

MEMO

TO: Mayor Kogon and Members of Amherst Town Council

FROM: Jonathan McClelland, CEO, Cumberland Business Connector

DATE: March 20, 2023

RE: Highlights of the Cumberland Business Connector's work in January and February

Support Existing Businesses

- The connector has brought on a Business Consultant to work with the next cohort of businesses in the Cumberland Business Accelerator Program. This is targeted at businesses with high growth potential.
- We continue with Business Retention and Expansion visits. Issues discussed include:
 - Succession planning
 - Labour shortages
 - Inflation pressures (fuel, input costs, employees housing costs and other cost of living increases that employees face)
 - Lack of housing for new hires
 - Need to invest in productivity enhancing equipment/ processes
 - The need for an anchor customer to pilot / validate innovative technology
- We are researching the opportunity for increased food production (greenhouses) which could also create a market for low grade wood to heat the greenhouses.
- In collaboration with the Town of Amherst and CBDC Cumberland we have contracted Mashup Lab to deliver their training program for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs. This training program will start in March. Registrations for this program for entrepreneurs was over-subscribed in less than 2 weeks.

New Businesses

- In collaboration with CBDC Cumberland and Nova Scotia Works, we put on training sessions to help young entrepreneurs develop a business plan. These young entrepreneurs presented their business ideas to a panel of judges on March 8. Five students received cash awards to go towards their business startup.
- We have provided advice to a Ukrainian entrepreneur who wants to start a business in this region.

Workforce

- We have met with NSCC and the Town of Amherst to discuss hosting an open house that will showcase the opportunity for local residents to earn extra income by renting rooms or apartments to students looking to study in Amherst.
- We have met with recent immigrants who are looking for work in the area and have made referrals to potential employers.
- We have met with the Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration and the Regional Enterprise Networks to better co-ordinate workforce attraction efforts to make it easier for skilled workers to come to rural areas.

- We have updated a booklet of all post-secondary courses offered within driving distance of Amherst and Cumberland County. This will assist in retaining youth in our region by highlighting the variety of training that is available locally.
- We are supporting Nova Scotia Works on their Job Fair in May based on its success last year.
- Our Northern NS Connector Program continues to work with students and other professionals to help them build a local network of contacts in our region.
- We are connecting business owners who want to rent apartments (to remove housing as a barrier to their hiring process) with a property developer who will be starting construction in Amherst.
- We are supporting the Chamber of Commerce with their workforce attraction initiative.