



105B Walker St., Truro, NS, B2N 4B1

March 11, 2021

Honourable Maryam Monsef
Minister for Women and Gender Equality
and Rural Economic Development
P.O. Box 8097, Station T CSC
Ottawa, ON K1G 3H6

Dear Maryam Monsef,

On behalf of the board of the Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce, and the 450 members it represents in rural Nova Scotia, I want to reach out to thank you for your continued leadership to support our community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your recent announcement of funding to support two women's organizations in Ontario reinforces your government's recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of Canadians, with women and girls being especially impacted. As well as providing affirmation that the Government of Canada takes into consideration the pandemic's disproportionate effects on different groups, including women and girls, when it designs, develops and implements policy.

The past year has presented countless challenges for business and the economy has experienced a disruption related to COVID-19. As the situation continues the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce is taking feedback from business and communicating it to all levels of government.

Recent layoffs at Stanfield's Ltd., a clothing manufacturer in Truro, NS, are very deeply concerning as it will have an impact on the local economy. The 150 jobs that have been lost at this time, were not just numbers but people who live and spend money in this area. This loss is further concerning as the majority of those workers are women, who have suffered disproportionate impacts due to COVID-19 that could have long-term and far-reaching consequences. The fact this loss was related to a federal tender process is extremely disappointing, however, we understand current policies and processes were followed.

While we were relieved to see the tenders were awarded to Canadian businesses, it was further disappointing to learn nine of the successful bidders are located in Canada's three most populated provinces: Ontario, Quebec and B.C.

You may also be aware the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce, supported by the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, had fought over a three-year period to keep a RCMP Communications Centre in Truro as well. Despite many reasonable arguments against this decision the outcome was an additional 50 job losses in Truro and Colchester.



The combined 200 lost jobs in a rural economy, due to federal government decisions, cannot be ignored.

The pandemic has raised awareness of the flaws in the country's supply chain that resulted in shortages of food, vaccines, automobiles, consumables and other items. Past and present procurement policies have driven manufacturing and processing jobs to the United States or centralized regions of Canada. Interruptions resulting from the closure of borders etc. leaves regions of the country vulnerable and ill prepared to deal with elements of a crisis.

In the wake of COVID-19, the government must adapt its policies and procedures with changing times to aid in stabilizing the supply of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and medical supplies made in Canada, as well as stimulating growth in rural economies.

We are writing to you to request that the federal government:

1. Direct Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to establish clear performance criteria for federal facilities in rural communities.
2. Submit an economic impact analysis to PSPC and consult with impacted communities prior to any decision by a federal department on relocating a federal facility.
3. Develop a strategy to build capacity within the country from coast to coast which would include a review of federal procurement policies and procedures with a lens on supporting meaningful access to public procurement contracts for rural business.
4. To consider the importance of localized manufacturing and production through procurement effectively bringing stability and certainty to local economies.
5. Prioritize funding and programing that supports women's access to employment and skills on sectors where there is high-growth potential such as traders, IT and manufacturing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for businesses in the Truro & Colchester region and across the province. As the recognized voice of business, the Chamber has provided ongoing support to the business community during these difficult times. The Chamber will continue its efforts to meet business needs as the pandemic stretches through 2021 and beyond and we look forward to working with you and your government to achieve those goals.

To further discuss the Chamber's position on developing a clear procurement strategy for PPE and support for rural economies, please contact Chamber Executive Director Sherry Martell by calling 902-895-6328 or by email ed@tcchamber.ca

Sincerely,

Ron Smith

President

Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce