2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Prince Edward County Field Naturalists | Candidate Survey

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Survey Questions

Question 1

Do you have a favourite natural area to visit in our community? If so, what makes it meaningful to you?

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Question 2

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), the Planning Act and the County's Official Plan form the legislative framework for land use planning. Section 3.1 of the County's Official Plan contains very specific provisions that are designed to protect the County's unique natural heritage.

How would you approach protecting the County's natural environment, and especially, how would you balance conservation with commercial, residential and infrastructure development?

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Question 3

Prince Edward County is an ecologically unique area and a major migratory pathway for birds, bats and butterflies. Much of its extensive shoreline is undeveloped and it is home to an abundance of coastal and inland wetlands. Other habitats include Areas of Natural Scientific Interest (ANSIs), numerous creeks and their watersheds, sand dunes, grasslands, hedgerows, alvar and woodlands. Together they support extraordinary biodiversity, including many Species at Risk, while helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. They also support two of our most important industries - agriculture and tourism – and contribute to the well-being of all who live in the County.

Yet the County continues to lose a significant portion of these habitats every year due to development, loss of farmland (24% since 2006 – Vital Signs Data, 2026) and the encroachment of invasive species like the Emerald Ash borer that has killed tens of thousands of our ash trees.

Many municipalities have a Site Alteration By-law that regulates changes that can be made to a property, for instance, the clearing of trees. Do you support the adoption of a Site Alteration By-law in Prince Edward County? Why or why not?

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Question 4

In its 2021 Official Plan, the County recognized the importance of our wetlands by choosing to implement a 50m development setback from all wetlands, as opposed to the minimum 30m outlined by the PPS. However, this has not been consistently applied. Will you commit to ensuring that Planning Staff implement this setback in all development plans?

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Mayoral Candidate

Ernie Margetson; ernie@margetsonformayor.ca

Q1: The forest at the back of my farm is a favourite natural area. It includes an upland sugar maple climax forest that slopes down to a soft maple swamp. It is meaningful to me as a place of quiet and calm and I take comfort in knowing that this land was never cleared and remains a remnant or reminder of the pre-settlement landscape.

Q2: Set the tone in governance that the Policy contained in Section 3.1, together with the vison and principles regarding the natural environment within the Official Plan have equal weight to other factors when evaluating land development proposals.

By establishing a tone that the natural environment is important to our sense of place and quality of life, and defending this credo through the policies contained in the OP (which includes PPS policy and goes beyond), the Municipality can firm up its reputation and approach regarding the importance of our natural heritage.

Q3: No, I do not support the adoption of a Site Alteration by-law. The Municipality is largely rural and over control of rural areas may compromise other realistic goals that support retaining rural landscapes and natural areas. The by-law would largely be reactive instead of proactive (permitting for cutting firewood for example), and very difficult to enforce or oversee. I do not agree that we have lost a quarter of our farmland since 2006 – unless you include abandonment as a loss. I would prefer to understand the objectives intended by proposing a site alteration by-law and look or other mechanisms, perhaps specific to land use.

Q4: I would support the use of a 50m setback from wetlands, and ensure the definition of a wetland is clear and is not limited to only provincially significant wetlands as designated EP in Schedule 'A' of the OP. Also, development as defined as grading or placing fill, or building structures or infrastructure. I would prefer to see no site alteration or removal of native flora within the 50m setback.

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Councillor, Ward 1 – Picton

Jane Lesslie; janeforpec2026@gmail.com

Q1: The Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory. I have friends who are mad birders. When they visited me I found a guide for them and went along. My friends - the fans who had travelled the world searching out birds - were blown away by what they found. They told me they had never seen so many different species (62) in one day. Going with them and seeing their enthusiasm drove up both my interest and appreciation. And thanks to our fabulous guide Chris Davidson I gained an understanding for how important sound is in the quest. My friends Bob and Leo were startled when Chris made a call for a particular variety of owl and the bird app they used identified the exact owl. And of course one of the owls appeared moments later. It is the Jewel of the County. But it was great to hear from Bob and Leo that my own backyard in Picton is abundant with birds and their birdsong.

Q2: I would like to start by actually enforcing the rules! While this is addressed in our official plan it seems it is often tossed aside. For example natural core linkages seem to

be constantly ignored. Same for shorelines. These are assets and they have to be protected. And loss of biodiversity will lead to our own demise.

Q3: Yes I do. As a member of the Environmental Advisory Committee we have been striving for about six years to acquire this.

Q4: Yes I will - particularly given the rising risk of flooding due to climate change. Someday I fear the municipality will endure a lawsuit due to flood plains that are pushing inward. But I am concerned that the province will mow us down in trying to enforce this as they have with allowing us to make building requirements that go beyond the Ontario Building Code. And we are not permitted to favour developers who use green or other environmentally friendly building techniques which ironically could help lower housing running costs for increasingly financially strapped homeowners.

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Councillor, Ward 1 – Picton
Phil St-Jean; votephilstjean2026@gmail.com

Q1: The walking trails at West Point/ Lakeshore Lodge, Sandbanks Park. Over the past 30 years I have enjoyed quiet peaceful walks along the trails through the woods, along the shoreline in particular the spectacular view out over the lake.

Q2: I have and will always ensure my decisions align with and respect legislative frameworks in relation to the County's natural environment and the potential impact regarding commercial, residential and municipal infrastructure.

Q3: I do not support an all encompassing county wide site alteration or tree bylaw. I do support the development of a site alteration framework that ensures owners of large residential development lands do not clear cut or significantly alter the landscape in advance of subdivision or redevelopment approvals. Any site alteration bylaw must be respectful of a private property owners rights to manage and enjoy their property without excessive, aggressive or difficult to enforce regulation by the municipality.

Q4: Every parcel of land and every land use proposal is unique. Each application is consistently evaluated on its own merits using the 2021 OP, the various secondary plans, provincial legislation alongside the professional expertise of recognized experts to inform all land use and planning decisions based on all relevant site specific factors.

I commit to ensuring that the spirit, direction, legislative requirements and policies of the 2021 Official Plan, the Planning Act, the PPS and relevant municipal policies are upheld.

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Councillor, Ward 1 - Picton
Kate MacNaughton; kateforcouncilpec@gmail.com

Q1: I have many. They're all precious. Some of my favourite memories have been made at Little Bluff on the cobbles between the wetlands and the lake, listening to the birds and bugs, the faint woosh of a water snake or the rattle of water shifting the stones on a breezy day. I taught my daughter to swim in that cold, cold water. Even just walking back to the parking area in a cloud of damsel flies seems like magic. I also love

Macauley CA. It is so close to home that it feels like home. I have spent countless hours there with my family. I've gone there for class visits, community events, meetings, cousin dog walks, covid distance visits and just to watch the rain from the shelter by the pond. I can mark special memories there from every age of my kid's life in every season, during droughts and floods, fall colours or misty green of springtime. We've tobogganed, spied on beavers (or tried), hunted for native plants (to photograph so don't call the plant police), looked for frogs, skated on the pond, star-gazed at night and crouched still in the woods to listen to coyotes. I saw my second bald eagle there. Breathtaking. I especially love the cool air in the forest on a hot, hot day.

Q2: It's great that you're directing candidates to these policies. I started my life as a councillor trying to figure out how to put a stop on practically any development ever that wasn't one-off infill in existing neighbourhoods on already developed land. This would be typically more compact and sustainable both environmentally and fiscally. I realized pretty quickly that that wasn't a practical approach at all. It was also fairly hypocritical. We need housing and ways to make our livings to survive. We also can't force people to build on property they own in established neighbourhoods in order to rely on infill as our source of new housing. If nothing else, my type of orthodoxy would land us in land tribunals with expensive failures on our hands. It's also worth noting that the province is making it harder for municipalities to vigorously consider the natural environment, water use, and climate needs in planning and development policies so it's harder to consider bold environmental inclusions like a mandatory green design guideline. There are, however, some rock solid inclusions in our existing policies and in the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS). The best one in the PPS is its mandate to direct development to existing settlement areas. I have long believed the best approach we can take is to maintain the settlement boundaries where they are today and encourage dense and compact development within those boundaries AS WELL AS easing policy for infill in established neighbourhoods. It is very difficult to protect lands that were scheduled for development years prior during our last secondary plan review. Lands that had natural water courses and high quality farm land were included in the acres that were then deemed developable. It is tough to see those lands get plowed under. I was hoping we would review the secondary plans for Picton/Bloomfield, Rossmore and Wellington this term as I wanted to ensure the boundaries were relatively static and excluded any additional farm land or other sensitive land uses. It will likely be this next term. Please participate when it does. A staff member once said, "Nobody cares about planning until they really, REALLY CARE about planning. This is very true but we all need to care to contribute to our secondary plans and ensure they are strong, sustainable plans.

Q3: Human development done carelessly has long devastated habitat and I believe we should be trying much harder to live with more consideration. All of our planning policies and development activities should reflect our responsibilities to the natural world. We have some very good principles expressed in our major policies suite but they need to strengthen with each iteration. There are some easy wins in there. Site Alteration has not been one of them. I support the adoption of a site alteration bylaw. I brought it forward originally last term (maybe 2021?). It was a member-led motion seconded by John Hirsch. We had spent a bit of time discussing with planning staff and thought it could address some of the issues we had noted in early days of the last council term. I believe a director at the time felt we had insufficient staff to implement but never brought any such concern to council. We did see a draft after I moved a

follow-up motion but never something to finalize. I continue to believe we are at risk without one. We have new staff now that seem interested in exploring alternatives including a separated and hopefully pending tree protection bylaw. Such a bylaw, would prevent clear-cutting on development lands or over wetlands) but would not prevent major earth works or prevent other sources of habitat loss. Staff have been updating several policies and procedures and I am hoping tree and site protection will be in the mix and coming forward in some form or another in the near future. Regarding alternatives, I've yet to see an alternative that can provide the security of a site alteration bylaw. I am very open to considering them as long as they achieve the same level of protection. Otherwise, I definitely think we need one and need it three years ago. I would suggest to the next council that this is an area that requires continued oversight. Regarding other sources of habitat loss, nothing we do can prevent some of the associated threats likely coming our way in the next few years due to our refusal to move away from fossil fuels. Some will have an impact as devastating as the emerald ash-borer including the oak wilt that is moving north due to changing climate. Rising summer temperatures themselves will put other less heat tolerant species as risk.

Q4: think it's important to recognize that it is not a prohibition but a trigger for an environmental impact assessment (EIS) if you wish to develop inside the 50 metres. I support the EIS requirement but not an actual prohibition. It's all in the mitigation of impact and the range of mitigations depends on the proposal. For example, I believe there are ways of developing in concert with nature and with the lightest touch on our natural world even very close to natural features by building small, minimizing paved surfaces with foot paths rather than long driveways, incorporating pilings instead of concrete slabs, using onsite energy instead of a hydro line, composting toilets rather than traditional septics etc. I think the best approach is making sure that staff are ensuring EISs are properly rigourous and that the EIS recommended mitigations are properly implemented.

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell
Kane Rutgers; kane.rutgers@gmail.com

Q1: Warings Creek as we are fortunate to have it run through our farm.

Q2: As infrastructure development is important, it should never be done in a way that comprises these vulnerable areas. These are spots that once gone never come back. My mindset is that there is always another option for development there is no need to ruin the natural environment.

Q3: As I believe people who own there property have the right to make changes, I also strongly believe it needs to be done within reason. I do support a by-law that would regulate and ensure our beautiful landscape is protected.

Q4: Yes, I believe rules are made for a reason and they are to be enforced.

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell

Mark Henry; markhenry4hallowell@gmail.com

Q1: Our bit of shoreline on West Lake features a wonderful assortment of shoreline flora and fauna right at home. Beyond that private space we love the trails through the Sandbanks Park system - off-season.

Q2: Section 2.3 of the County's Official Plan and Section 3.1, as mentioned above, offer important direction for Council and Planning to keep in mind. Curious, the section on Waring's Creek sub-watershed seems to read differently than what has been implemented. We have excellent guidelines - we need to make every effort to abide by them.

Q3: At this time, I have concerns when it comes to agriculture activities. Other than for the farm sector there may be a good case for a Site Alteration By-law.

Q4: Within development plans the 50M setback would certainly signal to our residents and other municipalities our conscious efforts to protect fragile wetlands.

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell

Victor Lind; votevictorward2@gmail.com

Q1: 1 McMahon’s bluff. I took a tour recently with the nature conservancy and to see an undisturbed area of shoreline and have biologists point out rare species of plants was memorable!

Q2: Areas of ansi are paramount to protect and should be non- negotiable.

Q3: If we had a site aleration by-law we would have had a stronger case to stop the quarry at Picton terminals site. I would support such a by- law with exceptions for farming where it supports reasonable agricultural practices.

Q4: Yes absolutely!

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell

Geoff Heinricks; geoffdlr@gmail.com

Q1: I don't have a favourite single place to visit; I feel fortunate to have a mix of different vistas and natural settings almost every day…from Lake views along 33, and the mix of farmland, fencerow and forest through the County. Being a near island, and the only island County in Ontario, I feel it is an integrated and unique whole. If in the east of the County I always enjoy time driving through Grimmons Woods. I rarely get to the dunes at North Beach or Sandbanks, nor the few conservation areas; I am fortunate to have my own small farm, and get much of my natural joys there. If I need a recharge, I have a small wood where I can wander alone.

Q2: I was on the first few Prince Edward Heritage Advisory Committees, and we were working on properly broadening out from just built heritage to natural heritage and cultural heritage. One of our first members did stellar work on putting together a plan for having the County seek status as an UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site, but the council of the day balked and killed it, believing it would unduly restrict the County. My personal philosophy is that we are stewards of this particular place on earth, and we must manage and make decisions with that in mind, balancing that with the health and happiness of citizens, visitors and future generations. There is a carrying capacity to this place, as far as population, wealth, and infrastructure, and it must be respected. I haven't done a deep dive into the last official plan yet, and do not know where it is possibly deficient or being disregarded. But that would be the proper place to start if I am elected.

Q3: I would have to look at how other municipalities have implimented and managed Site Alternaion by-laws, to identify how it might (or might not) work in our municipality. The disappearance of farmland here has always bothered me, as has the change in farming practices - with many of the unique fencerows that marked out our unique land settlement and (coincidently) helped preserve our mostly shallow soils - due to declining numbers of active farms/farmers and larger equipment. That is a very difficult problem to tackle, given competing interests. I would hope for respectful discussion and policy, believing we all want the best for our home.

Q4: If it has not been consistently applied, I would like to know why and how often the setback has varied, and then address the question.

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell

Joanne Fralick; fralickforward2@gmail.com

Q1: I used to enjoy Little Bluffs. It was quiet, had a great variety of flora and fauna, and best of all, it was free to access.

Q2: Environmental impact should be a fundamental consideration in every development decision. I support directing growth toward existing settlement areas with existing infrastructure, while protecting wetlands, shorelines, woodlands, agricultural land, and important natural corridors. We don’t have to choose between a healthy environment and a healthy economy. Development should be appropriate to the land, properly studied, and leave the County in better shape for the next generation.

Q3: Yes, I would support a Site Alteration By-law, provided it is practical, clear and fairly enforced. It should protect mature trees, natural drainage, wetlands and other important features while still allowing reasonable property improvements and development. The goal should be responsible stewardship without creating unnecessary red tape for homeowners and farmers.

Q4: I'd want to understand why the 50m setback has not been consistently applied before making a firm commitment. If it is the County’s adopted policy, I would expect it to be applied consistently, unless there is a clear legal or planning reason for an exception. As a councillor, I would ask Planning Staff to explain the current practice and ensure Council has confidence that the Official Plan is being followed.

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell
Erynn Ahern; erynnahernward2@gmail.com

Q1: This is honestly such a tricky question to answer for me! So many of the natural spaces around Prince Edward county hold a special place in my heart. In no particular order these are my four favourite natural spaces here and why; 1 - Macauley Mountain Conservation Area - through my teens and early twenties these trails were my second home. At that time, the Bloomfield Bicycle Club had a partnership with the conservation authority to build and maintain trails there, something we did on a weekly basis and spent many years learning to best practise for creating trails that worked with the natural landscape and ensured we were not destroying the natural flow of the woods and waterways. It also holds a place that connects me to the land in a personal way being home to the former world ward 2 training camp, a place my grandfather once lived and trained. The first time I stood in the old tank tracks on the top of the hill gave me a deep sense of place and connection to Prince Edward county, knowing that decades before my grandfather had stood in the very same place. 2 - the Dunes. Home to one of our most interesting hiking spaces, the shoreline along the bottom is a place I often ride to in the wee hours of the morning to sit and watch the water during moments of quiet contemplation. 3 - the Millennium trail. In the early 2000s we advocated through the BBC to get the county to create the amazing active transportation trail system we now all love. Having a line that runs almost the entire length of PEC for folks to get between communities without the need for a car is such an important piece of connection for us all. 4 - Beaver meadows - My home away from home in the early spring and mid fall for foraging, especially the immense diversity of fungi living around the grounds.

Q2: When it comes to protecting the natural green spaces here, this is of top priority for me. The last thing PEC should be doing is allowing the destruction of land for development that wads to us being another GTA suburb. I would like to see the county adopt a site alteration bylaw brought into effect inside the first year on the new council section. Seeing the amount of clear cutting that was allowed, particularly at the Base 31 site, long before a solid plan had been approved or any houses had been sold is heartbreaking (one of my favourite trails is now gone as a direct result of this, it was heartbreaking to ride by in the days after the clear cutting began). I would also like to see better consideration for if we actually need new developments and if we have the infrastructure to support them before we allow developers to do anything to affect the land they wish to develop.

Q3: Yes, please see answer above for more details. I think this would be a good first step towards better protecting our shorelines, wooded areas and natural habitats.

Q4: Yes, absolutely.

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Councillor, Ward 2 – Bloomfield / Hallowell

Mark Hopper; markhopper1@myyahoo.com

Q1: Sandbanks Prov Park , Its well cared for with a staff of its own and not taxing on the COUNTY

Q2: Its a balancing act for sure. I would need to do more work on my end before I was up to speed. I would need support and input from this group. I love the unique natural heritage of the county. It must remain.

Q3: Yes we need to save our Natural areas and woodlands stop the loss every year. I support a BY LAW that Regulates.

Q4: I am down on the water daily and it would be one of my first duties to go with a group from the association [ed: WLCA] and get your feed back and direction.

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Councillor Ward 4 – Ameliasburgh

Janice Maynard;janicemaynard2014@gmail.com

Q: I don't favour a single favourite natural area but enjoy many. In particular our wonderful Conservation Areas.

Q2: Adherence to the PPS and County's Official Plan will ensure protection for the natural environment while balancing conservation with responsible development.

Q3: I support the adoption of Site Alteration By-Laws. They are common in many Ontario municipalities.

Q4: I will advocate to make the 50m setback the default recommendation in planning reports.

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Councillor Ward 4 – Ameliasburgh

Paul Boyd; boyd2026@gmail.com

Q1: Mass Point Its history The hotel The quarry

Q2: No place for commercial or residential within the boundaries of these protected spaces Parking walkways lookout areas

Q3: Yes County council wants cottage and residential development and gives very little concern to a tree or farmlands

Q4: Yes The most word used at council is rezone How many times has that been applied to the original official plan

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Councillor Ward 5 – Athol

Haley Woods; woodsinward5@gmail.com

Q1: Point Petre and Macaulay Trail are two of my favourite spots in the county. Growing up in the county they are the places I always found myself exploring and wandering around when life would become overwhelming. Two places that always seem to bring me back to myself and ground me when I need it the most.

Q2: My approach would begin by thoroughly planning and looking into what COULD go wrong. Even with the best intentions it is clear that development plans aren't always thought through with as much detail as one would hope and then the community suffers the consequences. Putting more time and energy into the possible worst case scenarios may be costly upfront but I believe would save money in the bigger picture.

Looking at the scenario in Wellington where they have more then doubled their projected cost because they didn't anticipated what could have happened is and example we can learn from and I hope not repeat if we approach things differently. Balancing the development obligations the PPS mentions should be done in a way that maintains the county's unique and special qualities. I don't want to see more cookie cutter neighborhoods but instead look at ways to enhance what makes our natural areas special.

Q3: Based on the info provided here I would say I am against the adoption of a site alteration by-law that would cause major environmental impact. As climate change continues to increase and more and more creatures are put at risk (including humans) I believe we need to prioritize building in existing settlement areas and not create new ones at this time and protect the natural spaces in our area. We are about to see multiple major builds happen (Base31) and as more and more houses sit for sale we should be focusing on people being able to afford to live and stay in the county. If it was an instance of a private resident wanting to build on their own property my view sways a bit but I think if they were to cut a certain amount of trees down they should be obligated to replant around the new development to make up for the loss. People deserve the chance to create the home and land space they want to grow in but it should NOT be at the expense of the long term natural areas fading away.

Q4: I believe following the plan is the minimum standard that should be done especially when it puts our natural areas at higher risk if it continues to be ignored. We will lose all sense of the county if we continue to bend the rules for the developer's goals. I commit to ensuring that planning staff and anyone else who may bring development plans to council put environment at the forefront of their plans and ideas and do not continuously treat it as an afterthought.

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Councillor Ward 5 – Athol

Emily Jane Pickstock; councillor.emilyjane@gmail.com

Q1: Point Petre is my favourite, likely a bias from living so close by. Watching the influx of monarchs is breath taking. Then you add the perfect location for sunset and great

beach temperatures in the summer, a perfect place for a winters stroll, it is hard to beat.

Q2: I want to maintain and uphold all the protections for the County's natural heritage and agriculture. Everything needs a balance and sustainability. However, the protections for developments outside the urban centres is a start. I am aware about how those urban centre boundaries start to blur as they grow.

Q3: I would like to read more literature to decipher the details and full impacts of a Site Alterations By-Law. If this comes across council, it is something I would be in tuned to ensure benefits all of our residents and the environment.

Q4: I want to uphold all aspects of the Official plan in relation to environmental protections. I think clearer and more accessible ways to understand these documents can help residents and staff in avoiding misunderstandings.

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Councillor Ward 5 – Athol

Anna Zak; elect@annazak.ca

Q1: One of my favourite places to visit is Point Petre because of the variety of the landscape. You can go from these beautiful flat areas covered in river rock to these incredible layered rock formations along the shoreline. But the most fun is probably walking and playing in the shallow water of Lake Ontario, where there are huge, flat rock surfaces underneath the water. They can definitely be slippery, so proper footwear is a must! It's such a unique landscape and one of those places that really reminds me how special Prince Edward County is.

Q2: The County's Official Plan already gives us a strong framework. It speaks not only about protecting natural heritage and water resources from incompatible development, but also about restoration, enhancement and recognizing that our natural environment contributes to recreation, tourism and our economy. For me, this is also something I have experience with personally through my business at Lakecroft. We've also worked with local groups on erosion protection. We've changed how we maintain the property, including keeping mowing farther back from the shoreline, allowing vegetation to establish where appropriate, and focusing increasingly on native plants throughout the property. Those may seem like small individual decisions, but collectively they matter. And importantly, they demonstrate that environmental protection doesn't necessarily mean that land can't also support a viable business. That's the same practical approach I would bring to decisions at Council. When development is proposed, we need to understand the actual environmental features on the property and rely on appropriate environmental studies and professional expertise. Where there are wetlands, sensitive shorelines, important habitat, water-quality concerns or natural hazards, those need to be properly identified and protected. But I also think we need to distinguish between incompatible development and development that can proceed responsibly with appropriate design, setbacks, mitigation or restoration. I would also like us to put more emphasis on restoration. Sometimes the conversation focuses almost entirely on preventing impacts from new development. We should also be asking whether a project provides an opportunity to improve existing conditions—

restoring a shoreline, increasing native vegetation, improving stormwater management, protecting groundwater or reconnecting natural areas. Ultimately, I believe we can accommodate commercial, residential and infrastructure development while protecting the natural environment, but it requires thoughtful planning. We need clear rules, good information and decisions based on the actual conditions of a property—not a one-size-fits-all approach. I've tried to put those principles into practice on my own property. I believe in acting on environmental stewardship, not simply talking about it, and I would bring that same approach to the decisions I make at Council.

Q3: I would want to understand what regulatory gap a Site Alteration By-law is intended to fill before supporting another layer of permitting. Quinte Conservation already regulates significant activity in and around wetlands, shorelines, watercourses and other environmentally sensitive or hazardous areas. That includes things such as grading, placing fill, shoreline alteration and other significant site alteration. So my first question would be: what activities or areas are currently causing environmental damage that are not already covered by Quinte Conservation, the Official Plan, the Planning Act or other existing protections? If there is a demonstrated gap—for example, significant land clearing or alteration occurring outside regulated natural heritage areas—then I would be open to looking at an appropriate municipal tool. But I would not want us to duplicate an approval process that already exists or create another permit requirement simply because other municipalities have one. We would need to clearly identify what problem we're solving, what Quinte Conservation already regulates, what the municipality already regulates, and what specifically remains unprotected. Any new by-law should then be targeted to that gap, with reasonable exemptions for normal residential property maintenance, agriculture and other routine activities. Environmental protection is important to me, and I practice it on my own property. But good regulation should be effective, clear and necessary—not simply another layer of process.

Q4: I support protecting our wetlands, and I also believe that the policies contained in the County's Official Plan should be applied consistently. The current Official Plan was adopted in 2021, so these particular policies are relatively recent. From my own experience with the planning process, I have seen the County's newer environmental requirements being applied through site-plan applications. I also think it's important to clarify what the policy actually requires. My understanding is that the 50-metre provision is not simply an absolute prohibition on any development within 50 metres of every wetland. Depending on the classification of the wetland and the circumstances of the development, the Official Plan can require environmental evaluation, including an Environmental Impact Study, consultation with Quinte Conservation and demonstration that there will be no negative impact on the natural feature or its ecological functions. So would I commit to ensuring Planning Staff follow the Official Plan? Absolutely. Council adopts an Official Plan for a reason, and applicants and residents should be able to expect that its policies will be applied consistently. If there is evidence that the policy has been interpreted or applied differently between comparable applications, then I would want to understand why. If there is ambiguity in the policy, Council should address that ambiguity so that residents, developers and Planning Staff all understand the requirements. For me, environmental protection and good planning both depend on the same thing: clear rules that are consistently and fairly applied.

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Councillor Ward 6 – Sophiasburgh

Megan Hutton; votemeganhutton@gmail.com

Q1: I have many, but I love Macaulay Mountain conservation area and the P.E. Bird Observatory. Macaulay and I have a long history, day camps as a youth and on breaks from work and school, I used to hike the mountain, read along water or just enjoy bird house city.

Q2: Protecting Prince Edward County's natural environment and allowing our community to grow should not be treated as opposing goals. I believe responsible growth means understanding where development is appropriate, ensuring the infrastructure can support it, and protecting the natural systems that make the County such a special place to live. I support directing most significant residential and commercial growth toward areas where development and infrastructure already exist or can reasonably be expanded, rather than encouraging unnecessary sprawl into rural, agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas. When development is proposed near wetlands, woodlands, shorelines, wildlife habitat or other significant natural features, I believe decisions need to be based on good evidence. Environmental Impact Studies should be thorough and credible, and where there are legitimate questions about the findings or significant potential impacts, Council should be willing to seek independent expertise or peer review before making a decision. I also believe we need to consider cumulative and long-term impacts, not simply whether an individual development can technically be accommodated. Roads, water and wastewater capacity, stormwater, groundwater, agricultural land, wildlife habitat and the surrounding community all need to be part of the conversation. At the same time, the County needs housing, employment opportunities and a strong year-round economy. My approach would not be to oppose development, but to ask whether it is happening in the right place, at an appropriate scale, with the necessary infrastructure and environmental protections in place. Our natural environment is not an obstacle to our prosperity. It is one of the County's greatest assets, and responsible planning means making sure that the growth we approve today does not compromise what future generations inherit.

Q3: Yes, in principle, I would support the development of a Site Alteration By-law for Prince Edward County, provided it is carefully designed for the realities of a rural and agricultural community. We have an extraordinary natural environment in the County, and once a significant wetland, woodland, shoreline habitat or other sensitive natural feature has been substantially altered or cleared, it can be extremely difficult — and sometimes impossible — to restore. I believe there is value in having a mechanism that allows the municipality to intervene before significant and potentially irreversible damage occurs. At the same time, I would want extensive consultation with farmers, rural property owners, environmental organizations, Indigenous communities and other affected residents before determining what the by-law should cover. Normal agricultural practices, property maintenance, the removal of hazardous or diseased trees, management of invasive species and reasonable use of private property should not become unnecessarily complicated or expensive. I would also want the County to

clearly identify what problem we are trying to solve, what areas or activities require greater protection, what exemptions are appropriate, and what the cost of administering and enforcing the by-law would be. My goal would be a practical, targeted policy that protects significant natural features and prevents large-scale or irreversible site alteration without creating unnecessary red tape for residents carrying out normal activities on their properties. Protecting our natural heritage and respecting the people who live and work on the land do not have to be competing objectives. A well-designed by-law should be capable of doing both.

Q4: I support the County consistently applying the wetland protections established in our Official Plan. The 50-metre setback reflects the importance Prince Edward County has placed on protecting its wetlands and their ecological functions, and I believe that should be the starting point when development applications are considered. Applicants should not simply assume that a reduced setback will be accepted. Where the Official Plan allows a different setback to be considered through an Environmental Impact Study, I would expect that process to be rigorous and based on credible evidence demonstrating that there will be no negative impact on the wetland or its ecological functions. Where the potential impact is significant or the evidence is uncertain, I would support independent or peer review rather than asking Council or residents to simply accept the applicant's conclusions. Most importantly, these policies need to be applied consistently. Residents and developers should both be able to understand what the rules are and have confidence that similar applications will be held to the same environmental standards. So, yes, I will commit to upholding the County's 50-metre wetland setback as established in the Official Plan, while recognizing and applying the environmental review process that the Official Plan itself provides.

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Councillor Ward 6 – Sophiasburgh

Bill Roberts; wdroberts@hotmail.com

Q1: I have several favourite spots… I'm a hiker by nature, e.g. having trekked a good distance on the Camino de Santiago and the last 111 kms to the North Pole many years ago.

So every year I try to do at least one full traverse of our 46 km, amazing Millennium Trail. A few years ago The Picton Gazette did a nice & encouraging article about that happy "obsession".

Another favourite is Macauly Mountain. Lots of reasonable trails with various degrees of challenge… but all beautiful; it's one I enjoy with younger family members and one can often include a picnic and visit to Bird House City. But there are others of course, e.g. Sandbanks but lesser known parks/conservation areas like Potters Creek, Little Bluff and Massassauga Point.

Having said that, Northport Centennial Park probably sees more of my footprints given the community events there, and being the donated dumpster location for our annual Sophiasburgh Trash Bash that I organize… good fishing and boating off the dock too… plus gorgeous views of our Bay of Quinte! It's also a park benefiting from volunteer

community stewardship and restoration to natural and indigenous flora, which is wonderful to see.

Q2: I would begin by applying The County's Official Plan. Developments in sensitive areas already receive rigorous scrutiny by both staff and Council. And we're getting better at negotiating and navigating this important concern. In my view, we need to pursue strong financial and natural heritage incentives in all our growth related planning, new housing and development, and infrastructure decision-making… plus ensure that growth is responsible and accountable, protects agricultural land, as well as our unique PEC rural character and ecosystems.

As a related aside, as Vice-chair of our South East Public Health unit, I can share that our new SEPH strategic plan is paying more attention to climate, natural settings and the environmental impacts on our health… looking at things like extreme temperatures, extreme weather, food & water security, vector-borne diseases, air quality, and ultraviolet radiation… so I expect that more environment/natural heritage and tree canopy (forest therapy) public health policy will be forthcoming. In addition, public consultation with our residents is very important, including with our agricultural community, technical experts, our Mohawk neighbours and businesses where impacted.

I would also be interested in exploring natural heritage "compensation" when there is loss to natural heritage. And if the opportunity is present, I'd prefer to avoid costly appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal when a negotiated/mediated settlement is likely to end in a better natural heritage result. But anything that strengthens our "long-term resilience" as you say, is crucial over the next 3-4 years.

Q3: It's no secret that trees are excellent for our climate; not only storing heat-trapped carbon but also removing about a quarter of the carbon we pump into the atmosphere.

So I think it's a good time to review our tree canopy to validate what exactly is happening in PEC with regard to development.

But I would also need to understand how a Site Alteration Bylaw would relate to/impact our Asset Management work and existing Site-plan procedures. On the face of it, anything that protects our watersheds, avoids critical habitat loss, irresponsible tree clearing, wetlands abuse, etc., especially where there are cumulative impacts, is an idea worthy of exploration… and worthy of serious consultation with developers, farmers, Quinte Conservation, and other stakeholders. There will, of course, be many questions as to the practicality and enforcement capacity; and whether another bylaw… OR… encouraged education, stewardship and rigorous planning is a more effective route. Plus I'm not convinced that a new bylaw alone will stop the Emerald Ash Borer.

In addition, to be fair, despite our existing & strict ban on development on Prime Agriculture lands, there could be multiple other reasons for loss of farmland, such as costs vs return on investment, generational issues and succession planning, etc.

It's important to note that some developers are embracing natural heritage. Base31, for example, is promising 110 hectares of public greenspace and 10,000 metres of hiking trails.

A last thought… in my view, The County doesn't need another deeply polarizing and divisive hot topic. If we can design our public conversation on site alteration protection

in a way that "brings people together rather than pushing them apart", I'd be ever so encouraged.

Q4: In principle, absolutely yes.

I think a 50 metre wetland setback makes for responsible planning.

There may be some wrinkles with regard to provincial policy statements, legally required technical or other reviews, but 50 metres should definitely be our starting point.

Indeed, reverting to 30 metres should be a very narrow exception subject to rigorous studies and transparent justification.

For example, a responsible developer might actually commit to saving or restoring a wetland in exchange for a 30 metre setback, and I'd be open-minded to hearing that out.... but very specific consideration would be required before approving anything other than a 50 metre setback as outlined in our Official Plan.

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Councillor Ward 7 – Hillier

Chris Braney; coldcreekvineyard@gmail.com

Q1: My farm and the Millennium Trail. Peaceful and naturalized views.
Q2: It's imperative that we protect the County's unique natural heritage and environment. Throughout this term as the Councillor for Hillier I have advocated to protect the County's naturalized assets such as calling for an investigation regarding the serious irregularities in the Waring's Creek watershed. In regards to balancing conversation with commercial, residential and infrastructure development, I believe we need to communicate the importance of our assets to create buy in and support with the development community. However, protection of our natural assets should always be paramount regardless.

Q3: I support a Site Alteration By-law for all the reasons listed above!

Q4: I will certainly commit to ensuring staff implement these setback so we don't set precedents.

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Councillor Ward 8 - North Marysburgh

Tracey Stevens; tlsm52@gmail.com

Q1: Lake on the Moutain - 1 in a million! and it's the best meeting point!

Q2: We need growth, but not at any cost. The Province is pushing municipalities to build faster, and sometimes to go around local planning altogether. The County has one chance to get this right, and Council has to defend the integrity of our natural environment, even when the pressure comes from Queen's Park.

Q3: Yes, I support a Site Alteration By-law, provided it is practical, targeted and developed with the people it affects. Its purpose should be clear: to stop the damage that happens before anyone is asked. A good by-law closes that gap and gives the

protections in our Official Plan actual meaning. It must also be fair to rural landowners. Normal farm practices, cutting firewood, and routine work around one's own home should not require a permit. The focus should be large-scale clearing, fill dumping, and grading near shorelines, wetlands and watercourses, where the harm is greatest and of course, the hardest to undo. Finally, a by-law is only as good as its enforcement. Council needs to make sure the County can actually enforce it, and should develop it in consultation with farmers, landowners, Quinte Conservation and environmental groups. Done right, it protects both the natural environment and the agriculture and tourism that depend on it.
Q4: Yes. The County made a deliberate choice in its Official Plan to protect wetlands with a 50-metre setback, and that choice should actually mean something. A rule that is applied inconsistently isn't really a rule, and it's unfair both to the environment and to the applicants who follow it. Individual councillors don't direct planning staff, but Council does set expectations. I will push for the 50-metre setback to be applied consistently to every application. Any exception should come only through the process the Plan itself requires: an Environmental Impact Study showing no negative impact on the wetland, reviewed in consultation with Quinte Conservation. I would also ask staff to report publicly on how often, where and why exceptions are granted, so ratepayers can see whether the policy is actually being followed. Consistency protects our wetlands, and it gives everyone, including landowners and developers, clear rules before shovels go in the ground.

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Councillor Ward 8 - North Marysburgh
Ken Morton; ken.morton.pec@gmail.com

Q1: Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area - saw-whet owl migration
Q2: Keep urban development in existing urban areas. Encourage farmland to be but into the Ontario Farmland Trust.
Q3: Yes in environmentally sensitive areas
Q4: I will commit to new vacant land sites to have a 50M setback. Existing properties that have development inside the 50M need to follow the 30M .

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Councillor Ward 8 - North Marysburgh
Siobhan Harrison; siobhanfornm@gmail.com

Q1: Choosing only one of the natural areas in Prince Edward County is tough. If I had to choose one, it would be Sandbanks Provincial Park. It is meaningful to me on both a personal and environmental level. I have enjoyed countless days there over a number of decades enjoying the clean beaches and clear water. I love the diversity of its natural landscape; the beautiful shoreline, the unique dunes, the wetlands, the forest, and the wildlife they support. To me, Sandbanks represents one aspect of what makes Prince Edward County special and why protecting our natural heritage is so important.

Q2: I believe a Councillor's role is to ensure these policies are properly applied and that decisions are based on the long term interest of the community. I would balance conservation with commercial, residential, and infrastructure development by protecting environmentally sensitive areas and agricultural lands, directing growth to appropriate areas.

Q3: I would need to know what the specifics of the proposed by-law would be before forming an opinion.

Q4: Yes, as the County has adopted a policy, residents should be able to expect that policy to be consistently applied. However, there should be consideration for an appeal process based on individual situations.

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Councillor Ward 9 – South Marysburgh

John Hirsch; pec.councillor.john@outlook.com

Q1: Prince Edward Point (point Traverse) provides the best bird watching in the County - home to PEPtBO, great views of the lake; limestone shelves along the shore; the lighthouse; the whole National Wildlife Area. Who could want more?

Q2: The County's 2021 Official Plan follows all the requirements of the PPS and Planning Act while adding additional protections for the natural environment. I worked hard with organizations such as SSJI, PECFN, APPEC and PEPtBO to get these additional protections in place. Most notable is the Natural Core Area concept along with linkages which protects over a third of the landmass of the County. It is crucial that these hard fought protections are respected at every step of the planning process. There is already ample land designated for commercial and residential growth and i will resist any efforts to expand these areas into currently protected areas.

Q3: I have been working for years to get a site alteration bylaw in place. County staff are currently working on a draft which hopefully will come to the new Council. Destruction of tress, watercourses, wetlands, woodlands and other important features must be regulated with enforceable bylaws.

Q4: I will continue to insist that the rules in our OP are adhered to.

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