

A detachment of troops was sent to the head of Bedford Basin to erect a fort and keep open the communication with the interior of the province. Arms were given to those who built without the lines, and also to such others as could be trusted, and lamps were purchased in Boston to light the streets.

The reports regarding the hostility of the Indians proved true. Parties were attacked at Canso and Chignecto; and on September 30th the settlers were startled by news of the murder of four men who had been cutting wood near a saw-mill on the opposite side of the harbor, where the town of Dartmouth now stands. The indignant council refused to formally declare war against the savages, and decided they should be treated as rebels and banditti. A proclamation was issued ordering all British subjects to capture or destroy the Micmacs, and offering ten guineas for each one taken, living or dead, or for his scalp. An additional company of rangers was directed to be raised, and likewise a company of volunteers. Detachments of irregular troops patrolled the country everywhere about the town, and work on the rough fortifications was hastened.

In December the settlers were formed into a militia, and in the following month a guard of thirty-one men of this corps was ordered to keep watch every night. The settlers, who had previously been remarkably careless of danger, were now alarmed. It was feared that one of the store-ships that was moored in a neighboring cove might be boarded by Indians when the water froze about her, and instructions were accordingly given to have the surrounding ice broken each evening.

Although Indian alarms were frequent, and various hostile acts were committed throughout the more unprotected parts of the province, the winter passed at Halifax without the expected attack. The rangers and other troops, however, had to be marched from time to time to keep order and to maintain communication with other posts. The French had some time previously taken possession of land claimed by the British, and these encroachments gave more real uneasiness to Cornwallis than the open warlike acts of the Indians, of whose power to do harm he had not a high opinion.

Although most of the inhabitants of the town had houses to shelter them during the winter, there were a few, it is said, who remained in tents, and must have suffered great discomfort. Fortunately the winter was mild and favorable. In the spring much activity prevailed.