cochrane, yes—is talking about. But the point we are missing here is that Ontario doesn't have an independent boundaries commission. The boundaries were drawn by the independent federal commission. That's why we are mirroring it. If we now create an independent boundaries commission, it will cost money and it will cost time. We

are saving time and money. On top of that, we are keeping 11 ridings in the north instead of 10, so that northerners can have effective representation in the Legislature.

So I don't support that.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Berardinetti.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm not going to go back to the "old politician" argument that I brought forward earlier, but I do want to say one thing. In 1988, when I ran, there was one election day and there was one advanced polling day. That was it. So if people couldn't make those two dates, they couldn't vote.

In the last election, we had in the province at least a week—maybe I'm wrong and it was five days—but several days to vote in the advanced polling. The city of Toronto—and I don't want to centre on the city of Toronto. What the city of Toronto does is they've reached out. People in hospitals—my mother was in hospital when the last city election happened—actually, when my last election happened as well, and then she passed away. She was in a hospital outside of the riding, but she was recognized as a constituent. I came to visit her one day. A person from Toronto elections came by and said, "Where is Mrs. Berardinetti?" We said, "We don't know. She has been moved to another room." They were going to try and hunt her down.

We have a voting tablet. A person can vote by hitting the tablet and choosing their candidate. Three years of technology—the next election will be three years from now. We're all on BlackBerrys and iPhones, and we're all using these devices now. Twitter wasn't around three years ago, and a lot of other technology wasn't around three years ago. Three years from now, I would hope—I can't propose—that there would be technology that the person can stay in their home, walk down a street, and vote. No one is against the right to vote, but the way people vote has changed a lot. It's got to be more and more accessible.

I support that argument. I put a private member's bill forward to change the Election Act of Ontario and to increase the hours of voting time; well, it was actually for the city of Toronto to increase their time, but I think what also has to happen is, the way people vote has to change as well. If the member brings forward a private member's bill and wants support for more technological ways to vote—there's no boundaries when it comes to technology. You can vote on a tablet, on a computer or even by phone perhaps. The old-fashioned ways of having to go on election day or one day in advance—or now two days, or whatever it is in advance—have changed. Those are gone.

Someone could say, "I can't afford a computer. I can't afford an iPhone." Okay. Perhaps there could be one location nearby where you go to the voting booth and inside there's a computer, a tablet, a BlackBerry or an iPhone, whatever, and you vote on that; or you don't even have to leave your house, you just vote by making a phone call; or someone comes to your house and allows

you to vote with a tablet. So that washes out the whole argument regarding how far you have to go to vote.

Three years is a long time when technology is considered, where we come from technologically. I think the days of the pencil and the small little voting paper are long gone. A few years from now, perhaps the representative and the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane don't have to move anywhere and the voting is done where they want to vote. That is a better way to do it, and I would support that in the future.

But I think we are making the point of keeping one extra seat in northern Ontario. That's in front of us today. In the future, perhaps the people in his riding, people in my riding, people in anyone's riding in Ontario can vote with their electronic device, or someone comes to visit them with an electronic device and explains to them—in parts of South America, I've seen the ballots there. People are illiterate, so instead of voting for the name, they have a photograph of the candidate and a photograph of the symbol of the party. That's how they vote there.

We're not denying the democratic right to vote. We're passing a bill to basically simply say we're allowing one extra seat in the north and we're keeping the seats aligned with the federal—because a lot of people have asked me over the years. This last time when they did this redistribution, I lost my whole community. My base, where I grew up, where I went to school and everything, was shoved into a different riding. Some may say, "Well, that's not a big deal." But if the boundaries change, it's hard to predict what you want to do provincially, federally.

They had their hearings—the opportunity to go and have a whole bunch of hearings, and everyone wants to make their changes. It becomes confusion and disorganization.

I honestly and sincerely feel the concerns of the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, and I think the best solution is to perhaps in the future put something forward regarding technology. Three years from now, who knows where we will be, technologically?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Vanthof.

Mr. John Vanthof: A few points I'd like to add: The argument here isn't about voting; it's about serving the community after the vote is over. In northern Ontario—first, before we go to electronic voting, perhaps, do you know that most of my riding doesn't have Internet? Do you realize that large parts, the vast majority of northern Ontario, does not have the services we have? Do you realize that in a large part of northern Ontario, and specifically that part, there is no public transportation—none. The only way you can move in that part of the world is get in your car, providing the roads are clean—providing. Okay?

This isn't about voting. This is about serving the constituents, as we all do, after the vote is over. We're not trying to gerrymander the riding for votes. What we're trying to do is so that after the election is over, regardless of who wins or loses, these people are actually

served, can be physically served. In northern Ontario—and I'm sure in the rest of the parts of the riding, too, but I only know northern Ontario—when people have a mental health issue and want to look for treatment, do you know where they go? The constituency office. When they have huge problems with ODSP, where do they go? The constituency office. When they can't find a doctor, where do they go? The constituency office. Right? It's all the same.

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But these people, the 100 people who live on the Wahnapitae First Nation, represented by Chief Ted Roque, can't get to their constituency office unless they drive through two other ridings, because you know what's not going to change in the next two, three or 3,000 years? Lake Wanapitei is still going to be there. Why don't we take this opportunity now to actually serve those 100 people to ensure that when the next provincial election comes around, regardless of who wins or loses, those people are actually served by an MPP and by a staff whom they can actually access?

Because if you think about it—think—if someone wants to go see and arrange a meeting with one of you, it's five hours, folks. It's five hours there and five hours back, providing the weather is good. You can sit there and tell me, "Well, maybe we can change this someday in the future when we have the chance." This isn't going to cost anyone anything. It's one change, for no other reason than Lake Wanapitei is right there and someone drew the line around Lake Wanapitei and lo and behold, those 100 people, the Wahnapitae First Nation, happened to be on the wrong side of Lake Wanapitei, according to the boundaries.

We're used to long distances in northern Ontario. There are lots of my people who have to drive that long. But this is about forcing people to do something that absolutely does not make sense and would not be tolerated anywhere else in the province. But this government says, "No, no. In northern Ontario, we'll just let them suffer," because somebody in some corner office said, "You know what? We're not going to do this because it's just too much trouble." That's all this is: It's just too much trouble. The 100 people in the Wahnapitae First Nation are just too much trouble to actually do something that would make perfect, perfect sense.

It's not about voting; it's not about voting for any of us. It's about serving the people. Right now, we're not serving these people adequately and we could change that today.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Ms. Martow and then Mr. Hardeman.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I've been listening and I'm quite shocked. I've only been here for maybe a year and a half. What I wanted to do is to suggest a recess. Maybe the government side could speak to their advisers who are advising them not to support this, because they were given some reasons not to support that are obviously coming up inadequate. We need to hear some adequate reasons. It's actually embarrassing, to tell you the truth, because I'm just not hearing any sense of reason.

The whole point is to look at how to serve people better. We can't think of everything, and that's the whole point. We come to committee meetings, and we can't possibly think of everything, but here is something that has been given to us to put some thought into. I would suggest that, as representatives, we represent not just our ridings but we represent everybody. So if there's some new information that the government wants to put forward, if they need a recess to go get that information, then maybe we need to have a few minutes' recess.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is that a motion that you're making about a recess?

Mrs. Gila Martow: A request.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A request. I just remind the members that everything has to be wrapped up on this bill by 2 o'clock. So if we take a recess, that's going to eat into that time. It will certainly eat into the debate time. Does the committee agree to a recess?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Just one question: That clock says 1:45—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's actually 1:45 right now.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: And you had mentioned earlier, Madam Chair, that the voting must take place by 2 o'clock?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Yes.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Maybe we want to go on to the next amendment while they—you know? I don't know what to say.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Madam Chair, this seems to be the only contentious issue in the bill. For time's sake, I think we should debate this one until the time comes for voting. Recesses can be taken for 20 minutes after the time is up.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): So recess? Yes? No?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I hear some debate here so I'm going to oppose the recess.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm hearing a consensus around not having a recess but continuing the debate. Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Madam Chair, I just wanted to point out that we keep hearing from the government side that there will be another opportunity. What we need is a boundary commission for northern Ontario. I think that's what I heard from some members. We wouldn't want to make a decision that has greater impact than what we're talking about here. It's possible that it affects other ridings too, so maybe we should have a boundary commission.

I would point out that under the present structure, this is the boundary commission discussion we're having here today because we don't do that provincially anymore. We have—what shall we say?—given that over to the federal government to do, and we have taken back just the northern Ontario part. That's why we're having this

debate. This is the boundary adjustment commission or the end result of it.

I would point out one thing: The only time that this issue has gone to a boundary commission, the boundary commission said, after they talked to the people and made all the decisions, that this is the answer, that this reserve should be on the other side of the lake because that's where it is federally. They did all the study. They did all the work. They presented it to the people and they said they weren't asked to reduce the number of seats, because the province wasn't interested and shouldn't be. But they did say that whether it's 10 seats or 11 seats, this reserve should be on the other side of the lake. It should be with the people on the other side of the lake.

I think this is not only an opportunity for this committee, I think it's an obligation for this committee to look at it. This is the last time we're going to be talking about this for 10 years—at least 10 years. To suggest that we need a little bit more study and we need a little bit more review or that we need to appoint a judge to look at the other boundaries, too, would at the very best be at least 10 years away.

If you look at it seriously—forget the talking notes that you got just coming into the committee, and look at it—is the change that you're looking for here? After you've heard what it will do, is it enough to force these 100 people—every time they want to talk to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane personally, it's going to take a 10-hour day to go and talk to him to see why government services aren't being provided in the way they should be. For those 100 people, that is unacceptable. If you just make this change today, you're going to have them much closer, and they can actually deal with the representative on the other side.

Except for the talking notes that you got to start with, I can see absolutely not a single reason so far, as Ms. Martow said, that has suggested that there's any reason why this couldn't proceed. If you really believe that you need that extra time and to wait for 10 years—I just want to point out that if you agree with it today, 10 years from today you can turn it back. But I'm willing to bet that will never happen, because this makes too much sense to ever come to the conclusion that that was a mistake. There may be others that you want to make after that, but I can't see anywhere that anybody could justify, after moving this to the side where people can be served appropriately by their local member in any way, that anybody would ever think that it should be turned back the other way.

With that, I have no more to say. I think I've said it all.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? Ms. McGarry.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Again, coming back to Bill 115: What we had in front of us was a number of boundaries that we would be passing in their current form. I certainly understand the arguments here, but I have been part of the process in our federal boundaries review, and I know it took a lot of time and a lot of

consultation throughout the province to determine what our new federal boundaries were going to be—and that's without talking notes.

I do understand what the member opposite is saying, but I also understand through my time and applications and appearing in front of the federal boundaries commission how much time and effort it is.

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When I look at Bill 115, I certainly understand the issue before these 100 people in your community. I would like to challenge that if, in North Dumfries township, I had the same in my riding, I would be saying the same things. It's not because these people are in the north; it's not because they're in the southwest; it's not because these people are in the east. I think we've tried to bring fairness, and this is precisely the argument I'm looking at there.

I do know right now that keeping the 11 ridings in the north with their current form is something that we can do today. I know that if we selectively change the boundaries, there may be unintended consequences with other groups that may be changed around because of this. As my honourable colleague here said, I would feel better about having a full review of all of the 11 northern riding boundaries, and we don't have the time and the money at the moment.

The bill that's in front of us is looking at the boundaries that have happened because of the independent federal boundaries commission, and this bill is just asking us to align our boundaries with those without taking extra time, without taking extra money.

When I talk about fairness and I talk about unintended consequences—say we were to change these boundaries and it inadvertently disadvantaged another community. I don't feel I have enough information in front of me as a committee member to be able to make those determinations. That's why an electoral boundaries commission does the work: to be able to consult broadly and widely with many, many communities and put proposals in front of those communities that may be affected by boundary changes, allow them time for consultation, again, like they did with the federal boundaries review that I was a part of, and come back with a proposed change of boundaries. Then you can add some comment and readjust it.

In my riding of Cambridge, this was in fact true. It did divide for the federal, but not along the initial lines or even the secondary plan that they brought forward in terms of altering our boundaries. As a matter of fact, it was on the third round that they finally came up with the new boundaries to create Kitchener South—Hespeler rather than the first two proposals that we were looking at.

I go back to my initial comments. This would selectively alter boundaries—yes, to serve one group of people, but what if it disadvantages another? These are the questions that we can't answer without an electoral commission to be able to provide those comments and consultation broadly.

It's not just that. I understand that this may be one group. I would love to know how many other groups and

other communities may need to have boundaries reviewed. We can do that at a future date and keep this group and this community as one example.

But I think that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who knows his community well—I can't even imagine how many hundreds of thousands of kilometres you put on in order to service your community, beautiful as it is. I've driven through it. But this would be an opportunity to continue to gather some of those statistics in some of the other communities that may be served better and look at, in the next round, readjusting the boundaries if it seems to be a good thing to do.

I really do feel uncomfortable in changing a boundary selectively without the advice and without the counsel of somebody who really understands what it will do to the entire community. Again, I hearken back to the federal boundaries commission that I was a part of in terms of advocating for my own riding that did split—and it was not along the lines that I thought were feasible at the beginning, and yet when they came back at round three with the third proposal, I now understand that it makes sense.

Again, this was not my first idea. The first idea I had was thrown out for a variety of reasons. That's why I feel uncomfortable sitting in this seat today without all the information, being able to plot things on the map and look at some of the other communities that it may throw off.

I certainly feel for this community, but there may be others. That's why I talk about fairness. I'd love to open that up. You would be the member who is most likely to know about your community. Certainly, other members in the northern communities, those MPPs, would know their communities best, and they're not here to advocate for those communities that may not have known this is the way.

To wrap up, I really believe it's about fairness. I don't feel that I, as a committee member, have enough information to make a change like that. I know from my own experience that in the riding of Cambridge, the boundaries shifted significantly from my first time with it, and I feel that if we make one change to the northern boundaries, I'd rather be able to open it up so that other communities can do that.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I can't understand the logic. The member opposite says, "When the boundary adjustment was done in southwestern Ontario, I made presentations to the commission, and it was three times before they came up with one that the community would accept." This community accepts this one because the whole area—they didn't ask the people in Oxford whether they liked the adjustment in Cambridge. That was the people of Cambridge. These people in both ridings where the change is taking place have said this is what they want.

I have to emphasize, last but not least, that this is the boundary commission of Ontario that we're talking about now. When you had the public hearings, everybody in the

province was coming here to discuss whether the boundaries that the federal government had and that we had in the north were appropriate. This group said, "No, not quite. We need to make this change."

In Cambridge, it was three times before you finally convinced them to take your choice. These people are here, and they don't get another shot at it for 10 years. I think it's a shame that government would take this away from them for 10 more years. I can't say any more than that.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Just before we take the vote, the Clerk brought to my attention that when Mr. Singh moved the original motion, there was one part left off, number 11 at the end.

Mr. Singh, could you just reread the motion with number 11 included?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I move that the electoral district of Nickel Belt, as set out in the schedule to schedule 1 to the bill under the heading "3. Nickel Belt", be amended by striking out "All of the territorial district of Sudbury excepting those parts described as follows:" in the portion after the heading "Secondly:", and substituting "All of the territorial district of Sudbury, excepting those parts described as follows other than that part forming the reserve of Wahnapitae 11."

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Are members ready to vote?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Just before, I'd like to correct the record, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Berardinetti.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: When I spoke, I said my mother couldn't vote for my wife; it was for me, actually. Our election was in June, and my wife's was in October. I just wanted to correct the record. It was during my election that the provincial people came way out to the hospital to try to get my mother to vote for me. That was outside of the boundary—and they had a tablet. So I made a mistake. Sorry.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Are members ready to vote?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Recorded vote.

Mr. John Vanthof: Could I request a 20-minute recess?

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Only voting members can—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Can I request a 20-minute recess?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's pretty much 2 o'clock right now, and yes, we—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Can I request a 20-minute recess, Madam Chair?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We can. That's in our agreement at the beginning. So we will recess for 20 minutes and come back here and vote on this amendment, plus all of the others.

The committee recessed from 1400 to 1420.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Welcome back, everyone. Just before we took that recess, there was a call for a recorded vote for the third party motion number 1.

Ayes

Hardeman, Martow, Singh.

Nays

Anderson, Berardinetti, Mangat, McGarry.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The motion is lost.

NDP motion number 2 is deemed moved, and we will move right to the vote on that.

All those in favour? All those opposed?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Oh, recorded vote for both. I wanted to make sure—

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): You wanted it recorded for both?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes. I thought it was assumed it was for both.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's too late for that one. I'm sorry, Mr. Singh.

That motion is lost.

Shall the schedule to schedule 1 to the bill carry? Carried.

Shall schedule 1 to the bill carry? Carried.

So we move now to schedule 2: Shall I group sections 1 and 2 together? Okay. Shall schedule 2 to the bill and its sections carry? Sections 1 and 2 carried.

Shall schedule 2 of the bill carry? Carried.

We now move to schedule 3. Again, there are 1, 2 and 3 sections of schedule 3. Shall I group the sections? Okay. Shall sections 1, 2 and 3 carry? Carried.

Shall schedule 3 to the bill carry? Carried.

Now on to schedule 4. Again, we have sections 1, 2 and 3 of schedule 4. Shall I group the sections? Yes. Shall grouped sections 1, 2 and 3 of schedule 4 carry? I declare they're carried.

Shall schedule 4 to the bill carry? I declare it carried.

Schedule 5—

Interjection: Carried.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Wait a minute. Shall I group the sections? Sections 1 and 2: Shall I group them? Yes? Okay. Shall sections 1 and 2 to schedule 5 carry? Carried.

Shall schedule 5 to the bill carry? I declare that schedule 5 to the bill is carried.

In the beginning, we stood down the first three sections, so we need to go back to those now.

Shall section 1 carry? I declare section 1 carried.

Shall section 2 carry? I declare section 2 carried.

Shall section 3 carry? I declare section 3 carried.

Now we go back to the back page again.

Shall the title of the bill carry? Carried.

Shall Bill 115 carry? Carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? Okay, I shall do that.

I declare that Bill 115 is carried and the title of the bill is carried.

Thank you, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 1424.

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