

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.

Richard Whiten, running for Mayor

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

Our workforce in the County has been steadily shrinking in recent years, and is now endangering the ability of many businesses to operate. Attainable/affordable housing is of course a major factor in its decline along with the reduction in farming and subsequent industries. We need to take a close look at the emerging markets and attract new types of industry that will compliment our community. Tourism alone does not sustain our economy year round.

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 need industry. Industry needs workers. Workers need attainable/ affordable housing. The County is not the first to experience a shortage of housing options for the working class. There are many solutions to address a housing shortage and it will take a combination of these to alleviate this issue. With careful analysis of methods used by other towns and cities, we will develop our own solution that best fits our needs. It is an issue that will require constant attention and adjustment for many years to come.

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 feel that the County is taking the appropriate measures to contain and regulate an issue that is proving to have dire consequences on our community. STA's can have a positive impact on our economy if regulated properly. It is also necessary to protect our remaining stock of affordable housing rental units. Displacement of our local residents is have a negative effect on our economy and our sense of place. It is imperative that this matter be dealt with quickly and fairly.

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?

As with many areas of the County's departments appear to be lacking in efficiency. Processes need to be streamlined to save on staffing and time. i am confident that by improving efficiency we can cut costs and promote new development and attract new industry.

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

Promoting new affordable/attainable house is of the utmost importance. I would support any initiatives that would support its development.

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

Taking pride in the areas in which we live and work, shows our pride as a community. It helps to attract new residents and business. As for parking, we have been struggling with the growing pains of a booming tourist industry. Not one of our Main Streets were originally designed for vehicle traffic, let alone the volume that we receive. Therefore we will have to take a long hard look at this issue in the future to find a solution.

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?

Rural roads were not meant to have the volume of traffic that many see during the summer months. Many of our streets are in dire need of repair with water and sewer upgrades needed and we all know the extremely poor condition of Highway 49. We have the staff and the manpower to do the work yet we are short on equipment required to complete the work. Investing in the necessary equipment and doing more work in house will save us millions and time.

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?

Farms are traditionally the backbone of our community and we need to preserve the farms that remain and insure they stay operational. As with any business, it all comes down to the bottom line. A reduction in the farm tax ratio is just one of the ways we can help to protect this valuable resource.

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?

Due to the state of our roads, I could not endorse removal of the load restrictions at this time. However when our roads are repaired and upgraded, I would be willing to revisit issue.

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 will have to look into this further and answer at a later date.

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 support this as long as permits and inspections were still required.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!



