

Provincial Health Tour | Summer 2022

Whitecourt – July 28, 2022

What We Heard Summary

The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are jointly hosting a series of engagement conversations across Alberta over summer 2022. The Provincial Health Tour was designed to allow Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to engage with healthcare staff, partners and stakeholders in communities across the province; to share current approaches and priorities, discuss current state and future opportunities, celebrate our successes and to work together to identify strategies to address challenges within the healthcare system.

Whitecourt

15 Stakeholders participated, representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Martin Long welcomed stakeholders to the session.

Minister of Health Jason Copping provided an update on healthcare, including sharing successes and an update on Government investment and areas of focus.

AHS Vice President, People and Technology, Sean Chilton shared the AHS Health Plan and priority areas, as well as the challenges and opportunities for our future vision.

The power of partnerships

Healthcare is all about partnerships - with advisory councils, health foundations, social agencies, community organizations and businesses, as well as private citizens that can help make a positive difference.

- Friends of Whitecourt provides comfort and hope to patients of the Whitecourt Healthcare Center. The Friends have provided significant support to advance the Whitecourt Hospital, including funding a state-of-the-art scope cabinet to support the endoscopy program.
- Christenson's Manor, which is opening soon, will allow more Whitecourt residents to stay in their home community when they need additional support. The development is being supported by a group that will be furnishing the new palliative care spaces with additional comforts for residents.

What We Heard – Provincial Tour Summer 2022

Whitecourt

Alberta Health Highlights

Budget

Alberta Health’s budget is \$22B, and anticipated to increase by \$600M a year over the next three years including key investments as follows:

- \$64M increase to EMS budget
- \$60M in new funding over three years to expand recovery-oriented support for people experiencing addiction and mental health issues
- \$3.7B for continuing care, community care and home care programs
- \$3.5B over three years in capital funding for health facilities, equipment and IT systems across the province.
 - The Health Capital plan also includes \$45M over three years for the Rural Health Facilities Revitalization Program.

Physician Recruitment

Approximately \$90M is being spent in 2022 including:

Rural Remote Northern Program:	~\$57M	Rural Medical Education:	~\$6M
Rural Integrated Community Clerkship Program:	~\$4M	Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP):	~\$9M
Locum Program:	~\$3M	Rural Physician On-Call program:	~\$12M

Alberta Health is working with RhPAP on its Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience (RESIDE) program to help address challenges in rural and remote areas.

System Recovery

Over the next three years, AHS will perform between 20 and 23 per cent more surgeries compared to 2018-19 to reduce surgical wait lists.

AHS will return to pre-pandemic surgery wait list status by the end of 2022-23.

AHS is resuming many regular public health activities in 2022-23.

AHS will add 50 permanent, fully staffed ICU spaces by the second quarter of 2022-23.

Government is providing funding for more ground ambulances and additional EMS staff.

In each of the next three years, AHS will add about 1,000 new continuing care spaces and increase the number of unique home care clients by four per cent.

What We Heard – Provincial Tour Summer 2022

Whitecourt

AHS Health Plan 2022-25

AHS is entering a new era of transformation and innovation. The Health Plan 2022-25 is the roadmap for this exciting journey. At the heart of this plan are the 10 priorities that align with direction from the Minister of Health and reflect feedback from patients, clients and families who have received care from AHS.

The 10 priorities are:



1. Alberta Surgical Initiative

Implementation of the Alberta Surgical Initiative, ensuring that, by 2025, all Albertans receive their scheduled surgeries within clinically approved wait times.



6. Rural Initiatives and Engagement

Rural engagement and rural initiatives, to strengthen partnerships with rural communities, to better support the rural healthcare workforce and to better meet the unique needs of Albertans living in non-urban communities.



2. EMS 10-Point Plan

Implementation of the EMS 10-Point Plan, designed to improve EMS services and availability, especially in rural and remote communities.



7. Continuing Care

Continuing care, increasing the numbers of continuing care spaces and living options, expanding home care hours, and shifting reliance from facility – to home-based care when appropriate.



3. Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery

Mental health and opioid recovery, which includes adding AHS-managed treatment spaces, and expanding in-person and virtual recovery-oriented programs and services.



8. Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Workforce recruitment and retention, which involved supporting our current workforce following more than two years of pandemic response, as well as recruiting and retaining needed healthcare workers.



4. Pandemic Response and Recovery

Pandemic recovery, which involves adding acute care spaces (ICE beds), supporting continued access to vaccines and treatments to COVID-19, and establishing specialty clinics to support Albertans with ongoing COVID-19 symptoms.



9. Quality of Patient Outcomes

Quality of Patient Outcomes, ensuring patient safety and high-quality care are maintained and enhanced during a period of transformative change in the organization.



5. Digital Health Evolution and Innovation

Digital health evolution and innovation, including the ongoing rollout of Connect Care and continued expansion of virtual health to support more community – and home-based care, programs and services.



10. Sustainability

Financial sustainability, ensuring that AHS is run efficiently, with Albertans getting full value for every health dollar.

What We Heard – Provincial Tour Summer 2022

Whitecourt

The event included a working session where participants reflected on the following questions:

- *What is our healthcare system doing well?*
- *What challenges currently exist within the system?*
- *In addition to what is currently being done, how can we better address challenges?*
- *What can you do to improve the provision of health care in your community?*



Here's a sampling of what we heard in Whitecourt.

What we are doing well

- Patient Care: once a patient is in the system they are well cared for by dedicated staff who provide patient-centred care.
- Virtual care and technology: participants indicated appreciation for how AHS is embracing technology.
- Incentives and community support for new physicians were noted.

“Once you are in the system, it works well! Urgent needs are looked after. Great nurses. Screening done well.”

Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

- Workforce recruitment and retention was the most significant challenge identified. Whitecourt and the region faces gaps in physician coverage, and limited access to both family doctors and allied health professionals. The need to accommodate for work-life balance for healthcare workers; to incentivize rural recruitment; and to support the families of physicians and healthcare workers were highlighted.
- Aging infrastructure, which is small and not meeting the needs of current patients, was highlighted as a particular local challenge.
- Participants highlighted the unique needs of rural communities, including lack of mental health supports, and the work of community partners to provide health services (including Fire & Rescue and small municipalities).
- Scope of practice of healthcare workers and challenges with recruiting international medical graduates (such as policy barriers for international physicians) were highlighted as

“Recruit to live, support the long term integration of not only physician but their family.”

What We Heard – Provincial Tour Summer 2022

Whitecourt

challenges for government to address.

- Opportunities identified included working with local partners to encourage healthcare careers, such as educators; incentivizing local providers; and integrating technology systems to better meet the needs of patients and providers, and to improve the referral process.

Evaluation of event

- Of the 26 individuals who completed a survey (both internal and external events):
 - 23 (88%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (14 ranked as 5 out of 5; 9 as 4)
 - 23 (88%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (16 ranked as 5 out of 5; 7 as 4)
- Many respondents indicated that the most valuable part of the meeting was the opportunity for open dialogue, and to hear the perspective of other community members.
- Participants indicated a desire for more time to discuss the questions, and more local discussions.

“[The most valuable part was] the opportunity to generate ideas and speak openly & honestly with AHS Senior Leaders and political leaders.”

Next steps

- All notes and partnership ideas generated from the Provincial Health tour will be shared with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services leadership.
- A report and recommendations will be produced by Alberta Health.

Thank you

We are grateful to all who took the time to meet with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services leadership to discuss the future of healthcare in Alberta. Your experience and personal insights will inform future planning and changes that will improve healthcare for all Albertans.

Contact us: community.engagement@ahs.ca