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Honourable Minister Steve Clark  
Minister Municipal Affairs and Housing

Re: Bill 23 – *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*

Dear Minister Clark,

The Municipality of East Ferris supports the provincial government's goal of encouraging the construction of more housing for Ontarians. As a rural northern municipality with approximately 5,000 residents, we have worked hard to encourage construction. As the 2022 construction season draws to a close, shovels have hit the ground for 50 new housing units in East Ferris, representing a 150% increase in new units over a three-year period and a 235.7% increase in total construction value over that same three-year period.

We have a small staff to oversee the work, including a planning director, a chief building official, and an administrative assistant. The North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA) plays an important role in supporting our work by reviewing reports for hydrological studies, endangered species, environmental assessments, and septic system approvals. We are concerned that Bill 23 will make it more difficult for our small construction department to achieve the same level of results without the support of the NBMCA. This is compounded by the fact that we are a very financially constrained municipality and would not be able to increase our municipal tax rates to oversee such services. We ask the Minister to consider supporting the work of Conservation Authorities when it is deemed positive and supportive of home building. The removal of the NBMCA from the opportunity to comment on our development applications in any respect related to, but not limited to, matters pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Drainage Act, and the Planning Act would be a challenge for East Ferris.

Regarding the limitations on Official Plans, for several years now, the Municipality of East Ferris has had parts of its Official Plan withheld from final approval by the MMHA given a matter of provincial interest (land treaty negotiations). This situation has made the Municipality realize how difficult it is to oversee planning activities without the clarity of an Official Plan to guide the work. Accordingly, we also ask that the proposed amendments to section 23 of the *Planning Act* not be implemented. Municipalities carefully craft their Official Plans to suit the needs of their community and direct changes to these plans from the Minister, without a hearing, undermine our ability to guide planning decisions in our municipality.

The Municipality of East Ferris has been an active user of site plan control agreements. These agreements have been readily accepted by our builders and residents and have helped protect local vegetation and tree cover. As many of our homes are built along the lakeshore, these agreements are very helpful in protecting the shoreline and other environmentally sensitive areas. Therefore, we are asking the Minister to allow municipalities to choose whether the site plan control process should apply to developments of less than 10 units or provide an exemption process for land within a certain distance of the shoreline of larger water bodies.

With respect to the proposed changes to parkland dedication fees, we agree that the purpose of these accumulated fees is to be used and not to remain in accounts to earn interest. We support the idea of a park plan to support a parkland fee transfer by-law. That said, it is not always in the interest of better planning to mandate that 60% of the money in the park's allocation fund be spent or allocated each year, especially for smaller municipalities. For a smaller municipality, the parkland dedication fees accumulate more slowly and having to allocate 60% of the money in the account each year would make it incredibly difficult to focus the funds on larger scale, meaningful projects. The Municipality should have some flexibility to be able to plan for the best use of these funds and to support larger, more impactful applications. An option could be to remove the 60% requirement when the parkland dedication account is below a certain dollar value; this would achieve the desired results for larger municipalities while giving smaller municipalities the flexibility to accumulate parkland funds for larger projects.

Our final concern is related to the role the NBMCA plays in helping us monitor the quality of Trout Lake, which is the source of drinking water for some of our citizens in addition to the City of North Bay. In East Ferris, we also have Lake Nosbonsing, which is a headwater lake that flows into the Mattawa and then into the Ottawa River. Here also NBMCA plays a critical role in doing field work and research on water management. This work is greatly appreciated by the citizens of East Ferris. It would be difficult for the municipality to replace this valuable service provided by the NBMCA.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments to Bill 23.

Pauline Rochefort

Mayor  
Municipality of East Ferris

Cc

Minister Vic Fedeli, MPP Nipissing  
Michael Parsa, Associate Minister of Housing  
Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister, Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Joshua Paul, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing Division  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)  
Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA)  
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM)