



ALBERTA  
HEALTH

*Office of the Minister  
MLA, Calgary - Varsity*

JUN 01 2022

AR 201589

Barry Kalinski  
Reeve  
M.D. of Bonnyville No. 87  
4905 50 Ave  
Bag 1010  
Bonnyville AB T9N 2J7  
[rbartlett@md.bonnyville.ab.ca](mailto:rbartlett@md.bonnyville.ab.ca)

Dear Reeve Kalinski:

Thank you for your letter regarding physician access in northeast Alberta.

I share your priority to ensure residents of northeast Alberta can access the medical care they need. While Alberta saw years of growth in the number of physicians, there are some imbalances in doctor availability across different regions. Physicians are independent practitioners and are generally free to choose where they wish to practise, whether in a rural community or a city. Alberta is not alone in this challenge; provinces across Canada are working hard to improve the distribution of physicians to areas of need.

I am aware that the Cold Lake emergency department has had closures due to physician shortages over the last six months. Physicians work eight-hour on-call shifts in the Cold Lake emergency department; securing rural locum coverage for shifts of only eight hours is difficult. AHS is working to secure locum coverage for any unfilled emergency department shifts in May. I am pleased to inform you that three family medicine physicians have recently been recruited to Cold Lake, and they may start in the summer and fall of 2022. Additionally, one offer letter has gone out to a family medicine physician with a specialty in anesthesia.

Physician recruitment in northeast Alberta requires the collaborative effort of all interest groups, including the Department of Health, Alberta Health Services (AHS), the local community, the Primary Care Network and other health care providers. You may be interested to know that AHS is targeting the recruitment of three family medicine positions with enhanced skills, in Bonnyville this year.

The Government of Alberta continues to address physician access issues in the province with various recruitment initiatives and programs. These include financial incentives through Alberta Health, attraction and retention initiatives through the Rural Health Professions Action Plan, health experience opportunities for youth through [CAREERS](#), and rural medical education programs, such as the Rural Integrated Community Clerkship and rural residency programs.

.../2

Reeve Barry Kalinski  
Page 2

Most recently, in *Budget 2022*, Alberta's government is spending approximately \$90 million to address rural physician recruitment and retention. As you may know, Alberta has announced the [Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience program](#), which will provide \$6 million to 60 new family physicians in total, over the next three years, to attract physicians to practise in rural or remote communities of need. Cold Lake is on the list of communities for this program in 2022.

Thank you again for writing and advocating for the health and well-being of northeast Alberta residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jason Copping', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Copping  
Minister of Health

cc: Honourable Ric McIver, Minister of Municipal Affairs  
MLA David Hanson, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul  
His Worship Craig Copeland, Mayor, City of Cold Lake  
Her Worship Elisa Brosseau, Mayor, Town of Bonnyville