

**Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA Cumberland North**



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Députée Cumberland North**

Nova Scotia Legislature

January 21, 2022

Hon. John Lohr
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
14th Floor North, Maritime Centre
1505 Barrington Street
P.O. Box 216
Halifax, NS
B3J 2M4

Dear Minister Lohr:

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 Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management and Minister responsible for Military Relations.

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:

- Housing needs are an urgent matter. Local stakeholders and elected officials from Cumberland have met several times in the past two months and have taken a unified stand to address the urgent housing shortage. Your staff have been helpful in working with developers and municipal partners. We are formally requesting the necessary funding to hire a Housing Coordinator for Cumberland County. There are many opportunities as to where this individual would work out of, the important thing is to have a central person who helps to move efforts forward.

- Your mandate letter states a full inventory of lands owned by the province will be identified and then consider which land could be used for both affordable housing and general residential purchases. I request this information be shared with myself and the members of our Housing Task Force.
- Unfortunately, Cumberland County was twice involved in dangerous situations when emergency alerts were not shared to protect the community. This happened in April 2020 in Northern NS and then again January 2021 in Amherst. I have many questions about the decision-making process, and I would like to see the flowchart or process under which these decisions are made. Further, have all police departments in NS been adequately trained for emergency alerts? Is there coordination with neighboring New Brunswick for emergency alerts?
- 911 service 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 flew fire. Can someone from your department please work on a solution for this problem? Also improvements are needed in cell tower coverage to ensure all Nova Scotians have access to 911 service.
- Military relations are necessary to ensure our area has a strong defence sector. Unfortunately, our federal government stopped training reservists in Amherst in 2017. This lack of military training will affect the leadership strengths in our community's future. The federal government have also decided to divest the Armoury located in our area since 1915. This decision will negatively impact the Cadets and lead to a void in leadership training for our Youth. Please advocate on our behalf to the Federal government to reverse the decision and resume training of reservists and reinstate the Amherst Armoury as an active building for the DND.
- 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 you too also ensure this happens.

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

I formally request a meeting with you to discuss some of the issues laid out above. I look forward to working together.

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