

June 1, 2023

Hon. Steve Clark, MPP, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Clark,

On behalf of the Municipality of East Ferris, we acknowledge receipt of your letter dated April 6, 2023, regarding the Provincial Planning Statement. We are pleased to hear that the government is committed to addressing the housing supply problem in Ontario.

We wanted to let you know that despite the external economic challenges that are impacting new housing construction, residential construction activity in East Ferris remains vibrant. As a rural, northern municipality with a population of approximately 5,000, we continue to work hard to encourage construction. We were particularly impressed when in 2022, 50 new home permits were issued, representing a 150% increase in new homes over a three-year period and a 235.7% increase in total construction value over that same three-year period. While this is positive for our community, most of the housing being built is single-detached residential homes costing in excess of \$500,000. There is a need and demand for housing that is affordable.

Over the past 15 years, a local non-profit organization has built 30 affordable units for seniors in our area. With rising costs, they are struggling to service and maintain these units. As a municipality, we struggle to fund additional affordable housing in our community as our budgets are stretched thin. Funding and best practices to create and sustain affordable and attainable housing in our community is important for its growth and vitality. Strong leadership in this area would be greatly appreciated.

It is because of the growth in our community that we did want to take the opportunity to comment as part of the government's 60-day consultation on the proposed new Provincial Planning Statement. We were particularly pleased to learn of the emphasis the government is placing on the requirement for coordination between municipalities and school boards to consider school and childcare needs earlier in the planning process so that families moving into new housing can expect local schools to be available for their children. This is critical to East Ferris parents as in the past few months they have been impacted by regional school boards and day care providers seeking to centralize classes and services. Many parents have told us, "We chose to move our young family to East Ferris because of the excellent residential opportunities as well as the quality schools and childcare services."

We are struggling to maintain the quality childcare services. The childcare services that partner with the two school boards are operating below capacity because the service providers struggle to retain and attract Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) to run quality programs. There needs to be a focus in the Provincial Policy Statement on the care economy specifically

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how to support our working families so they can be employed to their potential knowing there are available services to care for their children. At a public meeting in our community, we heard stories of parents unable to work, having to take sick days, and/or traveling distances due to the lack of childcare spaces in our community. The lack of RECEs is making their lives very challenging. Again, strong leadership in this area is needed to create RECE jobs with appropriate salaries, benefits, and training so that people want to care for our children. This is important for our citizens to work to build the homes, and infrastructure needed and service our communities.

The Municipality of East Ferris welcomes the proposed changes to the use of site plan control on lakefront lots. We have two major lakes in our community and have relied heavily on site plan control as a tool for shoreline protection and managing lakefront development. Approximately 35% of the parcels of land within East Ferris fall within 120 metres of the shoreline of one of our major lakes and as a result, this tool is vital for us in managing the health of our lakes. Many of our planning policies are based on this tool being available to us.

East Ferris has reviewed changes relating to Rural Areas in proposed Sections 2.5 and 2.6 of the new Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). Although minor in nature, East Ferris appreciates the continued flexibility in rural development policies to allow municipalities the ability to implement development plans that are locally relevant based on the unique conditions of our municipality. Further, East Ferris is supportive of the PPS focus on providing a range of housing options and encouraging the use of a wide range of all housing options to help create complete communities.

We hope you can help us address our issues just as you addressed our concern regarding Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act* and site plan controls. Since many of our homes in East Ferris are built on lakefronts, these agreements are very helpful in protecting the shoreline and other environmentally sensitive areas.

On behalf of East Ferris and its citizens, thank you Minister Clark for hearing our concerns and for providing this further opportunity to provide input into the ongoing planning process.

Sincerely,

Pauline Rochefort

Pauline Rochefort
Mayor

c.c. Minister Vic Fedeli, M.P.P. for Nipissing