



## Tamarack Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2023 / 5:00 p.m. / Zoom

ATTENDEES & INTRODUCTIONS	
<b>Members</b>	Donna Kristiansen (Chair), Tara Baker, Maureen Schnirer, Lorianne Edwards
<b>AHS</b>	Sandra Herritt, Andrea Jackson, Shauna Wallbank
<b>Regrets</b>	Janet Wilkinson (Vice-Chair), Karen Gariepy, Jeff Goebel, Janet Jabush, Linda Prokott, Wendy Scinski
<b>Public</b>	One
<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>	Donna welcomed all in attendance and went through introductions. Donna provided a land acknowledgment and housekeeping.
<b>Approval of previous minutes</b>	November 2, 2022 minutes were reviewed and approved by consensus.
STANDING ITEMS	
<b>Action items from previous meeting</b>	<p>Action items from the November 2, 2022 meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandra Herritt to inquire about webinars for long Covid. In progress.</li> <li>• Shauna Wallbank will report on the number of physicians hired over the past five years and how that compares to baseline numbers – has the number increased or declined?</li> </ul>
<b>Alberta Health Services Zone Update</b>	<p><b>Sandra Herritt, Senior Operating Officer, Areas 1-4, North Zone, shared a written report. Highlights include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new site manager began work at the Edson Healthcare Centre in March, Michele Keast.</li> <li>• Recruitment efforts continue for various frontline positions in Edson.</li> <li>• Numerous agency and locum nurses have been brought on to Area 5 acute care and long-term care facilities, including Westlock, Barrhead and Swan Hills.</li> <li>• Barrhead Healthcare Centre welcomes two RN and two LPN preceptor students in April.</li> <li>• Zone-based patient flow/surgical coordinators have been filled. They support operations with management of bed capacity by utilizing a load-level process to balance patient bed demand with capacity limits. This will reduce surgical postponements.</li> <li>• Updates to capital projects including Mayerthorpe Healthcare Centre, Hinton boiler project at Continuing Care, The</li> </ul>



Manor in Whitecourt and Westlock Continuing Care call bell upgrades.

- Update on Connect Care – ‘go live’ will occur in fall 2023.
- As of March 6, 2023, masking became optional for AHS in areas where there is no contact with, or that is not accessible to patients or designated family/support persons. Continuous masking remains for all other areas.
- Anyone experiencing COVID symptoms 4-12 weeks after a confirmed case of COVID-19 should connect with their primary care provider to discuss Long COVID screening.

**Shauna Wallbank, Physician Resource Planner, shared an extensive physician recruitment report, including the following:**

- Barrhead – seeking 1 family medicine, anesthesia; 1 general surgeon. One OBGYN is incoming and there are two new physicians in family medicine.
- Edson – seeking 1 family medicine, anesthesia; 1 family medicine. AHS is hopeful for 2 more family medicine physicians.
- Hinton – seeking 2 family medicine with 1 family medicine, Obstetrics incoming.
- Mayerthorpe – there are 2 family medicine physicians incoming and one new family medicine physician already in town.
- Westlock – seeking 1 family medicine, anesthesia and 1 family medicine. 1 family medicine and 1 family medicine, ESSObs (C-Section) are incoming, and AHS is hopeful for 1 anesthesiologist
- Whitecourt – seeking 1 family medicine, anesthesia and 1 family medicine, ESSObs. There are 2 family medicine physicians incoming.

**Q&A:**

**Is the baseline for physicians hired good or bad?**

A solid number of physicians were hired, despite being in lock-down for two years. There was a steady flow, though not all positions were filled. There are about 20-40 doctors coming to the North Zone per year right now.

**Has government programming helped bring physicians to the area?**

Residencies are low. They aren't committing to terms. There were 3-5 residents who went through the Reside Program but not all chose the program. AHS continues competing with other programs and it's a very competitive market for residents. Many want to try a community out before committing.



	<p><b>Are family doctors or specialists more difficult to bring in?</b>          Specialists are the most difficult and are only recruited to so many sites, mainly Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie. Pending funding and capacity, Westlock, Barrhead and Cold Lake could possibly grow their programs. While family medicine doctors are easier to bring to the area, those with a particular skillset (i.e., anesthesiologists) are experiencing immense shortages. Family medicine with emergency skills is easier than some other specialties. The zone is also competing with nearby big cities.</p> <p><b>Is the cost of insurance prohibitive for family doctors to deliver babies?</b>          The cost for everything has increased. Becoming and getting licensed is an expense, which may be a deterrent though there's likely more to it than cost alone.</p>
<b>Action Item(s)</b>	Shauna to follow up re request for information on the number of physicians hired over the past five years and how that compares to baseline numbers – has the number increased or declined?
<b>Community Partners</b>	Anita Fagnan, Rural Community Consultant with Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), shared a written update with Council. One of the highlights is that Swan Hills is hosting a high school skills event on April 6, with 20 students.
<b>Voices of the Community</b>	See RhPAP report.
<b>Report from the Chair</b>	Donna Kristiansen shared that access to mental health is a continued issue she hears about among her networks. She also shared that her term as Chair ends at the end of April, which is why an election is occurring during this meeting.
<b>Advisory Council Coordinator Update</b>	Andrea Jackson, Advisory Council Relations team lead, shared updates on the Annual Advisory Council Forum and encouraged members to register if they've not yet done so. Andrea worked with Council to solidify <a href="#">meeting dates</a> for 2023-24 and will post them to the Advisory Council webpage.
<b>Council Round Table</b>	<p>Council members shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tara attended an RhPAP information session on the proposed expansion of physician training in Grande Prairie that was very informative. Additionally, Whitecourt now has an attraction and retention committee that has met once. They'll meet again in May. Lastly, Tara attended the Official Administrator (OA) 90-Day Report information session hosted by</li> </ul>



	<p>AHS Community Engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lorianne attended the Greater Edmonton Health Advisory Council engagement session on youth mental health. There were a lot of great resources shared and excellent discussion.</li> <li>Maureen shared that the Pembina Hills School Division was awarded \$500K to hire social workers for 15 schools in the area, as part of an Alberta Education Pilot Project to address youth mental health. The division now has four full-time employee advocates to address issues that were previously beyond the scope of existing personnel. She adds, the wait and cost to access addiction resources is too long – 3-6 months for 12-step programs and \$1000/day for 30 days.</li> </ul>
<b>Action Item(s)</b>	Andrea to post Tamarack HAC meeting dates for 2023-23 to the Advisory Council webpage.
<b>NEW BUSINESS</b>	
<b>Chair and Vice Chair Elections</b>	<p>Tamarack Health Advisory Council held its elections for Chair and Vice Chair as follows:</p> <p>Tara Baker put forth an expression of interest for the position of Chair. Andrea Jackson asked three times if there were any further nominations from the floor. Tara Baker was declared Chair of the Tamarack Health Advisory Council by acclamation. All in favour. <b>MOTION CARRIED.</b></p> <p>Lorianne Edwards put forth an expression of interest for the position of Vice Chair. Andrea Jackson asked three times if there were any further nominations from the floor. Lorianne Edwards was declared Vice Chair of the Tamarack Health Advisory Council by acclamation. All in favour. <b>MOTION CARRIED.</b></p>
<b>Action Item(s)</b>	Andrea will update Community Engagement contact lists with the names of the new Chair/Vice Chair, and advise the OAs office.
<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	<p>Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2023</p> <p>Time: 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.</p> <p>Location: Whitecourt</p>

Our meetings are open to the public. Dates and locations are [available here](#).  
[Find your Health Advisory Council here](#). Visit [Together 4 Health](#) (T4H) to engage with AHS online.

