

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA Cumberland North



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Députée Cumberland North

Nova Scotia Legislature

January 30, 2025

The Honourable Scott Armstrong, M.L.A.
Minister of Opportunities and Social Development
Department of Community Services
5675 Spring Garden Road
P.O. Box 696
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T7

Dear Minister Armstrong,

Congratulations on being elected as an MLA.. Your education and past experience as Member of Parliament will be of great benefit for your service to Nova Scotia and to your constituents. As the former federal MP for this region, I know you are well aware of the great people in Cumberland North and the dedication they have to their communities.

Thank you for agreeing to serve the people of Nova Scotia as Minister of Opportunities and Social Development. It is both a privilege and responsibility to contribute to building a stronger, more resilient Cumberland County, a region with untapped potential and boundless opportunities.

Governing is about people. On November 26th, 2024, Nova Scotians entrusted us with a mandate to shape a brighter future. We share a belief in the strength of our communities, the ingenuity of our industries, and the rich heritage that defines Cumberland County. Together, we will harness this potential to foster economic growth, improve healthcare, and elevate the quality of life for all residents.

Cumberland County stands on the precipice of tremendous opportunity. By investing in our people, supporting innovation, and ensuring sustainable development, we can unlock prosperity and lead Nova Scotia into a new era of progress. Our collective success hinges on collaboration, bold action, and a steadfast commitment to addressing the unique needs of our communities.

Specifically, I ask that you prioritize:

1. **Remove the centralized intake system** that is currently in place. It is very impersonal and does not provide the compassion and personal care that is needed by many people trying to access income and disability support. It is very difficult for people to navigate, especially when they are under duress.

2. As Minister of Opportunities and Social Development, I urge you to work with other Ministers to expand programs aimed at **reducing poverty and promoting economic self-sufficiency** for vulnerable communities in Cumberland North. Improving local food production through community gardens and supporting residential greenhouses could spur on self-reliance rather than building dependence on government.

3. **I look forward to the department to lead initiatives addressing affordable housing.** There is a significant need for affordable housing in Cumberland. We have a large number of apartments and homes currently being built but very few, if any, are affordable. Thankfully your department did fund a temporary shelter that is now a full-time shelter with transitional housing. We have incredible community partners that are working tirelessly to improve the lives of the vulnerable in our communities. In the past I have worked with contractors and municipal leaders to spur on housing construction and we are pleased to see things now underway.

4. Many vulnerable people living in our communities that receive income assistance or disability support, have entrepreneurial abilities. **I would like to see our provincial government provide incentives for small business projects for these individuals.** I believe many could be lifted out of poverty with the right support that didn't penalize them if they made small profits. When I was first elected back in 2017, the department would look at gross sales revenue instead of net and that made it impossible for anyone to transition out of income assistance with starting a small business. This did get changed thankfully but we can do more to capitalize on individual talents. This would help them financially and build self-worth.

I would like to request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss how we can collaborate on these priorities. A stronger Cumberland North will lead to a stronger Nova Scotia, and together, we can lay the foundation for lasting success.

Your mandate will be shaped by the voices and needs of our citizens. I expect you to engage regularly with the people of Cumberland County, ensuring that our policies and programs reflect their aspirations and address their concerns.

I look forward to working with you to build a stronger, more vibrant Cumberland County. Together, we will seize the opportunities before us and create lasting positive change for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
MLA for Cumberland North

CC: Deputy Minister of Opportunities and Social Development