

Provincial Health Tour | Summer 2022

Peace River – July 25, 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.

Peace River

17 Community members participated, representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Dan Williams (Peace River) 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.

Vice-President, Quality and Chief Medical Officer, AHS, Dr. François Belanger 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.

AHS partnered with local RCMP to form Regional Police and Crisis teams, in which AHS mental health professionals and RCMP officers work together to intervene, assess, de-escalate, refer and follow-up with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

The Peace River Community Health Centre has benefited from the generous support of the Peace River & District Health Foundation. Through support from the foundation and its donors, the health centre has received funding for a new cardiac monitoring and telemetry system for monitoring acute care, emergency and surgical patients.

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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.

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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 healthcare in your community?*

Here's a sampling of what we heard in Peace River.



What we are doing well

Peace River and surrounding communities reap the rewards of a high-quality **workforce** with great people providing great care and working collaboratively. Many participants spoke of the collaboration and connections between primary care and acute care and commented positively on the increased focus on mental health and interdisciplinary community resources.

Patient care was praised as high quality despite barriers to access. Virtual Health is seen as an asset and references were made to Connect Care, ConnectMD, HealthLink, and other technologies that support wellness (i.e., Telus virtual health).

“Good communication between levels of physicians.”

Other successes identified included communication and engagement, cultural awareness among EMS staff and infrastructure and equipment.

Top healthcare challenges & opportunities

Access & Resources: Access to primary care, mental health, surgeries such as knee/hip replacements and the associated wait times, were key concerns.

Many felt lack of transportation resources or the costs of travel to get access to healthcare services were a barrier for rural populations. There could be opportunities to address these challenges through community partnerships and subsidized transportation options.

Workforce: Like other communities, recruitment and retention was the focus of discussions. There are simply *“not enough physicians”* said one participant and this is forcing communities to compete with one another and offer financial or other incentives to get an edge on one another.

“Lack of funding to return patients to their home communities.”

“Driving to appointments / access to services for those without financial means (is challenging).”

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More effective use of Nurse Practitioners was suggested by several as a solution; as well, hiring and training locally was recommended. Education and training were mentioned frequently with the added suggestion that creating opportunities for staff to “scale up” with local education supports would be a way to keep healthcare workers in the community.

“Develop (opportunities) locally for high school and college students in healthcare settings (i.e., candy strippers, nursing assistants, etc.)”

Other challenges identified by participants included not having a First Nation liaison to support Indigenous communities, outdated infrastructure and equipment, lack of resources for rural addiction and mental health and lack of broadband to support virtual health options.

Evaluation of event

- Of the 32 individuals who completed a survey (both internal and external events):
 - 30 (94%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (15 ranked as 5 out of 5; 15 as 4)
 - 28 (88%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (20 ranked as 5 out of 5; 8 as 4)
- Many respondents indicated that the most valuable part of the meeting was brainstorming in small groups, face to face, to identify shared challenges and potential solutions. Participants appreciated the opportunity to share their perspective directly with AHS and the Minister.
- Participants expressed a desire for more notice about the meeting, and to see a larger turnout to the next event.

“I liked that we were in small groups – more opportunity to speak, but I would have liked to see more people attend and participate.”

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