

Cumberland North
Pre-Budget Submission
2024-2025

Presented to Department of Finance of Nova Scotia

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Cumberland North

Cumberland North is the most northern constituency in Nova Scotia and is located in Cumberland County. Cumberland North includes the geographic area that borders the province of New Brunswick and extends along the Northumberland Shore as far as the county line for Colchester, close to Tatamagouche.

As the elected public representative of Cumberland North, it is my responsibility to voice the concerns of the people and represent their viewpoints.

It is also my responsibility to assist in problem solving and develop expertise in areas of importance to Cumberland North, share ideas for new laws, amendments of existing laws, all in an effort to empower the people of Cumberland North and Building Cumberland County, the Province of Nova Scotia and the entire Maritime Region.

Executive Summary

The people of Cumberland County have felt separated from the rest of the province of Nova Scotia for the last few decades. Previous governments have placed tolls separating Cumberland County from the rest of the province, provincial offices have been removed from Cumberland, centralizing government services including health and education. In general, there has been a lack of investment in capital infrastructure in the area. Cumberland residents want to see a return to local decision making, where the people's voices matter and are valued as in the principles of democracy.

The people of Cumberland North stand on principles of truth and justice and have an overall desire to see a collective growth of prosperity in the area. Building a stronger Cumberland County and Region is a common goal.

Rural Nova Scotia and primary industries have been neglected and the time has come to make Cumberland and all rural Nova Scotia a priority.

The people of Cumberland County has suffered undue hardship due to the pandemic and the Mass Shooting that occurred in April 2020. The effects of border restrictions and the mass shooting will have lasting negative effects on our region unless there is a purposeful shift towards Maritime Collaboration and investment into Cumberland County.

This document provides a list of recommendations to build Cumberland County stronger which will in turn strengthen the entire province, the Maritime Region and in fact the entire country of Canada. In some cases, I have tabled bills in the Legislature to provide solutions, where applicable, the bill is included in this document.

2024-2025 Recommendations

Maritime Collaboration

The Maritime provinces are connected geographically and consequently share an economy that requires governments to work together to create a competitive region both nationally and globally.

All financial planning for Nova Scotia should be done through a lens of collaboration with fellow Maritime provinces.

Chignecto Isthmus Protection

Rising sea levels threaten farmland on the Chignecto Isthmus as well as the local towns of Amherst, NS and Sackville, NB and infrastructure connecting Nova Scotia with New Brunswick and North America. On average, more than 32 Billion worth of goods are transported through the Chignecto Isthmus yearly. The isthmus contains the supply chain for both rail and roadways. Past governments have failed to make financial commitments to the repairs needed. The people of Cumberland North urge the NS government, NB government and Federal government to invest now in the protection of this valuable Isthmus.

The dikes and aboiteaux along the Chignecto Isthmus are in urgent need of repair. This is a problem that has needed to be addressed for several years and is considered by the UN to be one of the three greatest risks due to climate change.

<https://research.fit.edu/media/site-specific/researchfitedu/coast-climate-adaptation-library/canadaamp-arctic/canada---atlantic/Webster-et-al.-2012.--An-Evaluation-of-Flood-Risk-to-Infrastructure-Acrossthe-Chignecto-Isthmus.pdf>

An Act to Strengthen and Protect the Chignecto Isthmus—
A Key Section of the Atlantic Gateway

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b073.htm

Affordability

This is a major priority in Cumberland North. Cumberland County has one of the highest levels of poverty in the province as well as the highest percentage of people with disabilities.

Inflation and the rising costs for everything from food, gas, rent, mortgage rates, property valuation assessments and more are causing stress for most people.

Some solutions that the people of Cumberland have proposed are included in these requests to the Department of Finance.

Remove tax on tax

Currently Nova Scotians are paying 15% HST on top of provincial motive fuel tax of 15.5 cents/litre, federal excise tax 10 cents/litre and carbon tax which is increasing over time. No one should be paying tax on tax.

Property tax should be a deduction for income taxes so that residents are not paying personal income tax on property taxes that have been paid.

An Act to Eliminate the Payment of Taxes on Tax

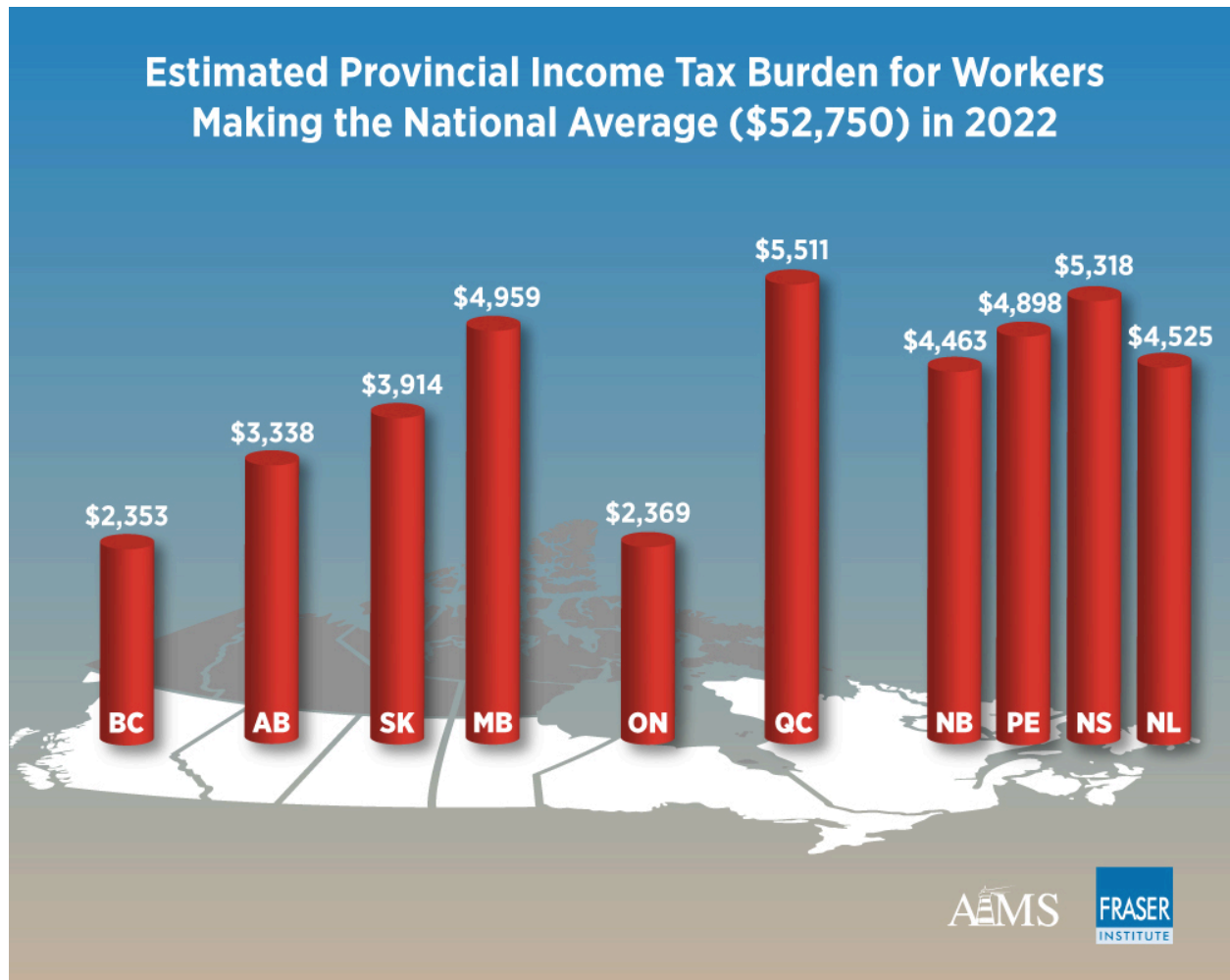
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b355.htm

Index income tax brackets to the Consumer Price Index

Nova Scotians pay income tax that is more in line with other provinces instead of being the highest in the country.

An Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Income Tax Act, Respecting Tax Brackets

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b244.htm



<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/file/provincial-marginal-tax-rates-middle-income-canada-infographicjpg>

Increase the Basic Personal Exemption

The first deduction on income tax calculations must be increased and be on par with other Canadian provinces so Nova Scotians would keep more of their own hard-earned money. The basic personal exemption should also be indexed every year in line with CPI.

An Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Income Tax Act, Respecting the Basic Personal Amount

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b275.htm

Remove the tax on used vehicles

Remove the sales tax on Used Vehicles

An Act Respecting Used Vehicles

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b354.htm

Control Property Taxes

Ensure property taxes are kept affordable by limiting the increase in the taxable assessed value of qualified properties to the lesser of 2.5% and the increase in the Consumer Price Index for Nova Scotia.

An Act to Amend Chapter 23 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Assessment Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b175.htm

Increase Access To Local Food

Increase access to local food production by offering grants – for both residential and commercial projects – for the construction of greenhouses. This will reduce the need for imported, more expensive produce and help to increase local food production.

Buy Maritime First Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b392.htm

An Act to Establish a Greenhouse Rebate Program

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b180.htm

An Act to Support Commercial Greenhouses and Vertical Farming

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b393.htm

Healthcare

Cumberland North borders New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The residents of Cumberland North sees the need to collaborate with the Minister of Health for New Brunswick and the Minister of Health and Wellness for Prince Edward Island to jointly lobby the federal government for Canada Health Transfer payments based on the demographics of the Maritime Provinces; and

(b) create a maritime health network that provides equitable health-care access to residents of the Maritime Provinces irrespective of provincial borders.

(2) The maritime health network must address seamless access to

(a) acute clinic care;

(b) effective and efficient administration;

(c) emergency health services;

(d) health professional education and licensing;

(e) home care;

(f) integration of information and communication technologies (E-health);

(g) long-term care;

(h) mental health and addictions services;

(i) pharmacare;

(j) prescription monitoring;

(k) primary health care;

(l) public health services; and

(m) virtual care.

In collaboration with the Minister of Health for New Brunswick and the Minister of Health and Wellness for Prince Edward Island, shall annually review to find further efficiencies and ways to further reduce barriers to health-care access.

An Act to Provide for a Maritime Clinical Health Service Strategy

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b181.htm

Leadership

The person leading the healthcare system must have expertise in the healthcare field and have healthcare administration experience. The Health Authorities Act must be amended to reflect this need. The administrator appointed shall lead with a patient-centred approach, always placing the needs of the patient first.

An Act Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act, to Ensure the Needs of the Patient Come First

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b195.htm

Positive Change Comes with Local Decision Making

Each Regional hospitals must have control and management of the recruitment and hiring of medical, nursing and allied health-care professionals and hospital staff. The centralized approach has been shown not to provide the health outcomes that taxpayers need and deserve. Each Regional hospital should submit a clinical health-services plan to the Minister of Health and Wellness and the province-wide plan should be developed by local input. An Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act,
Respecting Local Decision-making

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b248.htm

Improved Governance and Safety Committee for Healthcare

New directors must be appointed to the health authority within one year of dismissing a previous board. Premier Houston dismissed the health authority board soon after being elected in 2021 and has never reinstated. An administrator acting in place of a board of directors must appoint a quality improvement and safety committee if one has not been appointed by the board. There must be a quality improvement and safety committee to take actions to uphold standards of care and create and administer a plan to ensure patients' concerns are responded to. This has been consistently happening and many patients that contacted the MLA office that sent in complaints never received a response from anyone in NS Health.

An Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b376.htm

Improve Patient Safety

The healthcare system must maintain a comprehensive and responsive system for receiving, investigating and resolving patient complaints respecting adverse events. The Minister of Health and Wellness should appoint a patient safety and quality advisory committee.

An Act to Amend Chapter 13 of the Acts of 2012, the Patient Safety Act
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b294.htm

Funds for Physician Recruitment

Specifically recruitment is needed for family physicians for Pugwash and Amherst and Psychiatrists for Cumberland Regional. Family Physicians are needed that are willing to provide comprehensive primary care. Psychiatrist Physicians are needed that are willing to provide an on-call service and work to meet acute needs at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre as well as chronic needs in the community. There has been significant improvement over the last three months however more can be done to ensure mental illness is given equitable access similar to physical illnesses.

Since NS Health and the Department of Health and Wellness have not been able to recruit the physicians needed, it is recommended that a physician recruitment company be hired to get the results needed for the people to have access to primary healthcare.

An Act Respecting Physician Recruitment

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b247.htm

EHS - Emergency Health Services

The people of Cumberland County are too often been placed in situations where there are no ambulances in the county at any given time. This has become commonplace. This is due to the ambulances being pulled to other areas of the province with an underlying problem of offloading delays. While we appreciate there are province-wide needs, the people of Cumberland should never be put in situations where emergency services are not available in a safe and timely manner. The provincial government contracts the emergency ambulance services to a private company however the government is not ensuring the private company are meeting standards of care and KPI. Since the provincial government will not hold the private company accountable for the responsibility to provide the emergency services under their contract, the government must look for another approach.

It is imperative to improve the delivery of care by, and restore the confidence of Nova Scotians in ambulance services in the Province by mandating a Strategy that will lead to the creation of a Provincial ambulance service.

An Act Respecting the Creation of a Provincial Ambulance Service

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b338.htm

Residents of Nova Scotia have the right to expect reasonable access to emergency health services in a timely manner. Wait times in Nova Scotia for ambulances and in regional hospital emergency departments have become, in many cases, very long and unpredictable. Individuals and families should have up-to-date information available on when an ambulance may arrive and how long they may have to wait in an emergency department in order to make informed decisions on how they will access care. The late Allison Holthoff, a resident of Cumberland County, died after waiting many hours for care at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre emergency department. The Bill below recommends making ER wait times public for Regional Hospitals and

placing GPS trackers on ambulances similar to what is done for snowplows in NS.

Ali's Bill: An Act Respecting Ambulance and Emergency Room Wait Times
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b267.htm.

After Allison Holthoff's death it became very apparent that the legislation around fatal investigations need to be improved upon. The Chief Medical Examiner to recommend to the Minister of Justice that a fatality inquiry be held where a death occurs under certain circumstances at a health-care facility and the Chief Medical Examiner determines that it is in the public interest for an inquiry to be held; and require the Minister to order that a fatality inquiry be held where any death occurs at a health-care facility and the Minister determines that an inquiry into the death is in the public interest or the interest of public safety.

An Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2001, the Fatality Investigations Act
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b293.htm

Cumberland North borders New Brunswick and we have strong cross border communities. Health services such as emergency health services should be integrated into cross border communities ensuring that local needs are met, not based on provinces but rather as a region.

An Act to Establish a Cross-border Emergency Ambulance Services Strategy
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b295.htm

Ensure that any provider of ambulance services reports monthly to the Minister on the following key performance indicators:

- (a) time to dispatch first ambulance after receiving an emergency call;
- (b) time for ambulance to respond to life-threatening events; and
- (c) time to release ambulance from hospital after a drop-off.

The reports above must be made publicly available on the Department of Health and Wellness website within one week of receipt by the Minister.

An Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2005, the Emergency Health Services Act, to Create Accountability for Emergency Ambulance Services

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b192.htm

Expansion of the Emergency Department at CCRHCC

There were plans announced for expansion and renovation of the CCRHCC Emergency Department in December 2020. I request the timeline for this expansion be expedited due to the urgent needs. Since the ER was built in 2001, the ER departments in neighbouring community hospitals have been reduced and this has placed increased demand at CCRHCC. The ER is too small physically to meet the demands. This is needed now and on behalf of the community, I request this be an urgent priority for government. Although improvements have been made after a flooding incident with regards to visualization of waiting room by triage staff, the ER treatment area continues to be too small to safely provide care and manage the admitted patients often kept in the ER for several days.

Walking and Scooter Access to CRHCC and/or Public Transportation

When CCRHCC was built in 2001, walking access was promised to the residents of the area. To this date, the province has not provided this. A bridge over the TransCanada Highway (TCH) or a tunnel under the TCH providing access is needed. The infrastructure costs should be paid by the province. Another viable option is to provide a public transportation system, daily route from Downtown Amherst to CRHCC and done in a loop fashion throughout the day. The public transport would also assist with those requiring access to grocery stores as there are currently none in the downtown area.

Pharmacare

The current practices by Pharmacare in Nova Scotia lead to increased costs for the patients and for government. Inefficient communication and disrespect of primary health care professionals medical opinions are the cause. Inefficiencies are caused by slow communication practices of only using Canada Post rather than using email or faxes with medical professionals. Disrespect is shown to physicians and nurse practitioners by pharmacare staff making decisions to deny medications for patients that are being recommended by medical professionals. Cardiologists with 10 years of medical training are having their medication recommendations denied by persons working in Pharmacare. One can assume that the Pharmacare budgetary restraints are the cause for these decisions. Please change these practices. Delaying the most appropriate medical treatment recommended by qualified medical professionals should not be allowed to continue and does not save money in the long run. Seniors should not be charged a late enrolment penalty; and there should be no copayment charged to persons enrolled in the Seniors' Pharmacare Program with respect to the Program.

An Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2011, the Fair Drug Pricing Act,
Respecting the Seniors' Pharmacare Program
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b359.htm

Recruitment of Nurses

There is urgent need to invest in the recruitment and retention of licensed practical nurses and registered nurses. Also the hiring practices of Nova Scotia Health must change to become more efficient and effective. Each hospital must have the power to hire the staff they need. This is in line with local-decision making as the government promised but have not delivered. Prospective staff should receive personal phone calls from NS Health and not only rely on email and other non-personal approaches to hiring.

Whistleblower Protection for Healthcare Workers

Many healthcare workers are intimidated and will not report problems within healthcare system. There is a need for improvements confidential reporting measures to protect healthcare workers to report unsafe conditions.

An Act to Protect Whistle-blowing by Health-care Workers
https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b290.htm

Physicians who obtain medical degree outside of Canada

There are many Nova Scotian residents that have studied medicine in other countries, often because they could not get into Dalhousie Medical School. These doctors will stay in Nova Scotia if we can provide a family medicine residency program here. I recommend our government create a rotating internship for these doctors and offer them medical careers here in Nova Scotia.

Palliative Care

CRHCC does not currently have any designated palliative care beds. The Palliative care team has requested beds to be designated.

The Cumberland County Hospice and Palliative Care Society Hospices provide a compassionate and supportive community of staff, volunteers, and donors dedicated to making dying as comfortable and as meaningful as possible at the end of life. The local Hospice Society have met with the Department of Health & Wellness in the past to request funds for operational expenses.

Unfortunately, no funding has been provided to this date. Please consider funding this hospice and meeting with board members to discuss how government can financially support a hospice in Cumberland County for the dignity of our aging residents.

Creation of acute care psychiatric beds at CCRHCC or another Cumberland hospital such as All Saints Hospital

There are no beds for patients with mental illness or acute illness due to addictions in Cumberland. Local stakeholders report persons at risk being not receiving necessary medical care at Cumberland hospitals. Hospital staff need to have acute care beds for MH patients in Cumberland and not have to rely on Colchester Psych Unit that often has no capacity available.

Expansion of the Detox Unit at All Saints Hospital

Patients with addictions that have been ready for detox have been denied care due to lack of beds available. The detox must be expanded back to be open 7 days a week and never close.

Crisis Team for Mental Illness and Addictions 24/7

The mental health crisis team is currently only available 9-3 Monday thru Friday. The lack of access for persons in mental health crisis is a real barrier for supports for patients in need. The Mental Health Crisis Team must be available 24/7. A mobile unit would be ideal to work with law enforcement and community stakeholders. Addictions is a real burden to many in our community and many are in high-risk situations. The lack of health care services for mental illness is causing great distress in our community. All community services are stressed especially law enforcement. This has been an ongoing major problem since I was first elected in 2017, however it is worsening. The only access to help in a crisis is the emergency department. Unfortunately, sometimes, there is a stigma culture against mental illness and addictions at the CRHCC. There is a need for education and training of staff including commissionaires and security staff. This is needed now so that persons coming to the hospital in need of medical care actually receive it.

Youth and Recovery Supports in the Community

Many youths have struggled with mental illness and addictions. A group of Moms have started a social enterprise called "In The Works". The social enterprise supports youth in recovery from mental health or addiction issues. There is much community support and the local Credit Union is providing a building for the first project. In The Works is modelled after the REACH Foundation located in Prince Edward Island. REACH has a full-time mental

health worker to support those in the program. Funding is requested to provide a mental health worker for the In The Works here in Cumberland.

Replacement of East Cumberland Lodge

Cumberland North has three long-term care facilities, and two of them are in desperate need of replacement. Gables Lodge is located in Amherst and owned by Gem Health and East Cumberland Lodge in Pugwash is owned by the Municipality of Cumberland. Both buildings are old, have few single rooms and are in need of replacement. A commitment was made last year by the previous government to replace Gables. This building replacement should be a priority.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Office of Adult Protection and request accountability

Currently many community leaders, including law enforcement, medical community and others believe the Adult Protection office does not effectively "protect" adults. Changes are needed to ensure that when doctors, law enforcement and other community members call with concerns of an adult needing protection that assessments are done and action is taken to protect the adult.

To start improving accountability Adult Protection office should maintain a record respecting reports that an adult is in need of protection; and prepare and table an annual report respecting such record.

An Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Adult Protection Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b034.htm

Invest in Addictions and remove Illegal drugs off the streets

Illegal drugs are entering Nova Scotia at an alarming rate. The Town of Amherst is an entry point for illegal drugs. In the past four years I have met with local RCMP and Town Police to discuss this several times. One of the solutions identified was to work more collaboratively with neighbouring New Brunswick. Soon thereafter, the pandemic began, and no real improvements have been realized, in fact, the problem of illegal drugs has appeared to have increased dramatically. There is a Cross Border Policing Act, and I would like to see our two provinces working together to reduce these harmful substances from making their way to our streets.

Protect Youth from Illegal Drugs

I had met with former Minister of Justice to share the concerns of parents and community members about the lack of protection for youth living in dangerous situations like known drug houses. Too many of our youth are being trafficked, drugged, and abused. We must do more to protect them. Currently neither DCS nor Justice departments have legislation in place to protect youth.

New and Expectant Mothers

A few years ago the province of Nova Scotia stopped offering prenatal classes by Public Health. This was very negative and did not respect the significant importance of healthy pregnancies and health Moms and parents. There is a need to lower the rates new and expectant mothers experience of: (i) postpartum depression, (ii) urinary incontinence, (iii) pelvic organ prolapse, (iv) painful intercourse, and (v) generalized pelvic, hip and back pain; There is a need to increasing the breastfeeding rates for women who choose to breastfeed and education and supports are needed for this as well as enhancing healthy infant care and outcomes. A minimum of six prenatal classes provided by a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse; a minimum of two

breastfeeding classes provided by a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse who is certified as a lactation consultant; and an in-home visit provided by a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse within 48 hours of the mother being discharged from the hospital. Every hospital that provides obstetrics shall set a goal to meet the World Health Organization's Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative by 2025, including ensuring a minimum of 50% of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses who work in an obstetrics unit are certified as lactation consultants and ensuring all registered nurses and licensed practical nurses who work in an obstetrics unit are certified to provide pelvic floor physiotherapy; and offering a minimum of 10 sessions of pelvic-floor physiotherapy to each new mother before she is discharged. A public education program for new and expectant mothers is needed on (i) the prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome, (ii) the prevention of postpartum depression, (iii) breastfeeding, and (iv) pelvic floor therapy; (b) create a support line to help new mothers with postpartum depression; and (c) develop breast milk banks across the Province to assist new mothers with breastfeeding.

An Act Respecting Health Care for New and Expectant Mothers

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b016.htm

Diabetes

Establish a Diabetes Framework aimed at preventing and managing diabetes. The Diabetes Framework should include coverage for all diabetes medications under Pharmacare; the provision of a continuous glucose monitoring system at no cost to the patient if a primary care provider orders it; and diabetic foot care at no cost to a diabetic.

An Act to Establish a Diabetes Framework for Nova Scotia

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b245.htm

Shingles Vaccine

The provision and administration of the Shingrix vaccine for shingles should be an insured professional service under the MSI Program for residents age 50 or over.

An Act to Amend Chapter 197 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Health Services and Insurance Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b179.htm

Clinical Procurement

Create an office of a Medical Procurement Officer who is responsible for a new Clinical Procurement Office. Currently in Nova Scotia health/clinical procurement is completed by the same staff as those doing general construction and IT procurement. This allegedly is leading to lack of efficiencies and delays in getting health infrastructure completed on budget and on time.

An Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2011, the Public Procurement Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b286.htm

Sexual Assault and Family Violence

Women in Cumberland have identified a non-supportive culture in the department of Justice surrounding issues of sexual assault and domestic abuse. Women throughout the province have identified a need to improve the culture in policing as well so that when victims come forward there is a supportive environment. This is systemic and longstanding. Victims have faced delays in charges being laid. Victims have faced cases being dropped due to Jordan's Rule due to long delays in the justice system. Women have experienced a culture of misogyny.

Train more Crown Prosecutors and Judges in sexual assault and violence

Nova Scotia has trained a limited number Crown Prosecutors to become specialized in Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence. Unfortunately, these specially trained CP's are not prosecuting all sexual assault cases in the province. Further to that, I have had alleged victims of sexual assault come to me to share concerns of criminal charges being dropped due to the pandemic. The cases brought to my attention were fully investigated by both law enforcement, SANE nurses, and charges were subsequently laid only to have long delays prevent the alleged victims from their day in court. It is disappointing to see the government dismiss the importance of victims of sexual assault and family violence. There is clearly a need to educate more Crown Prosecutors and change the culture around sexual assault and domestic violence. The courage shown by the alleged victims in these cases is not being respected by the Provincial Courts.

An Act to Provide Protection for Victims Who Disclose Sexual Assault

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b285.htm

An Act to Support Sexual Assault Victims

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b243.htm

An Act Prohibiting Non-disclosure Agreements with Political Parties

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b278.htm

Similar to the Federal Law called Keira's Law, a law is needed in Nova Scotia where the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia shall establish education courses for judges of the Court respecting sexual assault law, intimate partner violence, coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships and social context.

An Act to Amend Chapter 238 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Provincial Court Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b361.htm

Education investment in Sexual Assault and violence

Curriculum changes in schools are needed to foster positive changes in sexual behaviour. Specifically, we must strive to reduce sexual assault and violence. Clear measurables should be regularly made available so we can best measure progress outside reported incidents of sexual assault.

University Campus Sexual violence

This is a major problem on university campuses. The culture of sexual violence must change. Although there is no university campus in Cumberland North, I have young women that have been victims of sexual violence on NS university campuses and the university's have pushed the problem under the rug. Investment is needed to support the work to change the accepted culture of sexual assault.

Sexual Assault in the Legislative Assembly or a Political Party/Independent MLA

Legislation must change to require each person to whom the House of Assembly Workplace and Harassment Policy applies to begin receiving ongoing in-person education and training respecting harassment in the workplace within six months of becoming a person to whom the policy applies;

(b) not include a time limitation respecting when a complaint must be made or filed;

(c) provide a clear statement that sexual assault is a crime and guidelines as to what constitutes sexual assault under the Criminal Code (Canada); and

(d) require that any sexual assault complaint immediately be reported by the Speaker to the proper authorities upon the complaint being made.

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b281.htm

The College of Physicians and Surgeons must restrict a physicians license if they are found guilty of sexual misconduct.

An Act to Amend Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2011, the Medical Act, Respecting Sexual Misconduct

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b045.htm

Addictions

Gaming Addictions

Addictions to gambling is becoming an increasing problem. By prohibiting the display or broadcast of gambling advertisements in places or through mediums, where persons under the age of majority are likely to be influenced by the advertisements ; and exempt activities aimed at raising funds for a community benefit from gambling advertisement prohibitions to help reduce the incidence of gambling in our youth.

An Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Gaming Control Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b300.htm

An Act to Protect Children from Abusing Drugs

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b009.htm

Internet and Cell Service and Emergency 911

This is not available to all residents in Cumberland County due to a lack of cell phone service. There are also some areas along the Northumberland Shore that 911 calls go to PEI or NB instead of NS. This happened again just this past week and caused a delay in fire service being contacted for a few fires.

Improvements are needed in cell tower coverage to ensure all Nova Scotians have access to 911 service.

This Bill requires the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that emergency calls to 911 from within Nova Scotia go directly to an answering point within Nova Scotia.

An Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1992, the Emergency "911" Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b166.htm

Medically At-Risk Registry

After both Hurricane Dorian and Fiona as well as the common power outages has shown there is a need for an At-Risk Registry for persons medically at risk. This would include persons who are on home oxygen, home dialysis, ventilation and more.

An Act to Create a Medically at-Risk Registry

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b380.htm

Housing

Local stakeholders and elected officials from Cumberland have met several times in the past few years to address the urgent housing shortage. We have requested the necessary funding to hire a Housing Coordinator for Cumberland County but so far this has not been provided.

Cumberland County, specifically the Village of Pugwash and area and the Town of Amherst require provincial and federal support for infrastructure for roads, water and sewer.

Red tape and bureaucracy must be reduced by the province so that building contractors can build as efficiently as possible.

An effort must be made to enable young people can afford to become homeowners. This can be achieved through incentives for first-time homebuyers.

Armoury

The Armoury in the Town of Amherst has been divested by the Federal Department of Defence. This has been a significant loss to the strength of the area as locals do not have easy access to train for reservists or the active armed forces. This decision by the Feds should be reversed but if this is not possible, the provincial government can purchase the building or assist with funding for a local community group and use for community events.

Veteran Medical Clinic

Veterans have sacrificed their lives for our country. They deserve safe and accessible medical care. Premier Houston made a commitment in the fall session of the legislature to meet with stakeholders and implement a Veteran's Walk in Clinic. I am requesting that funds be allocated to ensure this comes to fruition.

Free Hunting and Fishing Licenses for Veterans

Amend the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act and the Wildlife Act to allow veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces to hunt in the Province and angle and fish recreationally in Provincial waters without needing to obtain a licence or pay a fee.

An Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 1996, the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act, and Chapter 504 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Wildlife Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b347.htm

Education

The provincial government must have supports in place for children with needs such as autism and other health needs. Inclusion policy states all children should be able to attend school and receive an education however currently the supports are not in place to enable the Inclusion Policy to be effectively be implemented. This is causing great stress amongst educational staff and administration, parents and students.

Violence in Schools

Violence in schools is increasing. Efforts must be made immediately to support students and teachers.

Province wide School Lunch Program

Cumberland County has a non-profit society in place for cafeteria services that is willing to be a pilot site for the testing of this program. PEI has a successful school lunch program that we could use as a basis for creating an NS-focused model. The Premier communicated support for this initiative in the fall legislative session after I tabled a Notice of Motion.

Education investment in Forestry

Curriculum changes are needed in schools to adapt to the evolving priorities of climate change. The Cumberland Forestry Advisory Committee have advocated for accurate forestry information to be added to school curricula.

Education investment in Cyberbullying

Curriculum changes are needed to foster healthy social media behaviours and reduce cyberbullying. The Department of Education's own statistics showed an increase of more than 100 incidents of cyberbullying in 2020-2021.

Replacement of EB Chandler Junior High School

This school will need to be replaced due to age of the physical structure. Can an assessment be done and this school be placed on the replacement capital plan and a financial commitment made for the replacement of this school.

Economic

Agriculture

Invest in Farming Infrastructure and Increase Productivity Cumberland County has rich soil and many productive farms. However, over the last 20 years there has been a decline in farming productivity and revenue for many reasons, one significant reason was BSE. The farmers in Cumberland County want to increase productivity getting all unused farmland back into use. Farmers also need access to funds for infrastructure such as barns and equipment. We would like a plan for Cumberland County and have the Department work with us to implement.

Cell and Internet

Build more cell phone towers and improve internet connectivity Economic development is being thwarted due to a lack of adequate internet access and cell phone coverage along the Northumberland Strait; the area I hear the most concern from stretches from Tidnish to Malagash. Many people have moved along the shore to "work from home" and are having great difficulty due to lack of internet. It would be in this government's best interest to uphold their platform promises and immediately act to bring internet coverage to fruition.

Storm drains need to be replaced in the Village of Pugwash

Storm drains need to replace in the community of Wallace

Trunk 6 between Warren and Linden

This area requires paving this next fiscal year before more damage is done which lead to higher repair costs.

Paved and Gravel Road Repairs

A list of roads and their priority was discussed at a meeting with officials from Public Works your department in November 2023 and also discussed with both area managers Chris Verge (Colchester) and Adam Cameron (Cumberland).

Trail connectivity for OHV

A bridge over the TCH or a tunnel under the TCH would serve to provide accessibility to the hospital as well as a trail for OHV. Off-Highway Vehicles have huge potential to boost economic activity in Cumberland and throughout all Nova Scotia and the Maritime Region. Currently the only piece missing is a connection across or under the Trans-Canada Highway near or on Exit 4 outside of Amherst. We are requesting a bridge or a tunnel in this location that could allow trail connectivity in Cumberland so that maps of legal trails could be made, and marketing of OHV trails could be done. This could be used for both OHV and person accessing the CCRHCC.

OHV Tourism marketing and maps

Cumberland County has a diverse set of trails for Off-Highway Vehicles which were developed by volunteers and trail committees. We are missing maps and marketing that could bring millions of dollars of tourism revenue to Nova Scotia through Cumberland County. We are requesting support to develop maps and a marketing plan to attract these OHV enthusiasts. Off-Highway Vehicles have huge potential to boost economic activity in Cumberland and throughout all Nova Scotia and the Maritime Region.

Invest in a Provincial Museum

Cumberland North is home to a rich heritage and culture that traces back to the early 1600's. The Indigenous, the French and the British battled over the land known as Beaubassin and Fort Lawrence. This area is home to the

Acadian people before their expulsion. Beaubassin is a perfect location for tourism development and currently Cumberland North is one of the only areas of the province that does not have a provincial museum. We are requesting the province to work with the people of our area to create a provincial museum at Beaubassin. This is adjacent to the already existing Visitor Information Centre located at the entrance to NS.

Tidnish Pedestrian Walking Bridge

The pedestrian walking bridge in Tidnish is owned by the provincial government. The bridge has needed repairs for a few years. The taxpayers of the area have made numerous requests for it to be repaired. A study has already been done and request repairs to be completed by Summer of 2022.

Nature Development

The Pugwash Estuary is located along the Pugwash River. There is a large group of committed community members that would like to further develop this area into trails for nature walks, birding, canoeing and other outdoor activities.

The Pugwash Yacht Club and the Bill Mundle Marina

A vibrant organization, eagerly seeking to develop the Pugwash area to attract boaters from the Maritime region. Meetings have been held in the past with Develop NS and the local folks would love to work with the provincial government to reach the potential in this naturally beautiful harbour and estuary. Funds are required for dredging. The municipality and federal governments have both made a financial commitment and the community is awaiting provincial support.

Develop Blue Sea Beach

Community members in the Malagash area would like to develop Blue Sea Beach. They had applied for a "placemaking" fund in the past but have not been able to secure any financial support. This entire area of Malagash is ripe for tourism development and the community members have several ideas to improve upon the beach to draw more visitors. Funding is needed.

Develop Heather Beach as per residents wishes.

Sportsplex Wellness Recreational Centre

The Municipal governments in Cumberland County have identified a need for a Wellness Centre to provide physical space for recreational activities. This is a strategic priority, and I am requesting the provincial government to work with our town and county to build a wellness centre like ones we see in other communities such as Liverpool, Port Hawkesbury and Truro.

Expansion of the Amherst Industrial Park to the west side of the Trans-Canada Highway

Over the past two decades, we have witnessed significant growth in Moncton. As a result, many of the distribution centres were interested in Amherst due to the proximity to the TCH and rail line; however, larger lots are needed with infrastructure in place of water and sewer. Because much of this area is wooded, I request your government support expansion of business opportunities here by providing funding for infrastructure needs, including infrastructure to support water and sewer services. Preparing these lots will bring in a great deal of activity for our economy.

Invest in Renewable Energy

Cumberland County has much potential to assist in supplying the province with renewable energy by 2030. Several landowners in the Fort Lawrence area are interested in renting land for wind turbines. It would be a wonderful opportunity for your government to discuss this further with these residents. There is also great geothermal energy potential in our county. A Solar Farm was built in Amherst recently and we are eager to be involved in energy projects.

Pulp Wood Market Needed Urgently

Since the closure of Northern Pulp there is no market for low grade pulp wood. Unfortunately most of the pulp is being left on the ground since the closures of Nova Scotia's only pulp mill. I am requesting your government work directly with the Cumberland Forestry Advisory Committee. This committee formed after the closure of the pulp mill. Cumberland has a long history of having a vibrant forestry sector. Within Nova Scotia, Cumberland County accounts for the largest amount of wood harvested annually yet none of the provincial transitional funding was allocated to Cumberland County forestry projects. The government will have better outcomes if they work with the landowners and people that actually work in the forestry industry. If there is no buyer for pulp wood, this could lead to worsening forestry practices. Foresters in Cumberland County want to participate in a healthy and sustainable future for forestry.

Invest in the growth of Oyster Farming

Oyster Farming is currently being done in the Malagash Bay. Discussion with locals indicate there is untapped potential with unused licenses for oyster farming. The Oyster industry in PEI does not have the supply to meet the global demand. I am requesting the department to investigate if there is

opportunity to grow our economy through Oyster Farming to help meet the demands for this unique quality product.

NSCC Students can aid in Housing Crisis

Trades are urgently needed for the construction of housing. There are untapped opportunities for trades to be more "hands-on". This would benefit the demand for workers while providing more practical learning for students studying various trades- particularly carpentry, plumbing and electrical. I have several tradespeople that are willing to take on students here in Cumberland North as soon as possible.

Build NSCC Campus Downtown Amherst

NSCC is an incredible institution of learning. Currently, the Amherst campus is costing our provincial government over one million dollars a year in rent and is located in an area that is not reaching the potential spin-off benefits that NSCC could have in our town. Over the years, local representatives and experts in the field have communicated a belief that if the province used those funds to build a province-owned campus in the downtown area of Amherst, the economic spinoffs would be very beneficial to all. We are requesting that an analysis be done with the goal of construction of a new campus. The influx of students in the downtown will be a significant boost to the economy.

Real supports for Entrepreneurs

Under the former government, economic supports by the Province were mostly removed. This inhibited growth to both small, medium, and large enterprises. I hope that under this governments leadership the government will offer a suite of initiatives that will aid entrepreneurs.

Immigration of Workers

The number one concern business owners have communicated is the lack of an available labour force. This is not unique to Cumberland however if we are going to have a thriving economy we will need workers. Supporting immigration to Cumberland North and Nova Scotia is important. We have a successful history of persons immigrating to our area and staying to raise their family. Establishing regional immigration offices will be beneficial. My constituency office receives regular inquiries and having a provincial office here in Amherst would benefit persons greatly. We have a very diverse population and an active multicultural association who would provide community supports. Please consider Amherst as a location for a Regional Immigration Office.

Other

An Act to Stop the Burying of Plastic in Nova Scotia

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b250.htm

Increase Fee paid for Jury Duty

An Act to Amend Chapter 16 of the Acts of 1998, the Juries Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b302.htm

Emergency Alerts

The Emergency Management Office is responsible for ensuring that emergency alerts are issued in appropriate cases by the appropriate authorities; and provides for the issuance of emergency alerts to Nova Scotians for emergencies in another province near the Nova Scotia border.

An Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, Respecting Emergency Alerts

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b158.htm

Emergency Act

A state of emergency should only be renewed with the unanimous consent of the House of Assembly or by an Act of the Legislature.

An Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, Respecting a State of Emergency

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b167.htm

Road Safety

Requires vehicles operated by employees of the Department of Public Works or a municipality to be treated as other emergency vehicles when the vehicles are stopped on a roadway or a shoulder adjacent to the roadway and exhibiting flashing lights.

Allow service, repair or towing vehicles to display red light visible from directly in front of the vehicle and to be equipped to show flashing or revolving red and amber lights in all directions.

An Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Motor Vehicle Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b371.htm

Heather Beach and Seagrove Road Safety

Allow the Minister of Public Works, the Provincial Traffic Authority and municipal traffic authorities to designate an area on a highway as a high

population density area and reduce the speed limit in that area to no lower than 25 kilometres per hour; and

(b) prohibits drivers from exceeding the speed limit in high population density areas.

An Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Motor Vehicle Act, Respecting Speed Limits in High Population Density Areas

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b400.htm

Taxpayers Money-Finance

Respect the Auditor General recommendation to amend the Finance Act to bring legislative oversight and accountability to the provincial budget. Last year the Executive Branch/Cabinet spent more than 1.6 Billion dollars of taxpayers money with no legislative oversight. This is not in line with parliamentary democracy and is

Strengthen Parliamentary Democracy by changing Legislation for Independent Members

Make provisions in the Elections Act respecting Electoral District Associations and tax receipts applicable to independent candidates as if they were a registered party.

An Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2011, the Elections Act

https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b253.htm

Conclusion

The people of Cumberland understand the importance of fiscal responsibility and respect your important task of creating a provincial budget.

I can attest that the people were encouraged to see the extra tax they have been paying at the Cobequid Pass removed after 24 unfair years.

It is time to include Cumberland County in the financial planning of the province and ensure this large geographic area of the province and its people are treated fairly and equitably.

Investment in Poverty Reduction, Health Care, Caring for Mother Earth and Supporting Entrepreneurs and Businesses will lift and empower all people in Cumberland North and Nova Scotia.

The people of Cumberland North have many needs and have much potential. Investment in Strong a Cumberland is an Investment in a Stronger Nova Scotia, a Stronger Maritime Region and a Stronger Canada.

Thank you for your leadership as Minister and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA for Cumberland North