

Spring Issue

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

The spring of 2020 has been one that each of us will remember long into the future. Businesses, residents and communities across Cumberland County are dealing with disruptions and challenges that would have been hard to imagine a year ago.

As COVID-19 swept across the world and emerged in Nova Scotia in mid-March, life as we knew it came to an abrupt halt. All levels of government and all aspects of society tried to adapt in order to slow and the stop the spread of COVID -19. As large parts of our economy shut down, the Federal and Provincial Governments scrambled to put emergency programs in place to limit the economic damage. These programs were rolled out rapidly and modified as needed.

The Connector also adapted and changed our focus to narrow in on “connecting businesses with the resources that they need to be successful.” Through this crisis we have worked to provide a current summary of resources to help businesses survive the crisis. Moving forward our focus is on helping identify resources for businesses as they reopen.

This crisis has reinforced the value of teamwork. We have worked closely with many partners to support the business community while avoiding duplication. We have also collaborated closely with the Regional Enterprise Networks across the rest of rural Nova Scotia, in order to share best practices and resources that can help rural businesses from one end of Nova Scotia to the other.

This COVID-19 crisis has reinforced the value of a diversified economy. We are fortunate to have a strong manufacturing and goods producing sector in Cumberland, Amherst and Oxford. Many of these companies, especially those involved in food production and processing are expanding and hiring more staff. This is creating opportunities for other workers that are laid off because of declines in their sector.

-Jonathan McClelland



The Cumberland Business Connector is working with our municipal partners, Chambers of Commerce, CBDC Cumberland and other local partners to assist the business community as much as possible.

If you would like to talk to one of us, please send us an email to:

research@cumberlandbusinessconnector.ca

Please include your name, phone number and one of us will get back to you as quickly as possible.

Reopening our Border Economy

In collaboration with our partners and the business community, we have been engaged in discussions around the challenges that we face with having our provincial border with New Brunswick closed. Many business's customer base spans both Cumberland and Westmorland County, NB. With the border closure our businesses are unable to service their customers. A meeting was held which focused on gathering recommendations on strategies for safely reopening our border economy. We, along with others, continue to advocate to the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Governments to allow normal commerce to resume between Cumberland County and Westmorland County, and then between the Maritime Provinces.

COVID - 19

COVID -19 has had a detrimental affect on our economy and local businesses. Since February 2020 Atlantic Canada's GDP has fallen 23%. Employment fell 4% and hours worked dropped 17% in March. This is the biggest monthly drop in employment since 1976. As restrictions begin to lift and businesses start to open, personal protective equipment is becoming harder to find. We have created a list of businesses in Cumberland County that supply PPE which can be found [here](#). In addition to our list of local suppliers, Ignite Labs has created a portal for businesses to list what kinds of PPE they require. Using this portal Ignite Labs is able to match those that need PPE with the supply source. If you can produce PPE, or in need of PPE please go to the portal [here](#).

For daily information on COVID-19 supports and resources, connect with us!



@cumberlandbusinessconnector



www.cumberlandbusinessconnector.ca/covid-19

On our website we have created a page for COVID-19 that lists local and national business supports to assist businesses through the crisis and their reopening. Along with useful resources and weblinks, we have compiled a summary of all the Federal and Provincial programs currently available to small businesses. You can visit the page [here](#).

WEBINARS

Partnering with our local Municipalities we co-hosted a COVID-19 Q & A Panel for business owners. Panellists included representatives from CBDC Cumberland and three local accounting firms. This webinar led to a great discussion on the Federal and Provincial programs that are available to businesses. We look to host more webinars in the coming months that will support business owners of Cumberland County as they begin to reopen. Follow us on social media for updates.

CASH FLOW IS CRITICAL

Cash flow is critical to businesses in times of uncertainty. To help businesses forecast changes to projected Cash Flow, a spreadsheet has been developed by our business consultant Jason Steele. You can find the spreadsheet on our [COVID-19 page](#) under March 27th. Truro Buzz and Jason Steele created a video on how to use the spreadsheet which can be found [here](#).

Forestry

We continue to support the forestry sector through these challenging times. This pandemic has served as a double hit to an industry already struggling due to the closure of Northern Pulp. On our website we've created a summary of programs that may be beneficial to the forestry industry. This can be found [here](#). The Cumberland Forestry Advisory Committee has continued to work and has developed a strategic plan for the Future of Forestry in Cumberland County. On May 31st a public meeting was held via Zoom to present the strategic plan and gather feedback and community input on this plan. We had a good turnout and positive attitudes towards the strategic plan. The strategic plan can be found [here](#).

The Future of Forestry in Cumberland County

Strategic Plan 2020-2022



NORTHERN CONNECTOR PROGRAM

Match - connect - Refer

Adapting to COVID-19

Business needs talent. Talent needs opportunity. Both need the Connector Program

The Connector Program is a program that helps recent graduates, immigrants, and people returning from other parts of Canada to help them build a local professional network and become connected to our business community.

Given what is occurring with COVID-19, our Northern Connector Program has made the decision to take the program VIRTUAL! While face-to-face networking is valuable to both businesses, new graduates, and young professionals; online networking is also an effective way to make professional connections, meet talent, and build business networks. With the given circumstances, we are planning to continue virtual meetings for the foreseeable future to support new immigrants and recent graduates in these unprecedented times.

Matthew Berrigan, Regional Manager, is meeting clients through Zoom and connecting them to business leaders in our community to network via virtual meetings.

If you have any questions or would like to know more, contact Matthew Berrigan: mberrigan@northnsconnector.ca

Graduate To Opportunity—Access Funding to Hire a New Grad

Receive up to 35% of a recent post-secondary graduate's first year salary and 12.5% of their 2nd year salary with the [Graduate to Opportunity Program](#). Applying is easy, and payments are typically turned around in less than 5 days. Your business is eligible if you identify as one of the following: a small business with less than 100 full-time staff, a start-up, a social enterprise, a non-profit, or a registered charity.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, several helpful upgrades have been made the program:

- A funding agreement can be put on hold if you are forced to layoff a graduate. The wage subsidy will re-start when the graduate is re-hired.
- If you already have a GTO agreement, you may stack your funding agreement with the [federal government subsidy \(of 75%\)](#) which is being offered to qualifying businesses for up to 6 months (retroactive to March 15, 2020). The subsidy combination can not exceed 100%.
- Offering funding payments earlier. You can receive three GTO installments as opposed to two. One at the 2 or 3-month mark if that would be beneficial (as opposed to the 6-month mark), another for the balance of the first year at 7 or 8 months, and the remaining at the 15-month mark.

Questions? Feel free to reach out to Margaret Schwartz, Program Outreach Coordinator Department of Labour and Advanced Education: Margaret.schwartz@novascotia.ca

The Cumberland Business Connector is a business led, not for profit organization. Our focus is to foster a strong business environment in order to strengthen Cumberland County by removing barriers to business, and connecting businesses with the resources they need to be successful.

