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May 18, 2021

Honourable Keith Irving
Department of Environment and Climate Change
Barrington Tower
1894 Barrington Street, Suite 1800
P.O. Box 442
Halifax, NS
B3J 2P8

Dear Minister Irving:

I hope this letter finds you and your family healthy and safe.

These are challenging times for the people I represent in Cumberland North and all Nova Scotians.

The border restrictions have been a challenge for many people, and most recently our rotational workers.

One of the problems facing many people is the "on-line" internet, computer-based approach. Not everyone has a computer or internet and many people do not have the computer skills to navigate the on-line forms.

As MLA, I receive calls every day from people who need assistance with the NS Self-Check-In online form. Last Friday, I received several angry messages from people who called the number provided to us for support only to receive a voicemail and said the mailbox was full. The email response was also an automatic response which did not provide any answers or support.

The purpose of my letter today is to request an increase in access to help for people with questions. The rules and restrictions are changing frequently and there is a great deal of confusion and very little access to supports for people that need it. A phone line that is manned would be helpful.

For example, last Thursday the press release stated that all Nova Scotians were now required to fill in the NS Self-Check In form every time they cross the NS Border. This caused immediate chaos here in the border community. Every call and message that came to me and my staff was redirected to the government through the environment email and phone number provided.

I hope this illustrated to your Department just how many calls my staff and I receive on an on-going basis.

We literally start every morning at 8am and I stop at midnight, and still some days cannot get to every message. I am sure being the MLA on the border leads to most questions being directed my way, but this is not sustainable. We need a procedure to have questions answered in a timely manner, especially when changes are made so often without clear and concise application.



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Last Friday, 24 hours after the press release, I was informed that people that follow the NS NB Travel Protocol do not need to fill out the NS Self-Check In Form. Had that been communicated in the press release on Thursday it would have prevented a huge amount of chaos and stress here.

The latest problem is with our men and women that work abroad and are trying to get home to their families, rotational workers. Many are not able to meet the new requirements in a timely manner and this has again caused anxiety and strife needlessly.

Please consider increasing access to supports for Nova Scotians to have their questions answered in a timely manner and please consider the impact of your decisions on the lives of the people affected.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

CC: Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer