

McClelland Provides Government Program Update

Jonathan McClelland, CEO Cumberland Business Connector has been following business activity and working hard to create interest in businesses throughout the county, whether it be a new start-up by local people, or other entrepreneurs who see Cumberland as a place to do business. Recently, like many executives he has been watching the every evolving situations as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

On March 23, McClelland sent an update, of the various programs being offered by the federal and provincial governments.

A. Summary of Provincial Initiatives to Support Small Businesses as of March 23, 2020

Effective immediately, government will invest \$161 million to address cash flow and access to credit for small and medium-sized businesses in Nova Scotia. I have placed these in order of what I feel is the highest priority items for our businesses:

1. Changes to the Small Business Loan Guarantee Program

(administered through credit unions) include: (a) For businesses that currently have loans guaranteed through this program: deferring principal and interest payments until June 30. (b) For businesses needing additional credit/liquidity, enhancing the program to make it easier for businesses to access credit up to \$500,000. For businesses that would not qualify for a loan, the provincial government will guarantee the first \$100,000

2. Government will defer payments until June 30 for: All government loans, including those under the Farm Loan Board; Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board; Jobs Fund; Nova Scotia Business Fund; Municipal Finance Corp and Housing Nova Scotia.

(b) small business fees, including: business renewal fees (a list of fees will be posted online early this week) and workers compensation premiums.

3. Further measures include: small businesses which do business with the government will be paid within five days instead of the standard 30 days; the province will suspend payments on Nova Scotia student loans for six months, from March 30 to Sept. 30. This is automatic, students do not have to apply; ensuring more Nova Scotians can access the internet to work from home, by providing \$15-million as an incentive to providers to speed up projects under the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative and complete them as soon as possible

B. Update on Government of Canada initiatives to support small businesses:

WCB payments do not need to be made until June 30; Corporate income tax payments can be deferred until September 1, 2020 - no interest or penalties on late installments in that period; Federal temporary wage subsidy in place for 3 months - for wages paid between March 18 and June 20th. Reduce income tax (NOT CPP OR EI) remittance by 10% of gross wages to a maximum of \$1,375 per employee, total maximum \$25,000. Continue to deduct tax, CPP and

EI from employees as usual. Available to small business (CCPC, under \$16M taxable capital), NPOs and charities:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/campaigns/covid-19-update/frequently-asked-questions-wage-subsidy-small-business-es.html>

C. General Notes:

1. We have had clarification around the announcement on Sunday, March 22 about the closure of the provincial border with New Brunswick. Exemptions from self isolation for cross-border travel into Nova Scotia include: healthy workers in trades and transportation sectors who move goods and people; healthy people commuting to work and people travelling into the province for essential health services. The focus of the border closure appears to be geared towards stopping non-essential social outings and shopping, not stopping workers from reaching their place of employment and/or shutting down commerce.

2. While public social gatherings of more than 5 persons has been prohibited under the Health Protection Act. This restriction does not restrict the number of persons in a workplace, provided the directives issued to date under the Health Protection Act measures are being followed including those relating to social distancing and personal health protection.

3. The announced Federal and Provincial Government support for businesses (which were announced last Wednesday and Friday respectively) were important and good. However, some details are still being worked out. For example, Parliament is meeting on Tuesday, March 24th to pass the legislation needed to implement some of these provisions such as permitting people who were previously excluded from the EI program, such as entrepreneurs, to be able to access EI benefits. The Senate is scheduled to meet on Wednesday to also pass this bill.

4. The government is aware that there will need to be other supports put in place to maintain or small businesses and their workers. We will keep you informed as we become aware of additional measures that will help you and help our communities.

5. The provincial and federal government recognize the necessity of maintaining food production. It has been recognized by the government that Temporary Foreign Workers are required to keep many of our horticultural farms and our fish plants operating since most Canadians are unwilling to do this type of work. There are many details still to be worked out, but government and industry are working on this.

D. What you can do for your business

1. Focus on managing cash - how much do you have, what can you access (lines of credit, etc)
2. Manage revenue as best you can to keep it coming in
3. Follow up Accounts Receivable quickly and regularly

4. Expense side - big items are usually occupancy/rent & wages - monitor relative to revenue. Cut what can be cut: Check for automatic withdrawals, what doesn't need to continue; take advantage of government programs to reduce remittances and Defer loan payments (all ACOA and CBDC loans have extensions in place to July 1.

5. Set up simple cash flow spreadsheet to monitor revenue/expense daily and convert to cash

6. Do you have a spouse that works in a high-risk industry? (medical staff, truck drivers, etc.) Plan for isolation and minimizing risk to rest of business.

In times of uncertainty and turmoil having some consistency

in daily routine is very beneficial for people's mental health.

Rely on Government Websites for accurate information. Be sure to disengage from social media a few hours per day to get some downtime and avoid burnout.

Update Friday March 27th:

Here is the latest update which includes provincial and federal announcement, including the game changing announcements that have been made a few minutes ago. Wage subsidy increase to 75%; \$40,000 federally guaranteed business loans through banks; More funds for EDC/BDC and GST/HST remittance postponed.

Keep calm, and wash your hands!

Jonathan McClelland is CEO, Cumberland Business Connector

Poetry Festival Cancelled

The Oxford Poetry Festival Committee has made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Poetry at Large Poetry Festival scheduled for April 25 and 26 in Oxford, NS.

The decision was made based on the current state of emergency recently declared to reduce risk for Nova Scotians during this COVID-19 outbreak, and

the expectation that social distancing may be required for some time.

Other ways to bring uplifting poetry and positive messaging to the public during Poetry Month (April) will be explored by the Committee. Please follow the Oxford Poetry at Large Facebook page to see what we offer.

Aboiteau Bridge Disappears from 5 Year Plan

By Tory Rushton

The 2020 Spring sitting of the Nova Scotia Legislature did not even make it to Spring. The spring session is where Government will introduce their budget documents for the upcoming fiscal year and Ministers are questioned on their past years process and the upcoming years plan over a 40-hour period.

This is a great opportunity for anyone involved or watching to learn what each department offers Nova Scotia. I took an opportunity to ask questions of the Ministers of Health, Transportation, Education and related to my critic role, the Minister of Lands and Forestry.

These questions were related to how a bridge like the Aboiteau Bridge in Parrsboro could just disappear off the 5 year Plan, why Cumberland South is still



Tory Rushton

ing on it, and more difficult to swallow regarding the ER closures, this is a last resort. I am sorry, these closures in Cumberland South have taken place regularly for the past several years, this is not a new, last resort issue. There is an issue and I have been asking the Minister to work on a plan to help not only Cumberland South, but all rural Nova Scotia overcome the daily ER closures.

We are going through uncharted ground as a Country right now. Many generations have never lived through a pandemic with directions and request such as this. COVID 19 had brought many lives and business to a halt. There are going to be hardships due to this pandemic. Please reach out to my office if you need anything from navigating some of the assistance programs to having

Cumberland Applying for Smaller Council

By Maurice Rees

The Municipality of County of Cumberland has filed documents with the province's Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) to reduce the number on council to eight councillors, down from the current twelve. The municipality is also requesting approval to go switch to an elected Mayor from the current Warden system.

Under the warden system, he/she is elected as a councillor, then internally councillors choose who will be their leader. Under the mayoralty system, which if approved for this fall's municipal election, a mayor would be elected by taxpayers. NSUARB must hold public meetings prior to rendering a decision.

If approved, the municipal council structure would be eight councillors, plus a mayor instead of the current system of thirteen councillors, with once selected as warden from within council, following the election.

On January 30th, Karen Casey, MLA Colchester North and Deputy Premier on behalf of Energy and Mines Minister Derek Mombourquette, announced \$245,000 for

three projects under the Low Carbon Communities Program. The Town of Amherst will receive \$75,000 to develop a town-wide plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Comments on the announcement, David Kogon, Mayor said "Amherst is committed to reducing emissions through increased energy efficiency and adoption of renewable energy. The funding received under the Low Carbon Communities Program will help the town develop an action plan that will lead to concrete reductions in the town's greenhouse gas emissions."

The other part \$170,000 of the funding was awarded to The Municipality of the County of Colchester will receive \$100,000 to design a pedestrian and active transportation bridge at the Fundy Discovery Site in Lower Truro to link a network of trails north and south of the Salmon River. The municipality will also receive \$70,000 to develop a community energy emissions plan to help guide the municipality to a low-carbon future.

something picked up and delivered.

Since October, I have been doing routine door knocking. This was a great opportunity to hear firsthand what are residents are thinking and an opportunity to see their MLA seeking their advice not just at election time. I have stopped this practice for the time being. My offices in Parrsboro and Springhill are now closed (River Hebert has been closed for renovations) to the public but myself and staff are working and helping people navigate through this time. Please feel free to reach out by phone 1-833-597-8679 or email toryrushtonmla@bellaliant.com

WE can and WE will get through this. As a COMMUNITY, a PROVINCE and a COUNTRY.

Talk to you next month.

Tory Rushton is MLA for Cumberland South

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