

2020 Peter McCracken - Candidate District 11

Now that Highspeed broadband will be installed over the next three years in Colchester and Cumberland Counties in a \$60.1-Million project with Xplornet what additional infrastructure should Colchester provide within the program to improve the local economy?



Peter McCracken

This is exciting, access to information is essential for all residents and improved broadband connectivity is critical to attracting small business growth. New business development may require developing access points. Also, once up and running there may be gaps in service which may require additional infrastructure. Furthermore, residents and tourists will benefit from community hot spots, which may require infrastructure improvements. I noticed the announcement did not mention the federal government, hopefully they can contribute to this additional infrastructure.

What do you believe is the most important issue(s) for your District?

The 6 priority on my website, peterfordistrict11.ca, reflect what I feel my district needs. Any progress on these priorities should be grounded in citizen engagement, which remains low in the County.

In the next 4-5 years, Covid recovery will be critical. The Municipality is working with less revenue, businesses are struggling, people have lost jobs. We need to be working together with other levels of government and business leaders on a plan. We need to buy local, better promote businesses in the county, and give businesses the skills to provide online services.

Through Covid, we have also learned the value of our parks, trails, walking and biking routes. These were the first things to re-open. We need to keep investing in these, they are important for our physical, social and mental health.

Should taxpayers on J-class roads be asked to contribute 25%-50% of repaving or rebuilding costs?

J-Class roads are owned by the Province but fall under a cost-sharing agreement between the Province and municipalities. General maintenance falls under the responsibility of the Province. Outside of this, the Municipality is required to provide up to 50% of the project funding to repave or rebuild roads. However, even if the county agrees to cost share the upgrades, the Province's contribution is inadequate to meet all our priorities. We need a new provincial/municipal funding agreement that is fair. Until then, taxpayers are stuck footing too much of the bill.

Should Colchester Municipal council make infrastructure investments in Debert Airport and Debert Business Park among its top three priorities?

Supporting economic development must be a top 3 priority of Council. Any economic strategy should include the Debert Business Park as a major asset. The park needs to remain relevant and an attractive option for investment, which requires modern infrastructure.

The airport presents some unique opportunities. I believe it's worth trying a full-time manager for the facility to create a long-term plan and to secure a long-term commercial tenant.

With real estate costs in Halifax soaring to new heights, should Colchester encourage new or existing sub-division developments to attract new residents who wish to live in "quasi-rural" areas, to enjoy a different lifestyle?

Short answer, yes. People who already live in HRM or were considering living there, are looking for options. There are examples of successful innovative housing solutions across the province, from tiny home developments, to eco-housing, affordable housing co-ops, and retirement communities. We can work with developers on all these ideas. Everyone feels they live in the best place in Nova Scotia, but what is going to distinguish us from other areas? That is where the opportunities lie.

What level of priority do you place on marketing the county as a desirable place to live and invest in attracting new residents, who might start or purchase an existing business?

People want to feel welcomed, have good schools, great healthcare, affordable housing, and recreation/cultural activities. We have most of that, so we need to tell the stories of people like my family and others who chose to move here and why they like it, and brag about Colchester in our marketing. If the community grows, it will attract more business investment as a result. That said, marketing needs to be matched with business and resident friendly taxes and services.

Colchester has a new hospital, RECC centre, Dal Ag Campus, Nova Scotia Community College, excellent geographical location and many other assets all within two hours drive to other major urban centres and almost one million consumers. What does the municipality need to focus on to be the fastest growing municipality in the province?

Part of the solution is creating a vision for the County as a whole, which should include focus on the assets mentioned. We need to be working even closer with the Towns, Villages and Millbrook. Currently, there's room for more inter-municipal collaboration in most service areas. Growth and efficiencies come with a common approach, which requires a common vision.

What approach to municipal governance will you take to obtain the important things in your district?

I commit to quarterly engagements with my constituents and creating a social media platform to learn about the issues in my district. I'll also educate myself on the issues and take an informed approach to solutions. As their councilor, I need to be their voice but also recognize we can't have 11 competing agendas at the council table.

What is most needed in your district?

My 6 priorities are: Inclusive and welcoming communities; Support for the local economy; Fiscal responsibility; Citizen engagement; Respect for the environment and Active and safe neighbourhoods.

What professional or personal experience do you bring to the council table?

I have 18 plus years working in and with municipalities. I have different ideas, seen other ways of doing things, and bring a fresh voice on issues. I also have a young family, and as a parent with a child with a disability, I know what its like to be on the outside looking in on opportunities and services others take for granted. This gives me a unique perspective. Lastly, I have been a community volunteer for 20 plus years with various local and provincial organizations.

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