

**Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin**  
**MLA Cumberland North**



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**Députée Cumberland North**

**Nova Scotia Legislature**

January 30, 2025

The Honourable Brian Comer, M.L.A.  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
Department of Health and Wellness  
Barrington Tower  
1894 Barrington Street  
P.O. Box 488  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 2R8

Dear Minister Comer,

Thank you for agreeing to serve the people of Nova Scotia as Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

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.

As Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, your leadership will be pivotal in addressing the mental health crisis and ensuring that Nova Scotians have access to the care and support they need. Your work will play a crucial role in building a comprehensive mental health care system, with a focus on community-based services and reducing stigma around mental health.

Specifically, I ask that you prioritize:

**1. Financially supporting the establishment of a 24/7 mental health crisis response team in Cumberland County to provide immediate assistance during emergencies that are in communities.** Families have called the crisis line and are told that if they lived in the city they could have a mobile crisis unit attend to the situation but there is nothing available for them in rural Nova Scotia, specifically Cumberland.

There is a void in care of persons who are suffering from mental illness and cannot advocate for themselves. Unfortunately Adult protection has become virtually useless in these situations, frustrating everyone involved including our office, medical professionals and law enforcement agencies.

**2. I am pleased to share that we have seen some improvement in psychiatric care here in Cumberland since the legislative change adding CRHCC to the list of facilities that can do psych assessments. Also the addition of the two recent psychiatrists have been very valuable. Their work ethic and desire to see patients is a breath of fresh air.**

**3. Please consider changing the model of care that is available to the public for psychotherapy.** I have seen a strong model that has worked well called the “Shared Mental Health Care Model”. It was used at the Cowie Hill Medical Clinic. I tried to get that model of care here in Amherst but there was great resistance from the mental health team management.

The Shared Care Mental Health Model has therapists integrated into the collaborative practices with family physicians and nurse practitioners. There is little to no wait time for patients and the satisfaction of the patient, family and healthcare team is much higher than what is currently available in Cumberland.

**4. The Detox services must be reinstated to 7 days a week.** Addictions unfortunately have increased, likely due to stress post-pandemic, especially in our area of the province. Having to discharge patients on Friday is not only stressful on patients and families but also on the detox medical/nursing team who want to be able to provide effective quality care but are not able to in the current scenario.

**5. Please pass Bill 474 [Personal Health Information Amendment Act](#)** This bill proposes critical amendments to the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA), allowing healthcare providers to share a patient's information with their families or caregivers when there is a credible risk of harm. Specifically designed to address gaps in mental health care, the amendment would relax privacy restrictions in cases involving minors at risk of suicide or self-harm. The goal is to enable more collaborative and compassionate care by

ensuring that families and caregivers are informed and involved in crisis situations.

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/bills-statutes/bills/assembly-64-session-1/bill-474>

I would like to request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these important priorities and how we can work together to address the unique challenges and opportunities in Cumberland County. Collaboration is key to ensuring that we deliver meaningful results for our communities, and I look forward to engaging with you to advance these goals.

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', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
MLA for Cumberland North