

# Wood Buffalo

## 2019-20 Annual Report



Wood Buffalo  
Health Advisory Council

Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**

## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors



*Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn*

Alberta Health Services values Advisory Council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in health care planning. With every year that passes, I see how our Councils continue to grow and expand. They challenge us and ask really great questions, they share the AHS story with their communities, their families and neighbours – helping Albertans everywhere to better understand our complex health care system – and they advise AHS on our planning, programs and services.

We had a number of long-time members leaving Councils in 2019-20 and we would like to acknowledge their hard work, dedication and passion. While we will miss them, we also know it's important for new voices to join the conversation and we look forward to building new partnerships, relationships and connections.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn,  
Vice Chair, Board of Directors; Chair, AHS Community Engagement Committee of the Board

## Message from the Chair, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council



*Valerie O'Leary*

When first joining the Wood Buffalo Advisory Health Council, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of caring people in our community who wanted to make a difference and be a voice for others.

Since our last report a lot has happened. Despite some challenges there has been a great sense of community and growth in the initiatives and programs offered by Alberta Health Services (AHS). I have worked with many AHS frontline workers and those supporting rural communities. They have been instrumental in making positive changes for our residents.

One of the exciting AHS initiatives this year includes midwifery services at Fort McMurray's Northern Lights Regional Health Centre, giving local and area residents increased choice for maternity care. In July 2019, a new AHS mobile health van was introduced to the North Zone, providing residents with increased access to an array of health services, information and resources. I'm excited to see what 2020-21 brings to our area!

Sincerely,

Valerie O'Leary  
Chair, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council

## Who we are

The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council (HAC) is comprised of up to 15 volunteer members who reside in the geographic [region](#) surrounding Fort McMurray. Visit us online for a full list of [membership](#).



L-R: Murray Crawford, Stacey Stevens, Evelyn Okoh, Mary Gerosa, Natalie Castro- Gentili, and Angela Betts.  
Missing: Valerie O’Leary (Chair), Tinna Ezekiel (Vice Chair) Carol Theberge, Farooq Shamshad, Ifeoma Rita Uzorchukwuamaka, Lisa Barter, Patience Akenbor, Sandra Grandison, and Todd Hillier.

*The AHS North Zone team provides service to a large geographical area with a diverse population. We place a very high value on the information and advice we receive from a broad range of stakeholders in our communities. The HACs give us a regular forum to share ideas, receive input, and refine our ways of working so that our strategies and operational priorities are aligned with provincial and local priorities.*

Gregory Cummings  
Chief Zone Officer

## Highlights

### Opportunity for Participation

- North Zone Primary Care Network (PCN)
- Enhancing Care in the Community (ECC)

### North Zone Sector Meeting

- A combined meeting with all six North Zone Health Advisory Councils
- Connection with multiple AHS North Zone leaders
- Members shared top health priorities from their region

### Location of Public Meetings

- Fort McMurray, Fort McKay & virtually
- 6 members of the public attended



## Key achievements of 2019-20

Council is pleased to have AHS participate in each of its meetings where leaders provide regular updates on workforce information, capital projects, innovation, new programs and services. In addition, when we have questions or require information on specific topics of interest we invite AHS to present. Council received the following presentations during the year:

- Indigenous Health Program
- Nistawoyou Friendship Centre
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
- Pride YMM
- Addictions and Mental Health
- Talent Acquisition

The Community Engagement Committee of the Board invited our Council to present in November. We shared information about our members and our region. We also presented about our engagement strategies, work plan priorities, challenges in our community and some suggested partnerships opportunities for the Council.

Throughout the year Council shared our Top Concerns with the AHS Board, for its broad understanding of issues across the province. These include: addiction and mental health (access to services for youth); need for more seniors services and continuing care facilities; access to specialist health services in rural and remote communities; and integration of services.

Council participated in the Timeraiser Event in Fort McMurray in April. Timeraiser is an innovative event that raises the profile of volunteerism in the community while promoting arts and culture to the region. It was a huge success and we had the opportunity to connect with attendees to broaden awareness of our Council and inform about our upcoming meetings.



*Members Farooq, Natalie, Lisa and Mary at the Timeraiser Event*

## A look ahead

Council is looking forward to 2020-21. Implementation of the new direction of Health Advisory Councils (HAC 2.0) is expected to begin in the fall, where community events will be embedded into our annual planning cycle. Events will be co-designed with AHS and will be a partnership with Zone leadership. Work is underway to determine the nature of these events.

Promotion and awareness of our Council remains a priority. To achieve this we plan to:

- Connect with community partners and share information about Council and AHS.
- Use new methods to encourage public attendance at meetings, including increasing our presence on social media and sharing posters in the community.
- Travel to a rural community and partner with AHS and community partners to provide timely information to the public through presentations.
- Attend community events to engage the public and share information about our Council. We will use these events as an opportunity to speak with members of our community and gather feedback.

We have a number of activities planned that we're looking forward to, including:

- Continuing to build relationships with other AHS Advisory Councils by inviting their members to our meetings and events.
- Partnering with AHS to hold an addiction and mental health community event in the fall.
- Identifying topics of interest to learn more about topics such as Connect Care, Enhancing Care to the Community, collaborative care and public health.

We look forward to the coming year and accomplishing the plans we have in place.



*September Council Meeting at Father Begin Community Hall in Fort McKay*

Advisory Councils act in an advisory capacity to Alberta Health Services (AHS) as we share feedback with AHS leadership from our communities about health services. We hold public meetings at locations throughout our geography and participate in engagement activities that further contribute to health services in Alberta.

## Learn more

Visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils)

✉ [woodbuffalo@ahs.ca](mailto:woodbuffalo@ahs.ca)

☎ 1.877.275.8830

Check us out on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) or by searching AHS Advisory Councils.

## Get involved

You can make a difference to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS. You can get involved by:

- Attending an [upcoming meeting](#). Agendas and notices are posted on the Advisory Council webpage: [ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca)
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest or concern
- Provide input on various health care topics online, at [Together4Health](#)
- Apply to [become a member](#). Members are appointed for three-year terms.



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