

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

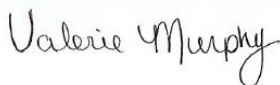
There are no direct financial implications associated with this report and recommendation at this time.

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