

Municipality of East Ferris

Report to Council

Report No.: BL-2026-01

Date: February 24, 2026

Originator: Valerie Murphy, By-Law Enforcement Officer

Subject: Freight Container Policy Update

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council for the Municipality of East Ferris directs staff to amend section 3.2.8 of Zoning By-Law 2021-60 to permit the placement and use of freight containers within Rural, Commercial, Institutional and Industrial Zones subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

At the Council meeting held on November 25, 2025, Council directed staff to undertake a review and evaluate options for the expanded placement and use of freight containers under Zoning By-Law 2021-60 and prepare a recommendation, including appropriate standards and criteria for their placement and use in zones, beyond Commercial and Industrial.

The purpose of this report is to outline the scope of a proposed amendment to the Zoning By-Law, provide a list of appropriate standards to be included in the update, and outline the next steps to proceed.

Freight Containers

Currently, Zoning By-Law 2021-60 addresses freight containers as an accessory use, and their placement is limited to specific land uses set out in Section 3.2 as follows:

3.2 Accessory Uses

3.2.8 The locating of transport trailers, freight containers, or similar, as an accessory use for the storage of materials on a lot in a Residential or Rural Zone is not permitted. The accessory use of a transport trailer or freight container for storage are permitted in Commercial and Industrial Zones, however under no circumstance may freight containers be stacked one on top of the other.

Section 3.32 speaks to the temporary use of storage containers for construction purposes:

3.32 Temporary Buildings and Structures

3.32.1 Temporary structure uses in the construction of public works, but only for so long as it is necessary for such works to be completed or abandoned. A temporary structure associated with a construction project may be permitted for a period of one year, maximum. This may include freight containers associated with temporary construction projects in all zones.

3.32.2 A construction trailer, scaffold or other building or structure incidental to ongoing construction on the premises where it is situated, and only for so long as it is necessary for the work to be completed or abandoned.

In order to assist in the development of municipal policies related to freight containers, staff reviewed a variety of by-laws from surrounding municipalities to gauge existing best practices to help inform policy creation.

A variety of municipal by-laws pertaining to freight containers were examined for their approach. The results found a range of zoning standards, from municipalities prohibiting freight containers in any zone, permitting them in specific zones and a variety of conditions and/or regulations. A summary of which zones permit freight containers in surrounding municipalities can be found in **Schedule A**.

In addition to broad land use permission based on zone, most municipalities implement a series of additional conditions and regulations related to freight container use. A summary of this information from municipal by-laws and how freight containers are regulated can be found in **Schedule B**.

Proposed Updates

When considering the expansion of the zones in which freight containers are permitted in the Municipality of East Ferris, property owners would require clear direction on applicable conditions and criteria that would need to be met.

The following list of conditions and criteria would need to be met in order to permit the placement of a freight container on a property within the Municipality of East Ferris.

Zoning:

- Freight containers would be permitted within Rural, Commercial, Institutional and Industrial Zones.

Conditions/Criteria:

- Freight containers larger than 15m² (161ft²) will require a building permit.

- Any modifications proposed to a freight container, of any size, will require a building permit.
- Freight containers will be permitted in the rear yard only when accessory to a residential use.
- Freight containers will be permitted in the rear and side yards when accessory to a non-residential use.
- Freight containers, of any size, are considered an accessory structure and must adhere to the Zoning By-Law standards for accessory structures for the respective zone.
- A maximum of one (1) freight container shall be permitted accessory to residential uses and a minimum lot area of 0.4ha (1.0 acre) is required.
- Freight containers accessory to non-residential uses shall be permitted on a sliding scale relative to lot area:
 - 0 – 1 acres: one (1) freight container
 - 1.01 – 2 acres: two (2) freight containers
 - 2.01 – 3 acres: three (3) freight containers
 - 3.01 acres or greater: four (4) freight containers (maximum)
- Freight containers shall be maintained in good condition and protected against rust in accordance with the East Ferris Property Standards By-law.
- The location of freight containers in non-residential zones will be further dictated on a case-by-case basis through Site Plan Control.
- Building permit fees as outlined in the Building Services section of the Municipal Fees and Charges By-Law shall apply.
- No shipping container shall be used for human habitation.

Staff are recommending that the most efficient and effective way to permit and regulate the expanded placement of freight containers within the Municipality of East Ferris is by applying the above conditions and criteria, allowing a window for compliance for existing properties with freight containers and developing a communications plan to provide awareness of the changes to residents.

The implementation of this policy change would require an amendment to Zoning By-law 2021-60, which would be circulated to the East Ferris Planning Advisory Committee for review and recommendation, prior to returning to Council for final consideration.

OPTIONS

Option 1

That the Council for the Municipality of East Ferris directs staff to amend section 3.2.8 of Zoning By-Law 2021-60 to permit the placement and use of freight containers within Rural, Commercial, Institutional and Industrial Zones subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

Option 2

That the Council for the Municipality of East Ferris directs staff to conduct further research and explore further options and conditions for the placement of freight containers on properties within the Municipality of East Ferris.

Option 3

That the Council for the Municipality of East Ferris directs staff to proceed with the enforcement of existing zoning regulations related to freight containers and make no amendments to existing policies.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

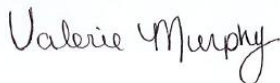
There are no direct financial implications associated with this report and recommendation at this time.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council for the Municipality of East Ferris directs staff to amend section 3.2.8 of Zoning By-Law 2021-60 to permit the placement and use of freight containers within Rural, Commercial, Institutional and Industrial Zones subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

Respectfully Submitted,

I concur with this report,
and recommendation



Valerie Murphy
By-Law Enforcement Officer

Greg Kirton, RPP, MCIP
Director of Community Services



Jason Trottier, HBBA, MPA, CPA, CMA
CAO/ TreasurerEncl.

Schedule A – Permitted Use Comparison Table
Schedule B – Municipal Standards Comparison Table

	Armour (By-Law 23-2010 A By-Law to amend By-Law 27-95 The Zoning By-Law – Consolidated July 9, 2025)	Bonfield (By-Law 2025-11 Being a By-Law to amend the Comp. Zoning By-Law 2012-49 for ADUs, Hunt camps and Accessory Structure – May 2025)	Callander (By-Law 2023-1882 Being a housekeeping amendment By-Law to amend zoning By-Law 2014-1407 – October 2023)	North Bay (By-Law 2015-30 Comprehensive zoning By-Law – 2023)	Chisholm (Zoning By-Law 2014-25)	Perry Township (Zoning By-Law 2014-21 Consolidation June 3, 2016)
Permitted Zones	Shipping containers are permitted in the rural, commercial, recreational commercial, rural industrial and industrial extractive zones (subject to conditions)	No shipping container shall exceed 5m in height in any residential zone . Cannot be placed within 2m of the main building in ALL zones (unless authorized by building permit).	Urban residential – Must comply with zone provisions. Must be kept in good condition, painted earth tones, remove any markings or labels and kept free of rust. Rural residential – If shielded from view of the street/water and neighbours, does not need to be sided. Permitted in rear yard only, min. 30m from the road or water’s edge, 1 acre per storage container with a max. of one on water, 1 acre per storage container with a max. of 2, not on water. Commercial – must be in rear yard and sheltered from view of the road and residential neighbours with plantings/fencing. Cannot be used for self-storage, unless appropriately zoned and sided, meet max. lot coverages, max. 1 per acre and no more than 2 per property. Industrial – must be min. 30 meters from road. Max. 1 per acre, 4 per property, must be in rear yard or side yard and sheltered from view from the road and residential neighbours with plantings or fencing. Cannot be used for self storage, unless appropriately zoned and sided.	Permitted in any industrial, commercial, institutional and open space zone . They are subject to the provisions of the zoning by-law for the main building, for the particular zone in which the freight container is located. Freight containers are prohibited in residential zones , except in accordance with the provisions in section 3.19 (temporary construction use) or in accordance with the issuance of a building permit required in conjunction with a main building for a period not to exceed 12 consecutive months.	Permitted in RU (rural) and A (Agricultural) Zones .	Permitted in an Industrial, Rural or Rural Residential Zones.

	Armour (By-Law 23-2010 A By-Law to amend By-Law 27-95 The Zoning By-Law – Consolidated July 9, 2025)	Bonfield (By-Law 2025-11 Being a By-Law to amend the Comp. Zoning By-Law 2012-49 for ADUs, Hunt camps and Accessory Structure – May 2025)	Callander (By-Law 2023-1882 Being a housekeeping amendment By-Law to amend zoning By-Law 2014-1407 – October 2023)	North Bay (By-Law 2015-30 Comprehensive zoning By-Law – 2023)	Chisholm (Zoning By-Law 2014-25)	Perry Township (Zoning By-Law 2014-21 Consolidation June 3, 2016)
Minimum Property Size	Shipping containers are only permitted based on a lot area at a rate of one (1) shipping container per 0.4ha (1 acre) or part thereof to a maximum of four (4). In no case is a shipping container permitted on a lot having an area of less than 0.4ha (1 acre).	Not mentioned	1 acre	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	In Shoreline Residential or Shoreline Backlot Residential zones, shipping containers will only be used as accessory buildings or structures where the lot is at least 1.0 hectare in size and the requirements for accessory buildings are met.
Required setbacks	A shipping container shall only be located in the rear yard and shall be located no closer than 30m to any street line. A shipping container shall be screened from view from the street and abutting properties and shall not encroach into any required landscaping buffer. Shipping containers shall be considered in all calculations for total lot coverage. Shipping containers cannot be located in required parking areas.	No container shall be placed within 2 meters of the main building in all zones. Containers shall not be permitted within the SRA bordering any water body and shall be positioned beyond the 30m setback over which NBMCA has jurisdiction. In rural areas, where lot size and dimensions permit, a min landscape buffer of 30m shall be applied around the perimeter of the property to ensure satisfactory screening of the container. Exceptions can be met where alternative arrangements (tree line, fence, siding...) have been proposed and approved by the municipality that would be considered visually appealing.	Section 2.38 The storage container shall be treated as an accessory structure. All setbacks and lot coverage requirements for accessory structures shall be applicable.	Subject to the provisions of Zoning By-Law for the main building, for the particular zone in which the freight container is located.	Sea container must maintain a minimum 30-meter setback from the front lot line and is located behind the rear wall of any principal dwelling or structure.	Must meet the requirements for accessory buildings in the applicable zone.
Maximum number freight containers permitted	1 per acre with a maximum of 4 on a property.	Does not mention	1 per acre, maximum 2 per property. Industrial – 1 per acre, maximum 4 per property.	Empty freight containers are permitted to be stacked one on top of the other to a maximum height of 2. If containers are in use, they	Not mentioned	General Commercial-3 By-Law 2019-52 Notwithstanding Section 3.2.13 to the contrary, two shipping containers may be used as an accessory building or structure. In all

				are not permitted to be stacked.		other respects the provisions of this By-Law shall apply. General Commercial – 4 By-law 2019-70 Notwithstanding Section 3.2.13 to the contrary, one shipping container may be used as an accessory building or structure. In all other respects the provisions of this By-Law shall apply.
Size of Freight Container permitted	No shipping container shall exceed a height of 3m or a total length of 16.76m (55ft)	No shipping container shall exceed 5 meters in height in any residential Zone Shipping containers cannot be stacked upon other containers.	2014-1407 Section 2.1 – Lot coverage of all accessory buildings and structures to not exceed 10% of the lot area. Maximum height of accessory structures is 6m.	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	If storage containers are 20ft, permit for placement is not required. If storage containers are 40ft, they need a building permit. Fee for building permit is \$100. Permit is more of a schematic showing the size of the container and a site plan showing it meets all the necessary setbacks. Building/By-Law goes out to check to ensure it is placed where it was approved, then close the building permit.
Required Maintenance	Not mentioned	Containers shall be rust protected by applying a uniform colour to ensure their satisfactory design quality and visual appearance. All markings shall be removed or masked from the container. The container shall be maintained in such a state.	Storage containers cannot be used for the purposed of advertising and display.	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Permitting required (OBC)	Shipping containers all require a building permit and shall only be permitted as an accessory use on a lot where a principal use already exists.	Section 3.11.8 Containers greater than 161.5 sq. ft or 15 sq. m or of any size if they contain plumbing, if they are attached to other structures, or used for purposes other than personal storage sheds ancillary to a principal building, shall not be placed or constructed except under the authority of a Building Permit.	Section 2.38 – All permanent storage containers require a building permit if over 15sq. m or if any modifications are made to the structure.	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	40ft – Building permit required.

Permit Fees	Require a building permit, therefore building permit fees apply.	Per Building Department User Fee by-law – Standalone and Misc. Work Residential – accessory shed structure (<than 400 sqft/37.16m2) = \$400 greater than above = \$500	Building Permit fee	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	\$100
Servicing – e.g. electrical / Modifications	Any change of use or exterior finishes for a shipping container shall require a building permit and site plan control under Sect. 41 of the Planning Act.	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Refrigerated and/or heated freight containers shall not be located in any yard adjacent a residential use.	Not mentioned	If alterations to the containers are made (e.g. doors, windows, roofs connecting containers) then that's changing the structural integrity of the container and that would require a building permit and design from an engineer.
Materials stored	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Compacted base	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Timelines for compliance	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Other	<p>No shipping container shall be used for human habitation, home based industry or any occupation of business.</p> <p>Unless stated elsewhere in this By-Law, shipping containers are only permitted for accessory storage purposes.</p>	Containers are not permitted to be stacked upon other containers.	<p>2014-1407 Section 2.13 Regardless of floor area, no shipping container shall be used for human habitation.</p> <p>Section 2.38 Storage containers cannot be used for human habitation, unless converted under and compliant with the OBC.</p> <p>Storage container can only be located on a property as an accessory structure, not the main.</p> <p>Temporary Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For moving – 1 week timeframe - For building a home or business and storing 	<p>Freight containers shall not be used for extra work space, office space or any other use than storage.</p> <p>Freight containers are permitted to be used as part of a seasonal garden centre in any commercial or industrial zone and are subject to the regulations of that zone.</p> <p>Self storage uses does not include freight containers.</p> <p>3.19 Temporary Construction Uses Permitted – Notwithstanding any other provisions of this By-Law,</p>	Limited information in zoning By-Law	Zoning By-Law 2014-21 Section 3.2.12 Shipping Containers

			<p>materials – 1 year timeframe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Not permitted for alterations to existing buildings.- No storage containers in required parking spots.	<p>uses such as a storage trailer, freight container, construction camp or other temporary work camp, a tool shed, scaffold or other building or structure incidental to the construction shall be permitted provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Uses, buildings or structures are used only as long as they are necessary for work in progress which has neither been finished nor abandoned; and- uses, buildings or structures are removed when the work in connection with which they were constructed is terminated.		
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