

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.

Elis Ziegler, Ward Nine South Marysburgh

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

Continue to work with local training bodies to meet employer needs, address affordable housing and transit so people can stay and travel to work in the County.

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?

Short term accommodation and investment property ownership are a threat to available housing stock (both rental and ownership), and need to be carefully monitored and addressed. Meanwhile, partnerships with the private sector and public organizations need to be fostered to encourage a range of new housing options to help young residents, seniors, singles, and families can stay in the County, and also attract new residents.

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?

The County needs to address the amount of absentee investment owners of vacation rentals - whole homes make up 80% of that housing. Owner occupied and "resort" type properties should not be penalized for the negative impact of empty streets and lack of affordable housing. I would carefully monitor the rapid bylaw changes and adjust according to community need.

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?

I would review the staffing requirements of that Department as well as across the whole of County Services to determine how best to ensure Planning is properly resourced. I would also want facts as to the recruitment and retention plans of that Department to find and keep staff we need.

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

At this time I would approach waiving of fees on a case by case basis to ensure incentives are proactively planned to ensure a balance of housing needs are met.

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

Downtown revitalization and supporting the locally owned businesses are key to ensuring The County's long term economic sustainability. Each village and town needs to find solutions to meet the demand of new residents and tourists. I would also want to ensure The County is extremely cautious of adding any large retail outlets to the mix, which are the death knell to prosperous downtowns and local employment.

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?

While I am not well versed, as a resident, I see the demands on and condition of our roads, and listen to the lack of infrastructure for housing developments. Where possible, federal and provincial funds should be leveraged to meet infrastructure needs. Most importantly, The County needs to have a financially sustainable and prioritized plan to ensure our infrastructure needs are met in a measurable way.

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?

I am very concerned about over-taxation of farmers, which is a slippery slope for both the decline of agricultural lands and uncontrolled housing development. We can not claim to be maintaining the rural and historic character of The County as a strategic priority on one hand and maintaining such a high farm tax rate on the other. I would ensure a moratorium on farm tax increases until a fully articulated rationale for tax rates is in place which balances the tax pressures where they belong.

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?

My understanding of half load restrictions comes as a infrastructure problem, and obviously an economic one for farmers. I would want The County to carefully review and free up load restriction roads on a case by case basis to ensure farmers are able to successfully operate their businesses and employ worker's year round.

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 strongly support a farm 911 sign program (Emily's Project) in The County, which exists in several municipalities around us. It is a crucial emergency system for farmers and rural residents where properties must be identified for emergency services to get to workers and families. While I don't believe we currently have that system in place I would certainly support it for active land where there are no residents.

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 would hope The County would never consider development charges for new farm buildings.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!



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