

**Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA Cumberland North**



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Députée Cumberland North**

Nova Scotia Legislature

January 14, 2022

Hon. Karla MacFarlane
Department of Community Services
8th Floor, Nelson Place
5675 Spring Garden Road
P.O. Box 696
Halifax, NS
B3J 2T7

Dear Minister Karla MacFarlane:

Greetings from Cumberland County. I hope you had a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season. Thank you for your dedication to the people of Nova Scotia, especially your leadership for the Department of Community Services, Minister of L'nu Affairs and Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

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. I am requesting a meeting with you to discuss the needs and priorities identified below.

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 believe a more strategic approach and more regional planning will benefit all and will make us more competitive as a strong region in Canada.

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

- **Poverty Reduction**- it is a major priority in Cumberland North. I was pleased to see reducing Childhood poverty in your mandate letter. Please let us know what provincial initiatives will be undertaken to reduce childhood poverty. Our community leaders are requesting funding for a poverty reduction coordinator.
- There are urgent needs in the Town of Amherst for a shelter to house those who are homeless. There is a non-profit society that has been working on this. There was a fire at a private boarding house before Christmas which has exacerbated the urgent need. It is imperative that a member of your staff visit Cumberland North so that more information can be gathered to help with a timely solution.
- Youth are struggling with addictions and mental illness. A group of "mothers who care" named "In The Works" formed a non-profit social enterprise to provide work opportunities with wrap-around supports for youth in recovery. Your department has been very supportive over the past two years, and we look forward to many youths being positively integrated into the workforce through "In The Works A Social

Enterprise". We invite you to come and meet with these women and learn more about the important work they are doing.

- The Sunset Residential Care Facility provides excellent care to persons living with disabilities needing support. There is a concern in the community that the government is prematurely pushing people out of Sunset "into the community" through the transformation laid out in the roadmap. This concern is furthered by reports that these are people that are not able to live without the supports they currently have at Sunset. I have communicated with your department on several occasions on behalf of a family who had a son moved from Kings Residential Care Facility into a group home. Concerns were raised by the family before he was moved that were not considered and the young man nearly lost his life. Once recovered, he has been back at Kings Residential Care Facility. His family want to ensure this does not happen to anyone else. His experience of being moved into the community is an example of someone whose needs were not going to be successfully met in a different setting. Some individuals need 24 hour/7 days a week care and supervision for their own health and safety. My hope is that the department looks very carefully at situations such as this family's and takes measures to prevent and properly assess all risks and barriers faced by those transitioning into the communities.
- Although Cumberland County does not have a First Nations community, we do have many Indigenous persons living here. I look forward to working with your department to ensure that all Indigenous peoples are included in healing and reconciliation. Can you please provide me any initiatives I can share with the people of Cumberland North?
- Gender-based violence is a problem here in Cumberland County. Actions are needed within the department of Justice to change the response to victims. Can you please provide details how you can work with Justice and Victim Services to provide improved services for victims of gender-based violence?
- Sexual assault and sexual violence are all too common. A change in culture is needed. I ask that you implement the Sexual Health Strategy for Nova Scotian's.

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 among all elected officials in all three levels of government will strengthen our ability to adapt post pandemic.

Would you be willing to meet to discuss these priorities identified in this letter? This can be arranged by contacting my office 902-661-2288.

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