

Tiny Houses could come to North Hastings

By Jim Eadie

Have you ever heard of a "Tiny House"? The idea appears to have become a North American phenomenon, and according to at least one website "you have to be living under a rock if you haven't heard of them."

Traditionally, a Tiny House can be as small as 100 square feet, but still contain living, sleeping, kitchen and bathroom areas.

Intriguing detailed plans and pictures have become the rage on social media such as Facebook and Pinterest.

They are being promoted as the ultimate in simple inexpensive living, with a very small environmental footprint.

On Nov. 10, Wollaston Township council received a written report from chief building official Frank Mills, who is also the CBO for the Municipality of Hastings Highlands.

"We are still receiving requests for Tiny Houses, usually about 500 square feet. My recommendation is to amend the zoning bylaw at some point to allow them on rural lands," he wrote.

The current problem is that [tiny houses](#) fall in a zoning "no man's land", between permitted structures. No building permit is required for a structure with a footprint less than 107.6 square feet.

A small hunt camp is permitted, provided it has no services such as hydro, water, and septic services, making them unsuitable for permanent residency.

Also permitted is a residence over 800 square feet, with services. A Tiny House does not meet any of those criteria.

"I get about one call a week about this," Mills told Bancroft This Week. "People may own some rural land, and they don't hunt. They want to stay there. Housing is unaffordable for a lot of people ... a regular size home can be a big burden ... cost of building, maintaining, and taxes. It could be ideal for young people starting out, or even an older person who is downsizing."

Mills notes that it is up to the municipal councils to decide if they wish to make changes to allow such structures.

What does he think of the idea?

"It might work if it was just for visiting, or a place to spend some time," he said. "I think if someone was going to live in it long term, they will probably be back to get a permit for an addition."