

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA Cumberland North



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Députée Cumberland North

Nova Scotia Legislature

January 30, 2025

The Honourable Becky Druhan, M.L.A.
Attorney General and Minister of Justice
Department of Justice
1690 Hollis Street
P.O. Box 7
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2L6

Dear Minister Druhan,

Thank you for agreeing to serve the people of Nova Scotia as Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

Governing is about people. On November 26th, 2024, Nova Scotians entrusted us with a mandate to shape a brighter future. We share a belief in the strength of our communities, the ingenuity of our industries, and the rich heritage that defines Cumberland County. Together, we will harness this potential to foster economic growth, improve healthcare, and elevate the quality of life for all residents.

Cumberland County stands on the precipice of tremendous opportunity. By investing in our people, supporting innovation, and ensuring sustainable development, we can unlock prosperity and lead Nova Scotia into a new era of progress. Our collective success hinges on collaboration, bold action, and a steadfast commitment to addressing the unique needs of our communities. As Attorney General and Minister of Justice, your leadership will be pivotal in upholding the rule of law, advancing access to justice, and fostering trust in our legal system. Your work will be critical in ensuring fairness, equity, and public safety for all Nova Scotians.

Specifically, I ask that you prioritize:

1. Enacting legislation to **ban the misuse of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in cases of sexual assault** to ensure survivors have the freedom to share their experiences without legal barriers. Please consider passing legislation that includes the content of Bill 278 that was tabled last Session. This Bill defines key terms related to sexual assault and harassment within political parties and prohibits respondents and responsible parties from entering into non-disclosure agreements with complainants.

2. The need for the establishment of a **code of conduct for handling sexual assault disclosures, ensuring victim confidentiality, and providing online and mobile reporting options**. It prohibits reprisals against victims and outlines procedures for addressing and investigating complaints of retaliation. Bill 285 has the content for this important need.

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

3. The need for the establishment of a code of conduct for handling sexual assault disclosures, ensuring victim confidentiality, and providing online and mobile reporting options. It prohibits reprisals against victims and outlines procedures for addressing and investigating complaints of retaliation. Consider Bill 285 called the [Sexual Assault Victim Whistleblower Protection Act](#) https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b285.htm

4. Addressing systemic issues such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) by implementing comprehensive prevention and support strategies. Include amending the Provincial Court Act and pass Keira's Law as has already passed Federally and in some other provinces. Keira's Law mandates the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia to create educational courses for judges focusing on sexual assault law, intimate partner violence, coercive control, and social context, with provisions for consultation and reporting. It was tabled last Session as Bill 361.

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

5. Enhancing efforts to combat Human Trafficking through increased resources for law enforcement and victim support programs.

6. Tackling the Crown Prosecutor shortage by improving recruitment and retention efforts to ensure timely and effective prosecution of cases. The current court delays must be removed and cases heard in a timely manner. Consider the Bill 492 [Justice System Improvement Act](#) The Justice System Improvement Act would mandate increased funding for appointing more judges and hiring additional Crown attorneys to expedite case processing in the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia.

7. Strengthening support for victims of crime by expanding legal and social resources. I hear often from people that the eligibility criteria for **Legal Aid** is prohibited and too low.

8. The Elections Act is the responsibility of the Justice Minister. Please consider amending the Elections Act by passing Bill 253. [This Bill](#) makes the provisions in the Elections Act respecting Electoral District Associations and tax receipts applicable to independent candidates as if they were a registered party. Independent candidates and MLAs in other Canadian provinces and territories have the ability to have EDA's and can issue tax receipts and Nova Scotia should end their discriminatory practices. https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/64th_1st/1st_read/b253.htm

9. The Workplace Harassment Policy should be amended (in the House of Assembly Act) to

- (a) require each person to whom the 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; and
- (d) require any sexual assault complaint to immediately be reported to the proper authorities by the Speaker of the House.

These amendments are found in Bill 281.

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

10. An increase in jury fees is needed as is indicated in Bill 302. [This Bill](#) sets the fees a juror is entitled to at not less than \$100 per day.

I would like to request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these important priorities and how we can work together to address the unique challenges and opportunities in Cumberland County. Collaboration is key to ensuring that we deliver meaningful results for our communities, and I look forward to engaging with you to advance these goals.

I look forward to working with you to build a stronger, more vibrant Cumberland County. Together, we will seize the opportunities before us and create lasting positive change for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA for Cumberland North