

The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward



332 Main Street
Picton, Ontario
K0K 2T0
Tel: 613.476.2148
Fax: 613.476.5737

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New Year's Message to the citizens of Prince Edward County From Mayor Leo P. Finnegan

This is the time of year we look back over our accomplishments, trials and challenges of the past year and ahead to the opportunities of the future. 2010 brings not only a new year but the end of this term of Council.

2009 was an eventful year. We were very fortunate in receiving close to \$20 million in grant monies from both the Federal and Provincial governments for eight separate projects. These funds helped us do much needed work and contribute to the economic recovery. We are grateful to our representatives, Federal MP Daryl Kramp and Provincial MPP Leona Dombrowsky, for their support in obtaining these grants.

2009 highlights include:

- Specialized transit now operating four days a week.
- Construction started on the new Picton Wastewater Treatment Plant, a new Wellington and Area Community Centre, and a Youth Park.
- Council reports, agendas, minutes and by-laws on our website for greater efficiency and transparency.
- Road, sidewalk and water and wastewater infrastructure reconstruction started on Queen and Centre streets in Picton.
- A new governance meeting structure for more efficient decision making.
- The Olympic Torch relay came to the County and was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Wind energy development and the Green Energy Act have raised strong opinions both opposed to and in support of wind turbines in the County. A public meeting on the subject provided Council and the community with extremely helpful information and a better understanding of the opinions of our citizens. The province has taken control of that issue, but we continue to try and find ways we can best work with the province to represent both those championing the initiative and those with concerns.

We have encouraged and received **increased citizen awareness and involvement** in issues that, in most cases, is informed, helpful and provides Council with valuable insight and information. We tap the impressive array of expertise within the community through our many committees, task forces, boards and events. These unsung heroes do excellent work, put in many hours and contribute significantly not only to our community but to good local government. We have also had less than satisfactory interaction with certain citizens groups that has been costly, counterproductive and divisive in the community. We need to find new ways to work towards productive solutions and mutual respect.

Looking ahead to 2010, we have started our budget process. A reduction in Provincial funding of \$744K, potential increased policing costs and low reserves available to offset these impacts will make for difficult choices. The economic conditions have put some of our citizens out of work and we are mindful of their ability to pay. We are looking for citizen input into the 2010 budget with a survey on our website and in libraries.

2010 will bring more focus to promoting accessibility awareness and looking for ways to remove barriers for persons with a disability, improving the way we communicate and interact with our citizens, and improving customer service. We will be finalizing the major construction projects started in 2009 and commencing long-range planning for future development in Wellington and Hallowell/Picton. We will also develop charges for water and wastewater services that are fair and sustainable.

In summary, we have had advancements and successes in 2009. We have also had some major challenges and these will continue into 2010. In this final year of the term we have a great deal to accomplish, including finding new ways to work with our citizens towards positive and collaborative solutions to problems.

I would like to thank members of Council for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the County through this term. It has rarely been easy, but it is tremendously rewarding. I would also like to encourage citizens to participate in the October 25 municipal election, either as a candidate or by voting. This is your chance to make a difference!

On behalf of Council, I would like to wish all our citizens much joy, health and prosperity in 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Finnegan". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "F" and a cursive "negan".

Mayor Leo P. Finnegan