

The Corporation of the
County of Prince Edward



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

**Mayor's Address at New Year's Levee
January 8, 2012
PE Community Centre, Picton**

I thank you all for coming out today and on behalf of Council and staff wish you all the very best for 2012.

I would like to introduce our special guests, members of Council and staff:

- Mayor John Williams and Councillors Ron Hamilton and Jim Alyea from the City of Quinte West;
- Mayor Neil Ellis, Councillor Garnet Thompson and CAO Rick Kester from the City of Belleville;
- Allan Ross on behalf of Loyalist College;
- Councillors Bev Campbell, Barry Turpin, Jim Dunlop, Nick Nowitski, Dianne O'Brien, Jamie Forrester, Heather Campbell, Alec Lunn, Robert Quaiff, Barbara Proctor and Terry Short; and
- Commissioner of Corporate Services and Finance Susan Turnbull, Commissioner of Planning Services Gerry Murphy, County Clerk Victoria Leskie and Fire Chief Scott Manlow.

Finally I would like to thank the Friends of Macaulay Heritage Park for the delightful refreshments and the decorations in the hall.

Your new Council has completed the first year of its four-year term. We started out 2011 with many new faces around the horseshoe, and following orientation, we were immediately plunged into budget deliberations. Being mindful of the current economic climate and the fact that many of us were new to our role, we took a cautious approach to spending in 2011. We implemented a status quo operating budget and a minimal capital budget resulting in a 1% average tax increase. We also committed to carefully review our operations and services and I will tell you more of this initiative later... but first some highlights of 2011.

Health care in the County has a positive prognosis thanks to the excellent work of the Prince Edward Family Health Team, in collaboration with the Prince Edward Health Alliance, Quinte Health Care and other agencies. They are working on a proposal for an integrated, community-based healthcare system that could very well become a model for communities

across Ontario. They will be presenting a plan to the Province in February for 'one-stop shopping' for all healthcare needs on a campus-style setting centered by a new hospital in Picton, with satellite locations in Wellington and the north end of the County.

We have made great strides in affordable housing. We have an affordable housing strategy that is reflected in our new secondary plan. The strategy was developed through a volunteer-based Affordable Housing Working Group, whose dedication and hard work is responsible for this significant achievement, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Working collaboratively with the Prince Edward-Lennox and Addington Social Services Committee, the County has adopted and is working on implementing this plan.

We completed Draft Secondary Plans for Picton-Hallowell and Wellington, approved a Community Improvement Plan for the entire County, and began work on a new official plan by commencing county-wide studies that will lead to new policies for effective land use planning over the long term.

The retirement of our longtime CAO, Richard Shannon, was followed by a concentrated six month search for a new CAO. We were very pleased to appoint Merlin Dewing as of November 1, 2011, and we are confident we got the best possible person for the job.

On the business attraction front, we are thrilled to welcome Solar Science Inc., a Canadian-based designer and manufacturer of photovoltaic modules, to the Picton Industrial Park. Solar Science Inc. has commenced construction of a fabrication facility which will employ 45 to 50 people in 2012.

The County has seen significantly increased investment in the high tech and clean tech sectors, including the newly opened Innovation Centre in the former Picton Bay Motel. This tech-sector focused facility brought together private and public sector financing. The 7-tenant businesses at the Centre currently employ 25 people in the tech sector and are anticipated to continue to grow.

In education, Loyalist College and Headland 3D Centre of Excellence teamed together to create the first 3D/HD training centre for television content in Eastern Ontario, located in Picton. Further discussions continue with Loyalist to create programs and opportunities for local students.

In early 2012, we will finalize our new economic development strategic plan and we look forward to working collaboratively with other levels of government, external agencies, the business community and investors to see more opportunities for the new economy in our community, and to nurture and support our existing businesses.

Hi-speed internet, an initiative of the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus , will provide affordable high speed internet access via satellite in January and wireless in the fall to our citizens, as of 2012. Speed and costs will be competitive with the major urban centers.

Going forward to 2012, we recognize that we are in the midst of global economic uncertainty. Like other municipalities, we are facing increasingly complex issues around the delivery and funding of municipal services. It is apparent that we cannot continue to offer the same type and/or level of services as we have in the past at the current levels of taxation, user charges and the uncertainty of funding from senior levels of government.

Council, working with our new CAO and staff, are addressing these challenges by conducting a review of all of our services and programs to examine the impact of eliminating programs, reducing resources required to deliver the service, or reducing service levels.

We also will be examining opportunities for efficiencies through the identification of key business processes, alternate delivery methods, and opportunities for organizational improvements.

We will solicit input from our citizens as we work through this multi-faceted process and you will be hearing more of this initiative in the coming weeks and months. I invite all of you to be our partners in defining what your local government will look like in the future. I am confident and optimistic that, collectively, we have the ability to reinvent ourselves as a successful and sustainable municipality that embraces change while respecting our rich heritage and natural environment.

Mayor Peter A. Mertens