

Provincial Health Tour | Summer 2022

Lloydminster – July 20, 2022

What We Heard Summary

The Government 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.

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42 Internal stakeholders representing healthcare staff and physicians participated, along with municipal and community leaders



MLA Garth Rowswell (Vegreville-Lloydminster-Wainwright) welcomed stakeholders.

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 and Chief Health Operations Officer Deb Gordon shared the AHS Health Plan and priority areas, as well as the challenges and opportunities for our future vision.

The power of partnerships

The Lloydminster Region Health Foundation is an excellent example of the partnerships that contribute to AHS' success.

Crossing borders and health authorities, the foundation has supported the work of AHS staff and programs that exist in the Lloydminster hospital.

Thanks to the generosity of the foundation and its donors, AHS benefitted from the creation of the foundation's COVID-19 Emergency Fund.

The fund supported valuable initiatives, such as the provision of PPE and upgrades to the facilities that included defibrillators, crash carts, portable oxygen machines and more.

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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.

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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.

At the event, we held a working session where participants reflected on the following questions:

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- *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 healthcare in your community?*



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

What we are doing well

There was significant praise for the AHS **workforce**, particularly for the dedication shown throughout the past two in managing the pandemic. One participant identified the Wainwright program training healthcare aides through a partnership with the University of Calgary as a success and others spoke of frontline staff in general who are making a difference and care about the community.

Access was also a major topic of discussion. Several participants talked about how well acute care does, in general, once people are in the system. Success highlights included the Vermilion day surgery program and the ability to access HandiBus for transfers to appointments.

Participants also identified appreciation for **resources** within mental health and specialized services such as physiotherapy and dialysis and health promotion programs and services.

“Doctors that make a difference and are passionate for their work.”

“Solid foundation and good values.”

Top healthcare challenges & opportunities

Workforce – Shortages of physicians and staff was a number one challenge identified in Lloydminster, as it was in other communities. Recruitment and retention, the toll being short-staffed is having on people and burnout were part of many discussions.

Recommendations considered by the groups included programs to incentivize individuals training to become doctors and/or nurses to practice in rural areas of the province and working with professional colleges to reduce barriers to increasing scope of practice. Municipal leaders in attendance acknowledge their role to help promote careers in healthcare and added that creating incentives to keep young people or support their return to their rural roots was emphasized.

“Work with colleges to lighten barriers with out-of-country doctors and RNs increased scope of work.”

Several participants raised concern about opening new continuing care space without the staff

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to support the residents.

Funding/understanding jurisdiction for out of province patients was an issue highlighted in the unique border city – juggling jurisdiction and understanding responsibilities with Saskatchewan Health.

Local decision-making: More involvement from the community and local leaders was identified as an opportunity to address many of the challenges identified in Lloydminster and the surrounding communities represented at the event.

Communication, two-way dialogue and conversation and more opportunities to connect were also suggested by several participants. They also identified the negative influence all the “wage negotiations and budgets” media have on young people making decisions about their futures and choosing their career trajectory.

Access & Resources – Many discussions focused on the need more mental health resources and wait times. One participant said there is a *“significant issue with wait times and continuous changes to appointment dates resulting in complications and further deterioration of health”* for patients. Several also commented that lag time for appointments for mental health support have a negative effect on an individual’s health.

There is an opportunity to improve through more engagement with the community and development of community partnerships. These could positively address many of the challenges identified, said one participant.

“Both Health Authorities appear to treat Lloydminster as a portion versus a whole.”

“Don’t just invite us to your table, come join us at ours and have open two-way conversations.”

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Evaluation of event

Participants told us:

- Of the 26 individuals who completed a survey:
 - 24 (92%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (19 ranked as 5 out of 5; 5 as 4)
 - 24 (92%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (16 ranked as 5 out of 5; 8 as 4)
- Many respondents indicated that the most valuable part of the meeting was the opportunity to share successes and challenges, and to hear other perspectives.
- Participants indicated a desire for more time to discuss the questions and the preference to receive the agenda in advance.

“Lots of the ideas from all involved were excellent! Things will improve! We are working together and going in the right direction.”

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