

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.

Kate MacNaughton Picton Ward 1

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

I've heard frustration from employers both on Main St. and in agriculture that they can't find staff and that they can't keep staff. To address the shortage, we need to address the needs of our community to make sure that our workforce isn't struggling to meet their basic needs. The housing crisis has begun to create a migration to surrounding areas and the lack of transit means a lack of movement for potential employees. Addressing these two issues might solve a lot of our labour woes. I have a long wish list to tackle both of these chronic issues. I address the housing aspect below.

Education is also a key component. I don't know what the possibilities are through Shire Hall but any investment in training and education often pays for itself tenfold. Career Edge and Community groups like the ROC and Community Living are the municipality's partners for employment training. It would be interesting to hear from them, especially Career Edge, and receive feedback from their clients, both employers and job seekers, to see what sort of training is relevant beyond whmis, Smart Serve etc.

I have some thoughts - more like a wishlist - for developing agricultural apprenticeships. I've been wondering about an extended apprenticeship relationship with Guelph since Kemptville closed that would relate to innovative farm marketing, farm management, horticulture etc. I believe many wineries already participate in very successful viticulture apprenticeships. Creating enhanced relationships with agricultural programs and sustainable agricultural programs in Guelph might attract more young, dynamic farm workers for our wineries and farms.

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?

We now have a couple of tools to use since Prince Edward County formed its own housing corporation. We can use this to help create purpose-built units in as many ways as we can fund or imagine. There are many options to consider:

- Public-private partnerships to create livable mixed-purpose developments with mixed-income housing.
- Change our building codes to allow for smaller homes at a higher density and mixed-use areas.
- Look at models like co-ops and lease-to-own as well as traditional purchases and rentals.
- Identify wasted space in urban areas and allow building permits for builders or PEC Housing Corp to develop those spaces that lie outside the current restrictions.
- Direct proceeds from an across-the-board hospitality tax to the PEC Housing Corp.

STAs

- A piece of this puzzle - just one piece - is the attraction of short-term rentals for landlords. I have a whole section devoted to it on the website but in short, I want to see:
 - A maximum ratio of year-round, whole-home rentals per neighbourhood.
 - Create incentives for STA owners to convert short-term rentals into long-term rentals. For example, fast-tracked permits, allowances for extra parking spots etc.
 - Sourcing assistance for STA owners to access all available funding to convert short-term rentals into long-term rentals.
 - To operate a landlord insurance policy or emergency pool through the housing corp. that PEC long-term rental owners could pay into to protect from the financial harm and expense of a bad tenant.
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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 liked that it was being addressed. I realize it was just a first draft and there will be more to come. I would like the regulations for B&B's and Owner-Occupied Air BnB's to continue to function under the current regulations for B&Bs. I see them as a net gain for our community. We need those accommodations to support our tourism industry, the shops on our main streets, our local artisans etc. I have no problem with asking them to register but any onerous regulations on top of the ones they currently follow would seem needlessly punitive.

Additionally, I would like occasional short-term accommodation providers exempted, eg. if I go camping for a week, I can rent my house out without registration. They should have their own definition and very limited regulations to follow to avoid safety or nuisance issues.

Where I would like the regulations to focus are the year-round, whole home Air BnBs as outlined in the housing section above. For those STAs, I would like to see strict requirements to register, a maximum ratio per radius maintained and stiff fines imposed for operating without a licence or for committing safety violations. They are no longer homes. They are functioning as a business and should be regulated as such.

I liked some of the regulations proposed to protect neighbourhoods from nuisance complaints, in particular, that absentee owners had to have a responsible party available with little notice. I have heard many complaints as I've canvassed in Picton. I suspect the Wellington candidates have heard quite a bit more.

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?

People complained about the planning office being short-staffed before the county got rid of the actual planners. The current staff needs more support, training and real planners.

There should also be a better way of tracking inquiries and the time it takes to respond. The same goes for developments - progress or lack thereof needs to be tracked.

I would like to see a fast track for attainable housing and for people developing second suites that will be earmarked for long-term rental. However, one can't do any of this without actual planners in the office.

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

YES! I would but the definition of affordable would have to change and each waiver would have to be reviewed individually.

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

Make biking safer! Add bike lanes when we redevelop artery roads. Get a few cars off the roads. Add additional bike parking. I hear people's concern about parking but I moved here from montreal where parking is a hellish free for all. I've been here a long time but I still have nightmares about parking at the top of Peel St. in winter.

Second, I would love urban design to accommodate trees mandated. I would like all of our downtowns to be fully lined with mature or maturing trees that have been planted with wider openings in the sidewalk to allow for root flare. Deciduous tree alleys are attractive and cooling. They're a helpful tool to keep people strolling in the downtown area and they help reduce cooling costs. Good for business AND good for the environment.

Third, I would like a portion of the downtown enhancement fund to go towards historic building preservation as well as accessibility adaptations.

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?

The County does not have the means to keep up with our infrastructure needs. I absolutely support returning some secondary roads to gravel and, when rebuilding high traffic roads, paving shoulders whenever possible. They save lives but they also save years of wear and tear at the edges. The better job we do upfront, the more money we save long term. This also applies to underground infrastructure.

HW 49 is a particular nuisance, the cost of which is prohibitive for redevelopment at the municipal level. Lobbying the other levels of government has to continue and eventually has to succeed or we'll start having to collect tolls at the bridge.

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?

At this time, I would not be in favour of the reduction.

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 don't know much about the issue. I'm assuming the restrictions are to protect roads during the fall and spring like the province does with 400 level highways. If so, we need to protect our roads and preserve their longevity through best practice. Our infrastructure budget requires it. The crops cited are, absolutely, important crops for the region but lack the time sensitivity of dairy, animal feed and potable water.

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 don't know enough about the issue to comment. It wasn't on my radar. I'm willing to study and learn about it but, likely, I would be inclined to request recommendations by the OPP and the Fire chief. They're the experts.

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?

No. I would have to study this issue. Again, I know very little about it. In the absence of more information, I would support exemptions only for a limited variety of traditional farm buildings, but like I said, I would have to learn more.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!



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