



February 12, 2025

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Via email: info@districtofmackenzie.ca

Their Worship Joan Atkinson
Mayor of the District of Mackenzie
1 Mackenzie Blvd
Mackenzie BC V0J 2C0

Dear Mayor Joan Atkinson and Council:

Thank you to you and your delegation for meeting with the Minister and me at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Convention on September 16, 2024. It was a pleasure to hear from you. Please accept my apologies for the delay in providing a response to your queries. As a matter of procedure, government moves into an interregnum period during the election process, which places a pause in normal government operations until the election is complete and new government is formed. Unfortunately, this has contributed to my delay in responding.

The issues your delegation brought forward were of great interest to me. During the meeting we discussed hospital diversions, and the Minister noted that the Ministry and Northern Health Authority are implementing targeted strategies to fill emergency department shifts and mitigate diversions at Mackenzie District Hospital.

The District of Mackenzie is eligible for a range of health workforce supports through BC's Health Human Resources Strategy, including the Provincial Rural Retention Incentive (which provides up to \$2,000 per quarter for eligible healthcare workers), travel nursing support through GoHealth BC, prototype housing supports for healthcare workers, and Student Loan Forgiveness.

Healthcare workers who take eligible positions in Mackenzie may also be eligible for the Northern Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive, which provides up to \$30,000 with a 2-year return of service. Additionally, through the Rural Practice Subsidiary Agreement, Mackenzie is also eligible to receive physician and community support.

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You raised the need for Seniors Housing in Mackenzie. The Ministry is significantly expanding seniors care across the province. Addressing this challenge will require tailored solutions to meet the scale and specific needs of the local population. Health Authorities are accountable for the planning and delivery of healthcare services, including planning associated with the continuum of housing and care services (e.g., Home Health, Assisted Living, and Long-Term Care). Given the rural nature of much of Northern Health, the planning and development of housing and care resources is complex, often requiring innovation to meet the specific needs of a community. I would encourage you to link directly with Northern Health, and have provided contact information for Greg Marr, Senior Operating Officer, Northern Interior Rural region, and for Ciro Panessa, President and Chief Executive Officer, Northern Health.

Ciro Panessa, President and Chief Executive Officer
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600-299 Victoria St
Prince George, BC V2L 5B8
Ciro.panessa@northernhealth.ca

Greg Marr, Senior Operator Officer
Northern Interior Rural Region
Greg.marr@northernhealth.ca

Thank you for your advocacy with respect to addressing wait times for neurodevelopmental assessments. While considerable efforts have been made to increase the number of assessments provided and decrease wait times, we recognize there is still work to be done. Please be assured that the Ministry of Health is engaged in ongoing collaboration with the Provincial Health Services Authority and the Ministries of Education and Child Care, and Children and Family Development to address the needs of neurodiverse children and youth, and their families.

Thank you for your leadership. I appreciate these important opportunities to exchange ideas and share information.

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Armitage', followed by a horizontal line.

Mark Armitage
Associate Deputy Minister