



BECKY DRUHAN

MLA LUNENBURG WEST

MLA CONSTITUENCY OFFICE
373 King Street, Bridgewater, NS B4V 1B1

OFFICE HOURS 9am - 4pm | Monday - Friday

CONTACT BECKY

Phone: 902-530-5449

Email: info@beckydruhan.ca

Website: www.beckydruhan.ca

MLA COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Dear friends and neighbours,

As the days grow longer and warmer weather approaches, government has returned to legislature for the spring sitting. One key element is the budget that will support our work over the coming year. I'm happy to share a few highlights that will have a positive impact here in Lunenburg West:

Budget 24/25 will deliver a **new universal School Lunch Program** for students in public schools, rolling out over four years (\$18.8 million this year); expand cellular service access across the province with a **new Cellular for Nova Scotia Program** (\$15 million this year); **support Nova Scotians with diabetes** including coverage of glucose monitors and expanding the insulin pump program (\$7.2 million); and it will invest in **maintenance and repair of gravel and rural roads** under the Rural Impact Mitigation program (totalling \$91 million).

Also, Budget 24/25 will leave **more money in your pocket** beginning January 1, 2025 (through indexing personal income tax brackets, the basic personal amount and certain non-refundable tax credits), saving Nova Scotians about \$160 million in taxes annually by 2028.

Finally, with Budget 24/25 we continue to make big **investments in health care, mental health and addictions, long term care, housing and roads**. Some of these programs are detailed in this newsletter.

With thanks to the great support of Constituency Assistants Sandy Mair-Dodman and Bronwen Thomas we continue to help community members who reach out to our office for assistance. Recently, we have:

- Advocated with Public Works on behalf of community members for road upgrades and investments, and for repair and maintenance needed as a result of conditions caused by heavy rainfall and rapid thaw/freezing cycles.
- Helped residents apply for Seniors Care Grant, Home Warming, Dental Rebates, Emergency Home Repair and other grants.
- Sought and shared information on services and supports available through Departments of Seniors and Long Term Care, Justice, Education, Housing and Municipal Affairs, Health and others.

As always, if you need support or have questions, please reach out to our office. We are happy to help. It is an honour to serve as your MLA.

Becky Druhan

INSIDE...



SSRH Redevelopment

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Environment & Active Transportation

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Steve Smith, VisionFire Studios Photo
Celebrating Our Community

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HEALTH CARE

Progress on South Shore Regional Hospital Redevelopment

The two-story 49,705 sq. ft. expansion of the South Shore Regional Hospital Redevelopment is well underway, bringing us closer to:

- Larger, modern facilities for emergency care
- A complete endoscopic unit
- 12-bed dialysis unit
- Local access to diagnostics with a new MRI
- Expanded day surgery clinics

The redevelopment will increase the hospital's footprint by 30%. The dialysis/endoscopy area is now structurally complete. Interior walls are being constructed in the new emergency department. Underground mechanical and electrical installations are ongoing. Completion of the Emergency, Endoscopy and Dialysis units is anticipated in Fall 2025.

This new construction is made possible by the Health Services Foundation of the South Shore, supporters and donors who raised \$10.8 million through the Brighter Days Capital Campaign, and a Provincial investment of \$120 million.



Access Health Care and Information with New YourHealthNS App



The Province is making it easier to access health care services, resources and information with the YourHealthNS App: a one-stop shop at your fingertips to book services, navigate care, and find information easier and faster. YourHealthNS lets you:

- Book blood tests, X-rays and vaccines
- Search for nearby health services
- See predicted emergency department wait times
- Access free, same day virtual care
- Connect with a care navigator who can help find the best service or information needed

YourHealthNS has already been downloaded over 221,947 times with more than 6,000 users in the Bridgewater area. Scan the QR code to the right to get connected.

GET IT ON
Google play

Available on the
App Store



Lunenburg County Welcomes 17 Physicians

2023 was a successful year for physician recruitment here in Lunenburg County. The Province has continued to support the many people and organizations working to attract health care professionals to our amazing community, most recently with grants totalling over \$90,000 to the South Shore Multicultural Association, the Town of Bridgewater and the Health Services Foundation of the South Shore.

The Province's hard work and investments are paying off! Over the last year, 17 physicians have chosen to provide services here in our community. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to each of them:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| • Dr. Michael Gibson (Palliative Care) | • Dr. Russell Incatasciatio (Emergency) | • Dr. Kory Jollymore (Family Medicine) |
| • Dr. Grainne Neilson (Psychiatry) | • Dr. Eric Wainwright (Family Medicine) | • Dr. Daryush Kiamiri (Internal Medicine) |
| • Dr. Fiodar Kuznetsov (Hospitalist) | • Dr. David Robertson (Family Medicine) | • Dr. Natasha Harlow (Emergency Medicine) |
| • Dr. Kate MacEachen (Cardiologist) | • Dr. Karl Misik (Family Medicine) | • Dr. Zach Shaffelburg (Internal and Rheumatology) |
| • Dr. Victoria Smith (General Surgery) | • Dr. Julia Locke (Primary Maternity Care) | • Dr. Eliza Moldovan (Family Medicine) |
| • Dr. Emily Whelan (Urology) | • Dr. Gabrielle Haidar (Family & Maternal Care) | |

We have also welcomed many medical learners to the area for short and long-term rotations in our clinics and hospitals, and we hope they choose to stay in our community when they complete their training.

HEALTH CARE

Patient Access to Care Act

Last March the Province passed the *Patient Access to Care Act* which is helping make Nova Scotia a world leader in healthcare.

The *Patient Access to Care Act* allows the Province to work with our over 40 regulated health professions to expand the scope of what they're allowed to do. Since the bill was passed the Province has had over 19,000 applications for nurses from all over the world to come and work in Nova Scotia. Because of this work, Nova Scotia is being called "The little province that could — and did".

The *Patient Access to Care Act* provides for:

- 1. Common sense credentialing:** recognising that health care professionals who are good enough for the UK, the US, Australia, and Ontario are good enough for Nova Scotia.
- 2. Expansion of scope of allied health professionals:**
 - Nurse practitioners can now admit, discharge and issue certain prescriptions.
 - Physiotherapists are now in emergency departments, and they can prescribe x-rays and tests.
 - Pharmacists can diagnose, treat and prescribe for a wide range of common illnesses - like strep tests - something that would have otherwise been done in a doctor's office or at the ED.
 - Nurses in Nova Scotia have the largest scope of practice in the country.
- 3. Red tape reduction:** The Province has eliminated 250,000 hours of red tape, which means more time available for doctors to do what they're best at - seeing their patients.

Pharmacy Clinic Offers Expanded Options for Non-Emergency Care.

Walk-in clinic options for South Shore community members expanded again with the addition of another pharmacy primary care clinic in Bridgewater.

The Province announced opening of the Lawtons Pharmacist Walk-in Clinic + location on August 18, 2023. At the Lawtons Clinic, pharmacists and nurse practitioners work together to order and interpret patient lab work, as well as diagnose and treat routine and non-emergency health concerns. They joined the Bridgewater Guardian Pharmacy Clinic in delivering important primary care for non-emergency health concerns to our community.



EMERGENCY SERVICES

Students can earn a High School Credit for Volunteering with a local Fire Department

Students participating in the Junior Firefighter program can earn a personal development high school credit through hands-on learning of firefighting, fire prevention, and safety skills from experienced local firefighters.



► Lunenburg West fire department members visited the NS Legislature and were recognised by the Premier and MLA Druhan. Pictured are: Bridgewater (FC Michael Nauss, Cynthia Isabelle, Brooke Weagle); Conquerall Bank (FC Ryan Anthony, Nolan Anthony, Madison Gaul); Hebbville (FC Doug Peveril, Jerry Read, Trenton Baker); Italy Cross Fire Department (FC Nancy Llewellyn-Rafuse, Brandon Burgoyne, Callum Mosher) & Tri District (FC Paul Hayes, Christa Rosevear, Kendra Rosevear).

Day of Recognition for First Responders – May 1

Professional and volunteer first responders now have a day that recognizes their bravery and unwavering commitment to protecting people and their communities in the face of extraordinary circumstances. During the fall sitting, the Province introduced and passed legislation recognizing these heroes for their ongoing dedication to keeping Nova Scotians safe, as well as their critical day-to-day roles in healthcare, law enforcement and emergency services.

Strengthening Emergency Support Services More Funding for Fire Departments

Every volunteer fire department and ground search and rescue organization in Nova Scotia received \$10,000 to help address the impacts of high operational costs earlier last year. In September, seven Lunenburg West departments each received an additional \$20,000 from the Emergency Services Provider Fund to help with the cost of safety equipment, and two others received funding under the Community Facilities Improvement Program:

- Fire Fighters Assn. of Bridgewater
- Hebbville Fire Dept.
- Hebbs Cross Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Hemford and Dist. Fire Dept.
- Italy Cross Middlewood and District Fire Dept.
- Pleasantville and Dist. Fire Dept.
- Tri District Fire Rescue
- Conquerall Bank Fire Dept.
- Simpson's Corner Community Hall Society



Hebbville Fire Department Fire Chief, Doug Peveril says that his department will "use the funds to offset the cost of purchasing four brand new Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), which will replace our aging equipment."

HOUSING

A safe home gives people and families the comfort and security they need to thrive. Nova Scotians need affordable housing, so they have more money in their pockets for basic needs like groceries, recreation, and transportation. The responsibility for housing is shared across all levels of government and across sectors. To address our community housing needs, the Province has a multi-year plan with our partners to:

- increase housing supply
- grow and sustain affordable housing, and
- deliver programs people need

Housing and Care for Seniors – 46 New Rooms for Hillside Pines

Hillside Pines is expanding, adding options in our community for elders to live to their fullest potential. Supported by care providers who embody the philosophy that Long Term Care centers can and should be homes, the addition of 46 new rooms (and the replacement of the existing 50 rooms) is an investment in housing as well as seniors and health.



Becky Druhan, MLA; Marisa Eisner, Administrator, Hillside Pines; elders and care partners

Provincial Land for Housing – Affordable Housing coming to Aberdeen Road

The Province has entered a conditional agreement with ARC Developments for a proposed affordable housing initiative for 3.03 hectares on Aberdeen Road, Bridgewater under the Province's Land for Housing Program.



(l to r) : Brian J. Ward, NS Provincial Housing Agency; Becky Druhan, MLA, Mayor David Mitchell and Emily Richardson (NSPHA).

Public Housing in Bridgewater

The Province is making the largest investment in new public housing in three decades. On March 11, I was pleased to announce new public housing for the South Shore that will be built at the Pineview Manor site in Bridgewater.

The housing will be owned by the Province and managed by the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency. The building planned for this site will be three storeys with a mix of 1, 2, and 3-bedroom units. In total we can anticipate about 21 units providing housing for up to 94 people. The target start date is spring 2025. Target completion fall 2026.

These new buildings will provide housing options not only for seniors, but also for families – allowing more Nova Scotians to access the benefit of public housing.

Housing for Students – NSCC Residence for 40 Students

The Province is building new student housing at the NSCC Lunenburg campus in Bridgewater. Announced on November 21, 2023, the new NSCC residence will provide affordable housing to 40 students, and help ease pressure on our local housing supply.



Housing Support for Homeowners – Provincial Secondary & Backyard Suite Incentive Program

The Province is partnering with homeowners to create more affordable housing, faster, under the Secondary and Backyard Suite Incentive Program. The Program is for eligible homeowners who create an affordable Secondary and/or Backyard Suite in their home or on their property. Assistance is in the form of a forgivable loan, for up to 50% of the project cost, up to a max of \$25,000. Secondary and Backyard Suites provide families with space for multi-generational living and offers affordable options for renters and income to homeowners. For more info call 1-844-424-5110.

Supports for Unhoused – Transitional Options in Lunenburg West

Transitional housing options like supportive housing, shelters and drop-in centers are important elements of an integrated crisis response. Provincial funding has supported organizations like South Shore Open Doors Association and The John Howard Society to open and operate 36 new beds through Roof 25 and Cedar House.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

I am proud that the Province is making investments in education to better support students and families and deliver programs that improve achievement and wellbeing here in Lunenburg West and across Nova Scotia.



The Province is introducing a **Universal School Lunch Program**, so every student in public schools has access to healthy food at school. Affordable for all, and free for those who need it.



Through **Ideas for Education**, the Province is acting on teachers' great ideas. Pilots like full-time term substitute teachers, Children and Youth Care Practitioners supporting student behaviour and new teacher mentors are happening across the province and here on the South Shore.



In 2022 the Province introduced **Summer Literacy Camps** for students entering Primary and Grade 1 to enjoy a summer-camp environment with a focus on teacher-led reading and literacy. In 2023, three schools hosted camps here on the South Shore.



The Province's updated five-year **School Capital Plan** invests almost **\$1 Billion** in our school buildings, with more funding for capital repairs to preserve existing schools, new schools like New Germany, and modular classrooms to meet the needs of growing school communities.



In the 2023 fall session of the legislature, the Province **introduced and passed the *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial Act***. The Act is the first dedicated French first-language education legislation in Nova Scotia and Canada. It strengthens support for publicly funded French first language education in schools like Rive-Sud.



After consultation with school communities, the Province is **enhancing local voice in the public school system** by increasing transparency and strengthening the voices of families, students and school advisory councils. Connect with your school, the South Shore Regional Centre for Education or attend a Public Engagement Session to learn more and get involved.



The Province is improving pathways for teacher education with programs like the new **8-month Online BEd Pilot** which will allow students to complete their practicum study from anywhere in the province. This allows future teachers here on the South Shore to earn their BEd without leaving our community.



The Province is creating affordable childcare when and where families need it. Local expansion projects delivering **New Childcare Spaces in Lunenburg County** include:

- YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia Child Care Centre in Bridgewater – 10 new spaces
- Centre de la Petite Enfance de la Rive-Sud, Cookville – 17 new spaces
- Family Matters Home Child Care Agency – 16 new spaces
- Before and after school – 336 new spaces in South Shore since 2021



Childcare transformation requires more than just spaces. To make life more affordable the Province has **Reduced Childcare Fees by 50%** (on average) in 2022 and are on track to achieve \$10 a day on average by 2026. To ensure we have the ECEs we need we have increased wages and are introducing pension and benefit plans.



Centre Scolaire de la Rive-Sud Bilingual Sign Installation Project (l to r) Becky Druhan, MLA; Siena Cusick, Charlize Donat & Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson.



ENVIRONMENT & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Protecting Cape Lahave Island

Cape LaHave Island is a rare and special piece of our Nova Scotia coastline – 2,600 acres of breathtaking undeveloped nature, is home to important habitats and rare species. During our fall sitting of the legislature I brought this land one step closer to protection by introducing and passing An Act to Amend Chapter 72 of the Acts of 1897, the Lunenburg Common Lands Act.

The amendment to the Lunenburg Common Lands Act will enable the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg to enter into a conservation easement with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, ensuring that the common lands on Cape LaHave Island will be protected in perpetuity in a natural and undeveloped state, protecting those rare species and important ecosystems for today and future generations.

I was pleased to collaborate with the Municipality and their team to make this happen and appreciate the work of Honourable Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, Councillors Leitha Haysom, Martin Bell and others to protect this significant natural resource.



Left to right, Councillor Leitha Haysom, Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, Becky Druhan, MLA and Councillor Martin Bell.

Investing in DesBrisay Museum

The DesBrisay Museum preserves our history, brings it alive and puts it into context for today and for the future. It offers programming and special events and provides Bridgewater and Lunenburg County with a safe social space to learn new skills.

This important hub of heritage, art, and culture was supported with Provincial funding of \$349,980 through the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund. The investment will make the museum more energy efficient, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and better protect the building from flooding.

“The entire community is deeply grateful that the Friends of the DesBrisay Museum Society was awarded a Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund grant by the Province of Nova Scotia. This support contributes to the preservation of our cultural heritage and ensures that the museum can continue to function as a community hub for generations to come. Thank you for recognizing the importance of the DesBrisay Museum and the work that we do.” – Lynette de Montreuil, Culture and Heritage Manager, DesBrisay Museum



Provincial investment of \$349,000 for Desbrisay Musuem.

Investments in Active Transportation makes getting around Lunenburg

Trails

Over \$5 Million invested in the repair of Nova Scotia's flood damaged trails, including the LaHave River Trail and Bull Run Trail.

Public Transit

Bridgewater Transit received \$25,000 from the Public Transit Assistance Program to support provision of bussing services.

Expanded routes and options for off-road vehicles

The Road Trails Act, passed in the spring setting of legislature, gives municipalities the ability to designate local streets for off-highway vehicle use through bylaws. The Act also permanently designated a number of provincial sites for use of off-highway vehicles, including Trunk 10 in New Germany. A new pilot project allowing snowmobilers to access trails and services via snow-covered road shoulders and roadways is underway until March 31, 2024.

ENVIRONMENT & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre Photo

Sustainable Communities Fund

The Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund reflects the Province's commitment to help communities prepare for and respond to climate change. In addition to funding for the Friends of the DesBrisay Museum, it has supported local initiatives like:

- **Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation** - \$770,604 to support its work to build a living shoreline in Mahone Bay
- **Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy Association** - \$267,400 for research on the carbon storage capacity of the Shaubac wetlands and assessing the carbon storage capacity of other wetlands
- **The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq Aquatic Resources and Fisheries Management** - \$181,722 for research on conserving and enhancing cold-water habitats for fish and other species.



Last November Environment and Climate Change Minister, Timothy Halman, announced NS Sustainable Communities Fund recipients.

Climate Action Plan

Nova Scotia has legislated ambitious climate goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, grow the green and circular economies, improve the health and sustainability of our environment, and move us toward clean and renewable energy. Steps we have already taken include:

Protecting over 24,000 hectares of land with:

- 19 new/expanded Provincial Parks – like Cookville
- 16 new/expanded Nature Reserves – like Cherry Hill Beach
- 22 new/expanded Wilderness Areas – like Medway Lakes

Investing in communities, like our \$75,000 grant to support MODL's Solar Garden Development Activities.

Introducing Netukulimk 12, a new environmental stewardship course which blends Mi'kmaw and Indigenous knowledge with Western Science using land-based learning approaches.



Beautiful Cherry Hill Beach Nature Reserve

County easier for you and better for the environment.

Student Transportation

The NSCC Lunenburg Campus received \$17,113 through the Community Access-Ability Program to support students enrolled in the Achieve Program.

Pre-booked, door-to-door transportation throughout Lunenburg County

Lunenburg County Wheels received over \$290,000 to support expanded service area and the purchase of vehicles and bike racks. Provincial funding is supporting the addition of new, fully accessible vehicles to their fleet and the addition of two high quality, transit grade bike racks for new vans, coming this spring. LCW's service area has even expanded.



CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY



Cathy Hughes of Chelsea - an incredible, kind lady who has given so much to her church and community.



The Bridgewater Fire Department celebrated 147 years of service at its annual banquet, November 4. Reid Whynot was honoured for 50 years of service.



Seaside A Cappella - visit to Legislature October 26.



Heather Fralic, a committed community supporter, who volunteers with the United Way of Lunenburg County, the LCLC and Lunenburg/Queens Business Awards.



Hillside Pines Home for Special Care celebrated its 40th Anniversary August 17.



Last September Bridgewater Ready Mix celebrated the grand opening of their new multi-million-dollar ready-mix concrete plant.



Barbara Wicks of Bridgewater, a dedicated and passionate Scouts Canada Volunteer for 50 Years.



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Important Phone Numbers

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|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Emergency (Fire, Police, Ambulance) | 911 |
| Professional Health Advice | 811 |
| Provincial Road Conditions | 511 |
| Directory Assistance | 411 |
| Community And Government Programs | 211 |
| Access Nova Scotia | 1-800-670-4357 |
| Mental Health Crisis Line | 1-888-429-8167 |
| Domestic Violence | 1-855-225-0220 |
| Kids Help Phone | 1-800-668-6868 / Text Connect to 686868 |
| Nova Scotia Dept. of Seniors | 1-844-277-0770 |
| Pharmacare Program | 1-800-544-6191 |
| Continuing Care | 1-800-225-7225 |
| Public Works (Potholes, Culverts, Ditching) | 1-844-696-7737 |
| Housing Nova Scotia | 1-844-424-5110 |
| Seniors' Safety Program | 1-902-543-3567 |
| Lunenburg County Wheels | 1-902-543-3567 |
| South Shore Open Doors Assoc. | 1-902-521-0994 |