



Abstract

In October 2017, the *Ontario Representation Act (2015)*, was amended to increase the number of provincial electoral districts from 107 to 124, impacting the June 2018 provincial general elections. This qualitative research study examines the impacts on the work of constituency offices for returning Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) in the aftermaths of the elections. Based on respondent interviews, the research calls for increasing financial resources, building formal channels for skill and knowledge exchanges, and modernizing boundary readjustment processes to address challenges faced by constituency offices in periods of post-boundary readjustments.

Research Question

How did the boundary readjustments in Ontario impact the (re)organization of returning MPPs offices following the 2018 provincial general elections?

Methodology

MPPs serving 2+ terms in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario were invited to participate in the study. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews lasting 20-30 minutes were conducted at Queen's Park. Thematic analysis of the primary data was conducted and secondary sources were consulted to inform research findings.

Selected References

Courtney, J. (1988). Parliament and Representation: The Unfinished Agenda of Electoral Redistributions. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 21(4), 675-690.
 Pelletier, J. (2017). Far North Boundaries Commission. Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
 Weller, G. (1997). Politics and Policy in the North, in Graham White (ed.), *The Government and Politics of Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Literature Review

	Description	Readjustment Mechanisms	Enabling Legislation
1860s-1990s "The Early Days"	Boundary readjustment efforts in Ontario were focused on combatting gerrymandering and seeking cost-savings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Commission on Redistribution of Electoral Districts in Ontario (1962-1965) Ontario Electoral Boundary Commission (1973-1975) Ontario Electoral Boundaries Commission (1983-1986) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Federal Electoral Boundary Readjustment Act (1964)</i> <i>Fewer Politicians Act (1996)</i> <i>Representation Act (1996)</i>
2000s-Present "The Current Landscape"	Boundary readjustment efforts in Ontario are untied to the federal-level and focused on increasing northern representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ontario Electoral Boundaries Commission (2012) Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission (2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Electoral Boundaries Commission Act (2005)</i> <i>Election Statute Law Amendment Act (2016)</i> <i>Representation Act (2005, 2015)</i>

Findings

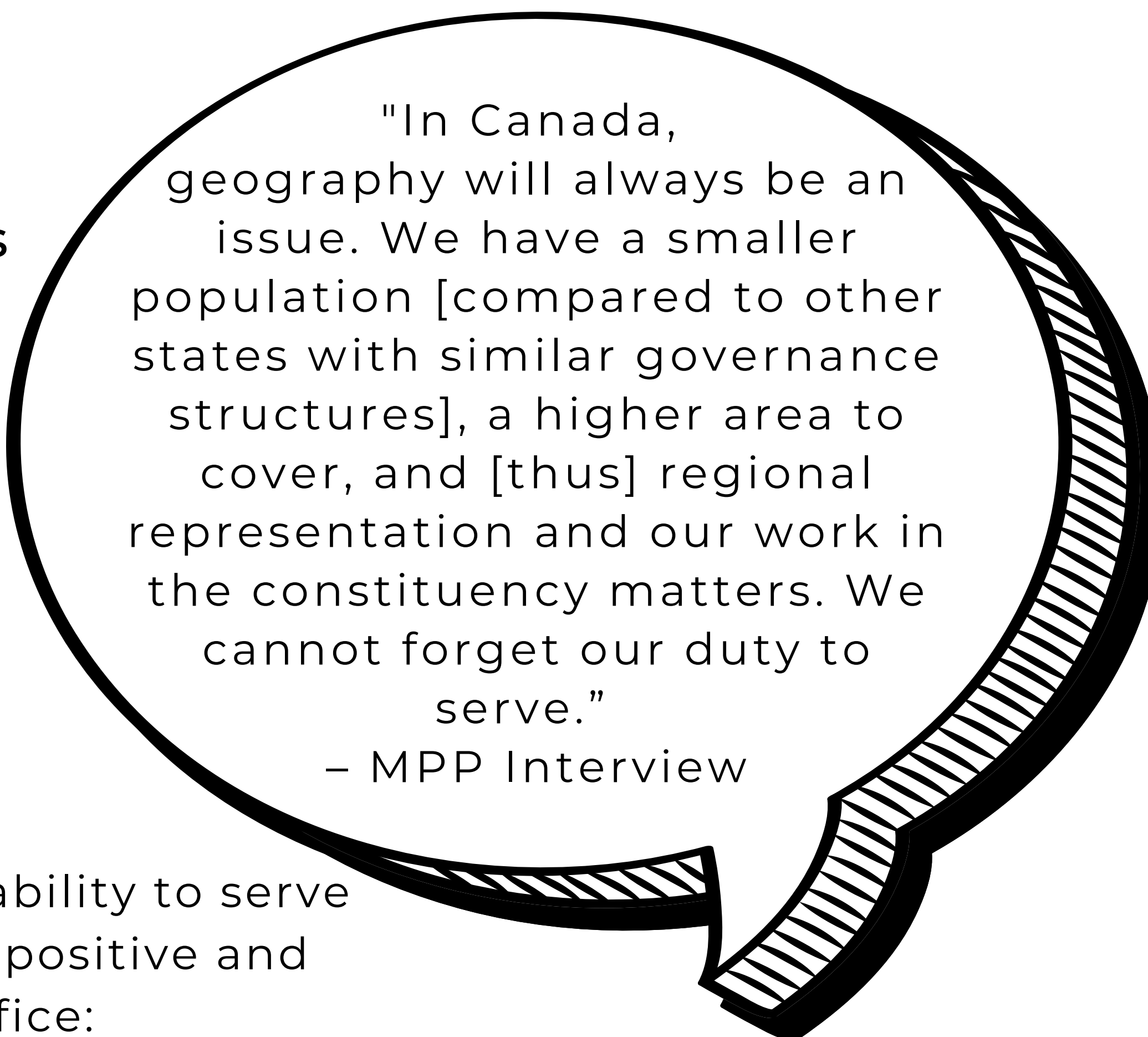
Minor Impacts on Office Relocations

Most MPPs kept their office location in the same location as the previous term served. Factors such as accessibility for constituents, convenience for staff members, and proximity to other services and levels of government influenced positioning of office locations.

Mixed Impacts on Capacity to Serve

There were mixed impacts on an MPP's ability to serve their constituency. There was a range of positive and negative impacts on the work of their office:

Noted Positive Constituency Office Impacts	Noted Negative Constituency Office Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved ability to travel and attend events within riding Improved ability to focus on key issues affecting constituents Decreased volume of case work and correspondence received from constituents Increased engagement among constituents in their office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased number of staffing due to budget constraints Increased diversity of needs among constituents visiting office with concerns Increased time and resources used to educate constituents about boundary readjustments Increased volume of case work and correspondence received from constituents Decreased total budget to serve the riding



Key Recommendations

Increase MPP Financial Resources

In the short term, allocate a special budget to support MPPs to facilitate a smoother transition. In the longer term, revisit global budget financing structures to ensure improved supports for constituency work.

Improve Channels for Knowledge and Skill Development

In the short term, implement a cooling period between boundary readjustment transitions to allow for MPP work plan development. In the longer term, leverage formal channels, such as workshops and MPP association groups, to build capacity between and within constituency offices.

Modernize Electoral Boundary Readjustments Processes

In the short term, expand membership on independent boundary commissions beyond experts in the field. In the longer term, adopt the province's Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation to implement a regularly scheduled process for reviewing electoral districts and boundaries.