

Oldman River Health Advisory Council

2022-23 Annual Report



**Alberta Health
Services**

Oldman River
Health Advisory Council

Message from the Official Administrator Dr. John Cowell



It has been a great pleasure to reconnect with Alberta Health Services (AHS) Advisory Councils since I was appointed to the role of AHS Official Administrator in November 2022. Soon after my appointment, I had the opportunity to meet with Council Chairs and our conversation informed the development of my 90-Day Plan to achieve rapid improvements in four priority areas of AHS:

- Improving emergency medical services (EMS) response times.
- Decreasing emergency department wait times.
- Reducing surgery wait times.
- Improving patient flow and continuity of care.

There has been marked improvement in all these areas, not just over my first 90 days as OA, but sustained improvements made possible, in part, by the invaluable advice and perspectives provided by our Councils.

Through our partnership with Advisory Councils, we're seeing EMS response times improving despite sustained increases in call volume across the province. Emergency department wait times are also coming down. Fewer people are waiting longer for surgery than clinically recommended. And we're seeing evidence of improved patient flow with the addition of acute care, intensive care and continuing care beds. We need to continue building on this momentum, while also addressing our organization's serious workforce issues. This is all challenging and complex work, and AHS will continue to involve our Advisory Councils as a key stakeholder for advice and real-time feedback on how we're doing in our efforts to serve all Albertans.

I understand and appreciate the value that Advisory Councils bring to AHS, and look forward to expanding and deepening our partnership. I'll continue to reach out to Council Chairs, and meet with Council members throughout the year, including at the 2024 Advisory Council Forum.

I'd like to express my gratitude for the work of all Advisory Council members. Although AHS still has much work ahead, I look to the future with optimism knowing we'll move forward and navigate our challenges with our valued and steadfast Advisory Council partners.

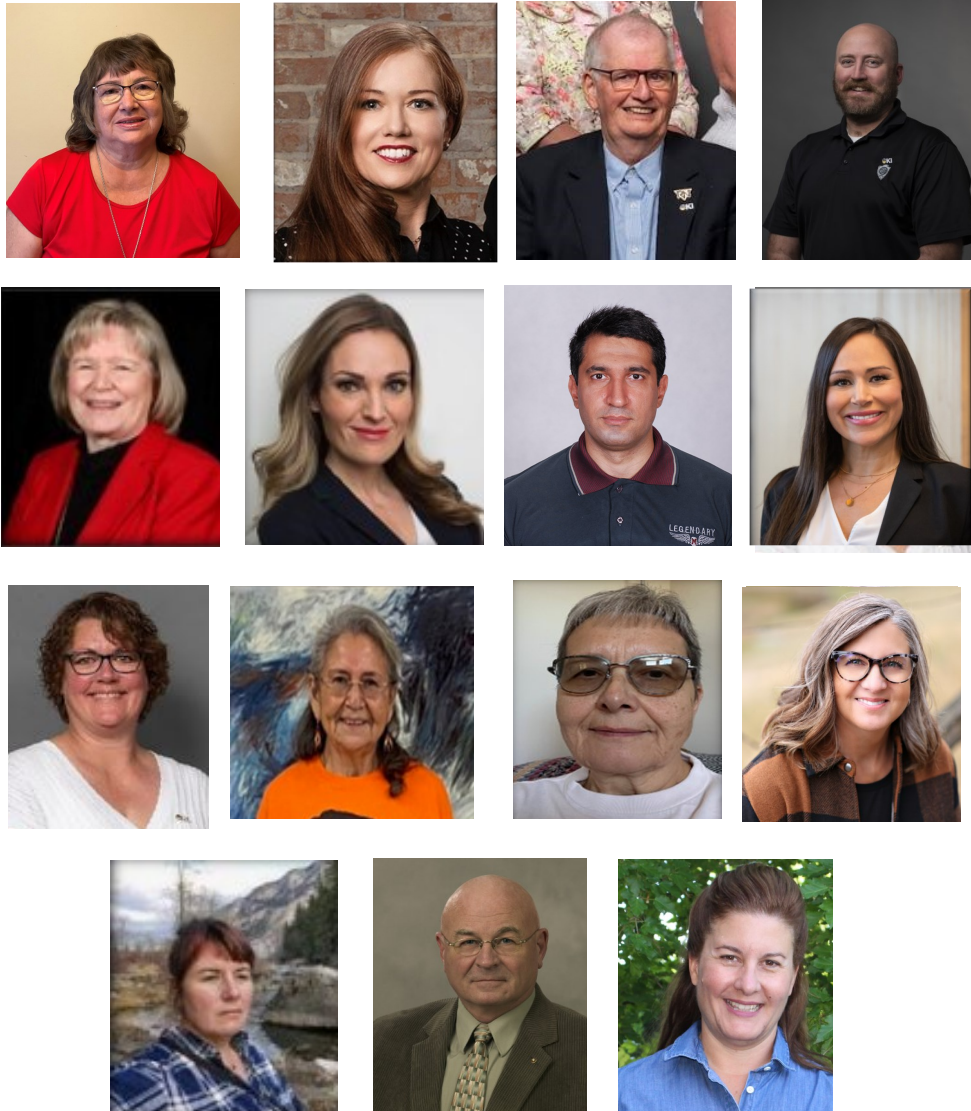
Message from the Chair Colleen Bianchi, Oldman River Health Advisory Council



The Oldman River Health Advisory Council (ORHAC) has been meeting virtually throughout the year. I have been the Chair since February and I thank Doug Thornton and Jim Bennett, former Chair and Vice Chair, for their guidance. I also thank departing members for their contributions. We have several new members from the communities of Coalhurst, Blairmore, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek and Hill Spring.

The Council meeting presentations provided insights on emergent healthcare issues, including healthcare staff shortages and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), which are still a top priority for community members. Council discussions included mental health and addiction resources; Wellspring, provincial providers of cancer care services for patients and families; and we heard from the Chinook Primary Care Network (Chinook PCN). Other community engagements in the zone saw large public participation which included the conversation in Milk River on emergency department closures and lack of physician availability due to issues around recruitment and retention of physicians that are ongoing. I'm thankful for all the work of our Coordinator on behalf of the Council, as well as for the connections made with community members throughout our meetings and events. I look forward to connecting with more people in the coming year.

OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS



*Top Row L-R: Colleen Bianchi (Chair), Stephanie Leavitt (Vice Chair), David Anderson and Jim Bennett
Row 2 L-R: Barbara Boyer, Rebecca Bultsma, Behnia Hooshyarkhah, and Marni Hope
Row 3 L-R: Vicki Koersen, Betty Ann Little Wolf, Anne Michaelis and Tracy Oosterbroek,
Bottom Row L-R: Margaret Thomas, Doug Thornton and Lisa Weekes*

“*This* year, the South Zone has embarked on the journey of creating the South Zone Healthcare Plan which will share the high-level strategic vision and support of clinical service plans for the zone for the next 10 to 15 years. Our HAC members have been right there with us, sharing the views and perceptions of the communities they represent. As we continue to move forward, we greatly appreciate the perspective they bring and value their input in the support of the delivery of healthcare services.

Linda Iwasiw and Dr. Aaron Low
Chief Zone Officer and Zone Medical Director, South Zone

FACTS AND FIGURES



Council Member Representation

Blairmore
Coalhurst
Coutts
Fort Mac-
Leod
Hill Spring
Lethbridge

Magrath
Milk River
Pincher Creek
Raymond
Taber

By the numbers

Public participation in ORHAC meetings & events:
3 public meetings
67 public attended
1 engagement event
89 public attended
7 new members

Provincial participation at Advisory Council meetings & events*



*Reflective of the number of public that attended all HAC and Provincial Advisory Council meetings and events between July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Advisory Council members share advice and feedback from their communities with AHS. Councils hold public meetings and engagement activities virtually or in locations throughout their geographic area that further contribute to improving healthcare services in Alberta.

- ✓ ORHAC continues to focus on raising awareness of the Council's role within the South Zone communities it represents. Health experts weighed in on several topics of interest with the HAC hosting three meetings and one event focused on community lab services, addiction and mental health (AMH) resources, seniors health in the South Zone, healthy aging and cancer care services provided by WellSpring.
- ✓ 86 community members attended an engagement session: A Roundtable of Addiction and Mental Health Resources in the South Zone. This event resulted in several community connections amongst community health providers specializing in addiction and mental health, and the AMH support information is now included in every meeting package to ensure community members are informed on the resources available to them.
- ✓ Ongoing and transparent conversations continue to be a priority for members and South Zone leadership, allowing many members to fulfill their volunteer commitment by representing the voice of the community and sharing resources to support Albertans' experience with the healthcare system.
- ✓ The Chair met monthly with the Council Coordinator and AHS South Zone leadership bringing good news stories and health-related concerns to their attention.
- ✓ Council attended a session with Dr. Cowell, AHS Official Administrator (OA), where he reviewed findings from his 90-Day Report, which outlined progress from his first 90 days as OA.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE INPUT (ALL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS)



Newcomer Engagement Patient & Experience

AHS sought input on how AHS can communicate, support, and enable Albertans to become active partners in their care.



2022-23 Influenza Immun- ization Campaign

Members reviewed draft AHS influenza campaign materials and provided input toward the provincewide campaign that informed Albertans about the flu shot.



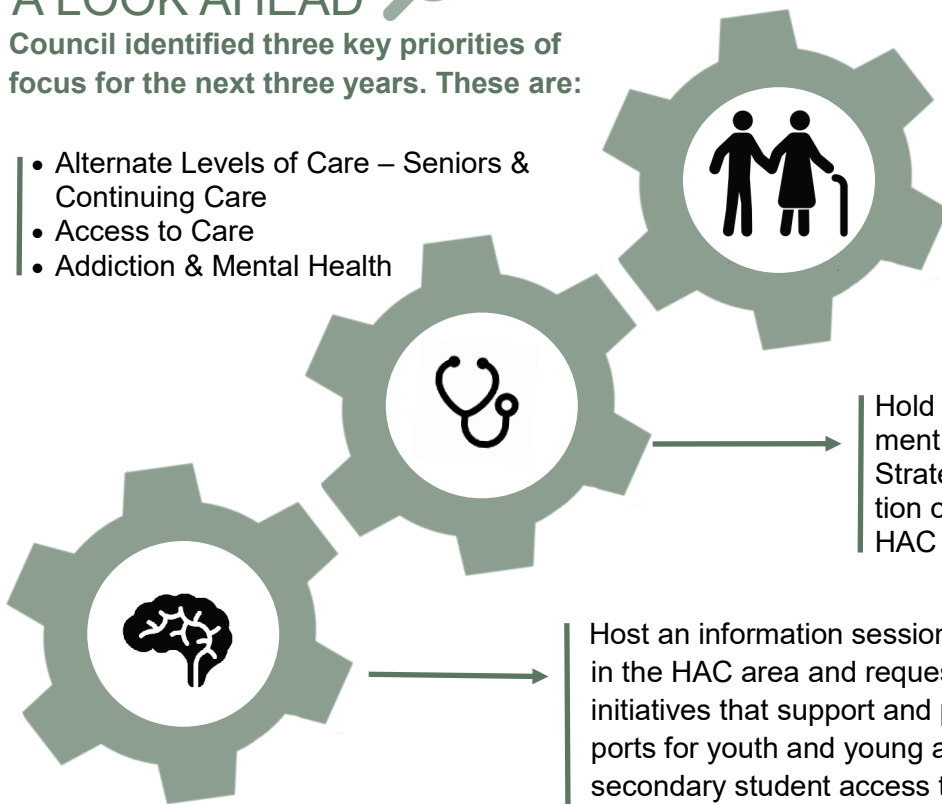
Spiritual Care Policy

Councils were invited to provide feedback to the AHS Community Spiritual and Religious Care Providers Access Policy.

A LOOK AHEAD

Council identified three key priorities of focus for the next three years. These are:

- Alternate Levels of Care – Seniors & Continuing Care
- Access to Care
- Addiction & Mental Health



ORHAC commits to:

Host an information session on topics related to seniors such as home care services, aging in place programs and how EMS supports seniors living in their own homes.

Hold an information session or engagement event on the South Zone Workforce Strategy, including recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals within the HAC area.

Host an information session on addiction recovery and care services in the HAC area and request updates from zone leadership on new initiatives that support and provide addiction and mental health supports for youth and young adults seeking counselling, including post-secondary student access to stress management programs and supports.

GET INVOLVED

Make a difference to the health and well-being of your community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS.

- Email: oldmanriver@ahs.ca
- Phone: 1.877.275.8830
- Attend an [upcoming meeting](#)
- Provide input on various healthcare topics online, at [Together4Health](#)
- Apply to join an Advisory Council:

APPLY

