

Tamarack Health Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

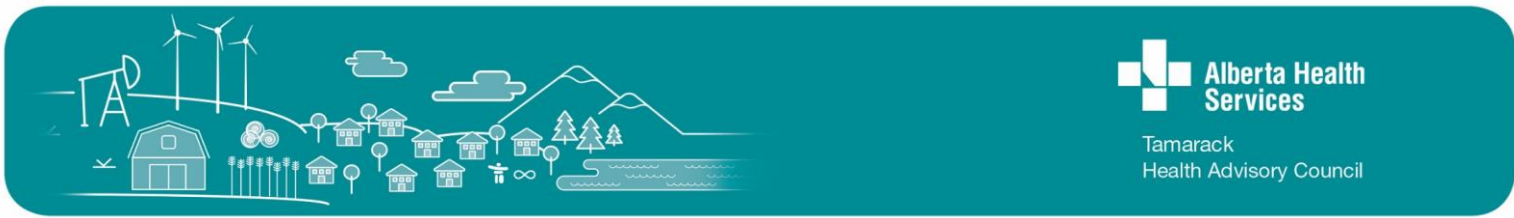
Tuesday, September 12, 2023 / 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m./ Forest Interpretative Centre Whitecourt

ATTENDEES & INTRODUCTIONS	
Members	Tara Baker (Chair), Lorianne Edwards (Vice-Chair), Jeff Goebel, Janet Wilkinson, Maureen Schnirer, Rob Stauffer
AHS	Nicole Allan, Melony Cole-Zettler, Stacy Greening, Sandra Herritt, Jessica Landry, Diana Rinne
Regrets	Karen Gariepy, Janet Jabush, Linda Prokott, Wendy Scinski
Public	One
Media	Brad Quarin from The Whitecourt Star
Welcome & Introductions	Tara welcomed all in attendance and went through introductions. Tara provided a land acknowledgment.
Approval of previous minutes	April 5, 2023, minutes were reviewed and approved by consensus.
STANDING ITEMS	
Action items from previous meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No actions from April 5, 2023, meeting.
Alberta Health Services Zone Update	<p>Stacy Greening, Chief Zone Officer, shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A huge thank you to the healthcare professionals and community members who worked tirelessly this summer through the wildfire season. Sandra Herritt led the Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) since early May and it's still operational to respond to the Northwest Territory (NWT) wildfires. AHS is caring for individuals from those regions, in continuing care. Those patients will return to NWT in a few weeks and the ZEOC will be closed. Launch 7 of Connect Care is set to occur November 4 for the Tamarack area (and others in North Zone). Internationally educated nurses will begin work in the North Zone in the fall. Community members are asked to welcome them and their families as they amalgamate. Locum nursing programs are a short-term strategy to bridge vacancy challenges. Surgical volumes and targets were met and exceeded in the North Zone in the last quarter. The longest wait times and overall surgical volumes have been reduced by utilizing capacity in rural communities.

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Sandra Herritt, Senior Operating Officer, Areas 1-4, North Zone, shared the following:

- Gail Hutchings, manager of the Hinton Health Care Centre, is retiring this fall and a new manager has been hired.
- The first cohort of the International Nursing Program is awaiting the arrival of nurses to Hinton and Mayerthorpe.
- Permanent recruitment is showing improving at several sites in the North Zone.
- There’s been service disruption to addiction and mental health services due to staffing challenges for the medical detox programs in Swan Hills. There is a weekly clinic offered on Tuesdays for community members needing support.
- Addiction and Mental Health has recruited new staff, including an addiction counselor in Edson and a mental health therapist in Hinton.
- The North Zone Senior’s Health Program Community Support team, who provides support all over the Zone, is recruiting for new transition coordinators to assist in acute care.
- All continuing care residents were welcomed back at the end of July and operations are back to normal.
- The flu season immunization program will launch in early fall for flu vaccinations; COVID vaccinations are also available.

Jessica Landry, Physician Resource Planner, North Zone, shared the following:

- Barrhead has recruited an OBGYN - Dr. Sidhu.
- Hinton has recruited a family medicine and obstetrics physician – Dr. Findlay.
- Mayerthorpe has recruited two family medicine physicians – Dr. Egberongbe and Dr. Oteghekpen.
- Westlock has recruited an anesthesiologist –Dr. Heather Ting.
- Whitecourt has recruited two family medicine physicians – Dr. Mustapha and Dr. Osagie.

Questions:

Can referrals be more automated/electronic?

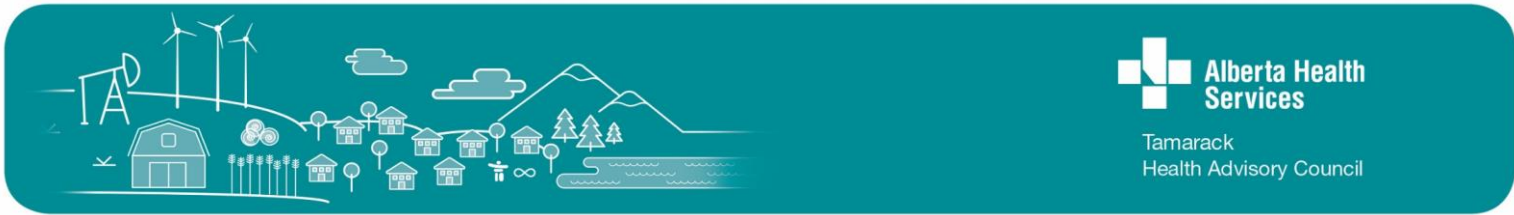
- Referrals come through a specialist’s office, which are privately owned physician clinics. AHS is in the beginning stages of centralizing referrals and is onboarding by specialty for surgical services. A centralized program receives requests which are then reviewed by an AHS team and added to the surgical list. This service may branch out to other specialties.

Is additional funding needed for home care support beds in Westlock?

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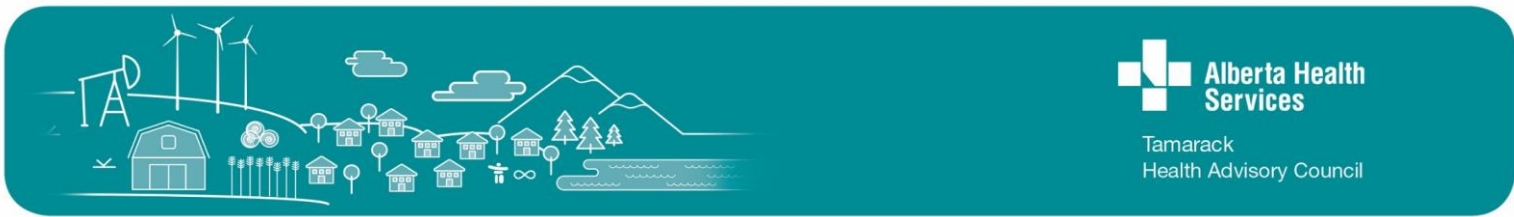
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding has been received to look at spaces, as there were legislative changes to support care to reduce pressure and ease flow in the hospital. There are approximately 10 beds that would require capacity for permanent needs. <p>Is the Barrhead Community Cancer Centre at risk?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No cancer care is at risk. AHS is aware of the increased need and is assessing the growth plan for the 12 locations within the zone that provide cancer services. <p>How is funding allocated for nurse navigators for cancer patients?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHS, Primary Care Networks (PCN) and various physician groups have joined a governance committee to support primary care within different geographies. The business plan identifies priorities for various community needs to which a funding model would be granted, and recruitment would commence. <p>With five doctors leaving Edson and only three on the recruitment list, how does physician recruitment work and what are the targets for the Council area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recruitment process is based on the fiscal year. When there is a resignation, a replacement posting requires an impact analysis requisition. This process cannot commence until the resignation is submitted. The physician contract states that a termination of contract requires 90-days' notice for the target forecast.
Community Partners	<p>Anita Fagnan, Rural Community Consultant with Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), shared updates with Council. Highlights includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported by RhPAP funding, Westlock healthcare team upgraded its advanced skills for treating shock. Check out the video here: Video RhPAP has virtual learning opportunities and events available for rural community members and healthcare providers. Spoke about REAL (Rural Education and Advanced Learning) program funding, an initiative aimed at nurses, midwives, nurse practitioners, and allied health professionals working in rural Alberta in a primary care network, out-of-scope/non-union position, or independent/private practice.

Commented [AJ1]: This needs to be linked to a website.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next RHPAP Rural Virtual Information Session – Sept. 21, 11 a.m.-12 p.m. Learn more about the role nurse practitioners can play in the primary healthcare continuum with a presentation from the Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta (NPAA). Click on the link to register. • ‘How do I Get There’ nursing conversation – October 10, 6:30-7:30 p.m. (for high school students in the north).
Voices of the Community	Two members of the public attended and did not comment.
Council Round Table	Introductions of council members, welcoming Rob Stauffer. Rob volunteers at Wellspring Alberta as a Community Connector and has travelled extensively through the province assisting with cancer support.
Action Item(s)	<p>Stacy Greening’s team to follow up with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab and x-ray tech position (.8 FTE) out of Swan Hills as it is currently a lab and diagnostic imaging position. • Netcare family physicians having to pay for services. • Additional funding needed for the Westlock Community Health Centre (Home Care) to support additional beds. <p>Nicole/Mel to share the Physician Recruitment Update with Council members.</p>
NEW BUSINESS	
Presentation(s)	<p>Local and Provincial Resources – Accessing Help and Services</p> <p><i>Tara Baker – Chair</i></p> <p><i>Tara displayed a large pop-up billboard and spoke about accessing resources within the local community, provincial help and federal services that are available. Tara displayed the ‘connection cards’ and described how the community resource centers utilize and refer to these contact cards when assisting members of the public.</i></p>
Date of Next Meeting	<p>Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023</p> <p>Time: 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.</p> <p>Location: Zoom</p>