

**Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA Cumberland North**



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Députée Cumberland North**

Nova Scotia Legislature

January 25, 2022

Premier Tim Houston
Office of the Premier, Nova Scotia
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, NS
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Dear Premier Houston:

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

Thank you for your service to the people of Nova Scotia as Premier and Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, Trade, Regulatory Affairs, and Service Effectiveness and Priorities and Planning.

Our province is primed for exponential growth and success. In your role as Premier of Nova Scotia, you represent all the constituencies that make up this beautiful province, and that role requires feedback from the individually elected members of the House of Assembly. Much can be achieved through collaboration and open lines of communication. That is my goal on behalf of the people of Cumberland North.

Over the past two decades, residents from Cumberland County have felt like they are not part of Nova Scotia. We were encouraged to have the added taxation (i.e., the tolls at the Cobequid pass) removed. I had advocated for that, with your support, for many years. I am happy that it will no longer bear a burden on the local residents and businesses in my area as they operate normally.

It should be acknowledged that decades passed where only one region was consistently and unfairly taxed for travelling to such vital locations as the IWK. Cumberland North is grateful to the Province for swiftly removing this unequal fee. That said, there are many issues in this region that have not been properly addressed or acknowledged by many past governments. I am hoping an open and honest exchange will help keep your office informed and allow me to deliver appropriate expectations to those in Cumberland.

I have reviewed the mandate letters from the Office of the Premier to your Cabinet Ministers. I have prepared and sent letters to each Minister identifying the needs of those I represent and look forward to working together with them on plans to reach each goal.

Nova Scotia will achieve more if it works collaboratively with our Atlantic neighbors. As Premier of our province, you are an esteemed member of the Council of Atlantic Premiers and I look forward to your leadership in setting priorities for collaborative projects. I am aware that today you are in fact Chairing the meeting, and I am confident you will be able to gain the support of our neighbouring provinces. Removing

interprovincial barriers and working together will advance the entire Atlantic Region to become more competitive on a national and global scale.

Among the most important examples of where relationship building and communication are needed is with regard to the Chignecto Isthmus. As you know, I introduced a bill in the fall that would include all neighbouring provinces, departments, representatives, private sector experts, and the indigenous community. I have spoken with CN Rail, our local MP, the federal government, local elected officials, and those in the farming community on a regular basis. As Premier, you have considerable clout to bring these crucial pieces together to create a plan, and a show of good faith would begin with sharing the taxpayer-funded feasibility study. There are many possibilities that can only be realized by sharing this information with those directly impacted, as they are most aware of the resources they can provide.

Over the years, you and I have had many conversations about our shared goal of creating more local decision-making in health care. By recognizing that all regions do not face the same challenges and entrusting a certain level of decisions to be made based on their individual needs, service delivery will be more personal, more accessible, and be a better reflection of the current circumstances. As Leader of the PC Party, you led a very strong campaign on this issue, and I am saddened that I have not seen it enacted as of yet. I look forward to the implementation of local decision-making in health care by your government.

Indeed, this pandemic has brought much stress on the health care system. I believe now is the opportunity to pivot and make the big changes that have been needed but no one has had the courage to do. You are poised to make these necessary changes and I implore you to do so with courage and determination.

I have great respect for the office you hold. On more than one occasion during the fall legislative session, we spoke both on and off the record regarding projects I was bringing to the government's attention. You committed to a meeting with the Veterans' group to establish a health clinic that is adaptive to the needs of those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. You had also communicated your dedication to launching a school lunch program for children- one that would be designed on the successes of the Prince Edward Island model.

I know how difficult the decision-making in your office must be, and I understand the quantity of requests you receive on a daily basis is overwhelming as you approach the introduction of your first annual budget. Cumberland County is the first area people visiting our beautiful province enter. It should not be inadequately compensated. The challenges faced by citizens are very real, but the potential for growth is so encouraging, and with the support of the Province, I know it will flourish. A stronger Cumberland will result in a stronger Nova Scotia.

I formally request a meeting in advance of the release of the provincial budget, and I sincerely hope I can trust your word in your commitments to meet with the group of veterans and myself and collaborate on the best approach to a school lunch program.

The potential of Nova Scotia cannot be matched, but in order for our province to thrive, cooperation and communication are essential.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin