

**Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
MLA Cumberland North**



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Députée Cumberland North**

**Nova Scotia Legislature**

January 24, 2022

Hon. Brian Comer  
Office of Addictions and Mental Health  
17th floor, Barrington Tower  
1894 Barrington Street  
P.O. Box 488  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 2R8

Dear Minister Brian Comer:

Greetings from Cumberland County. I hope you had a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season.

Thank you for your service to the people of Nova Scotia, especially your leadership for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions, Communications Nova Scotia and Youth.

As the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Cumberland North, I am always looking for ways to improve the lives of the people I represent. We had spoken in the fall session about a meeting to discuss issues under your department, and I am once again following up on that commitment. I would like a meeting with you to discuss the needs and priorities identified below.

The Capital Plan has not yet been released and budget consultations are underway for all departments and agencies. I see this as an opportune time to communicate some of the needs of Cumberland North. It is a critical time in our province, and it is very important to acknowledge the difference in needs in each community.

I think your department has a unique opportunity to lead the way in creating cooperation and collaboration between our maritime neighbours and advancing our region for our mutual betterment.

I am looking for your assistance to advance priorities related to your department including:

Acute Care for Mental Illness

- The Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act includes all regional hospitals except CCRHCC. This results in all psychiatric patients being forced to other regional hospitals. This places undue hardship on the medical and nursing staff at CCRHCC and most importantly, it is a barrier to health care for patients and their families. The actions needed include an amendment to this legislation to legally allow psychiatrists to do assessments at the CCRHCC. The community needs psychiatrists that will provide acute psych assessments and inpatient care as needed. The current model of care does not meet the community needs.

- Creation of acute care psychiatric beds at CCRHCC or another Cumberland hospital such as All Saints Hospital
- Expansion of the Detox Unit at All Saints Hospital and re-open the Detox Unit in Pictou
- The mental health crisis team is currently available 9-3 Monday thru Friday. The lack of access for persons in mental health crisis is a real barrier for supports. 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 CCRHCC. 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. It 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.

Your department will play an integral part in advancing Nova Scotia and our Maritime Region to become competitive internationally and achieve economic independence in our own country by becoming less reliant on federal transfers. Cooperation amongst all elected officials in all three levels of government will strengthen our ability to adapt post pandemic.

In the fall you had committed to coming to Cumberland North to meet with various people who represent the various areas of need in the Mental Health Care system in our region. I look forward to setting up this meeting in advance of the introduction of the province's 2022-2023 budget.

Thank you for your leadership as Minister and I look forward to working with you in these important areas.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

Cc: Dr. Stephen Ellis, MP Cumberland Colchester; Mayor Murray Scott, Cumberland County; Mayor David Kogon, Town of Amherst