

Riding changes may leave King-Vaughan up for grabs

By Mark Pavilons

The redistribution of federal electoral districts for Ontario, creating King-Vaughan, may open up the township to a new MP and MPP.

As a result a riding like Oak Ridges-Markham, which has more than eight times the population of some ridings in Canada, will be redrawn as several smaller ridings.

New riding boundaries will come into effect at the next general election and Oak Ridges-Markham will be divided into the new ridings of Markham-Stouffville, Markham-Unionville, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, and King-Vaughan.

"I am happy to declare that in the next general election, scheduled for October 2015, I intend to run in the new riding of Markham-Stouffville," announced MP Paul Calandra. "I thank my constituents in King City, Schomberg, Nobleton, Kettleby, Richmond Hill, Oak Ridges, and the western part of Markham for their support through the last two general elections. I will continue to serve as your MP until 2015 at which point I have decided to run in the riding which includes my hometown of Stouffville. Redistribution will mean more equal representation for residents of York Region and all of Canada.

"I am pleased that the commission's final report includes ridings that promote and recognize Stouffville and King, something I have fought for since first being elected."

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he's pleased with the riding's new name "King-Vaughan" which more closely reflects the area. King is no longer split among different ridings and it's more contained, meaning it will also be more manageable for provincial and federal reps. They will get to know the residents better. The mayor pointed out King is the largest geographic portion of the riding, but the numbers (voters) will come from Vaughan.

As to who may be the next MPP or MP, the mayor said it depends on who the party leaders are.

York-Simcoe MPP Julia Munro will lose King Township from her constituency.

She will continue to represent Innisfil and Barrie, whose populations have grown significantly over the years. Her new riding is geographically smaller, but more dense in population.

Politicians and would-be politicians are "rubbing their hands together" to see how things unfold, she observed.

She did point out that if an election were to be called prior to 2015, the current ridings would remain in effect.

Dr. Helen Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, said while the current riding she represents is not only the largest in Canada (population of 250,000), it's the "most beautiful and exciting" riding she's ever seen.

But the size of Oak Ridges-Markham makes serving the constituents problematic and the residents are somewhat under-represented. The redistribution makes sense and she's happy some of her recommendations were adopted, specifically the name of the new riding of King-Vaughan.

Jaczek pointed out, however, that we could be looking at a provincial election next spring, if opposition parties oppose the next budget. There wouldn't be enough time for Queen's Park to pass the new boundary changes in time.

Should the current federal and provincial governments continue to 2015, then the riding changes will take effect.

The redistribution process began in December 2011. Every 10 years federal riding boundaries are reconsidered in order to maintain a mostly consistent population allocated to each riding.