Leonard Hiebert
Chair, Peace River Regional District Regional Board
prrd.dc@prrd.bc.ca

Dear Leonard:

Thank you for your email regarding the Province's vision for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in BC. and potential plans to support AI data center development. As the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Innovation and Industry Development Division within the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (the Ministry), I am pleased to respond.

Promoting opportunities to enhance the development, testing, and adoption of innovative technologies, such as AI, is a priority for the Ministry. As such, our teams actively collaborate with other governments, Ministries, businesses, and communities to attract investment and establish the foundational elements that will facilitate the growth and prosperity of AI companies and generate benefits across sectors.

To address your specific questions, the following initiatives may align with your interests:

- The Province is actively engaging with stakeholders to align BC's opportunities to access a portion of the $2.4 billion allocated under the federal Canadian Sovereign AI Compute Strategy (https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/canadian-sovereign-ai-compute-strategy). This funding includes up to $705 for public supercomputing infrastructure, $700M to mobilize private sector investment, and $300M to support the purchase of AI compute resources by Canadian innovators and businesses. If there are interested proponents approaching or potential projects being considered, we would be happy to see whether and how we can support them.

- In alignment with BC's Clean Energy Strategy (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/electricity-alternative-energy/powering-our-future), the Province is working on strategies to balance the clean energy needs of emerging industries, including AI data centers, with grid planning and affordability goals to ensure that investments can create lasting value for communities across BC.
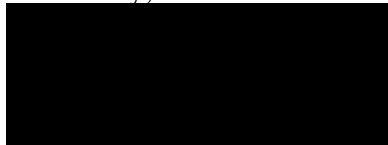
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Ministry of Jobs,
Economic Development
and Innovation

Assistant Deputy Minister
Innovation and Industry
  Development Division

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- In parallel, the Province continues to invest in expanding broadband connectivity through initiatives such as the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by the Northern Development Initiative Trust (https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/partner-programs/connecting-british-columbia/connecting-british-columbia-phase-two-community-infrastructure-strategy-funding/#terms).
- The Province is also working with the post-secondary and research sectors to explore innovative approaches to ensuring that BC researchers and companies have access to the advanced computing capabilities.

The Province recognizes the potential of made-in-BC AI data centers, and we are happy to engage with you further to better understand any potential opportunities to advance AI development in Northern BC. Please contact the Executive Director of Technology and Life Sciences Branch, Maija.duffy@gov.bc.ca, who is the lead for this file, if you would like to set up a time to connect.

Thank you for taking the time to write and share you interest on this topic.

Sincerely,

Nathan Nankivell
Assistant Deputy Minister
Innovation and Industry Development

February 24, 2025   File #: 0400.20.14

Honorable Minister George Chow
Minister of Citizens' Services
Province of British Columbia
PO Box 9068 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Via Email: CITZ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Chow,

Re: Inquiry Regarding AI Data Center Infrastructure Development in Northern British Columbia

At the February 20, 2025 Regional Board Meeting, the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) Board resolved to inquire about the Province of British Columbia's vision and potential initiatives to encourage the development of an artificial intelligence (AI) data center infrastructure, particularly in Northern BC.

> MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED,
> *That the Regional Board send a letter to the Minister of Citizens Services inquiring what the Province's vision for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in British Columbia is and whether there are plans to support future AI projects in British Columbia.*

Given the increasing demand for high-performance computing and AI-driven applications, regions across Canada are exploring opportunities to attract AI-related investments. Notably, Alberta's Municipal District of Greenview has recently announced plans for a large-scale AI data center in partnership with industry leaders (link). This initiative highlights the growing interest in leveraging Canada's natural advantages, including abundant land and renewable energy resources, to support AI infrastructure.

Northern British Columbia presents a unique opportunity for similar developments. With its access to hydroelectric power, cooler climate for natural cooling efficiency, and available land, the region is well-positioned to support AI data center investment. However, such initiatives would benefit from provincial support in terms of incentives, policy development, and infrastructure planning. Accordingly, could you please provide insights into whether the Province has any current or future plans to encourage AI data center infrastructure in Northern BC? Specifically, we would appreciate information on:

- Any existing or planned policies to support AI-related investments in BC.
- Potential funding or incentive programs available for AI data centers.
- Provincial strategies for integrating AI infrastructure with broadband and energy resources.
- Opportunities for regional districts, municipalities, first nations and other stakeholders to engage in this initiative.

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A made-in-BC AI datacenter could offer significant strategic and economic advantages, considering recent tariff complications affecting cross-border trade. A domestic AI datacenter supports job creation, strengthens BC's technology ecosystem, ensures data sovereignty and compliance, and reduces reliance on foreign cloud providers, fostering long-term resilience and innovation. With AI demand surging around the world, it could help to enhance performance, security, and economic stability for Canadian governments and businesses navigating an uncertain economic landscape.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and explore how regional stakeholders, including local governments and industry partners, could collaborate with the Province to advance AI data center development in Northern BC.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Leonard Hiebert

Leonard Hiebert
Chair

c: Jeanne Holliss, Executive Director, Connected Communities, jeanne.holliss@gov.bc.ca
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        Mr. Larry Neufeld, South Peace MLA, Larry.Neufeld.MLA@leg.bc.ca
        Mr. Jordan Kealy, North Peace MLA, Jordan.Kealy.MLA@leg.bc.ca

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