

New boundaries present new challenges for MP Reid

The 2015 federal election sliced up the old riding of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, for which I had served since 2004 as MP, and created a new riding named Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston.

The boundaries were redrawn to exclude the county of Lennox and Addington, and to include Mississippi Mills (Almonte, Pakenham, and the rural areas that surround them), as well as the part of Kingston lying north of Highway 401 — about half of Kingston's geography, but less than 10 per cent of its population.

None of this changes the economic priorities of the people who live here, but an MP's priority ought to be to represent the interests — economic and otherwise — of the people he or she represents.

The essential character of the new riding has not changed, but the boundary adjustments do mean that for the first time I will be focussing some of my attention on issues that are important to the areas that have been added to the riding.

In Mississippi Mills, this means issues associated with the area's strong arts community and its development of festivals, weekend tourism, and other links to the economy of Ottawa. Almonte, like Carleton Place (and increasingly, like Smiths Falls), is home to a large and growing population of daily commuters. This makes transportation an important local issue.

In Kingston, the issues where I think I can be most useful relate to the high degree of involvement that the federal government has in this city. The federal presence is felt in the city's penal institutions — one of which is within the boundaries of the new riding — and also in the fact that the Cataraqui River, which forms the southern portion of the Rideau Canal system, flows through the south end of the riding.

The Rideau is important in other parts of the riding too, and I am grateful to my fellow MP, Gord Brown, for the excellent work he has done in ensuring that the canal, which is Ontario's only World Heritage site, is operated in a way beneficial to the local tourism industry. But in the south, the canal is important for another reason: the waterway serves as a problematic barrier to east-west transportation. As such, discussions about the need for, and the eventual nature of, the bridge that will become Kingston's so-called "third link" across the Cataraqui, will be on my mind in coming years.



MP Scott Reid says his focus is on the economy and not forgetting the rural constituents.

The addition of Mississippi Mills to the riding brings an end to an unjust situation that had lasted for more than a decade. Lanark County's largest municipality had been severed from the rest of the county and placed in another, mostly urban riding, along with Kanata and Stittsville.

My fear, during this period, was that the needs of the more populous urban areas in that riding would demand all the attention of the local MP, leaving him with little time for rural concerns. My former colleague Gordon O'Connor did as good a job of remembering the rural parts of the riding as could have been hoped, but it is still a relief to see Mississippi Mills back in an electoral district where its issues and concerns are so similar to those of the rest of the constituency.

In any rural area, land-use issues will always be top-of-mind. And so, in one of the few ridings in Ontario with no towns of over 10,000, these are the issues that are on my mind too.

In Frontenac County, green energy programs (a solar farm near Sunbury in the south part of the county, and a proposed project of enormous wind turbines in North Frontenac) are the result of provincial policies that devalue the rights of local landowners when these are seen as standing in the way of the use of that land, or of land nearby, in the service of the goal of generating electricity without generating greenhouse gases. This insen-

sitivity has generated a strong local reaction, with which I sympathize.

I first articulated the position that I still hold, regarding such projects, when Amherst Island, in Lennox and Addington County, was part of the riding. A large wind turbine project was contemplated for the island. Some local landowners, on whose land the turbines would be located, would receive fiscal compensation for the use of their land. Their neighbours would receive nothing. This policy was perfectly formulated to divide the community in the bitterest possible way.

I maintained that the logical policy was to expect compensation to each landowner, to the extent that the new project has lowered the value of their land. This is nothing more than the application, to green energy projects of the longstanding common-law doctrine of full compensation for de facto expropriation.

A similar concern about respect for property rights was a strong motivation for me, when keeping up on the slow-moving but very important negotiations of the Algonquin land claim. Almost the entire landmass of Lanark and Frontenac counties falls within the land claim area.

Bringing these negotiations to a successful conclusion would have the effect of removing an important impediment to the development of Crown land in the area, which could

be very positive, in a part of Ontario where land use — whether for cottage and recreational use, for farming, or for other purposes — remains the primary basis of wealth-creation.

So far, I think both the Algonquin negotiators and their government counterparts have been sensitive to the need to respect private property rights. I hope this will remain true, as this land deal is finally concluded and put in place.

As a final note, it is worth emphasizing that agriculture remains the backbone of the rural economy in our region. Traditionally, this has meant the production of a series of commodities: beef, milk, corn, soybeans and so on.

These commodities remain important, and it is the job of a federal MP to make sure that the interests of these producers are defended — particularly in international trade negotiations. But there is also a steady growth in non-commodity agriculture: farmer's markets, agri-tourism (where sugar bushes lead the way), community-supported small-scale co-operative selling arrangements (often referred to as CSAs), and so on.

These smaller-scale enterprises represent a trend whose strength has surprised many people, including me. Surely they serve as proof that there will always be room for new innovations to revive the most traditional sector of our economy.

Hillier working hard on behalf of constituents

As a member of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, I do not have a seat at the provincial Cabinet Table to directly influence the policy direction of Ontario. Instead, my role is to identify and address shortcomings, problems, and failings within the system, highlight them for the government, and work with officials to try and find a remedy. Some problems are broad-stroke problems, affecting a great number of my constituents, while others are more unique and specific to an individual's or family's personal exposure, experiences and struggles.

While I continue to represent folks on problems involving Hydro One, the Family Responsibility Office and MTO among others, I would like to take this opportunity to share a few of the broader efforts I am also involved with.

I have been working actively with Dr. Manuela Joannou of Tay River Reflections to bring in a new program to assist our first responders and



Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington Member of Provincial Parliament, Randy Hillier

military who suffer from PTSD. Called SPARTA, this program has seen significant success in treating PTSD in the United States, and recently ran a very successful and well-regarded pilot program with the Australian military. Dr. Joannou and I have been in discussions with officials from the OPP, the RCMP, and Canadian Forces representatives to try and secure a pilot project for first responders and military right here in Lanark County.

I have also been involved in efforts to end violence against women, and have had productive meetings with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Attorney General for Ontario and the Minister for Women's Issues. There are significant obstacles and failings in the systems we have established

to prosecute and sentence the offenders and significant shortcomings in the assistance we provide to the victims and their families. Often, victims live in fear with little or no direction and support. As a society, we often see victims stigmatized while offenders remain unnamed and unaffected. There will be a number of community events in the riding in the coming weeks to further the cause of ending violence against women and addressing the problems with the current systems.

I have been working with the Town of Carleton Place and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care in an effort to secure an investment for much needed modernization of the Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital. The Minister of Health has assured me of

his interest in the revitalization of our community hospital, and I look forward to continuing my efforts toward a positive result.

Along with members of the respective communities, we have been successful in preventing the proliferation of Industrial Wind Turbines (IWT) and Solar Projects in communities that identified themselves as 'unwilling hosts'. The proposed IWT projects proposed for North Frontenac and Addington Highlands, as well the solar projects proposed for Collin's Lake were both rejected by the IESO in the most recent round of funding.

I am confident that the public objection and concentrated efforts of these communities in opposing these projects played a significant role in stopping them before they got past the application stage. We will remain vigilant when next year's tenders are issued for new energy projects.

I have been actively involved with the vaping and e-cigarette community as the Liberal government attempts to vilify and restrict one of the most effective smoking-cessation tools ever produced. While the National Health System in the UK has authorized prescribing and publicly funding these vaping tools to assist people who wish to quit smoking, the Ontario government is ignoring the science and the medical community, and chooses to regulate vaping like tobacco, preventing and restricting access to vaping equipment, reducing the opportunity for adults to get access to and benefit these important harm-reduction implements.

That is just a brief summary of some of the things I have been working on, but is far from a complete list. Everyone is welcome to contact me at any of my offices for more details on these and other efforts I have been involved in.