

# **Cumberland North Pre-Budget Submission 2022 - 2023**

**Presented to the Honourable Allan MacMaster  
Minister of Finance for the Province of Nova Scotia**

**February 4th, 2022**

**Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
MLA Cumberland North**

## **Cumberland North**

As Member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly elected for Cumberland North, I represent the people and their needs of this unique and valuable area. As a representative of Cumberland North, it is my responsibility to voice the concerns of the people and represent their viewpoints. It is also my responsibility to assist in problem solving and develop expertise in areas of importance to Cumberland North, share ideas for new laws, amendments of existing laws, all in an effort to empower the people of Cumberland North and Build this great area of the province and Maritime Region.

## **Executive Summary**

The people of Cumberland County have felt separated from the rest of the province of Nova Scotia for the last two decades. Previous governments have placed tolls separating Cumberland County from the rest of the province, provincial offices have been removed from Cumberland, and in general, there has been a lack of investment in capital infrastructure in the area. Cumberland had been excluded from provincial tourism investment and planning in recent years. In general, rural Nova Scotia and primary industries have been neglected and the time has come to make Cumberland and all rural Nova Scotia a priority.

The pandemic caused by the Covid19 coronavirus brought undue hardship upon Cumberland County more than any other area of the province. Cumberland County has a unique relationship with Westmoreland County in New Brunswick. For centuries, cross border relationships have been tightly woven in business, health care and families. March 2020 brought interprovincial border restrictions which created huge disruption exclusively to the people that live in the border communities. It became clear that the source of the problem was that provincial governments were not working in collaboration but rather in isolation, ignoring the interconnectivity of our Region. The effects of these border restrictions will have lasting negative effects on our region unless there is a purposeful shift towards Maritime Collaboration and investment into Cumberland County.

This document provides a list of recommendations to strengthen Cumberland County which will in turn strengthen Nova Scotia, the Maritime Region and in fact the entire country of Canada.

## **2022 - 2023 Recommendations**

### **Maritime Collaboration**

The Maritime provinces are connected geographically and consequently share an economy that requires governments to work together to create a competitive region both nationally and globally.

All financial planning for Nova Scotia should be done through a lens of collaboration with fellow Maritime provinces.

### **Chignecto Isthmus Protection**

The Chignecto Isthmus connects Nova Scotia with New Brunswick and North America. On average, over \$50 million in goods are transported through the Chignecto Isthmus daily. This connects the supply chain on both rail and roadways. Past governments have failed to make financial commitments to the repairs needed. The people of Cumberland North urge this government to invest now in the protection of this valuable Isthmus. The dikes and aboiteaux along the Chignecto Isthmus are in urgent need of repair. This is a problem that has needed to be addressed for several years and is considered by the UN to be one of the three greatest risks due to climate change.

<https://research.fit.edu/media/site-specific/researchfitedu/coast-climate-adaptation-library/canadaamp-arctic/canada---atlantic/Webster-et-al.--2012.--An-Evaluation-of-Flood-Risk-to-Infrastructure-Acrossthe-Chignecto-Isthmus.pdf>

### **Poverty Reduction**

This is a major priority in Cumberland North. Our community leaders are requesting funding for a poverty reduction coordinator.

## **Housing Needs are Urgent**

Local stakeholders and elected officials from Cumberland have met several times in the past three months and have taken a unified stand to address the urgent housing shortage. We are formally requesting the necessary funding to hire a Housing Coordinator for Cumberland County. There are many opportunities as to where this individual could work, the important thing is to have a central person who helps to move efforts forward. Also the mandate letter for the Minister responsible for Housing asks for a full inventory of lands owned by the province to 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. This need is urgent.

## **Shelter**

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. Funding is needed for a project lead for the Shelter as well as operational funding.

## **Equity and anti-racism initiatives**

Empowering all people in Cumberland North and throughout all Nova Scotia must be a priority. Strategies can be undertaken to achieve greater equity and support anti-racism initiatives and I invite this government to invest funds in this important area. We have several leaders in Cumberland North on this issue and they are willing to participate in efforts to create the positive changes that are needed.

## **Sexual Assault and Gender Based Violence**

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. Women have faced delays in charges being laid. Women have faced cases being dropped with an excuse of delays due to the pandemic. Women have experienced a culture of misogyny. There is no excuse for this, and it must be a top priority.

### **Train more Crown Prosecutors in sexual assault and violence**

Nova Scotia has trained a limited number Crown Prosecutors to become specialized in Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence. Unfortunately, these specially trained CP's 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.

### **Education investment in Sexual Assault and violence**

Curriculum changes in schools are needed to foster positive changes in sexual behaviour. Specifically, we must strive to reduce sexual assault and violence. Clear measurables should be regularly made available so we can best measure progress outside reported incidents of sexual assault.

### **University Campus Sexual violence**

This is a major problem on university campuses. The culture of sexual violence must change. Although there is no university campus in Cumberland North, I have young women that have been victims of sexual violence on NS university campuses and the university's have pushed the problem under the rug. Please make this a priority. Investment is needed to support the work to change the accepted culture of sexual assault.

### **Funds for Physician Recruitment**

Specifically recruitment is needed for family physicians for Pugwash and Amherst and Psychiatrists for Cumberland Regional. Family Physicians are needed that are willing to provide comprehensive primary care. Psychiatrist Physicians are needed that are willing to provide an on-call service and

work to meet acute needs at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre as well as chronic needs in the community.

### **Funds for a Cancer Care Centre**

The Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre is the only Regional Hospital that does not administer systemic chemotherapy to cancer patients. This results in all cancer patients that live in Cumberland being forced to travel for treatment. Historically, most patients travelled to Moncton (about 45 min), but during the pandemic, patients were forced to travel to Halifax (2 hours). These changes in referral patterns caused and continue to cause significant delays in treatment. Most primary care providers in Amherst had long-standing relationships with specialists in Moncton. Finding specialists in Halifax that would accept new referrals and then waiting for these appointments causes long delays in treatment. Based on research, it is known that delays in cancer treatment negatively impact the risk of mortality for cancer patients. A Cancer Care Centre is needed in CCRHCC. The centre could administer chemo, allow for virtual specialist appointments, and have regular screening clinics for melanoma, cervical, prostate as well as educational tools to encourage screening for colon and breast cancer. I have met with department officials and shared these needs on two occasions over the past two years and I am hopeful that this will be planned into the renovation at CCRHCC while the new Emergency Room is built.

### **Dialysis Care for Cumberland**

Many patients living in Cumberland have never been able to access Dialysis in Nova Scotia and have traveled three times a week to Moncton. The Department is planning a new dialysis unit to be built at CCRHCC at the same time as the ER is expanded. Some Cumberland renal patients that travel to Moncton for dialysis are concerned they may not receive the same level of health care at the NS unit. Specifically, in Moncton they see a Nephrologist each day and all their renal medications are paid for. Patients tell me this is in the range of \$1000-\$1500/month. Please examine these two concerns our Cumberland renal dialysis patients have and work to remove them as barriers to receiving care in our home province of Nova Scotia.

### **Expansion of the Emergency Department at CCRHCC**

There are plans in the works for expansion and renovation of the CCRHCC Emergency Department. I request the timeline for this expansion be expedited due to the urgent needs. Since the ER was built in 2001, the ER departments in neighbouring community hospitals have been reduced and this has placed increased demand at CCRHCC. The ER is too small to meet the demands. This is needed now and on behalf of the community, I request this be an urgent priority for government. There is no site line for health care staff to visualize patients in the waiting room. The ER treatment area is too small to safely provide care.

### **Walking and Scooter accessibility to the CCRHCC**

When CCRHCC was built in 2001, walking access was promised to the residents of the area. To this date, the province has not provided this. A bridge over the TransCanada Highway (TCH) or a tunnel under the TCH providing access is needed. The infrastructure costs should be paid by the province.

### **Pharmacare**

The current practices by Pharmacare in Nova Scotia lead to increased costs for the patients and for government. Inefficient communication and disrespect of primary health care professionals is the cause. Inefficiencies are caused by slow communication practices of only using Canada Post rather than using email or faxes with medical professionals. Disrespect is shown to physicians and nurse practitioners by pharmacare staff making decisions to deny medications for patients that are being recommended by medical professionals. Cardiologists with 10 years of medical training are having their medication recommendations denied by persons working in Pharmacare. One can assume that the Pharmacare budgetary restraints are the cause for these decisions. Please change these practices. Delaying the most appropriate medical treatment recommended by qualified medical professionals should not be allowed to continue and does not save money in the long run.

## **Recruitment of Nurses**

There is urgent need to invest in the recruitment and retention of licensed practical nurses and registered nurses. Also the hiring practices of Nova Scotia Health must change to become more efficient and effective. Each hospital must have the power to hire the staff they need. This is in line with local-decision making as the government promised. Prospective staff should receive personal phone calls from NS Health and not only rely on email and other non-personal approaches to hiring.

## **Education for Nurses**

Access to education needs to be improved. Currently, only LPNs that studied at NSCC are eligible to take the two-year bridging program to become an RN. All LPNs in NS should be eligible for this education. This has been discussed with your colleague in Advanced Education, Minister Wong. Also the Northern Zone is the only area of the province that has no educational programs for Registered Nurses. I believe this is contributing to the lack of available RNs in our area. Please consider supporting an extension site of the programs at Dalhousie, St. FX, or CBU here in Cumberland County (similar to Yarmouth). Nova Scotian.

## **Physicians who obtain medical degree outside of Canada**

There are many Nova Scotian residents that have studied medicine in other countries, often because they could not get into Dalhousie Medical School. These doctors will stay in Nova Scotia if we can provide a family medicine residency program here. I recommend our government create a rotating internship for these doctors and offer them medical careers here in Nova Scotia.

**Palliative Care** • CCRHCC does not currently have any designated palliative care beds. The Palliative care team has requested beds to be designated.

### **The Cumberland County Hospice and Palliative Care Society**

Hospices provide a compassionate and supportive community of staff, volunteers, and donors dedicated to making dying as comfortable and as meaningful as possible at the end of life. The local Hospice Society have met with the Department of Health & Wellness in the past to request funds for operational expenses. Unfortunately, no funding has been provided to this date. Please consider funding this hospice and meeting with board members to discuss how government can financially support a hospice in Cumberland County for the dignity of our aging residents.

### **EHS - Emergency Health Services**

The people of Cumberland County have too often been placed in situations where there have been no ambulances in the county at a given time. This is due to the vehicles being pulled to other areas of the province. While we appreciate there are province-wide needs, the people of Cumberland should never be put in situations where emergency services are not available in a safe and timely manner. I would like the contract with Medavie reviewed and policy changes made that hold this private company accountable for the responsibility to provide the emergency services under their contract. If they cannot meet these standards, the government must look for another approach.

### **Creation of acute care psychiatric beds at CCRHCC or another Cumberland hospital such as All Saints Hospital.**

There are no beds for patients with mental illness or acute illness due to addictions in Cumberland. Local stakeholders report persons at risk being not receiving necessary medical care at Cumberland hospitals. Hospital staff need to have acute care beds for MH patients in Cumberland and not have to rely on Colchester Psych Unit that often has no capacity available.

### **Expansion of the Detox Unit at All Saints Hospital**

Patients with addictions that have been ready for detox have been denied care due to lack of beds available.

## **Re-open the Detox Unit in Pictou**

The closure of the Detox in Pictou is causing hardship due to the lack of available detox care in Pictou and area. It is also causing other Detox centres like in Springhill to have less capacity for the people in Cumberland.

## **Crisis Team for Mental Illness and Addictions 24/7**

The mental health crisis team is currently only available 9-3 Monday thru Friday. The lack of access for persons in mental health crisis is a real barrier for supports for patients in need. 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. There is much community support and the local Credit Union is providing a building for the first project. In The Works 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.

## **Replacement of two LTC facilities Gables Lodge and East Cumberland Lodge**

Cumberland North has three long-term care facilities, and two of them are in desperate need of replacement. Gables Lodge is located in Amherst and owned by Gem Health and East Cumberland Lodge in Pugwash is owned by the Municipality of Cumberland. Both buildings are old, have few single rooms and are in need of replacement. A commitment was made last year by the previous government to replace Gables. This building replacement should be a priority.

## **Stop using taxpayer's money to pay for empty beds in LTC**

Recommend taking the recommendation 5.3 from the Expert Panel on Long-Term Care and investigate the use of RDF by repurposing vacant licensed beds to provide convalescent and rehabilitation care. The Expert Panel on Long Term Care Recommendation 4.2 is needed as well. The current operations involving continuing care is not effective in efficiently getting patients moved from hospital to a long-term care facility. Further to that: pre-pandemic, I had expressed frustration with continuing care and the delays in getting paperwork completed to facilitate the moving of a patient from hospital to a LTC facility. There is no urgency from continuing care despite the huge demand for hospital acute care beds. I encourage the Finance Minister and departments to look at other models in other provinces to create improved efficiency. For example, NB has a policy that the government does not pay a LTC facility for empty beds after 5 days. NB does not have a continuing care level of bureaucracy and hospital discharge planners work directly with LTC facilities.

## **Evaluate the effectiveness of the Office of Adult Protection and request accountability**

Currently many community leaders, including law enforcement, medical community and others believe the Adult Protection office does not effectively "protect" adults. Changes are needed to ensure that when doctors, law enforcement and other community members call with concerns of an adult needing protection that assessments are done and action is taken to protect the adult.

**Continuing Care Assistants must receive higher wages.** The work they do demands it and in order to retain them they will need to receive improved remuneration and benefits. We all want the best suited people to stay in this field to provide care to our aging loved ones.

### **Invest in Addictions and remove Illegal drugs off the streets**

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 neighbouring 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.

### **Protect Youth from Illegal Drugs**

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.

### **Emergency 911 service**

This 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 few fire. Improvements are needed in cell tower coverage to ensure all Nova Scotians have access to 911 service.

### **Veteran Medical Clinic**

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 that funds be allocated to ensure this comes to fruition.

### **Invest in Greenhouses**

Greenhouse development, both domestic and Industrial, can aid in economic development while improving food security. Several provinces across Canada have subsidies for greenhouse development and this would be a positive step for us here in NS. The pandemic has shown a light on the weakness of supply chains. Responsible government ensures their people can feed themselves. Reliance on International food suppliers must be lessened and increase the amount of food that is produced locally 12 months of the year.

### **Invest in Farming Infrastructure and Increase Productivity**

Cumberland County has rich soil and many productive farms. However, over the last 20 years there has been a decline in farming productivity and revenue for many reasons, one significant reason was BSE. The farmers in Cumberland County want to increase productivity getting all unused farmland back into use. Farmers also need access to funds for infrastructure such as barns and equipment. We would like a plan for Cumberland County and have the Department work with us to implement.

### **Open a Provincial Agriculture Office in Cumberland**

Cumberland County has 30% of the arable farmland in the province yet has no Department of Agriculture staff based in our county. The department of Agriculture has valuable staff that could assist our farmers to reach their business goals. Please consider having a department office in Cumberland with staff working directly to increase productivity of food.

### **Invest in the The Maritime Beef Strategy**

Beef Industry is important to the farmers of Cumberland. The Nappan Experimental Farm is also integral to the future of the Beef Industry. Increasing production of the Beef Industry is important to Cumberland and the entire issue of food security in the province.

### **Bridges needing repair**

Infrastructure projects have been delayed funding in Cumberland North the past two years. I am most concerned about bridge structures that have been in the plan to have work done and have been postponed. Howard Bridge, Livingstone Bridge and most recently identified the Tidnish Bridge on Route 366.

### **Storm drains need to be replaced in the Village of Pugwash**

### **Storm drains need to replace in the community of Wallace**

### **Trunk 6 between Warren and Linden**

This area requires paving this next fiscal year before more damage is done which lead to higher repair costs.

### **Paved and Gravel Road Repairs**

A list of roads and their priority was discussed at a meeting with officials from Public Works your department in December and also discussed with both area managers Chris Verge (Colchester) and Adam Cameron (Cumberland).

### **Trail connectivity for OHV**

A bridge over the TCH or a tunnel under the TCH would serve to provide accessibility to the hospital as well as a trail for OHV. Off-Highway Vehicles have huge potential to boost economic activity in Cumberland and throughout all Nova Scotia and the Maritime Region. Currently the only

piece missing is a connection across or under the Trans-Canada Highway near or on Exit 4 outside of Amherst. We are requesting a bridge or a tunnel in this location that could allow trail connectivity in Cumberland so that maps of legal trails could be made, and marketing of OHV trails could be done. This could be used for both OHV and person accessing the CCRHCC.

### **OHV Tourism marketing and maps**

Cumberland County has a diverse set of trails for Off-Highway Vehicles which were developed by volunteers and trail committees. We are missing maps and marketing that could bring millions of dollars of tourism revenue to Nova Scotia through Cumberland County. We are requesting support to develop maps and a marketing plan to attract these OHV enthusiasts. Off-Highway Vehicles have huge potential to boost economic activity in Cumberland and throughout all Nova Scotia and the Maritime Region.

### **Invest in a Provincial Museum**

Cumberland North is home to a rich heritage and culture that traces back to the early 1600's. The Indigenous, the French and the British battled over the land known as Beaubassin and Fort Lawrence. This area is home to the Acadian people before their expulsion. Beaubassin is a perfect location for tourism development and currently Cumberland North is one of the only areas of the province that does not have a provincial museum. We are requesting the province to work with the people of our area to create a provincial museum at Beaubassin. This is adjacent to the already existing Visitor Information Centre located at the entrance to NS.

### **250th Anniversary Celebrations of the Yorkshire Settlement**

Cumberland County is home to many people with rich Yorkshire heritage. This coming summer (2022), there is interest in commemorating the 250th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of Yorkshire Emigrants to Cumberland County. Residents are hoping to hold a weekend celebration. Funding support is needed for planning and implementation.

### **Tidnish Pedestrian Walking Bridge**

The pedestrian walking bridge in Tidnish is owned by the provincial government. The bridge has needed repairs for a few years. The taxpayers of the area have made numerous requests for it to be repaired. A study has already been done and request repairs to be completed by Summer of 2022.

### **Nature Development**

The Pugwash Estuary is located along the Pugwash River. There is a large group of committed community members that would like to further develop this area into trails for nature walks, birding, canoeing and other outdoor activities.

### **The Pugwash Yacht Club and the Bill Mundle Marina**

A vibrant organization, eagerly seeking to develop the Pugwash area to attract boaters from the Maritime region. Meetings have been held in the past with Develop NS and the local folks would love to work with the provincial government to reach the potential in this naturally beautiful harbour and estuary. Funds are required for dredging. The municipality and federal governments have both made a financial commitment and the community is awaiting provincial support.

### **Develop Blue Sea Beach**

Community members in the Malagash area would like to develop Blue Sea Beach. They had applied for a "placemaking" fund in the past but have not been able to secure any financial support. This entire area of Malagash is ripe for tourism development and the community members have several ideas to improve upon the beach to draw more visitors. Funding is needed.

### **Funds to create a Neighbours Helping Neighbours Volunteer Program**

There is a large voluntary base here in Cumberland. We are looking to have a database created to connect available volunteers interested in providing extra help to organizations/causes in need of extra hands. Though we have

a current model that works locally, expansion of this would be of great benefit locally and province wide.

### **Province wide School Lunch Program**

Cumberland County has a non-profit society in place for cafeteria services that is willing to be a pilot site for the testing of this program. PEI has a successful school lunch program that we could use as a basis for creating an NS-focused model. The Premier communicated support for this initiative in the fall legislative session after I tabled a Notice of Motion.

### **Education investment in Forestry**

Curriculum changes are needed in schools to adapt to the evolving priorities of climate change. The Cumberland Forestry Advisory Committee have advocated for accurate forestry information to be added to school curricula.

### **Education investment in Cyberbullying**

Curriculum changes are needed to foster healthy social media behaviours and reduce cyberbullying. The Department of Education's own statistics showed an increase of more than 100 incidents of cyberbullying in 2020-2021.

### **Daycare**

Daycare is needed for Nova Scotians working shift work. This need has been identified in Cumberland especially by health care workers such as our nurses and CCA's.

### **EB Chandler Parking Lot Repairs**

The parents of the EB Chandler Junior High School have been asking for repairs to the parking lot and driveway for years. The pavement is in very poor condition often leading to damage to vehicles. Can these needed repairs be completed?

### **Replacement of EB Chandler Junior High School**

This school will need to be replaced due to age of the physical structure. Can an assessment be done and this school be placed on the replacement capital plan and a financial commitment made for the replacement of this school.

### **Wellness Recreational Centre**

The Municipal governments in Cumberland County have identified a need for a Wellness Centre to provide physical space for recreational activities. This is a strategic priority, and I am requesting the provincial government to work with our town and county to build a wellness centre like ones we see in other communities such as Liverpool, Port Hawkesbury and Truro.

### **Expansion of the Amherst Industrial Park to the west side of the Trans-Canada Highway**

Over the past two decades, we have witnessed significant growth in Moncton. As a result, many of the distribution centres were interested in Amherst due to the proximity to the TCH and rail line; however, larger lots are needed with infrastructure in place of water and sewer. Because much of this area is wooded, I request your government support expansion of business opportunities here by providing funding for infrastructure needs, including infrastructure to support water and sewer services. Preparing these lots will bring in a great deal of activity for our economy.

### **Build more cell phone towers and improve internet connectivity**

Economic development is being thwarted due to a lack of adequate internet access and cell phone coverage along the Northumberland Strait; the area I hear the most concern from stretches from Tidnish to Malagash. Many people have moved along the shore to "work from home" and are having great difficulty due to lack of internet. It would be in this government's best interest to uphold their platform promises and immediately act to bring internet coverage to fruition.

### **Invest in Renewable Energy**

Cumberland County has much potential to assist in supplying the province with renewable energy by 2030. Several landowners in the Fort Lawrence area are interested in renting land for wind turbines. It would be a wonderful opportunity for your government to discuss this further with these residents. There is also great geothermal energy potential in our county. A Solar Farm was built in Amherst recently and we are eager to be involved in energy projects.

### **Pulp Wood Market Needed Urgently**

Since the closure of Northern Pulp there is no market for low grade pulp wood. Unfortunately most of the pulp is being left on the ground since the closures of Nova Scotia's only pulp mill. I am requesting your government work directly with the Cumberland Forestry Advisory Committee. This committee formed after the closure of the pulp mill. Cumberland has a long history of having a vibrant forestry sector. Within Nova Scotia, Cumberland County accounts for the largest amount of wood harvested annually yet none of the provincial transitional funding was allocated to Cumberland County forestry projects. The government will have better outcomes if they work with the landowners and people that actually work in the forestry industry. If there is no buyer for pulp wood, this could lead to worsening forestry practices. Foresters in Cumberland County want to participate in a healthy and sustainable future for forestry.

### **Invest in the growth of Oyster Farming**

Oyster Farming is currently being done in the Malagash Bay. Discussion with locals indicate there is untapped potential with unused licenses for oyster farming. The Oyster industry in PEI does not have the supply to meet the global demand. I am requesting the department to investigate if there is opportunity to grow our economy through Oyster Farming to help meet the demands for this unique quality product.

### **NSCC Students can aid in Housing Crisis**

Trades are urgently needed for the construction of housing. There are untapped opportunities for trades to be more "hands-on". This would benefit the demand for workers while providing more practical learning for students studying various trades- particularly carpentry, plumbing and electrical. I have several tradespeople that are willing to take on students here in Cumberland North as soon as possible.

### **Build NSCC Campus Downtown Amherst**

NSCC is an incredible institution of learning. Currently, the Amherst campus is costing our provincial government over one million dollars a year in rent and is located in an area that is not reaching the potential spin-off benefits that NSCC could have in our town. Over the years, local representatives and experts in the field have communicated a belief that if the province used those funds to build a province-owned campus in the downtown area of Amherst, the economic spinoffs would be very beneficial to all. We are requesting that an analysis be done with the goal of construction of a new campus. The influx of students in the downtown will be a significant boost to the economy.

### **Real supports for Entrepreneurs**

Under the former government, economic supports by the Province were mostly removed. This inhibited growth to both small, medium, and large enterprises. I hope that under this governments leadership the government will offer a suite of initiatives that will aid entrepreneurs.

### **Immigration of Workers**

The number one concern business owners have communicated is the lack of an available labour force. This is not unique to Cumberland however if we are going to have a thriving economy we will need workers. Supporting immigration to Cumberland North and Nova Scotia is important. We have a successful history of persons immigrating to our area and staying to raise their family. Establishing regional immigration offices will be beneficial. My constituency office receives regular inquiries and having a provincial office here in Amherst would benefit persons greatly. We have a very diverse population and an active multicultural association who would provide

community supports. Please consider Amherst as a location for a Regional Immigration Office.

### **Stop wasting taxpayers money at the NS Border on the TCH**

The local Mayors of Amherst and Cumberland, along with myself, had meetings with department's to share safety concerns on the Trans Canada Highway at the entrance to Nova Scotia. I do not support the Province's decision to place border guards on the TCH. This is a safety risk and a hazard on a highway that has a posted speed limit of 110km/hr. The pandemic has been ongoing nearly 2 years now. Nova Scotia is one of only two provinces in the country of Canada that has border guards. I invite you to visit the three entrances to our Province. I strongly believe seeing firsthand the set-up on the TCH, you will find it is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Our neighbours in NB have removed the border guards at the provincial borders. I would recommend NS doing the same.

**Increase Disability Tax Credit** - Cumberland has the highest rate of persons with a disability. A report by Engage NS reported over 26% of Cumberland County residents identify as having a disability. The Nova Scotia government has not indexed the disability tax credit over the last number of years despite the cost of living increases. The recent rapid increase in inflation makes this request even more important for persons with a disability.

**Recovery Bonds** - In the Fall Session of the Legislature, I tabled a bill entitled "The Nova Scotia Recovery Bonds Act". This would create an additional revenue stream to boost our economy as we move forward after the pandemic and I welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you as it behooves us to consider all options to have a healthy economy.

## **Conclusion**

The people of Cumberland understand the importance of fiscal responsibility and respect your important task of creating a provincial budget.

I can attest that the people were encouraged to see the extra tax they have been paying at the Cobequid Pass removed after 24 unfair years.

It is time to include Cumberland County in the financial planning of the province and ensure this large geographic area of the province and its people are treated fairly and equitably.

Investment in Poverty Reduction, Health Care, Caring for Mother Earth and Supporting Entrepreneurs and Businesses will lift and empower all people in Cumberland North and Nova Scotia.

The people of Cumberland North have many needs and have much potential. Investment in Strong a Cumberland is an Investment in a Stronger Nova Scotia, a Stronger Maritime Region and a Stronger Canada.

Thank you for your leadership as Minister and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
MLA for Cumberland North