

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA Cumberland North



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Nova Scotia Legislature

January 14, 2022

Hon. Brad Johns
Department of Justice
1690 Hollis Street
P.O. Box 7
Halifax, NS
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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 Justice.

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:

- Illegal drugs are entering Nova Scotia at an alarming rate. The Town of Amherst is an entry point for illegal drugs. In the past four years I have met with local RCMP and Town Police to discuss this several times. One of the solutions identified was to work more collaboratively with neighboring New Brunswick. Soon thereafter, the pandemic began, and no real improvements have been realized, in fact, the problem of illegal drugs has appeared to have increased dramatically. There is a Cross Border Policing Act, and I would like to see our two provinces working together to reduce these harmful substances from making their way to our streets.
- In the Fall Session in the Legislature, I tabled a Bill entitled Protection of Children from Abusing Drugs Act. I had met with former Minister of Justice to share the concerns of parents and community members about the lack of protection for youth living in dangerous situations like known drug houses. Too many of our youth are being trafficked, drugged, and abused. We must do more to protect them. Currently neither

DCS nor Justice departments have legislation in place to protect youth. Please review this Bill and consider passing this bill or prepare similar legislation to protect our youth.

- Women in Cumberland have identified a non-supportive culture in the department of Justice surrounding issues of sexual assault and domestic abuse. This is systemic and longstanding. I am requesting that you and your department take actions to change this culture.

I have met with several victims of both domestic and sexual assault who are willing to provide feedback.

Women have faced delays in charges being laid. Women have experienced a culture of misogyny. There is no excuse for this, and it must be a top priority.

- Nova Scotia has trained a limited number Crown Prosecutors to become specialized around Sexual Assault and Violence. Unfortunately, these specially trained CPs are not prosecuting all sexual assault cases in the province.

- Further to that, I have had alleged victims of sexual assault come to me to share concerns of criminal charges being dropped due to the pandemic. The cases brought to my attention were fully investigated by both law enforcement, SANE nurses, and charges were subsequently laid-only to have COVID19 prevent the alleged victims from their day in court.

It is disappointing to see the government dismiss the victims of sexual assault. There is clearly a need to educate more Crown Prosecutors and change the culture around sexual assault and domestic violence. The courage shown by the alleged victims in these cases is not being respected by the Provincial Courts.

The Department of Justice 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 our educational institutions will strengthen our ability to adapt post pandemic.

I formally request a meeting with you to discuss these important issues. I believe the best way forward is to work together and acknowledge that different areas of our province face their own unique challenges. 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