

# 2023

# Business Retention & Expansion Survey

---

## All Sectors



**The County**  
PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY • ONTARIO

# What is a BR+E?

A Business Retention + Expansion survey helps municipalities gauge the health of the local economy, as well as identify issues, challenges and opportunities. Typically, a BR+E survey follows a template designed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and asks questions about five themes: business climate, workforce, business development supports and community development needs, as well as the business's future plans.

In 2023, the BR+E sought input from several sectors, including:

- agriculture
- allied health, such as massage therapists, chiropractors, dentists, etc.
- arts & culture
- hospitality, including accommodations, attractions and restaurants and bars
- manufacturing, including winemaking, beer, cider and spirit production
- professional services, such as accountants, lawyers, etc.
- retail
- trades/construction

This initiative was led by Karen Palmer, Economic Development Officer, and supported by an advisory group made up of representatives from local business improvement groups, Visit The County, The County Foundation and the Prince Edward Learning Centre, as well as two community members with extensive data analysis experience: Sue Mathieu and Mike Amos.

New this year, the BR+E project included a "Business Walk," or scheduled interviews with a cross-section of businesses in each ward, conducted with municipal staff, Councillors and partners.

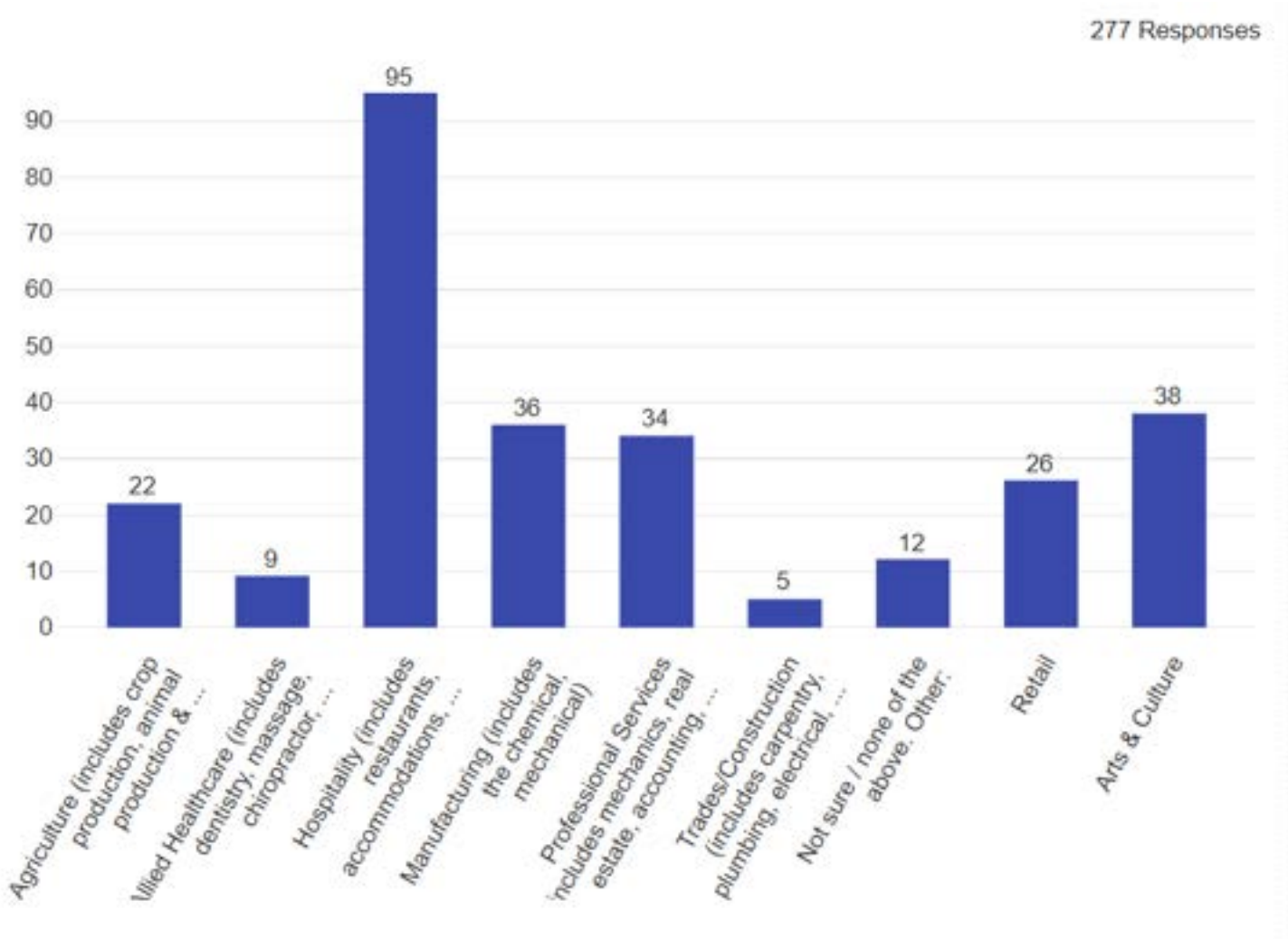
Mike Farrell of Farrell Insights was engaged to help analyze and understand survey results, using funds from OMAFRA's Rural Economic Development (RED) program.



# Survey Results

Snapshot of Respondents .....	Page 3-4
Key Findings .....	Page 5-6
Prince Edward County as a Place to Do Business.....	Page 7
- Top 3 Advantages .....	Page 8
- Top 3 Disadvantages .....	Page 9
Future Plans (In the next 18 months...) .....	Page 10
- Reasons for / Challenges to Expansion .....	Page 11
- Reasons for Remaining the Same .....	Page 12
- Downsizing, Closing, Selling or Relocating .....	Page 13
- Projected Sales .....	Page 14
- Debt .....	Page 15
Workforce .....	Page 16
Support for Community Causes .....	Page 17
Business Climate .....	Page 18-19
Business Development .....	Page 20
'Most Significant Change' .....	Page 21-22
Next Steps .....	Page 23
List of Local Business Supports .....	Page 24

# Snapshot of Survey Respondents



- Removing largely incomplete responses, we were left with a sample size of 212 online survey responses. With an estimated 1,000 businesses in Prince Edward County, and approximately 902 licensed short-term accommodations, this response rate derives an aggregate credibility interval range of 5.49% to 5.87%, an important indicator of a robust and statistically reliable data set.

# Snapshot of Survey Respondents



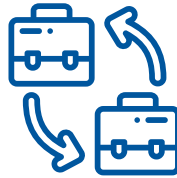
**58%**  
have a business plan



**66%**  
say they receive strong support from local residents



**88%**  
of owners are full-time County residents



**66%**  
say they receive strong support from other local businesses



**45%**  
of owners identify as belonging to an 'equity seeking group'



**53%**  
support local charities and causes with sponsorship and other support



**73%**  
own their facilities



**27%**  
lease their facilities



Revenue

**47%**  
0-\$249K

**15%**  
\$1 million+

**30%**  
\$250K-\$999K

**8%**  
Prefer not to say



# Key Findings

This survey illustrates a business community rising to meet new realities sparked by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which continue to have a profound impact on the stability of area businesses, and are threats to future growth and expansion. Survey results also point to a need for a cultural change at the municipal level. It's clear businesses feel undervalued. More effort is needed to transform the municipality into a willing partner who recognizes and celebrates how the business community contributes to the rich fabric of our community.



Affordability is a major barrier to expansion, across sectors. Land prices are high, rents are high, staffing costs are high, goods and materials costs are high. While almost half of businesses expect to remain the same, only 37% of businesses surveyed reported plans to expand. Results show economic development efforts will likely need to focus on retention in the near term.



Staffing remains a persistent and limiting challenge for most businesses, whether farms, restaurants, salons or shops. Many who feel ready for expansion have had to pause due to a lack of appropriate, available or reliable staffing. Limited public transportation is a related challenge, one the municipality is aiming to improve by utilizing provincial funding to recruit a Transit Coordinator to explore new routes, regional connections and microfunding for innovative solutions appropriate to our rural context.



While there are some commercial vacancies, several businesses noted that they've been unable to find a suitable and affordable spot for expansion or relocation. Significant turn over in 2021 at the height of the real estate boom means the commercial rental market has been slow to shift toward new realities and commercial rents and land costs remain stubbornly high. The lack of "employment lands," or space zoned for a range of activities, including industrial, commercial, institutional, and office use, was also noted. In 2024, staff plan to explore and identify potential locations for new employment lands.



There is a perception that the municipality is not business friendly, with survey respondents noting a high level of frustration with 'red tape.' There is also a perceived lack of support for businesses, particularly tourism businesses, at the Council level. This is compounded by an anti-tourism sentiment expressed openly in the community. Rural Economic Development (RED) funding will be used in 2024 to develop communication tools to help clarify Planning processes and better prepare operators for the costs and provincially-mandated timelines involved with rezoning, variances and other land use activities. The ongoing Zoning Bylaw Review also presents opportunities to streamline processes by updating zones to include 'as of right' permitted uses where appropriate. More discussion is needed within specific sectors to further explore pain points and challenges and devise suitable solutions.



# Key Findings



Visit The County (VTC) and StayPEC were identified in 2022 as Destination Marketing & Management Organizations, each receiving a portion of Municipal Accommodation Tax revenues. However, their role and vision in promoting The County as a tourism destination is not well understood by operators. This may be a symptom of the transition, a call for greater communication and consultation or the result of the lag in promotional activities that occurred as VTC recruited staff and set up governance structures. Frustrations may also have been heightened by a decrease in visitor numbers in 2023.



While support between and amongst business owners was identified as a positive, satisfaction levels with business improvement groups and other local business supports are relatively low. As the economy contracts, business owners will increasingly need to work together to ensure their voices are heard. RED funding will be used in 2024 to help strengthen business and community groups so they can be strong and equal partners in shaping a changing economy.



Poor internet and telecommunications, waterworks constraints and limited public transit for commuters were also identified as barriers to running a business in PEC. Rogers is currently laying fiber optic cable throughout Prince Edward County, as part of federal pledges to expand the speed and reliability of broadband throughout rural and remote regions in Canada. Innovative infrastructure financing has been developed in The County to shore up the necessary funds to replace aging waterworks infrastructure and expand service. As noted above, a Transit Coordinator will focus on transit improvements.



Strong support from local residents and from other local businesses were identified as a positive of operating in Prince Edward County. Operators listed the area's natural beauty, its enviable location and its reputation as a tourism destination as strong advantages for businesses in the community. There is camaraderie between business operators and a pride in the vitality of our Main Streets.



Finally, the business community is a generous supporter of community causes, with more than half of respondents saying they support one or more non-profit initiatives, ranging from amateur sports teams to the Regent Theatre to hospice, service clubs, library expansion, PEPtBO, The ROC, Community Living, 99.3FM and many, many more. Our community benefits not just from the types of businesses and services available here, but from the values that drive farmers, makers, manufacturers, professionals and entrepreneurs here. Their generosity shows Prince Edward County is not just a place to make money - it's a place to make deep connections and find community.

# PEC as a Place to Do Business



**63%**

say PEC is a "great place to do business"



**89.5%**

Agriculture



**57.1%**

Allied Health



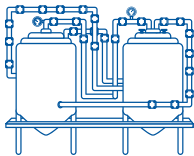
**71%**

Arts & Culture



**57.6%**

Hospitality



**51.4%**

Manufacturing  
(includes wineries,  
breweries & cideries)



**73.3%**

Professional Services



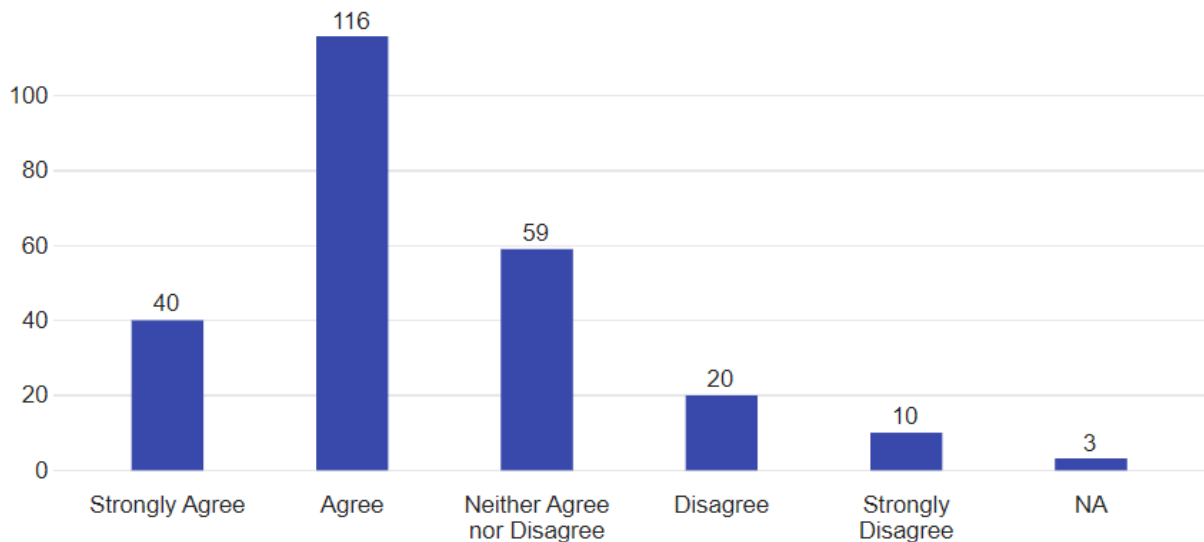
**61.5%**

Retail



**75%**

Trades  
& Construction



# Top 3 Advantages



**36.3%**  
Popular tourism destination



**12.7%**  
Supportive Community



**23.1%**  
Location



**11.3%**  
Active business support networks



**15.1%**  
Community Spirit



**10.4%**  
Locally made products (food, wine, other)



**14.6%**  
Beautiful place to live



**8.0%**  
Growing population

Unique shops with personalities

As a small business, we have the ability to make a difference

Outstanding quality of life for those who can afford to live within the community

Supportive business owners that share and work together well to market The County

Attractive historical buildings and a good walking / shopping main street

We have a great bookstore

Excellent community & arts organizations

Influx of new residents

Most people in the community are kind and neighbourly

High population of creative professionals

The community is vibrant and close-knit, willing to help/support

History  
Proximity to Sandbanks

Remarkable collection of inspiring people

The downtown is valued and vibrant

A creative community where new ideas are welcomed

A small community means word travels fast regarding new offerings and promotions

# Top 3 Disadvantages



**23.0%**  
Challenges with Affordable Housing



**11.7%**  
Poor Internet and cellular services



**20.2**  
High cost of living



**10.3%**  
Lack of municipal support / leadership



**15.0%**  
Limited public transit services



**9.9%**  
Anti-tourism sentiment



**12.2%**  
Seasonality



**8.0%**  
Lack of available staff

## Costly utilities

The Arts is underfunded and misunderstood as a powerful marketing tool to attract residents and businesses and build community happiness

Lack of Children's Services / Programs

No public transit, Uber or reliable taxi service

Slow construction permit process

Lack of doctors

Lack of cohesiveness with "place" marketing

Lack of actionable data

Economic disparity - a large percentage of the population struggles

Few supports for migrant workers

Major commute to pick up supplies / stock means higher costs

Red tape to get things done

Reservation system for provincial beaches

Most tourism-related businesses are WAY overpriced, making a trip to PEC unaffordable for most

NIMBY attitudes

Taxes are too high relative to services received

Lack of winter attractions

Can be unpleasant to drive here in the winter

Local distaste for tourism businesses

Lack of industrial land

Worried about rapid development with no accountability that doesn't protect, fit or compliment the beauty of PEC

Infrastructure is behind to support growing businesses

# In the next 18 months...



**49.4%**  
plan to keep their  
business the same



**4.4%**  
plan to sell



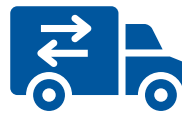
**37.3%**  
plan to expand



**2.8%**  
plan to close



**5.2%**  
plan to downsize

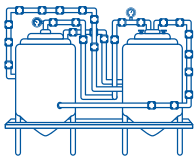


**0.8%**  
plan to relocate

## Sectors to watch



**62.5%**  
of Allied Health  
respondents plan to expand



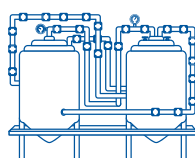
**54.3%**  
of Manufacturing  
respondents plan to expand



**15%**  
of Retail respondents  
plan to downsize



**15%**  
of Agriculture respondents  
plan to downsize



**11.4%**  
of Manufacturing  
respondents plan to sell  
(includes wineries,  
breweries & cideries)

With interest rates and costs of goods and services rising, nearly half of survey respondents are showing a 'wait and see' approach. The 14% mix of downsizing, selling, closing and relocating is statistically just above the typical rates for BR+E results (when compared with other municipalities) of 8-12%.

Business Walk interviews and open-ended online survey questions show the business environment is also a key consideration in expansion, with several operators noting they were reluctant to engage in a potentially lengthy and expensive process for rezoning and other Planning and Building services.

Medium Sales Range businesses (with a sales range of \$249K to \$999K) are twice as likely to be looking to sell over the next 18 months. This group also has been identified as a negative outlier across a variety of business factor ratings. These business are predicted to be the most volatile in the mid-term.

# Reasons for Expansion



71%

For more sales, storage or production space



51.4%

Greater demand outside PEC



57.1%

Greater demand locally



75%

To take market share from competitors

# Challenges with Expansion

- ✗ Missing market data
- ✗ Frustration with Planning processes
- ✗ Reduction in visitors compared to previous years
- ✗ Rising interest rates
- ✗ Cannot find appropriate staff
- ✗ Waterworks constraints
- ✗ Lack of available properties at reasonable costs
- ✗ Still building needed inventory
- ✗ Limited capital and difficulty finding or securing loans or investment



## How could the Community help?

"Make Planning more flexible and small-business friendly!"

"Buy local products!"

"Rally for affordable housing."

"By being more open to new businesses in the area."

"Grant funding for mental health services"

"An advisory group to help in security financing or writing grant applications."

"Many tools could be created, especially around keeping people notified of available commercial space."

"Move site plan and building plan approvals at a reasonable speed."

# Reasons for Remaining the Same

On the surface, “remaining the same” suggests a good news story. It would seem the bulk of businesses have survived COVID restrictions, and are finding ways to weather surging interest rates, inflation and rising costs of goods and services. However, the picture becomes much darker when looking at the reasons for remaining the same.

- 45% of Manufacturing respondents, which includes wineries, breweries and cideries, say a lack of funds is behind their lack of planned growth
- 22% of Hospitality businesses and 18% of Manufacturing businesses blame a perceived lack of municipal support for their lack of expansion plans
- 100% of Trades respondents, 28% of Agricultural respondents and 26% of Professional Services respondents say they can't find the staff they need to grow their businesses
- 33% of Allied Health respondents, 20% of Retail respondents and 18% of Manufacturing respondents say they expect to remain the same, even as they also say that business is declining.



**34%**

don't need changes /  
happy with status quo



**19%**

lack funds for expansion



**12%**

feel there's little support  
from local government /  
too many restrictions



**8.7%**

report a lack of staff



**5.2%**

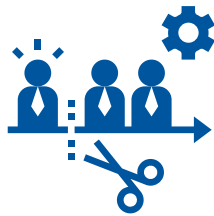
blame a bad economy



**7.8%**

say business is declining

# Downsizing, Selling, Closing, Relocating



**63.6%**  
say downsizing will lead to a decrease in employees



**54.5%**  
say downsizing will lead to a decrease in service for customers



**45.5%**  
say downsizing will decrease product line(s)



**36.4%**  
say downsizing will reduce floor space

\*Respondents could select as many reasons as apply



## How could the Community help?

"Support in the winter to keep staff full-time."

"Cutting costs for small businesses; ie taxes, municipal fees (patios) etc."

"Evidence of support for tourism in The County."

"Help to liberate affordable housing for employees."

"By being supportive of 'non-traditional' business."

"Recognition of the importance and contribution of our form of business would go a long way"

# Projected Sales



**40%**  
project sales to increase  
in the next year



**27%**  
project sales to remain  
the same



**19%**  
project sales to decrease  
in the next year

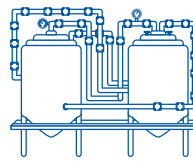


**14%**  
aren't sure which  
direction sales are  
headed

## Projected Sales Increase



**71.4%**  
of Allied Health  
respondents expect sales to  
increase



**51.5%**  
of Manufacturing  
respondents expect sales to  
increase



**42.1%**  
of Agriculture respondents  
expect sales to increase



**60%**  
of Professional Services  
respondents expect sales to  
increase

## Projected Sales Decrease



**28%**  
of Retail respondents  
expect sales to  
decrease



**29%**  
of Hospitality  
respondents expect  
sales to decrease

## Status Quo



**48%**  
of Arts & Culture  
respondents expect sales to  
remain the same

# Debt



**15.8%**

of businesses saw debt increase by up to 15% since 2019



**17.1%**

of businesses saw debt increase by up to 50% since 2019



**7.7%**

of businesses saw debt increase by more than 50% since 2019



**41.9%**

of businesses saw debt stay the same since 2019



**17.5%**

saw debt decrease since 2019

# By Sector

		50%+	by up to 50%	by up to 15%			50%+	by up to 50%	by up to 15%
Arts & Culture		7.4%	11.1	7.4%	Allied Health		28.6%	14.3%	
Agriculture		11.1%	16.7%	5.6%	Hospitality		3.7%	17.1%	15.9%
Manufacturing		18.2%	21.2%	21.2%	Professional Services		6.9%	10.3%	13.8%
Retail		12%	16%	32%	Trades & Construction		Insufficient data		

# Workforce

Respondents were asked: Since 2019, have the number of people you employ in this business:



## Factors affecting staff recruitment:

42%

too few applicants

30.1%

applicants lack relevant experience

30.6%

applicants lack appropriate skills or training

21.7%

applicants need public transit and cannot access it

16.5%

unable to meet wage expectations

While the majority of employers say they do not have difficulty retaining employees, those who did reported challenges around seasonal employment, the hours and/or shifts required, and the type of work.

## Positions where employers struggle to recruit staff:

Cleaners

Bicycle mechanics

Drivers

Restaurant 'front of house' staff, including hosts, servers, bartenders

Mechanics

Machinists & Fabricators

Tasting room staff

Restaurant 'back of house' staff, including dishwashers, table bussers, cooks

Sales Clerks

General labourers, seasonal workers, field hands

Hotel staff, including cleaners, maintenance, customer service, night manager

Carpenters

Landscape team members, including horticulturalists, team leads, project managers

Registered Massage Therapists





# Support for Community Causes

132 survey respondents said they had provided support for local projects, organizations and causes. The value of charitable donations, sponsorships and in-kind support to PEC community causes annually was reported as:



**19**  
respondents said they give up to \$500



**21**  
respondents said they give \$501-\$999



**47**  
respondents said they give \$1,000-\$4,999



**14**  
respondents said they give \$5,000-\$9,999



**24**  
said they give \$10,000+

# Business Climate

How strongly do you agree with the following statements:

	All	Agriculture	Allied Health	Arts & Culture	Hospitality	Manufacturing	Professional Services	Retail	Trades & Construction
I'm satisfied with HPE Public Health	58.5%	68.8%	25%	55%	56.6%	83.3%	42.1%	52.4%	25%
There is natural gas available for my business	48.3%	33.3%	100%	39.1%	54.5%	16.7%	56.5%	69.6%	25%
I'm satisfied with navigational signage	38.9%	43.8%	33.3%	58.3%	44.7%	28.1%	52.5%	---	16%
My business receives strong support from Municipal Council	33.9%	26.3%	14.3%	28.6%	39.5%	35.3%	26.9%	33.3%	33.3%
Cellular service is reliable, consistent and affordable	25.9%	25.0%	75.0%	34.5%	29.1%	14.3%	20.7%	15.4%	20.0%
Broadband (or Internet) is reliable, consistent and affordable	25.5%	10.0%	75.0%	27.6%	25.6%	8.8%	40.0%	26.9%	20.0%
I'm satisfied with the service I receive from municipal Planning, Engineering, Zoning and Building Permits	23.6%	17.6%	33.3%	39.1%	21.5%	20.0%	19.0%	19.0%	25.0%
There is ample commercial or industrial space available for purchase, lease or rent	18.9%	36.4%	50.0%	36.4%	27.1%	4.2%	15.2%	10.0%	---
Land costs for situating or growing my business are reasonable	11.4%	5.9%	---	4.5%	13.7%	16.7%	8.0%	15.0%	25.0%
I am satisfied with County Transit as a way for myself or my employees to commute to work	7.2%	7.7%	---	11.8%	3.4%	4.8%	23.5%	---	---

Represents percentage who chose "strongly agree" or "agree"

# Business Climate

How would you rate the following factors of doing business in PEC?

	All	Agriculture	Allied Health	Arts & Culture	Hospitality	Manufacturing	Professional Services	Retail	Trades & Construction
Water / wastewater capacity	41.1%	12.5%	71.4%	40.0%	42.0%	19.0%	65.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Support for diversity, equity, anti-racism	37.2%	36%	75%	31.6%	37.3%	36.4%	33.3%	33.3%	50.0%
Regional / provincial roads and highways	35.7%	35.0%	33.0%	17.4%	35.4%	51.5%	34.5%	30.8%	50.0%
Availability of serviced land	29.2%	45.5%	---	38.5%	33.3%	12.5%	16.7%	40.0%	50.0%
Development charges	25.5%	10.0%	75.0%	27.6%	25.6%	8.8%	40.0%	26.9%	20.0%
Availability of health & medical services	22.6%	31.6%	---	36.0%	20.8%	20.7%	20.0%	17.4%	50.0%
Municipal property taxes	21.0%	20.0%	25.0%	26.1%	17.4%	19.4%	26.9%	16.7%	---
Local roads & streets	20.5%	15.0%	60.0%	13.0%	25.6%	21.2%	10.3%	15.4%	25.0%
Availability of space for rent or lease	18.8%	12.5%	16.7%	23.5%	27.3%	5.9%	19.0%	13.3%	---
Land costs	16.8%	18.8%	---	---	22.9%	12.0%	22.2%	23.1%	---
Development / building permit process	14.8%	14.3%	26.7%	50.0%	13.1%	13.8%	11.1%	---	33.3%
Water / wastewater fees	12.4%	12.5%	16.7%	23.1%	9.3%	26.7%	10.0%	5.6%	---

Represents percentage who chose "excellent" or "good"

# Business Climate

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following community services:

	All	Agriculture	Allied Health	Arts & Culture	Hospitality	Manufacturing	Professional Services	Retail	Trades & Construction
Chamber of Commerce	40.0%	31.6%	14.3%	33.3%	37.8%	61.3%	40.0%	34.6%	50.0%
Business Improvement Area (BIA)	32.9%	10.5%	28.6%	32.9%	29.6%	35.5%	30.0%	34.6%	50.0%
LGBTQ+ Services	24.7%	26.3%	---	18.5%	30.5%	19.4%	30.0%	19.2%	25.0%
Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)	17.4%	31.6%	---	25.9%	12.2%	25.8%	16.7%	3.8%	25.0%
Schools (elementary & secondary)	16.7%	5.3%	14.3%	18.5%	16.3%	19.4%	6.7%	7.7%	75.0%
Postsecondary education	12.0%	10.5%	---	14.8%	8.5%	20.0%	6.7%	3.8%	50.0%
County Workforce Partnership	9.8%	---	---	14.8%	8.5%	16.1%	10.0%	4.0%	---
Small Business Counselling	9.1%	15.8%	---	7.7%	6.2%	22.6%	10.3%	---	25.0%
Child care services	4.3%	5.3%	---	---	3.7%	3.2%	10.3%	---	25.0%
Settlement & Newcomer Services	3.9%	---	---	7.4%	1.2%	6.7%	6.7%	---	---

Represents percentage who chose "excellent" or "good"

# Business Development



What products would you like to purchase locally that are now being purchased outside the area?

Food. Dairy, cheese, produce and all other items are brought in from suppliers outside the County.

Fresh fruit

Compostable takeout containers

Easier access to dispose of hazardous materials like batteries, paint, electronics, etc.

Art Supplies

Merchandise production

Beverage co-packing

Glass bottles

Rental vehicles (ie cargo vans, cube trucks)

Livestock disposal, tannery

Computers, computer repair and A/V equipment

Office supplies - labels and packaging supplies

Bed linens, decor items like pillows, blankets, art and furniture if they were more affordable.

Fabric supplies

FedEx, UPS and other couriers/shipping

Commercial dishwasher

Soil amendments and certified organic seeds. (We have tried to purchase locally through different County-based suppliers. They're not interested: too difficult to source and very little volume to make it worthwhile.)

Grain, which we now have to source from Toronto.

Farm mechanic services

Yoga props, including mats, blocks, blankets, straps and bolsters

Access to agricultural training in Spanish to support our seasonal workers.

Winemaking products

Event rentals and catering supplies

We would like to export our agricultural products out of the Port in Picton

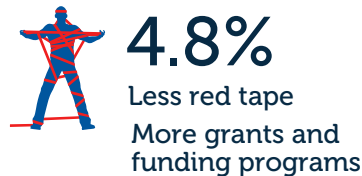
Pool supplies

HVAC supplies

I order way too much from Amazon because there are just not enough stores here to give me the variety of supplies I need. Also, no art supply store.

# 'Most Significant Change'

Survey respondents were asked: "In terms of overall impact on this community as a place to do business, what is the most significant change you'd like to see in the next five years?" Farrell Insights combed through responses, grouping answers together based on themes, to provide a quantitative picture:



Data collection and compilation to support investment and policy makers.

More industrial space for current and new businesses to relocate and/or expand

More festivals being held on Main St. We are asked to stay open late, but there is no reason to if something isn't going on.

Greater focus and work towards beneficial environmental design and sustainability. The County has an opportunity to be a leader in all of these areas, which could significantly increase the business opportunities for all

Diversification of the local economy - promotion of the County as a place for all types of businesses (beyond travel/hospitality and agriculture)



# 'Most Significant Change'

Protection of our streetscapes and villagescapes. Thoughtful planning and protections imposed on any and all development to growth in the County in a way that protects all of our assets, keeps it a beautiful, peaceful, livable and joyful place to live and work.

We need more taxi style services that are available 24/7.

More people under 50. For the kids that are here we need youth engagement and hope. More child care spaces. Make it possible to be a working parent.

Bylaws that fit what is actually going on.

Fixing the roads

Diversity in the business offering, reviving the Picton industrial park to offer places of work other than tourism sector.

More family-oriented attractions

More support during the winter months, more tourism promotion, more access to our parks.

Less resistance from Council to supporting the growth of PEC - it feels like they are just trying to protect what they had/have vs. looking at how to grow and evolve.

I think the wineries and breweries need to be recognized and understood better. On Saturdays, these businesses bring in a tremendous amount of tourism, which is the future of The County. The County needs to embrace change, listen and be flexible. Presently there is little to no recognition for this industry and the barriers to growth, due to a complete lack of understanding of our needs, are very high.

Water infrastructure!

Had I known the County would be so bound in red tape, and the internal politics around tourism, I never would have chosen to 'build a new life' here.

I'd like to see a "Yes! How can we help?" attitude from our municipal staff.

Housing for the workforce.

Reliable, affordable internet.

The more expensive housing (and the associated costs of housing, like utilities and waterworks) becomes in The County, the less likely it is that businesses can grow, and employees will be able to afford to live where they work. Whatever the municipal government can do to improve this issue, it should be the main focus.

More doctors and nurse practitioners.

Council and community being more open and supportive of businesses contributing to the economy through tourism.



# Next Steps

The municipality has several tools at its disposal to help address challenges highlighted in this report, and to capitalize on opportunities for economic diversification.

Attainable housing is at the heart of so many challenges highlighted in this report. And yet, we can't hope to unlock housing without having the necessary trades and skilled craftspeople to build it. This survey captured responses from only five Trades & Construction operators. In 2024, a BR&E focused solely on the Trades & Construction sector will take place to better understand barriers and opportunities.

While this survey highlights frustration with Planning and Building services, it doesn't delve deeply enough to pinpoint the causes. Comments highlight that fees and timelines are one issue; another may be that business operators are unfamiliar with Planning processes, timeline, fees or rationales. The County, like many jurisdictions, has struggled to find sufficient Planning staff to meet needs, especially as the complexity of Planning applications grows. Recruitment of two planning positions is imminent. RED funding is also earmarked for improvements to the corporate website to better prepare applicants for Planning processes.

The Zoning Bylaw Review, currently underway, has the potential to update "as of right" permitted uses in some zones, making it less costly and time consuming for operators to diversify or expand. In-depth, sector specific consultations are currently under way.

Planning and Economic Development staff will undertake the due diligence needed to identify and recommend suitable employment lands.

To ensure business and community groups feel empowered and equipped to advocate for change, RED funding will be used in 2024 to

train volunteers and establish pathways to partnering with County staff on community projects. Additional workshops and other opportunities will seek to build stronger links between business groups and the municipality.

To address workforce challenges, the Prince Edward Learning Centre, with funding from Thrive PEC, are developing a "Community Benefits Agreement" framework to encourage skill development and apprenticeship opportunities for tradespeople in new housing developments. Recruitment of a Transit Coordinator is currently under way. A microgranting program has been recommended to fund innovative solutions for rural commuter connections.

Fundamentally, a cultural change is needed within the municipality, including, at the leadership level. A shift from reliance on regulation and enforcement to a place of partnership and incentivization should be encouraged. A "Community Improvement Plan," a strategic plan of programs, grants and incentives, could be explored to better support on-farm diversified uses and heritage preservation.

Given what local businesses and their staff add to our community, they deserve to be celebrated and supported. An Economic Action Plan should be developed, focusing on creating a business-friendly municipal environment, development of a Community Improvement Plan focusing on agri-tourism and on-farm diversified uses; and identifying sectors with the most power and potential for successful economic diversification within the local economy.



# Area Business Supports

Economic Development Officer Karen Palmer helps connect new and expanding businesses to municipal resources and other supports. Reach her via [kpalmer@pecounty.on.ca](mailto:kpalmer@pecounty.on.ca) or 613.242.6476.

Prince Edward County Planning & Development staff can help navigate zoning and planning requirements when creating a new or expanding business. In order to connect with the most appropriate staff and receive a timely response, please fill in and submit a [Development Inquiry Form](#).

Prince Edward County Building Department: Staff receive building permit applications and inspect work on physical properties. Reach them via [building@pecounty.on.ca](mailto:building@pecounty.on.ca) or 613.476.2148. ext. 2040.

Confidential Small Business Counselling can help clarify a new business idea, answer questions about registration, structure or taxes, or help translate a vision into a Business Plan. This service is free. Reach out via [abbott.agency@sympatico.ca](mailto:abbott.agency@sympatico.ca) or 613.476.4240.

Career Edge provides a variety of free Employment Ontario services for Youth & Adults, maintaining a job board and providing assistance in attracting and retaining employees. Reach them via 1.866.859.9222 or 613.476.6456.

Bloomfield & Area Business Association represents businesses operating in the village of Bloomfield and the surrounding areas. Contact them via [info@bloomfieldontario.ca](mailto:info@bloomfieldontario.ca).

Community Futures Prince Edward Lennox-Addington encourages local economic development and diversification through non-traditional loans and provides strategic advice and capital to innovators and high-impact projects. Reach them at [ed@communityfutures.com](mailto:ed@communityfutures.com).

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health provides guidance on meeting regulations around the preparation and handling of food, inspects premises, enforces public health measures and supports farming and other operations in meeting housing and living requirements for migrant workers. Reach them at 1.800.267.2803.

PEC Chamber of Commerce fosters a network for entrepreneurs, and offers a voice as a collective group. Reach them via [contactus@pecchamber.ca](mailto:contactus@pecchamber.ca) or 613.476.2421.

Picton Business Improvement Area represents businesses operating in the town of Picton. Reach them via [info@experiencepicton.com](mailto:info@experiencepicton.com) or 613.922.4998.

Visit The County and StayPEC promote Prince Edward County as a visitor destination, encouraging responsible year-round visitorship and the creation of new and innovative visitor experiences. Reach them via [eleanor@visitthecounty.com](mailto:eleanor@visitthecounty.com) or [info@staypec.com](mailto:info@staypec.com).