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## AHS, Catholic Bishops formalize collaborative partnership

### *Agreements clarify respective roles of AHS and appointed Catholic chaplains*

EDMONTON – Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the Catholic Bishops of Alberta will be entering into access agreements that formally clarify the roles and responsibilities of appointed Catholic clergy and chaplains in AHS facilities across the province.

The first two agreements were signed today by Vickie Kaminski, President and CEO of Alberta Health Services, the Most Rev. Richard Smith of the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, and Most Rev. David Motiuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton. The remaining three agreements will be signed at a later date by Most Rev. Frederick Henry of Calgary; Most Rev. Paul Terrio of St. Paul; and Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan.

All five agreements are expected to be in effect on Jan. 5.

“Alberta Health Services embraces the principles of patient- and family-centred care, and that involves providing care that addresses each person’s specific health, emotional and spiritual needs,” says Kaminski. “These agreements help to clarify roles and responsibilities as we collaborate to best respond to the unique needs of Catholic patients and families in AHS facilities.”

Catholic chaplains are clergy or professionally trained lay persons who have been designated by their respective bishops to serve Catholics in hospitals. Their ministry includes praying with patients, spiritual counselling, bringing Communion, and ensuring patients receive sacraments such as Reconciliation or Anointing of the Sick.

Formalizing a longstanding informal relationship, the agreements recognize the needs of the Catholic patients and ensure they will be served by professionally trained Catholic chaplains.

The chaplains also collaborate with AHS spiritual care providers, who are trained to provide care for patients and families from various faith and no-faith perspectives.

Archbishop Smith says the Bishops welcome the new agreements as a way to ensure the chaplains they appoint will continue to be recognized as valued partners in delivering pastoral care and religious care to Catholic patients and their families.

“We’re pleased that Alberta Health Services has been receptive to our request for this agreement, which actually spells out in a detailed way our previously informal arrangement,” Archbishop Smith says.

“It means that we can continue to assure our Catholic people that they will have access to the sacraments and professional pastoral care from our clergy and chaplains, at a time when they most need it.”

Catholics represent the largest faith group in Alberta, numbering more than 800,000, according to Statistics Canada.

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Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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