



June 8, 2020

Municipality of East Ferris
Mayor and Council
East Ferris, ON

RE: East Ferris Internet Advocacy Group (EFIAG)

Dear Mayor Rochefort and Council,

We are a group of engaged citizens with a Vision “To build a community where residents have equal access to global Internet technologies, that when leveraged can help facilitate positive outcomes regardless of social or economic circumstances.”

Our mission is to advocate for the delivery of reliable, affordable and sustainable high-speed internet services to our community. We strongly feel that high speed internet connectivity is a key element that can directly impact social determinants in our community including, but not limited to:

1. Public Health
2. Education
3. Community Involvement and Engagement
4. Social Connectivity
5. Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness
6. Environmental Sustainability
7. Economic Sustainability.

We want to be an active participant in helping shape and support any East Ferris initiatives associated with improving access to high-speed internet for our community.

At this stage, we are beginning to organize and will be working to grow our numbers in an effort to better understand the needs of East Ferris residents. We are in the process of developing a communications plan that will utilize a Facebook page and other platforms to reach as many residents as possible. Our Facebook page is live and we encourage council members to find us at: [@east.ferris.internet.advocacy.group](https://www.facebook.com/east.ferris.internet.advocacy.group).

With respect to the Township’s progress to date, we are encouraged by the section on Broadband Internet contained in your COVID-19 Bulletin #4 issued on May 19, 2020. Recognizing the concern of residents regarding unreliable and slow speed internet access that has exacerbated the challenges in our changing world is a good first step toward resolving them. As we have seen, in the community’s Strategy Planning Survey, connectivity was high on the priority list.

Some of the research that we have performed to date has shown that according to the CRTC’s Broadband Fund Application Guide, “the quality and outcome of the consultations and the involvement of the community will also be considered as part of the CRTC’s assessment.” We truly have an opportunity to leverage the voices of the community and better position ourselves for success when it comes to the CRTC Broadband funding Application process.



[@east.ferris.internet.advocacy.group](https://www.facebook.com/east.ferris.internet.advocacy.group)



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In the spirit of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan's Guiding Principles of Transparency, Sustainability and Responsiveness, we ask the following from the Council as a start:

1. An explanation with respect to the application to the CRTC, developed by the Blue Sky Network and currently endorsed by Council, in order to show that there has been significant and meaningful consultation undertaken throughout the process. We would suggest that a separate "Town Hall" meeting be set up in lieu of a face to face meeting due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We ask that the details such as the timing of the rollout in each of the ten areas, the routes of any cable builds and the extent of area expected to only receive 25/5 Mbps and for how long should also be provided at this time.
2. Council's current understanding regarding internet speeds in our community? There seems to be confusion with regards to technology availability in our community. Coverage information from service providers does not seem to align with what we see in our community. There also seems to be a gap, in this area, when it comes to new house builds. To what extent can we maximize access with the existing infrastructure?
3. In light of the recent announcement, by the Provincial Government, regarding funding for high speed internet for rural communities, how does this impact the application already submitted to the CRTC?
4. In future, what is the best way for the East Ferris Internet Advocacy Group (EFIAG) to work with the East Ferris Council to further advance our common interest?

With the proper information in hand, we believe residents of East Ferris can become better engaged in the process. This will only increase the likelihood of success for our application despite the vigorous competition for funds that exists from other Canadian communities.

We look forward to not only hearing these important questions discussed in an upcoming Council meeting but also would appreciate a formal response per the East Ferris Communications Policy.

Thank you,

Michael Blair
Spokesperson, East Ferris Internet Advocacy Group

