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Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Delegation, August 17, 2020

Good Afternoon

Thank you for meeting with us.

One thing is for certain. As the saying goes, times they are a'changin'. It should be said you're your government has been responsive to the changing priorities and, where possible, have provided local governments with the opportunities to make decisions that are best suited for the communities they serve.

As an example, when we requested this meeting, one topic we wanted to discuss was the possibility of making amendments to the Municipal Act, 2001, that would allow for the enhanced electronic participation in Council meetings even outside of times when we are operating under a declared emergency. Especially for more rural, northern or remote communities, having the ability to employ technology in our meetings could increase engagement in the democratic process.

In between the time our delegation requests were submitted and our delegation today, your government has already listened to us and has entrenched in the Municipal Act, 2001, items which allow local governments with the ability to have enhanced electronic participation at meetings. Thank-you!

We believe the next topic we asked to discuss is one that, again, would provide local governments with the tools required to make decisions best suited to their communities. There are many examples of joint service boards or committees. Depending on those served by these bodies, often they include representation from First Nation Communities. Typically, the assets used to provide the services are owned by the host community.

Section 203 of the Municipal Act, 2001, and further supported by Ontario Regulation 599/06, provide municipalities with the abilities to form corporations. These corporations can be joint ventures if the other party is a public sector entity. The regulation defines public sector entities as a municipality, the Crown in right of Ontario, the Crown in right of Canada, or a combination of these.

Joint Corporations are often preferred as there can be governance models implemented where a portion of the Board would be open to change every year or two without normally having the possibility of complete changes which does happen with elections in both municipalities and First Nation Communities. As well, having a corporation established to manage the operations related to service delivery can result in more energy spent in managing the service than in political based arguments.

Presently, we are in discussions with Temagami First Nation on the ownership and operation of the Lake Temagami Access Point. The Lake Temagami Access Point not only provides docking and launching facilities but provides long-term parking for people who have water access only to their properties. The municipality has a land use permit for this area that expires at the end of 2021. Both communities have great interest in this area as a vital service to their residents. While there were different operational and ownership models discussed, one where both the Municipality of Temagami and Temagami First Nation were equal partners in the venture emerged as the preferred solution. The easiest way to ensure equality among the partners is through a Joint Corporation.

There is only one major obstacle in the formation of this type of corporation and that is the definition of a public entity in Ontario Regulation 599/06.

We also do not believe that our situation is unique. Especially in Northern Ontario, there are many areas where First Nation Communities and Municipalities could benefit if this type of arrangement was possible. Especially when the majority of operating and future service development costs would be covered through user charges, having the ability to establish the appropriate corporate structure is important.

While the regulation outlines different steps that also need to be completed before a corporation can be formed, in the model being contemplated until we are able to form a joint corporation with a First Nation Community there is not much sense to consult with our public or direct our joint staff to formalize the business case study and draft the associated policies.

We trust that you will give this request due consideration.

Thank you for your time.