

MEMORANDUM / OPEN LETTER

To: Residents of the Rural Municipality of St. Clements

From: Mayor Debbie Fiebelkorn, RM of St. Clements

Date: September 15, 2026

Subject: Clarification Regarding the East St. Paul Daycare Project and Municipal Governance

Dear Residents of St. Clements,

I am writing to provide residents with clear information regarding the unopened daycare facility in East St. Paul, the role of JohnQ Public, and the involvement of the RM of St. Clements in the broader daycare initiative.

There have been questions and public discussion regarding this project and the role of municipal representatives on the JohnQ Public board. Our community deserves clear facts, transparency, and accurate information grounded in official records.

Below is a summary of the relevant information.

1. Jurisdictional Reality and the East St. Paul Facility

The \$5.5 million daycare facility in question is located in the neighbouring municipality of East St. Paul, not within the municipal boundaries of St. Clements.

Physical construction of the building was completed in 2024. However, the facility has remained unopened due to an unresolved land-ownership and compliance dispute between the project owner, the Peguis First Nation Real Estate Trust, and the Province of Manitoba, stemming from a 2024 change in ownership of the land-holding company.

As a result of this dispute between the Trust and the provincial government, the Province withheld the final operational authorization and licensing required for the facility to open.

2. The Role of JohnQ Public and Board Oversight

The RM of St. Clements is a member of JohnQ Public. CAO Deepak Joshi and I serve as directors on the JohnQ Public board alongside representatives from other member municipalities. Official agreements confirm that JohnQ Public was not a party to the Financial Assistance Agreement between the Province of Manitoba and the Trust, nor was it a party to the Design-Build contract with Pretium Projects Ltd.

JohnQ Public was not the owner, designer, builder, or operator of the East St. Paul facility.

JQ Built Inc. administered the overarching request-for-proposal process for the multi-community daycare program and acted as program manager in public materials. This administrative role is distinct from site ownership, property security, and operational responsibility for any individual facility.

3. Financial and Legal Responsibility

The interests of St. Clements taxpayers are an important consideration.



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JohnQ Public engaged outside legal counsel, DD West LLP, to review the matter. That legal review confirmed that JohnQ Public and its member municipalities, including the RM of St. Clements, have no financial, legal, or governance exposure or obligation arising from the East St. Paul facility or the dispute between the Trust and the Province.

4. Provincial Procurement and Wider Program Context

The Manitoba Education Minister, Tracy Schmidt, has requested that the Manitoba Auditor General review the procurement history associated with the daycare project.

The funding agreements and procurement decisions relating to the East St. Paul facility were executed directly by the provincial government and external vendors, rather than by the RM of St. Clements.

The East St. Paul facility is one part of the broader "Daycare in a Box" initiative, which partnered with Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care and used provincial data to select locations.

Beyond the East St. Paul site, the broader initiative successfully completed 22 child care facilities, providing more than 1,700 child care spaces across Manitoba.

5. St. Clements' Local Child Care Project

The RM of St. Clements also participated in the broader initiative to address local child care needs.

Council committed two acres of serviced municipal land on Quarry Road for the local project. The East Selkirk Early Learning Centre was successfully delivered and provides infant and preschool spaces.

The facility is publicly owned and is operated locally by Hand in Hand Daycare.

This project demonstrates the importance of cooperation between different levels of government, municipalities, and community organizations in delivering needed services to residents.

Conclusion

The RM of St. Clements remains committed to providing residents with accurate information about municipal activities, protecting local taxpayer dollars, and maintaining transparent and accountable governance.

Where projects involve multiple governments, organizations, and agreements, it is important to distinguish the responsibilities of each party and to rely on the official record.

Our Council and administration remain focused on delivering services and infrastructure for the residents of St. Clements.

Sincerely,

Mayor Debbie Fiebelkorn
Rural Municipality of St. Clements

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