



Lesser Slave River

Minister's brief

HEALTH CARE
PERSONNEL SHORTAGES

mdlsr.ca/mandate



Establishing a framework for the recruitment, retention, and support of trained medical professionals is a primary concern for MD Council.

Like most of rural Alberta, health care service levels continue to erode in the Lesser Slave River region due to a shortage of skilled medical personnel.

Background details:

Health care service level challenges directly impact the daily lives of our citizens, and secondarily compromise the MD's ability to position the region as a destination of choice for industry, skilled labour, and other target demographics. As municipal leaders who have weathered significant crises and borne witness to their social aftershocks, we are confident that inaction on addressing fundamental flaws in our rural health care infrastructure will result in unforeseen economic, social, and quality-of-life ripple effects for many years to come.

We have emerged from a global pandemic with chronic cultural fatigue within our health care system. Some practitioners are retiring; others are saying 'enough is

enough' and leaving the industry altogether, having been overworked and under supported during the two gruelling years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many bright young minds avoid the profession altogether due to training barriers, licensing thresholds, and an anecdotal perception of what it's like 'on the inside.'

COVID-19 cannot be the sole scapegoat for the state of health care in rural Alberta. Medical and nursing professionals (registered nurses / licensed practical nurses / nurse practitioners) continue to be difficult to recruit. This leaves facilities perpetually short-staffed, which in turn places pressure on the remaining medical staff, resulting in lengthy treatment delays and postponements. Direct outcomes here in the MD range from waits of up to twelve hours in the emergency ward, to residents avoiding medical care altogether.

Establishing a framework for the recruitment, retention, and support of trained medical professionals continues to be a primary concern for MD Council. Health care training, licensing, and funding mechanisms must evolve or be completely reworked in order to support proper health care delivery in rural Alberta.

Minister's brief

HEALTH CARE
PERSONNEL SHORTAGES

VIEW OR DOWNLOAD
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
mdlsr.ca/mandate

Main concerns raised:

- The shortage of skilled health care personnel poses a considerable and ongoing challenge in the Lesser Slave River region.
- The Province needs to revisit its approach to health care, and redouble its resolve to implement sensible policies, programs and mechanisms.
- MD Council would like a status update on the questions and concerns expressed during the summer 2022 Provincial Health Tour; specifically:
 1. Did the Provincial Health Tour sessions result in any action plans?
 2. What, if any, progress has been made to address medical personnel shortages in the Lesser Slave River region?
 3. What, if any, plans are in place to address medical personnel shortages in the MD?
 4. What is being done to retain existing health care personnel?
 5. Is there a plan in place to recruit more health care personnel?
 6. Does the Province monitor the percentage of Alberta-trained health care professionals that choose to stay and continue working in Alberta?

Key issues:

Like most of rural Alberta, health care service levels continue to decline in the Lesser Slave River region. These service level challenges directly impact the daily lives of our citizens, and secondarily compromise the MD's ability to position the region as a destination of choice for industry, skilled labour, and other target demographics.

MD Council urges the Government of Alberta to review and rework most aspects of health care, including the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in smaller centers and rural communities such as ours.

We seek further dialogue around the ideas tabled during the summer 2022 Provincial Health Tour, including rural internships; increased educational opportunities; less stringent GPA requirements; a simplified physician licensing process; and an improved housing, onboarding, and support framework for new personnel. We also seek to know what progress has been made since the summer 2022 Provincial Health Tour to address critical medical personnel shortages in the MD.

