

Attachment: Top Five Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF) Recommendations for Response

Please identify the top 5 HATF recommendations that you support, and rationale / comments

1. **Recommendation #48: The Ontario government should establish a large “Ontario Housing Delivery Fund” and encourage the federal government to match funding. This fund should reward annual housing growth that meets or exceeds provincial targets, reduces approval times for new housing and removes exclusionary zoning practices.**
- The Municipality of East Ferris has demonstrated its commitment to new home construction in our community and is applying for funding under the 10% rural and northern component of the Building Faster Fund. In Northern Ontario, we are one of the few municipalities to have experienced steady growth, with a current population of 5,000. To support this growth, our residential construction record and our projections are, on a pro-rata basis, comparable to those of some of the municipalities that have been granted access to the Building Faster Fund.
 - East Ferris recognized the need to transform its housing profile and that is why it sought major revisions to its Official Plan. In 2022, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing granted its final approval. The Official Plan highlights the need for more affordable housing and a range of housing types, including a variety of multi-family types, secondary housing, and rental housing options. Furthermore, the municipality has created a more permissive land use, planning and approval system, and following are some examples of our commitment to housing growth and moving quickly in support of the Building Faster Fund:
 - We do not request or hold additional public meetings beyond those required by the Planning Act.
 - We allow public consultation through digital options.
 - We have delegated approval of minor variances.
 - We have no zoning policies or by-laws to preserve the physical character of a neighborhood.
 - We have updated zoning standards that reflect our commitment to the construction of new housing and rental properties.
 - Since 2010, 354 homes have been built, an average of 25 per year. More recently, the COVID pandemic has highlighted East Ferris' appeal, with a peak of 50 new residential building permits issued in 2021. Our region's largest urban center, neighboring City of North Bay, has seen real estate prices rise 85.8% since 2018, one of the highest increases in Canada. This situation is not sustainable. East Ferris is fortunate to have developers with the necessary resources (including aggregates) who want

	<p>to continue building in our community, and we believe that working with developers and providing financial incentives to reduce costs is the primary way forward.</p>
2.	<p>Recommendation # 7: Encourage and incentivize municipalities to increase density in areas with excess school capacity to benefits families with children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two elementary school in each of the villages of East Ferris: one has excess capacity, while the other has recently received permission to increase its capacity. Community safety and well-being surveys have confirmed that East Ferris is a desirable place to raise children. However, increasing density near schools has not been easy, and incentives in some of the following areas would make a difference: financial support for affordable rental housing, financial support for new as well as existing childcare centers to attract and retain childcare professionals, active transportation options so children can walk to school, safe roads for families and buses to utilize and expanded fire and emergency assets to protect homes, schools and all other community amenities. • The Municipality of East Ferris is committed to creating a community that all residents can enjoy and live in, with a range of housing types to meet everyone's needs. The Municipality of East Ferris has adopted a strategic plan for the municipality for the period 2023-2026. This plan includes a section entitled "Cultivate a Vibrant & Livable Community" and specifically calls for the construction of additional housing and amenities in support of young families and the elderly. In addition, the municipality has drawn up a "Housing Action Plan" and applied to the "Housing Acceleration Fund", which are further pieces of the puzzle in another measure taken by the municipality to increase and diversify the community's housing profile.
3.	<p>Recommendation #22: Simplify planning legislation and policy documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfortunately, one area where the new East Ferris Official Plan limits the rate of housing development pertains to not allowing more than one new subdivision/condominium designation to be considered at a time outside of village areas. This limits the ability to offer different housing options, as subdivision applications can come in many forms (waterfront, country estate, various condominium options, etc.) This policy is also problematic in that it does not allow multiple developers to be active at the same time and may exclude people who would otherwise build new homes in the community. • As a result, the municipality wishes to amend its Official Plan to allow multiple projects to be considered simultaneously, thereby providing more housing options and a greater number of development-ready lots. Allowing multiple applications to be active at the same time increases the opportunity for developers focusing on different housing types to be active with

simultaneous applications. If only one application can be active at a time by someone building only a certain type of single-family dwelling, this limits the possibility of having several types of housing simultaneously.

- But seeking such amendments is daunting when you consider that the Municipality of East Ferris new 2022 Official Plan followed nearly a decade off discussions with government officials, then a partial approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 2015 and final approval seven years later, in 2022. A decade ago, the need for considering more than one subdivision / condominium designation at a time was not seen as necessary, but in 2023 it is and that is why we need simplified planning legislation.

4. **Recommendation #42: provide provincial and federal loan guarantees for purpose-built rental, affordable rental and affordable ownership projects.**

- Although the municipality has experienced steady growth, we're building mainly single-family homes. With housing prices rising across the province, and single-family homes becoming less and less affordable for the average family, East Ferris needs to diversify its housing supply. According to 2021 census data, the distribution of housing types currently present in East Ferris is as follows: Single-family home 95.8% Semi-detached home 1.06% Townhouse 1.59% Apartment in a duplex 0.79% Apartment in a building with fewer than 5 storeys 0.53% Mobile home 0.26% The overwhelming number of single-family homes means that it's difficult for residents looking for different types of housing to find what's right for them. In particular young families attracted by the community's low property tax rate, good schools and outstanding recreational facilities and seniors looking to downsize and age in place in their community.
- East Ferris currently boasts 28 affordable housing units for seniors, managed by the non-profit group "The Seniors Villas of East Ferris". Construction of these units was made possible by community participation and funding from all levels of government, including volunteer leadership from the non-profit association, funding from CMHC and the provincial government, community banking (Caisse Populaire), municipal support with architectural renderings and elimination of planning and permit fees, as well as full rebate of the GST and municipal taxes. These units are in high demand, with a waiting list of over 50 applicants. However, our experience has demonstrated that provincial and federal incentives are needed to support the community and developers respond to this need.
- Our experience has also demonstrated a need for the development of a clear province-wide definition of affordable housing needs that is legislated to create certainty and predictability.

5. **Recommendation Appendix B: permit municipalities that have not passed inclusionary Zoning policies to offer incentives and bonuses for affordable housing units.**

- While the Municipality has not passed inclusionary Zoning, it's Official Plan encourages a mix of housing types and increased density in areas designated as "Village". The "Village" designation represents the core areas of Corbeil and Astorville, East Ferris' main historic settlements. Specifically, Astorville has a large property that is a former school site located in the heart of the community. The site has been vacant for several years and has recently changed ownership. This site is a prime location for infill development with a variety of housing types and denser development. It is close to a local elementary school, which is in the process of expanding as it is nears 100% capacity. It is also near 18 of the Seniors Villa units and many of the community's amenities including a grocery and hardware stores, fire hall, public library, community centre, arena, curling rink, tennis / pickeball courts, ski and active transportation trails etc...
- With the recent announcement of a 100% GST/HST rebate on new rental units built for this purpose, the timing is right for the municipality to encourage a project that meets these objectives by facilitating discussions with the owner and staff who have experience in building rental and affordable housing.