

DoKURA NEWS

Fall 2022

Welcome to the Fall 2022 newsletter for DoKURA (The District of Kenora Unincorporated Areas Ratepayers Association). Over the past few months the association's directors have been busy tracking several issues that impact the non-municipal areas of the region.

Hydro Bills Inching Upwards

Hydro bills are expected to increase slightly effective November 1 for Ontario electricity consumers.

On one hand, the government via the Ontario Energy Board reduced the net cost of electricity by about 10 per cent through the annual setting of the Regulated Price Plan per kilowatt hour rates. This plan covers most residential and small business electricity customers. Prices are set based on forecasts of supply costs and demand. The most recent forecast is for stable electrical demand out to April of 2024, with a reduction in overall supply costs.

At the same time the government is substantially reducing the Ontario Electricity Rebate (OER) – cutting it from 17% of pre-tax bill amounts to 11.7%, also effective November 1. This rebate was begun under the former Liberal government in 2017 to offset the provincial sales tax on electricity bills. It was merged in 2019 with another bill reduction program first introduced under the Fair Hydro Plan of 2017 that had the government cover a portion of interest costs related to long term utility borrowings for system expansion and upgrades. While the sale tax rebate was long term, the Fair Hydro Plan reduction, 25 per cent the first year was short term – projected to last 10 years at most and decline over that time.

Government support from tax revenues to lower electricity bills for residential, commercial, and industrial customers through nine different support measures was \$6.9 billion in the 2021-2022 budget year and is forecast to drop to \$4.2 billion by 2039-2040. The 2022-2023 rebate reduction, which cost \$2.3 billion in 2021, will transfer some \$750 million in electricity system costs back to consumers from government tax revenue.

The Regulated Price Plan per kilowatt hour rate reduction is a clear savings, amounting to just under \$6 a month for a typical 700 kwh a month residential consumer. The lower OER credit will add that much and a bit more to final bills making for a \$1 or so increase on a typical monthly bill and \$2 to \$4 more for those using electricity for home heating.

More information is available by accessing the Ontario Energy Board website:

Ontario Energy Board announces changes to electricity prices for households and small businesses | Ontario Energy Board (oeb.ca)

Check out our website at dokura.com

Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario

A boundary change could be in the future for the federal Kenora riding, splitting the riding into two.

Every ten years, the Constitution of Canada requires that federal electoral districts be reviewed to reflect changes and movements in Canada's population. That process has begun and could see the creation of the Kenora - Thunder Bay - Rainy River riding and the **Kiiwetinoong - Mushkegowuk** riding.

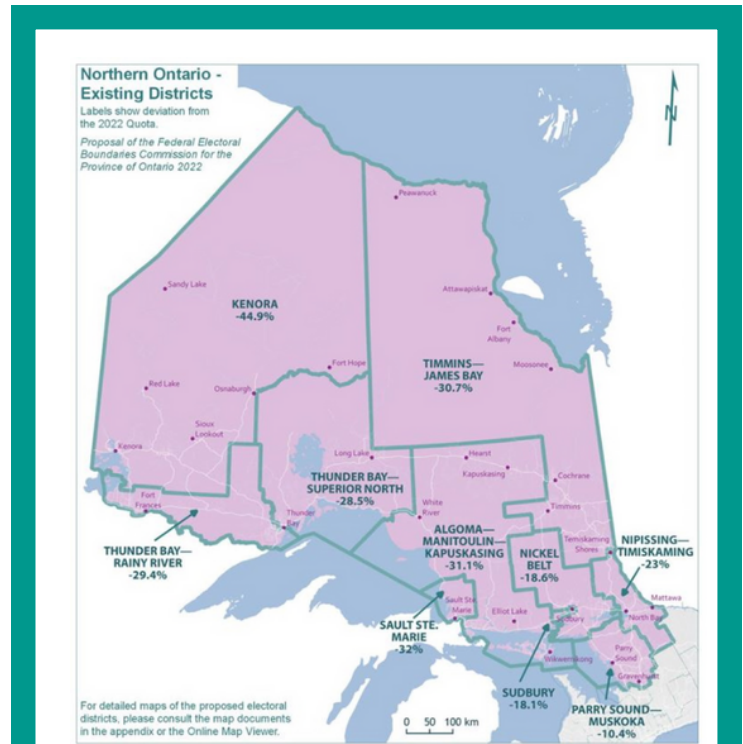
The proposed Kenora - Thunder Bay - Rainy River riding would include: Kenora, Dryden, part of the City of Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Fort Frances, Rainy River, Emo, Ignace, Machin and, Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls among other communities. A full list can be found by clicking this [link](#).

The proposed Kiiwetinoong - Mushkegowuk riding would include: Sioux Lookout, Red Lake, Ear Falls and, Pickle Lake among other communities. A full list can be found by clicking this [link](#).

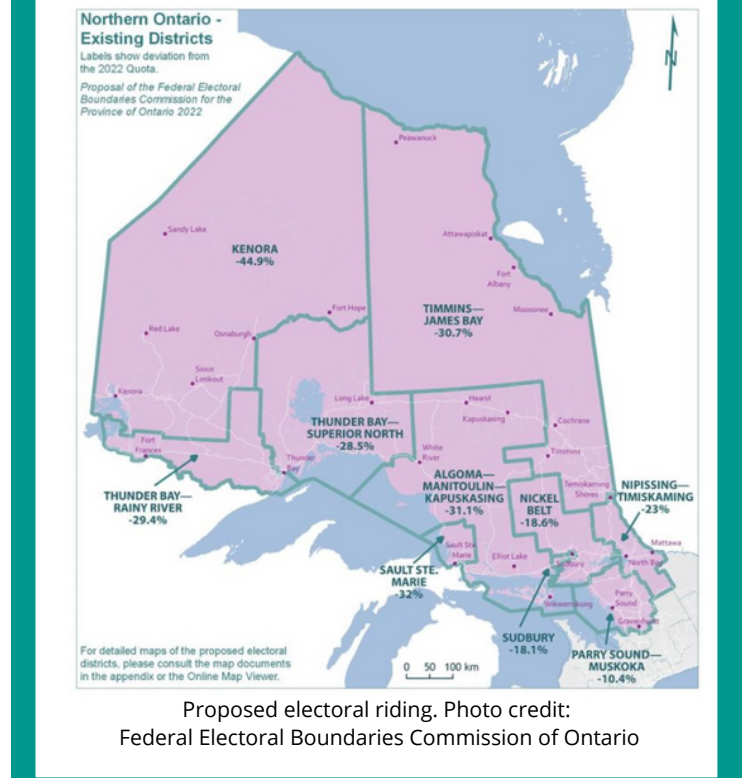
Several other ridings in Northern Ontario are also facing proposed changes.

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission of Ontario (Commission) held several in-person hearings across the region to gather comments and feedback on the proposed boundaries and electoral district names. In total, the Commission received more than 1900 written and oral presentations from across the province. The Commission will now compile the findings into a report to be submitted to the House of Commons by the end of December. A final report is scheduled to be released in February, 2023.

Your DoKURA representatives reviewed the Commission release regarding the proposed redistribution of federal riding boundaries. In its submission, DoKURA indicated that the proposed changes are not in the best interests of people living in Northern Ontario, noting that the proposal was criticized as impractical, unmanageable and unfair for northern communities by both current and former MPs and MPPs from across Northern Ontario, representing all three major political parties. The proposed redistribution would result in the loss of one seat in the House of Commons for northern Ontario. Please follow the link to see our full submission [CLICK HERE](#).



Current electoral riding. Photo credit: Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission of Ontario



Proposed electoral riding. Photo credit: Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission of Ontario

DoKURA AGM

This year's Annual General Meeting was held on September 15, 2022. The minutes from the September 9, 2021 AGM were approved along with the financial report for the fiscal-year ended March 31, 2022. An approval of the director's actions since the 2021 AGM was also passed.

The following reports were also tabled:

All Nations Health Partners Committee

Data Collection

Provincial Land Tax

Report on KDSB activities by TWOMO (Territories Without Municipal Organization) & Strategic Planning

The Nominating Committee, comprised of Dennis Wallace and Bob Stewart, presented their report, which was approved. The following are the DoKURA board of directors and officers:

Officers

President – Vacant

Past-President – Jack McKenzie (to 2023)

Vice-President – Ed Murray (to 2023)

Treasurer – Barry Baltessen (to 2024)

Secretary – Barry Baltessen (2024)

Directors at large

Ken Bracken – Lake of the Woods South (to 2024)

Dennis Wallace – Lake of the Woods South (to 2024)

Bob Stewart – Lake of the Woods South (to 2024)

Mark Sobchuk – Lac Seul (to 2023)

Kenora District Service Board TWOMO representatives

Ed Murray – Oxdrift (to Dec 2022)

Barry Baltessen – Lake of the Woods North (to Dec 2022)

Mark Sobchuk – Lac Seul (to Dec 2022)

Bob Stewart – Lake of the Woods South (to Dec 2022)

Based on the results of the election held on October 24, 2022, the KDSB TWOMO representatives for the period January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026 are:

Laurel Huffman – Oxdrift

Barry Baltessen – Lake of the Woods North

Mark Sobchuk – Lac Seul

Dennis Wallace – Lake of the Woods South

A tentative date of September 21, 2023 was established for the next AGM, recognizing that quality internet service is essential to allow for remote access to the meeting. The draft minutes of the most recent meeting can be found by clicking on this [link](#).

Provincial Land Tax

On October 14, representatives from DoKURA met with Ministry of Finance officials via video call. We are pleased to report that the Ministry of Finance work plan includes a review of the impact of MPAC reassessments on upcoming tax years. We hold the view that if TWOMO property owners are well informed and can see that what they are assessed pays for needed services, perceptions about fairness can be improved.

During the discussion, we asked the Ministry to consider a more open process and accounting as to what property owners in TWOMO pay for in their tax bills. We indicated a desire to better understand how services are identified to ensure that there is fair TWOMO cost sharing compared to municipalities. Essentially, we asked if it would be possible to provide information to rate payers in the unincorporated area that shows revenues and expenditures for TWOMO taxes.

Another issue raised was the potential for a mechanism that would allow for regional service offerings. Given that TWOMO is a very large geographic area, requirements for various services could be different between Northern and Southern Ontario.

We also mentioned that municipalities in Northwestern Ontario continue to hold the view that TWOMO property owners do not contribute to municipal costs and, generally, do not pay their fair share for services received. We requested that the Ministry look at how it could help to inform municipal councils about Property Land Tax reform and the system that is now in place.

In conclusion, we indicated that we would like to be involved in Ministry of Finance policy work moving forward. It was agreed that a follow-up meeting in early 2023 would be arranged to pursue these issues in more detail.

Check out our website at dokura.com

Contact Us

Mailing Address:

P. O. BOX 1245 KEEWATIN POST OFFICE
KENORA, ONTARIO P0X 1C0

Email:

dokuraorg@gmail.com