



The Hon. Andrea Khanjin
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

By email to minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Dear Minister:

Re: Comments Regarding Revocation of the Municipal Environment Assessment

The Frontenac Municipal Services Corporation (FMSC) is an incorporated entity under Ontario Regulation 599/06 of the Municipal Act, SO 2001. We are wholly owned by the four Townships in the County. The Corporation's mandate is to facilitate the efficient construction and operation of de-centralized communal water and wastewater systems within Frontenac County. As a largely rural community in Eastern Ontario, we are committed to providing a variety of housing options to ensure the vitality of our community. The Corporation is taking the lead on the servicing aspects of this commitment. Communal services are economical to install and operate, environmentally safer than typical individual well and septic solutions, and make efficient use of land by allowing increased density and multi-unit construction.

To begin, we wish to commend the Minister for your leadership on this important issue for municipalities and the provision of housing in rural communities like Frontenac County. The goal of protecting our environment and promoting efficient development are not mutually exclusive. Any initiative aimed at removing barriers to housing are welcome at the ground level, including Frontenac County. Our current experience with the EA approvals process in Frontenac is that the timeline for approval is 18 to 24 months, even for modest development projects. We find this both frustrating and demoralizing.

It is in this context that FMSC wishes to provide comments regarding the Ministry's proposed Environmental Assessment Act process as a driver of more efficient development. We will also be submitting formal comments through the Environmental Registry, but wanted to make sure that you, as Minister, are aware of our concerns.

As such, we provide the following:

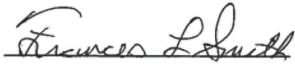
1. The new regulations will exempt wastewater projects that process less than 50,000 litres per day. This should facilitate the development of small housing project under 50 units. At the same time, such projects are generally accompanied by the installation of a drinking water system which will still be

required to proceed through a Municipal Project Assessment Process. As a result, the timeline for such combined projects may not be decreased.

2. While the less than 50,000 litres per day exemption is welcome, we would recommend that the Ministry consider increasing this limit to reflect residential housing developments up to 100,000 litre per day. This should incentivize developers to bring forward more efficient housing options, including multi-residential units.
3. The current approval process for municipalities within the jurisdiction of a conservation authority (there are four in Frontenac County), requires us to move through two parallel, non-coordinated processes under the EA process and source water protection requirement with our local conservation authority. Both programs are administered by your Ministry. This bifurcated process is time consuming, expensive and could result in the municipality receiving approval under one process and have a different decision in the other. We urge the Minister to consider harmonizing these two processes.
4. The planning process for subdivision development under the *Planning Act*, RSO 1990 should be utilized as the primary process for the approval of communal services for development. The subdivision process is open, transparent, and respectful of the environment. Municipalities have traditionally used this process to review, approve and facilitate the efficient development of housing in our communities.
5. Recommendation #44 from the *Provincial Housing Affordability Task Force* of 2022 recommended the establishment of municipal services corporations to facilitate servicing. The FMSC recommends that the Ministry recognize that service corporations are acknowledged as leading experts in communal servicing and be afforded status under the regulation.
6. Communal servicing solutions are utilized around the world. Much like a decentralized hydro grid, decentralized water, and wastewater services act as a hedge against failure by limiting the potential for large scale failures. The current state in Ontario is that each communal solution is treated like it is the first installation. Our analogy is that this is like treating every Ford F-150 truck as the first one. Our recommendation is that a system be pre-approved by the Ministry based upon a risk assessment matrix and that water taking and discharge be based upon the system meeting pre-determined source and discharge requirements. This action would greatly reduce development times and permit housing development to occur in a timely fashion.
7. In our experience, the servicing for housing utilizing communal services will cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per unit. Compared to \$35,000 to \$40,000 for a traditional well and septic solution, or more than \$50,000 for traditional municipal services.

8. Finally, we are concerned that the current system exempts private developers. This places projects where the municipal, or service corporation is the proponent at a disadvantage. The County of Frontenac and our member municipalities have a 160-year record of responsible government. We will be here long after the developer exits the scene and will be the responsible owner. Frankly, it does not make sense that a developer would be exempt from provisions such as the source water protection component, while the municipality is held to a higher standard.

We thank you for your time and consideration. We remain ready and willing to explore further discussions with the Ministry on how decentralized/communal water and wastewater systems can provide necessary housing in an efficient manner, while protecting the environment we all cherish.



Frances Smith
President
Frontenac Municipal Services Corporation

Cc. Meredith Staveley-Watson, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC)
Colin Best, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
John Jordan, MPP
Ted Hsu, MPP
Council of the County of Frontenac
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Jim McIntosh, Chair, Technical Support Committee (FMSC)