



February 28, 2018

VIA E-MAIL
Ref: 236457

His Worship Mayor Bill Streeper
Northern Rockies Regional Municipality
E-mail: c/o lksteller@northernrockies.ca

Dear Mayor Streeper:

Thank you for your letter of February 14, 2018, regarding your community of Fort Nelson. You have identified a persistent shortage of social workers and an erosion of social services to your residents as being of utmost concern.

The current configuration of the Fort Nelson Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) office is one Team Leader, three Child Protection social workers (CPSW) and one Social Program Officer Assistant (SPO-A). Up until early 2016, the office was fully staffed. Since then the office has been under-staffed for various reasons. Currently, there is the Team Leader, one permanent CPSW and one provincial mobile social worker who has been assigned to this office since August 2016. The SPO-A was hired in May of 2017 to assist the social workers in a variety of tasks, leaving them more available to address child protection concerns. Social workers in the Fort Nelson office continue to respond to child abuse/neglect reports as defined in MCFD's policy. There are two social worker positions to which we are attempting to recruit. The office has also accessed volunteers from other offices in the province to assist at times, such as vacation coverage.

As of April 2017, the Public Service Agency and British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) had come to an agreement regarding a retention incentive payment that social work staff in Fort Nelson would be eligible for based on being in a 'hard to recruit to' community. We have posted the vacancies for the Fort Nelson office eleven times since the beginning of 2016 and, to date, no applicants have specifically applied for Fort Nelson despite this available incentive. I have been assured that the Director of Operations for the North Peace and the Executive Director of Services for the whole Northeast are considering all options to find staff.

MCFD provides funding to a number of service agencies in your community. Those agencies continue to provide support services directly to families. These services may include family support, youth support, support for families with children who have special needs, as well as a variety of early years programs. Each contractor received funding increases this year to support further services being available.

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Thank you again for writing and bringing your concerns to my attention. I trust that the information I have provided will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katrine Conroy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Katrine Conroy
Minister