



Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary - Varsity

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JUL 1 1 2022

His Worship Colin Derko
Mayor
Village of Boyle
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Dear Mayor Derko:

Thank you for taking the time to share your kind words. I am pleased to learn that your community feels heard, and I commend your leadership and advocacy for the health and well-being of residents in the Village of Boyle. I apologize for the delay in response.

Alberta's government is committed to ensuring that Albertans have timely and equitable access to the care they need, no matter where they live. That is why *Budget 2022* had a record-high health care investment, with an increase of \$600 million in operating expense over the previous year.

Of this funding, approximately \$90 million per year will be used to attract and retain new family physicians to practise in rural and remote communities. I am happy that with the help of your MLA, you were able to expedite the assessment period for a new physician who is an international medical graduate (IMG). The Government of Alberta recognizes the significant role that IMGs play in delivering quality health care to Albertans. Alberta continues to have one of the most comprehensive programs for integrating IMGs into Canada.

In addition, the government funded incentives, initiatives, and programs to support the recruitment and retention of physicians in rural Alberta. As an example, the Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience program will provide \$6 million to 60 new Canadian-trained family physicians over the next three years, to attract physicians to practise in identified rural and remote communities.

You also mentioned our commitment to increasing ICU bed capacity. I share your concern that we must build our system capacity to ensure that Albertans can continue to get the high-quality care they need and deserve. To this end, *Budget 2022* includes allocating \$100 million for up to 50 new permanent ICU beds this year alone, which will be distributed in all Alberta Health Services (AHS) zones across the province.

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In addition to building bed capacity, Alberta Health and AHS are implementing community responses and maximizing the workforce to support patient care. This includes working closely with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to provide community resources for those who are managing their illness at home and implementing alternate team-based care models. PCNs have the flexibility to develop programs and services, and even make funding decisions based on population-based data and needs.

As you mentioned in your letter, Alberta's government continues to focus on providing Albertans with greater choice in their health care providers by increasing the number and scope of NPs in Alberta. The PCN NP Support Program expands Albertans' access to primary health care, specifically after hours and on weekends, in rural and remote areas and to underserved populations, by increasing services provided by NPs in areas of high demand. In addition, Alberta Health is working on a plan to ensure appropriate distribution of physicians and NPs in the province. This work involves developing access guidelines, population health needs assessments, and an exploration of opportunities to establish collaborative team-based clinics that are appropriately staffed to meet the needs of Albertans.

I am also pleased to learn that AHS' 10-point action plan is showing improvements in your emergency medical services (EMS) and that the Village of Boyle was included in the Hours of Work project to help ease EMS staff fatigue. Like you, I look forward to the Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory Committee's (AEPAC) final report in July 2022 for further solutions for EMS dispatch, ground and air ambulance services, and supporting further EMS integration within the health system. AEPAC's advice will also inform an objective review by independent health system experts on the EMS dispatch system, to be completed by September 2022.


Similarly, AHS and Alberta Health are working on a strategic EMS service plan to provide a strategic roadmap for the next five years, and the Health Quality Council of Alberta will develop a set of performance measures that look at more aspects of the EMS system, including patient experience, practitioner experience, health outcomes, and value for money.

The Government of Alberta recognizes that the strain on EMS is a top concern for many municipal officials, and we are investing an additional \$64 million, which is a 12.2 per cent funding increase, to strengthen EMS response capacity in *Budget 2022*.

Please be assured that addressing health system pressures is a priority. Alberta's government is committed to ensuring that Albertans continue to get the safe, high-quality care they need.

Thank you again for your kind letter and for your update regarding the health care situation in the Village of Boyle.

Sincerely,



Jason Copping, ECA
Minister of Health

cc: Honourable Ric McIver, ECA, Minister, Municipal Affairs
Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock