

# 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.

Stephanie Bell - Ward 1 Picton

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

I think the biggest connection can be made between the labour shortage and your next questions topic, housing. Without adequate housing we can't begin to touch on expanding our pool of skilled workers. Beyond that I would love to see more emphasis in creating on job training and apprenticeship opportunities. Speaking from experience, my favourite job this past year is one that I get paid and trained at. Many people thrive in these situations over classroom settings.

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**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?**

I think plain and simple affordable housing has to be built. We have to get going on this and I think the best options will be creative and outside the box ones. I would be looking for a few months of brain storming ideas and then picking something that looks feasible and right for our community. Then DOING IT!!

The National Housing Conference is in November and I would definitely look at attending if elected.

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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'm not sure that the licensing and registration that the County is currently taking is the right option. On the one hand it might possibly curb the creation of new STA's but it doesn't create viable dollars to help with the impact it has on affordable housing. My plan would be to look for a balance between what our economy needs and can bare but more importantly what our community as a whole needs to be healthy and vibrant. I would be looking for a holistic approach.

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**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 have to learn more about this in order to answer with integrity. I might make a stab that for staff to want to take and then keep jobs they have to have incentive to do so. Creating incentive usually means, for me anyhow, the right pay, the right benefits, but most importantly the right satisfaction in the job. I might ask questions like these: Do our staff feel appreciated? Are they treated as valued team members? Do we give adequate opportunities to let them be creative and express their talents?

It might be practical for Staff (and possibly Council) to try some team building. Co-workers and colleagues that appreciate and respect each other work better together. Creating a work environment where people can grow and be innovative.

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

Yes.

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

As far as parking issues, I would love to see, and propose a campaign to encourage walking, cycling or parking farther from your destination. Our side streets and backstreet parking lots are much better locations for cars keeping our main streets less cluttered and chaotic! If we need to create more parking in this style then we should.

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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?

I think I would be lying if I said I was an expert on roads and infrastructure projects. I'm not. But what I am is a great learner and listener and would be keen to get better educated about these projects. I do know that as a whole, Ontario's rural parts have a shortage of funds for such endeavours and as a collective we need to put pressure on the province to care about our roads. My angle would be to find ways of recycling material to pave as I'm aware that there are some great new technologies and options that we could be looking at. Infrastructure projects should also be looked at with longevity in mind not what is cheapest at the time.

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## 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 don't know for sure. I look forward to getting the opportunity to learn more about this issue and to fairly decide based on what constituents want. All decisions should be made with the desire for equality, quality of life, and affordability in my mind.

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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 think it would be reasonable to take a look at farming schedules and timelines, as far as trucking needs for corn and beans, and making some level of compromise as far as the restriction. So yes.

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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'm not sure I can answer this accurately.

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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?

Yes.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!



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