



Representing Business. Celebrating Business People. Since 1905

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 5, 2023

Strong communities start with successful businesses. Unfortunately, during Committee of the Whole on May 25th, council failed to recognize the obstacles that hinder the development of a sustainable and inclusive business ecosystem in the County. I'm grateful for Councillor Braney's support of our local business community and his understanding of businesses' sacrifices as they pursue their dreams and vision. However, as the Chamber of Commerce CEO I'm deeply disturbed and concerned about Councillor Maynard's negative comments attributed to our business and hospitality industry without objection from council. Council seems to have no understanding or appreciation of the investment and sacrifices made by our tourism and hospitality industry. Her statements have reflected concerns made by small business that the County overregulates and makes the business community feel unwelcome. This culture at Shire Hall needs to change to retain and attract a vibrant business community that expands economic growth to enhance our infrastructure, schools, and local hospital.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the County's tourism and hospitality industry was one of the hardest hit—and it will be one of the last to fully recover and rebuild. The crisis continues to have a severe and enduring impact, Councillor Maynard's remarks exemplify this. To facilitate the industry's recovery, immediate action is required to address operators' soaring debt while simultaneously supporting their capacity to remain competitive through long-term strategic investments.

Small business is the backbone of our economy, representing 97.9% of all business. A survey of local business in 2022 revealed that women own 55.6% of our businesses, while 64.9% of businesses are directly involved in hospitality and tourism.

Tourism and hospitality play a significant role in creating vibrant communities to work and live in. Tourism is therefore not only a key economic driver as an industry, but also an indispensable component of broader economic development. The sector directly employs nearly 6,000 people in PEC and impacts a range of sub-sectors, including arts, culture and heritage, construction and trades, agriculture, and retail. The sector contributed over \$1 million in annual municipal accommodation tax revenues for the County and benefits numerous adjacent industries.

These statistics are important to understand and address because the business ecosystem in the County can only be successful when it creates a higher level of value collectively than the members can create individually. As we continue to look at economic recovery, we must listen to the needs of small business and hear from them directly what supports and services will help to diversify our economy. The PEC Chamber is pleased to be a participating organization in the Business Retention & Expansion survey as we called on our municipal government to commit to the development of a long-term economic strategy to build a resilient community that focuses on levers of sustainable growth such as workforce development, immigration, technology, and infrastructure in our 2022 Municipal Election Priorities document.

So long as there exists a difference between what a community is, and what a community should be, there is a need for a Chamber of Commerce. Businesspeople pour their hopes, dreams, and personal finances into an investment in Prince Edward County. They live, work, and raise their families here. Sometimes they are born and raised here. Sometimes they move here. We acknowledge and respect this and are uniquely positioned to encourage growth and evolution by representing, advocating, and protecting business and the entrepreneurial spirit. Our work is not done.

About the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce

For more than a century, the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce has been the independent, non-partisan, indispensable partner of County business. The PEC Chamber's focus is to channel the collective strength of the business community to improve the economy.

Media Contact:

Lesley Lavender, CEO
lesley@pecchamber.com

