

From: [Gonzales, Jackelene HLTH:EX](#) on behalf of [Cramb, Lorrie HLTH:EX](#)
To: [Jane Nixon](#)
Subject: Response from the Ministry of Health – CLIFF ID # 1256480
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1256480

Via email: jane.nixon@sd5.bc.ca

Doug McPhee
Board Chair
School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
940 Industrial Rd #1
Cranbrook BC V1C 4C6

Dear Doug McPhee:

Thank you for your letter of March 29, 2023, regarding challenges with recruitment of Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) in rural areas. I am responding on behalf of the Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. You may also consider this a reply on behalf of the Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care and others in the Ministry to whom you addressed your letter. I apologize for the delayed response.

Ensuring that BC schools are adequately staffed with highly trained professionals is a priority that I share. [BC's Health Human Resources \(HHR\) Strategy](#) outlines plans to support and expand health human resources across the province, now and into the future. The HHR Strategy acknowledges that the health workforce is situated within a broad and growing care economy that extends beyond the health care system and includes childcare and education. In addition to the career development and mobility opportunities this offers to professionals, in the context of growing demands on the workforce, it also presents challenges for worker recruitment. The Ministry of Health (Ministry) is committed to working with partners across the care economy to support and strengthen our shared workforce.

BC's HHR Strategy further acknowledges that health workforce shortages are particularly severe in rural and remote communities, and several actions in the strategy aim to ensure that all those living in BC have access to high quality health services. This includes actions that break down barriers to targeted regional health education programs for students in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. The Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and post-secondary institutions to continue implementing health education expansions approved in Budget 2021. This work includes a one-time expansion of 2 seats for SLP students at University of British Columbia starting in September 2023 and a permanent expansion of 8 seats beginning in 2024.

In BC, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI) administers the BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP), BC's only economic immigration program that allows the Province to attract and retain workers and recent graduates with the skills, education and experience that is needed in BC. MUNI has confirmed that all occupations classified as TIER 1, 2 or 3 in the National Occupational

Classification (NOC) system, such as “NOC 31112 audiologists and speech-language pathologists,” are eligible occupations under some of BC PNP’s streams, including the Skilled Worker and International Graduate streams. In addition, MUNI implemented changes to the BC PNP in 2022 to increase support for select occupations in health care and childcare. NOC 31112 is included in these changes as a priority occupation. Furthermore, in recognition of the challenges faced in specific regions across the province to attract and retain workers, the BC PNP awards more points for job offers based outside of the Metro Vancouver Regional District.

To use the BC PNP, candidates should review program requirements and then register for the program stream that best fits their situation. The BC PNP periodically invites registrants to apply. Workers in priority occupations are invited through targeted draws to increase their access to the program. Employers supporting BC PNP applications must also meet certain requirements, which are summarized on the Employer page of their website. Full details about program requirements are listed in the [BC PNP Skills Immigration Program Guide](#). MUNI staff conducts regular outreach about their program, and regional outreach is a particular focus. They have extended an invitation for the Southeast Kootenay School District - you may wish to connect with their office directly at PNPConcierge@gov.bc.ca.

In terms of other strategic actions that the Province is taking, the Ministry of Education and Child Care (ECC) is working in close collaboration with the education sector, including the BC Public School Employers’ Association and the BC School Trustees Association, on the development of a provincial strategy for the K-12 workforce. It is anticipated that the K-12 workforce strategy will contain measures to help address some of the recruitment challenges of specialist positions, such as SLPs and other positions that support inclusive education.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Ministry is currently finalizing a Provincial Allied Health Strategic Plan that will provide a roadmap for the government and system partners to support a strong and stable allied health workforce across BC. The actions contained within it directly address a number of the training and recruitment challenges that you raised in your letter.

SLPs are valued members of the allied health workforce in BC. While I recognize that many of the initiatives outlined above may not reduce immediate SLP workforce pressures in rural BC, I hope that knowing more about the actions that are under way helps to reassure you that supporting the broader care economy throughout BC remains a high priority at the Ministry.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Cramb

A/Executive Director

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pc: Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care
Carolyn Broady, British Columbia School Trustees Association