

East Ferris Medical Centre Backgrounder

The Municipality is delighted to bring this project forward for Council's consent to proceed. It has been discussed at a municipal level for a number of years and with different members of the community and different groups. Given that the project is being sole-sourced, and that it involves the Municipality's finances, it is important to start the presentation with remarks on why that is. We appreciate Council's patience as we revisit our journey that has led us to this day.

- There is a long history of physicians who have served residents of East Ferris and with a connection to Lake Nobsong to include Dr. Joyal, Dr. Rochefort, Dr. Agnews, Dr. Truchon and Dr. Seguin.
- From 2010s onward, Dr. Seguin has continuously informed the Municipality of the shortfalls related to the location of his practice Doc on the Lake.
 - Lack of space as the clinic operates out of his home making it impossible to:
 - add physicians and:
 - add services e.g. blood clinics, health workshops etc...
 - Challenging space with multiples staircases causing problems for:
 - seniors, young families with strollers and physically challenged individuals and;
 - medical garbage pick-up and for snow removal.
- In 2011 Council of East Ferris passed a resolution supporting the request from Powassan for the creation of a Family Health Team. The East Ferris population count enabled Powassan to be successful in its bid. It involved Doc on the Lake receiving funding support as Dr. Seguin positioned his practice as part of the Powassan and Area Family Health Team. Construction funding ensued and supported the addition of a new medical office in Powassan. The Town of Powassan played a major financial role, even though there was a developer and even though there was government funding.
- In the meantime, the Doc on the Lake practice in Astorville continued to grow to the point where today Dr. Seguin has one of the highest patient counts in comparison to many other practicing physicians in the greater Nipissing area. That is why when the new St. Thomas d'Aquin School was being planned in 2014, former CAO John Fior outlined discussions with the School Board regarding the potential of adding a medical centre to the project. The Municipality was trying to find ways to fund such a project.
- In 2016, many patients of Dr. Seguin and citizens aware of the risk of losing Doc on the Lake initiated a grass root campaign to keep the clinic in the community. When old St. Thomas School closed, a public forum was organized by the citizens with the involvement of Seniors Villa of East Ferris, the North Bay Parry Sound Health Unit and the District of Nipissing Social Services Board. While initially the focus of the forum was on the future of the old school property, out of those deliberations came a strong representation for a medical centre. A Community Advisory Committee was formed that

included Dr. Seguin, the Powassan and Area Family Health Team, local businesses and an interested developer tied to Mallette Goring. The Committee proceeded as follows:

- It got the School Board to agree to continue to heat and maintain the property as its future was explored;
- An excellent plan was developed that included seniors housing, the relocation of the Doc on the Lake clinic and new services with expressions of interest from a physiotherapist, a pharmacy, Phara, One Kids Place and the list goes on. The Committee and the developer pointed to the need for government funding to ensure the financial viability of the project.
- As funding for senior housing was available at the time, it was deemed to be the way forward. The Municipality supported the effort with funding to prepare applications and for architectural drawings. At the time the Municipality was facing important legal issues tied to soil contamination linked to its purchase of the Old Ste. Theresa property. There was also the Lavasse River oil spill. And so the Municipality's capacity to support a medical centre was very limited. I don't want to go into all of the politics that occurred, but the long and the short of it was that DNSSAB funding for senior housing went to a 2nd location at the corner of Edmond and Village Road and the community and the Municipality passed on the School Board offer to purchase the old St. Thomas school for \$1.
- And so the School Board put the school up for public auction, and because of the opportunities that had been identified by the community... it was a very active bidding process. And so just minutes prior to the closing of the auction at midnight, a bid from investors from Mississauga beat out a local developer. And the property sold for \$500,000.00. The Municipality then had the opportunity to explore a medical centre with a new developer.
- Right from the start, the Municipality and community members met with the new owners. The opportunity for a medical centre was outlined and studied by the new owners. They reached out to funders: both private and public. The long and the short...after 4 years of unsuccessfully trying to financially move forward, the owners have recently advised the Municipality that they are selling the property.
- In the meantime, the 2018 Municipal Elections were held... we all heard from citizens about the importance of keeping Doc on the Lake in the community. At its first meetings when discussing strategic priorities, Council agreed that ensuring a Medical Centre to serve East Ferris would form part of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and be a priority of the Economic Development Committee.
 - The Municipality started to explore how it could move forward. Discussions with Powassan and Area Family Health Team, Doc on the Lake and the LHIN made it clear that we could count on very limited funding. And so for those that suggest that this project should be led by a private developer, I say "absolutely yes" but the reality is that in a rural setting it is nearly impossible for such a project to

stand on its own financial merit without government funding. That is why Powassan provided funding for its clinic. That is why the Municipalities of Bonfield, Callander and many beyond contribute financially to their medical office. Council also looked at examples of other municipalities providing housing, vehicles, and various other incentives to attract physicians to their communities.

- Council had discussed moving forward with a formal Request of Interest to seek a developer to construct a medical office. The matter however escalated in priority when in July 2019 Dr. Seguin advised Council that he could no longer operate the clinic out of his home. He explained that he was facing a very specific timeline. There was a flurry of discussions that included reaching out to local realtors. This resulted in several ideas and one from Jake Lacourse, Chair of the Municipality's Economic Development Committee that pertained to "has the Municipality thought of purchasing the old Sheppard property that Ray Seguin has just listed for sale?" Before we could meet as a Council to consider the opportunity, the property had sold.
- Council did informally explore some of the other options that were brought forward and that included two properties close to Astorville Freshmart, another on Southshore Road, another on Corbeil Road, one near Nipissing Manor etc... A few serious options started to emerge, one that included adding a Medical Centre to form part of the new Municipal Office being planned at the Office's current location. The Technical Advisory Committee that was formed was concerned that overloading the 100-year flood plain site would limit the space available for the Corbeil Park Hall and for community recreation.
- Following public deliberations at Council, the most serious option that came forward was from KRMT. Brandy Labonté proposed that the Municipality consider reorganizing its ground floor space at the corner of Champagne and Corbeil Road to fit a medical centre. This led to a formal examination of the space by the LHIN and Doc on the Lake and their conclusion that it was unsuitable for a medical office. Council then discovered the many building code obligations related to the construction of a medical centre. The Municipality was disappointed as it had thought that this was a solid way forward. Council then invited the LHIN's Dr. Paul Preston to a Council meeting in early 2020 to seek his input and guidance. Also present were representatives from the Powassan and Area Family Health Team. Dr. Preston congratulated Council for its efforts and encouraged East Ferris to move forward. He said it was important to find ways to support Doc on the Lake. He outlined how other communities are succeeding at getting medical centres built that normally always includes some form of municipal support in situations such as in East Ferris.
- By then Council was realizing that for this project to move forward it would require financial support by the Municipality. It recognized that it had gone full circle, spoken with the community, local developers, the health representatives, and government officials. Therefore, it was receptive when Councillor Kelly said, "we should look at the old Sheppard site." And I recall thinking "he is right." The old Sheppard site was a favorite of Dr. Seguin, it fit with the brand Doc on the

Lake and the community's history of a doc on Lake Nosbonsing. It is also a perfect location as it is somewhat in the centre of East Ferris, at an address known as the corner of Astorville, Corbeil and Big Moose Roads. And finally, it is a property that was cleaned for environmental purposes by the former owner.

- Council instructed staff to engage in discussions with the new landowner and while Council would have preferred for the developer to remain the owner of the property and for the Municipality to subsidize the rent for the medical office, this was not to be. The owner of the property made it very clear to the Municipality "we develop the land we own." And so Council was faced with a decision: pass on what was viewed by all as the "perfect property" ... or move forward. Council carefully reviewed the Municipality's procurement bylaw that allows for sole sourcing, in keeping with the goals and objectives of the bylaw as outlined in its Part 3. Council felt strongly that this was such a situation. Council also felt that financially with its recent \$2.6 MM settlement related to the old Ste. Theresa School soil contamination in Corbeil, the Municipality is in a good position to afford the project.
- The procurement bylaw does also allow the Municipality to retain professional advice. Architect Brian Bertrand who had been retained through a public procurement process for the municipal office, was also known to be the architect who designed the Powassan and Area Family Health Team medical centre in Powassan. He has worked closely with Dr. Seguin. He also has many other medical office projects forming part of this CV, and projects that have come in on budget and on schedule. Council felt he was the perfect professional to help the Municipality move forward in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- Our CAO will now outline the timelines that includes resolutions passed by Council and then Architect Brian Bertrand will explain why the proposed contract will deliver a cost efficient and quality medical centre to the taxpayers of East Ferris.