

PEC Chamber of Commerce Candidate's Questionnaire

The PEC Chamber of Commerce's Policy and Governmental Affairs Committee recently surveyed their members, asking them what their top priorities are for the next council. From those priorities we have created the following questions. As is our tradition, we have also asked the Prince Edward Federation of Agriculture to provide questions as well. If possible, we would like these questions to be answered and submitted by noon on Tuesday, September 25th. Please be aware that these answers may become available to the public.

Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce Questions

Please fill out your name and ward.

Bill Roberts Sophiasburgh

How will you tackle the Workforce Development and labour shortage issues in Prince Edward County?

More CEDC focus on this issue; closer working arrangements with regional colleges.

Affordable Housing is at a crisis point, what action will you take to address it to ensure current residents can afford to continue living here and new, young residents are enticed to move here?

Continue my efforts to assure attainable housing as a residential right in PEC through such instruments as an independent and citizen driven County not-for-profit housing authority.

Short Term Accommodations licensing and registration - do you agree with the direction the County is currently taking? What is your plan for dealing with Short Term Accommodations in PEC?

I fully agree with the STA direction Staff has taken, including their extensive public consultations for most of this year and their excellent research. Staff openness to refinements and amendments based on public feedback has also been noteworthy.

Development Charges and Process Restructure – there is a severe staff shortage in the Planning Department and the planning process is considered by many to be onerous and costly. How do you propose to address it?

Council and Senior Staff have been acting to fill all vacancies. Those are in place now. Once we've seen the workload result from this replenished complement, our CAO and Commissioner will reassess.

Would you support the waiver or reduction of development charges and building permit fees for affordable housing development to encourage such development?

Under the correct community safeguards & circumstances, and based on the business performance track record, absolutely yes. We've been considering this for some time and it has merit.

What are your thoughts on Downtown Revitalization within Picton, Bloomfield, Wellington and Consecon as well as the parking issues faced by these towns?

Revitalization of our population density cores is ongoing – as it should be. We have not solved the parking issue and the time may be correct for an AdHoc Committee composed predominantly of residents and business owners to suggest further parking improvements to Shire Hall and Council.

Roads and infrastructure (state of roads, drainage, water and sewage). Does the County have the means to deal with the true quality issues for roads in the County? What is your plan for addressing these major infrastructure projects?

Better performance measures and benchmarking are required here. I'm not certain that we've achieved optimal results-based accountability. This certainly needs to be addressed in the next term of a Council.

Prince Edward Federation of Agriculture (PEFA) Questions

Farm land property taxes have increased by over 25% for the second year resulting in the farm tax class share of County expenses rising to 2.2% of County revenue from 1.6% in 2016. Are you willing to support reducing farm tax ratio to ensure the percentage of municipal tax revenue contributed by the farm property tax remains at the level of 2018?

Not at this time. I want to see how the new grant program for young and new farmers performs first. And I'm still pushing for sensible halfload easements to assist our farmers in getting perishable product to market in a safe and timely manner.

There is an urgent need to relax the current half load restrictions which are a barrier to farmers who need to market beans and corn to fill contracts where the farmers do not control the scheduled delivery dates. These deliveries should be included with other essential services such as the transport of milk, potable water and prepared animal feeds as they are required to meet the market demands for animal and human consumption. The timely sale of these commodities are essential for farm viability and maintaining worker employment in the winter. Are you in favour of removing the seasonal axle load restrictions that can impede the movement of farmers' crops to markets as required?

I have been active, indeed central, to getting this resolved in favour of our farmers. It's not going as quickly as I had hoped at the Staff level. But I'm not going to let go of this critical agricultural concern.

There is a need for adequate emergency services in rural areas and improved response times. A Farm 911 Sign initiative has been created in The Quinte area. How does this municipality handle civic addresses on vacant properties? Is there a program in place for farmers to request a civic address for vacant farm land and what is the fee?

I am a 100% supporter of the Emily Project.

Do you support the OFA position that all new farm buildings should be exempt from development charges as is currently the case in most Counties including Prince Edward County?

I'm very interested in learning more about this issue from both the OFA and National Farmers Union.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!



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