

479 South Shore Road,
Astorville, ON
P0H 1B0

Mar 12, 2025

Kari Hanselman
Clerk,
Municipality of East Ferris,
25 Taillefer Road,
Corbeil, Ontario,
P0H 1K0

Dear Ms Hanselman,

With all the talk surrounding elections right now, we have been thinking about the upcoming local municipal election.

First, we would like to thank Monique for making it possible for us to vote at home during the last municipal election. She came to our home with our ballots and ensured that our votes were counted. We were surprised to hear from other residents in the community that they were not aware of this option for them to vote.

With continued voter apathy and low voter turn out, we would think that the council would be doing everything possible to ensure maximum participation in our municipal elections. It cannot be assumed that low voter turnout means that people are happy with the way things are being run. Rather, it can be an indication that they feel their vote doesn't matter and won't make a difference. It can also mean that there are not enough options to make voting more convenient for the residents of our community, particularly people who are active with their jobs, and busy with their family activities.

We were thinking about how difficult it would be for all of the cottage property owners on the lake to vote in the municipal election, particularly since it is now always held in November. It would make sense that these voters who live outside the area during the winter would have difficulty taking time off work to make a trip to the area just to vote, an activity that would take only a few minutes, if there is no lineup at the poll. There are also most certainly people who are working out of town, travelling or on the road, and who are not able to vote on election day in person.

We were also thinking about all the residents who are elderly, ill or disabled and who struggle to visit a voting poll in person. We personally have an elderly family member who is living with us, who is not able to physically get out to vote in person. In addition, we have multiple health concerns and continue to operate a covid conscious household, so visiting a voting booth in person is less safe for us.

Everyone's life seems to be getting busier and busier. It seems to us that it would be the responsibility of the council to provide as many voting options as economically viable to the taxpayers in our community. It is the right of every taxpayer to participate in the election, but it is also the responsibility of the council to make it reasonably accessible to all taxpayers.

It would seem to us that the East Ferris council would want to do everything possible to encourage voter participation and welcome the opportunity to move into the 21st century by integrating multiple voting options into their election platform to encourage maximum voter engagement.

In the last Federal and provincial elections, we registered online and the mail-in ballots were sent to us securely through the mail. It was mostly seamless and highly effective to meet our needs. The most important part was to have the information widely available far enough in advance so we could register to get our ballots.

We have also participated in online voting through other organizations, which has been secure, simple, effective and efficient.

In case it has not been brought to your attention, it is well known that offering only paper, in-person ballots, is considered a form of voter suppression.

It would be most important to investigate different voting scenarios at this time, in order to arrange for budgeting options well in advance of the next election cycle. It would be highly advantageous for the council to communicate with other similarly sized communities who have successfully integrated other options into their voting profile, to be able to weigh the advantages and disadvantages, as well as to troubleshoot any possible issues that could cause concerns.

One obstacle to investigating alternative voting options may very well be the cost. It seems that, as part of the democratic process, providing voting options to encourage voter participation is one of the most important things a community could offer to its residents. Another obstacle to the success of providing multiple voting options, would certainly be the willingness of the council to embrace a new voting framework for the

community. Finally, a third concern would be the security of the voting process. It seems very reasonable that other communities would have suggestions and guidelines to help overcome this concern. There must be counterparts in similar sized municipalities who could provide guidance to help put a new plan in place.

In the 2018 election, over half of the municipalities in Ontario had moved to different voting options, including online and phone in voting. (See 2 articles.)

<https://globalnews.ca/news/9187523/ontario-municipal-elections-online-voting-2022/>

<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/some-ontario-municipalities-are-letting-people-vote-online-despite-lack-of-provincial-standards-1.6102401>

There are many other Ontario communities of similar sizes who have run successful and secure elections which have included alternate voting options, such as on-line voting and mail-in voting. It seems completely sensible and responsible for the council to take a serious look at these options, in time for the next municipal election.

Thank-you for your consideration to increase voting options for the residents of East Ferris.

Sincerely

Louis Pharand Lyn Pharand

Louis & Lyn Pharand