

# Picture Port Elgin



## REPORT: SUSTAINABILI-TEA RESULTS

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## Sustainabili-tea Report

*Picture Port Elgin* is a process to create a sustainable future for Port Elgin. In order to create a vision of a sustainable Port Elgin, we want to remember what Port Elgin once looked like, see the current situation, and *picture* what the future might look like if we work together to address the sustainability challenges that we are facing.

The steering committee, which is made up of representatives from a board cross-section of the Port Elgin community, was tasked with engaging their acquaintances, neighbours, friends and family throughout this process. Since Port Elgin is a small community and people know one another, one of the engagement strategies and visioning exercises consisted of having Sustainabili-teas. A Sustainabili-tea involved a steering committee member having tea (coffee, etc) with a community member to ask them the following four questions:

1. Why do you live in Port Elgin? What keeps you here?
2. When you think about the future, what concerns you?
3. Imagine you are 30 years in the future and you are telling your grandchildren why Port Elgin is a great place to live. What do you tell them to prove it? What do you see in your vision?
4. As a member of this community, what do you think is your responsibility in achieving this vision?

The steering committee hosted 11 Sustainabili-teas in total. Detailed results can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Based on responses from community members, Port Elgin is an attractive location because it offers a simple, quiet lifestyle. The Sustainabili-tea results highlight the village as a safe place to live and raise children. Because of its size, most people in Port Elgin know one another, which creates a sense of community. Surrounded by nature, the rural setting allows residents to enjoy many extracurricular activities, such as hiking, canoeing, skating and skiing. Participants also discussed that they prefer to live in a rural community with the nearest town 30 minutes away and the nearest city centre is only an hour drive. Many participants also indicated that they live in Port Elgin because they grew up there.

When residents of Port Elgin think about the future of their community, they are concerned with the village becoming a retirement community as a result of the lack of economic activity and job opportunities, which is one factor affecting the out-migration of youth. There is a concern that the population will not be healthy if activities for youth, adults and seniors do not exist. Participants expressed concern over the effects of climate change, including rising water levels and, in particular, storm surge events in the area. The lack of concern for the environment, lack of green energy production, presence of pollutants and ground contamination are other environmental concerns that were highlighted during the Sustainabili-teas. Both the lack of health services and public transportation for seniors to gain access to health services in adjacent communities are a concern for the future of Port Elgin. Lastly, comments surrounding the idea of self-sufficiency and quality of life indicate the need for basic services and products in the village.

When participants were asked to imagine that they are 30 years in the future and they are telling their grandchildren why Port Elgin is such a great place to live, the responses are best summed up as: Port Elgin is a great place to live, work and play! Community members are integrated, safe and engaged. The community is still close-knit, but there have been a few changes. There is a wonderful school system with enough students to support the need for a high school. A greater sense of community was achieved through the

availability of a wide range of recreational activities (ie, community swimming pool, indoor rink, tennis courts, etc.) and interest classes (ie, photography). In 2040, Port Elgin is a community with a bustling tourism industry, with a focus on the environment (ie, marina) and culture (ie, craft shops, art gallery, pub with live music, etc.). Marketed as the only port village in New Brunswick, the community has focused on beautification of the downtown area with green spaces and well-maintained buildings and homes. Sustainable economic development has created new employment opportunities, products and services in the village. Shopping local is more important than ever, and there is a thriving farmer's market and Co-op. Public transportation is available and accessible. There has been an improvement in health services, especially for the elderly and those in need of mental health care. Through careful planning for climate change adaptation, the village has been able to mitigate the effects of sea-level rise. The municipality acts as a leader in the community by producing energy from renewable resources and the village has become carbon neutral. The community has minimized its carbon footprint by adopting environmentally sound practices.

Sustainability-tea participants were asked what they thought their responsibility was in achieving this vision. The majority of respondents offered to volunteer their time on committees working towards these goals. Others indicated that they felt they could take on a leadership role and could communicate the need for environmentally sound principles to those in governance. Participants also felt that supporting the efforts of Council was their responsibility, along with accepting a tax increase to supporting these initiatives. Community members believe that leading by example would be another helpful strategy in achieving their vision for Port Elgin. Lastly, it was suggested that education for all ages is key in communicating the importance of sustainability, both locally and globally.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Sustainabili-tea #1**

1. They live in PE because it's a great place to raise kids. The crime level is low and they feel safe in the community. The husband was born in PE and will never leave as it's "home" and most of his family is here. The wife is from the area and wants to be close to her family too.
2. Their only worry is about the amount of illegal drugs available and they are worried it is going to get worse.
3. In their future they see a great school system (they are not pleased with the present one because of difficulties around issues with their disabled daughter). They see a computer available for every child and every program there is available to help them. They see a close- knit community where people look after each other. There are lots of things for children to do including facilities such as an indoor hockey rink, indoor swimming pool, and other recreational materials.
4. They will help to reach these goals by fundraising and any other way they can, but they do not feel comfortable taking a leadership role.

### **Sustainabili-tea #2**

1. Moved from Moncton to Port Elgin as they wanted to get out of the noise and chaos of the city. Picked Port Elgin because the commute wasn't too far, they fell in love with the house they bought and loved the village. They love the peacefulness and the fact that their grandchildren can play outside safely.
2. Concerned about health services (ambulance and clinic remaining here), lack of public transportation, and the rising water levels.
3. In 30 years they see a place that is still friendly and people are well mannered. There are lots of tourists coming to the marina and there is a boardwalk with shops along it. There are many artists in the area who have workshops that are open to the public. There is a great local farmers market. There are many B & Bs and lots of things for snowmobilers, hikers, and bikers to do when they stop here as they go down the Trans Canada Trail. There are canoes and kayaks to rent to explore the bay and the river. There are retirement condos and a few more businesses than now to provide service for the increased population (a lawyer, accountant, clothing store, couple of restaurants, etc.). There is plenty of public transportation and health services are readily available in the village. Somehow the water level has not affected the village. They do not want to see a large population increase or industry coming in.
4. They will be opening an artist workshop/store next year and will support the efforts of the village council.

### **Sustainabili-tea #3**

1. They came here because of work and met their partners here. Family and work kept them here and they wouldn't think of leaving now. They feel safe here and for over 30 years it has felt like home. They are connected to the community through their work, volunteer jobs, families and friends. They feel this is a very welcoming community. Their support groups are strong including the previous groups and their church. They really like the quaintness of the village, that there are lot of green spaces, and that the houses have large

yards.

2. They are concerned that it will become a retirement community and that the children are disappearing. They are concerned about the lack of employment, that there isn't going to be anything for the children (Guides, basketball, etc.), that the churches will disappear, that the stores will disappear, and that the police protection level will be even worse than it is now. They only have one environmental concern - that there may be oil or gas spills under 2 gas stations that have been torn down which will contaminate the ground water and the river.
3. They see a vibrant small community with an emphasis on enviro-tourism. They see a great marina, a boardwalk along the river, lots of small tourist shops, craft stores, a nice beach, hiking trails, B & Bs, and equipment rentals year round (bikes, kayaks, canoes, skis, snowshoes, snow mobiles, etc.). They see lots of employment through cottage industries but no other factories than Atlantic Windows. They see comprehensive health services available in town including mental health, an art gallery, interest classes for adults and children, lots of children's programs, a community swimming pool, an indoor rink, live theatre, a nice entryway into town, tennis courts, a pub with live music, a bowling alley, and a movie theatre. The community has capitalized on the fact that it is the only port village in NB and the buildings downtown reflect that with bright colours and a nautical theme.
4. They should belong to planning groups and work towards meeting their goals. They are willing to see a modest land tax increase to financially support these initiatives.

#### **Sustainabili-tea #4**

1. Family lives here - It's peaceful and quiet. I have easy access to outdoor activities. Water to canoe and kayak in, snow to ski in, ice to skate on, trails to hike on.
2. Aging population, environmental sustainability issues (resource use, we're not consuming green energy), self determination, lack of economic activity, rising water levels, rising temperatures, continued poor work ethic with some individuals.
3. Still lots of green spaces, no sea level rise, producing our own green energy, no conventional street lights (if at all they will be solar powered), some sense of self governance, influx of enthusiast young people, sustainable economic development, strong community leadership.
4. We all have to be participants. Making changes to my life style so it is more sustainable. Communicating the desire for environmentally sound principles to those in governance. Educational programs for all ages. Becoming a part of the leadership. Volunteering.

#### **Sustainabili-tea #5**

1. Family lives here including aging mother. Know everybody. Feel safe. Can walk down the street and know everybody I see.
2. No work. My daughter is growing up and there is nothing for her to do here. I cannot afford to drive her to Sackville or elsewhere to participate in things. No place for kids to hang out. There is nothing for adults to do either.
3. Recreation building including a pool, indoor ice rink, exercise classes, etc. The high school is back. There

are more businesses downtown and lots of factories to provide work. There is a bigger nursing home, a theatre, a bowling alley, and a bakery.

4. If I win the lottery I will help to pay for things.

### **Sustainabili-tea #6**

1. My work is in Port Elgin, I have many friends in the area, my grown children and grandchild are only an hour away, I want to live in a rural area, I love being by the water, and I love all the nature around me. I can step out my door and go for a swim or put my cross-country skis on and glide away. I can walk to work. The majority of people are really friendly and they pull together when someone needs assistance.

2. My main concern is the rising sea levels. I live on the river and can see the tide getting higher and higher. I am concerned about all environmental problems - green house gas emissions, a lack of concern about the environment from my fellow citizens, having to drive at least a half an hour to buy most things. I am concerned about the village not having the money to provide basic services, never mind extras.

3. The village is carbon neutral and all of our energy is green. The river mouth has been dredged and the cribwork has been repaired. The green spaces have been expanded and the streets are lined with beautiful mature trees. We have a busy farmers market and a nice co-op store. We have professionals in town - lawyer, doctor, accountant, etc. There are increased health services including mental health. There are many hiking trails and flowers planted in all the parks. The increased number of elderly housing units and special care homes have encouraged young workers to move to the area with their families. There is an extremely strong sense of community with block dances, fairs, and other events. Many artists of all types have moved into the area.

4. Keep working with the whole community towards meeting the goals. Be willing to pay an increase in taxes to pay for green initiatives.

### **Sustainabili-tea #7 & #8**

1.

- ❖ By choice. In most cases the people polled were born here and were lucky enough to find work in fishing, farming or lumbering. In some instances, PE's citizens were born here, went to secondary school here, left for post-secondary education and/or employment and returned here because of family connections and/or the simple lifestyle associated with small town living. Some returned with young children because of a perceived safe environment: less crime than in larger centers, neighbors helping neighbors and a quality school system in PERS and TRHS. And in other instances, people came to the village to accept employment in the school, at the window plant, in the stores/shops or to set up their own small businesses.
- ❖ Location, location, location. PE is less than half an hour from two urban centers and less than an hour from a major Maritime city, each offering services not available here in the village. No feeling of isolation here, just an appreciation of a simpler way of life away from the hustle and bustle, traffic, air and noise pollution. The danger posed by wildlife on our roads/highways is an acceptable trade-off.

2.

- ❖ A clean, safe environment (protected from manmade pollutants and natural disasters as much as humanly possible, i.e. storm surge)

- ❖ Our population base
- ❖ Business/industry, the backbone of all communities (keeping people here, bringing people back, attracting newcomers)
- ❖ Quality of life for residents, something for everyone
- ❖ A greater police presence or a quicker response time
- ❖ The image we project to visitors or prospective residents

3.

- ❖ Small town living is not for everybody but for those grandkids who would opt for this lifestyle we would point out that we have addressed the issues, implemented suggestions and/or solutions and have seen our vision take shape over time. The consensus is that PE is home and home is where the heart is and the village has evolved, of necessity, into the thriving, intimate community it is now (2040) where its residents of all ages are integrated, safe and engaged, a great place to work or to play, bring up families, live happily in retirement or to visit if you are not a resident (but wish you were).
- ❖ Our vision for PE includes:

Maintaining the business / industry which we have now and attracting or creating new ones in order to keep people here and bring others in. Besides Atlantic Windows, PERS and Westford Nursing Home are our other largest employers. All other businesses in town (the credit union, the post office, the pharmacy, a grocery store, a hardware store, a convenience store/gas bar, a restaurant, two inns, a library, a redemption center, a health center, another nursing home, PEDVAC and the municipality itself) each employ a small full-time staff.

Accentuating the positive and capitalizing on our natural attributes by utilizing and promoting the charming little river that runs through the village. Some people see building a boardwalk along the river with kiosks: a gift shop, coffee/sandwich shop, canoe and kayak rentals with a boat slip and docking area for small watercraft in the middle of town.

Supporting racetrack development. (Kudos to the committee working hard to restore harness racing in the village.)

Offering more organized recreation for youth, seniors and everyone in between (outside of school sponsored activities) with an emphasis on summer sports, e.g. tennis, softball, lawn bowling, horseshoes. We already have a tennis court and a ball field, neither of which has been maintained and consequently cannot be used in their present condition. It would seem that it is time for grant workers to be hired to restore the tennis court and organize and schedule summer sport for all ages.

Projecting a positive image to the public (in both virtual and real-time). There needs to be more 'teeth' in the Unsightly Premises Act. Our streets should be swept clean for summer visitors and residents alike. Our vehicles, homes and businesses are covered in gravel dust all summer. PE should be promoted as a destination 'getaway' for all seasons, but first we have to look the part...a quaint, clean and vibrant little community. And last but not least...

Adopting environmentally sound practices with regard to our water, air and land use and minimizing our carbon footprint.

4.

Our responsibility in achieving our vision entails:

- ❖ Getting involved...by volunteering, assisting, joining, suggesting, requesting, questioning, doing and otherwise supporting community initiatives with regard to sustainability.
- ❖ Educating ourselves... about the importance of sustainability locally and globally.
- ❖ Living our lives in a more eco-friendly manner... everyone's a winner!
- ❖ Developing pride of place.

### **Sustainabili-tea #9**

1. Sure.
2. More shops to buy things.
3. No.

### **Sustainabili-tea #10**

1. Sure.
2. More sports teams and activities to do.
3. No.

### **Sustainabili-tea #11**

1. Quiet atmosphere.
2. Not being up kept; too many run down buildings.
3. I'd like to think that there will be an emphasis on making vacant spots more attractive; make pond more welcoming. Create park & seating at Main St. & Shimogue (right on corner).
4. To do my part in keeping property up kept. General maintenance & pride in my home.