

# Wood Buffalo

## 2016/17 Annual Report



Wood Buffalo  
Health Advisory Council

Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**

## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors

The health system belongs to over four million Albertans and, as such, their voices need to be heard — and considered — when Alberta Health Services is planning and making decisions about healthcare delivery. Our Health Advisory Councils, Provincial Advisory Councils and Wisdom Council bring the diverse voices of Albertans to the decision-making table, so health services can meet the unique needs of communities across the province.

Our councils are made up of people who are passionate about understanding what's working and where improvements can be made in how health services are delivered in their communities. Advisory councils demonstrate our true commitment to community engagement – their work is strategic and valued, shaping the future of healthcare and enhancing care in communities.



*Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn*

There was much growth over the past year. It was a year of renewed commitment from Alberta Health Services to ensure councils act as the voices of their communities, supported by extensive recruitment to strengthen the reach and diversity of council members. For the first time, Council Chairs collaborated to share their priorities and identify similar priorities across the province. This approach was valuable and created synergies and linkages between councils across Alberta. At the same time, the collaboration between councils also showed how their priorities clearly aligned with Alberta Health Services' strategic approach and how we are all working towards the same, very important goals.

On behalf of the Alberta Health Services Board of Directors, our leadership team and our workforce, I want to thank you for being our partners. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with councils and the strategic value they offer.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn  
Vice Chair, Board of Directors  
Chair, Community Engagement Committee of the Board  
Alberta Health Services

## About community engagement

Alberta Health Services is committed to meaningful and authentic community engagement. Engaging with Albertans means patients, families and members of the public contribute to healthcare solutions and the betterment of our system. They can benefit by having their needs reflected in planning and decision making. Engagement aligns with the Alberta Health Services culture of caring and listening, which results in more patient-centred care, local decision making and more open and trusting relationships.

## Role of advisory councils

Alberta Health Services values advisory council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in healthcare planning. They help build a stronger relationship between the people in their communities and those who work in the health system.

Members of Health Advisory Councils, Provincial Advisory Councils, and Wisdom Council are Albertans who care about health of their communities, and are connected to the public in many different ways. They provide a grassroots perspective and an understanding of their communities' health needs, and they're interested in listening to the people. They also:



- share their communities' priorities with Alberta Health Services
- give advice and help to inform the decision-making process
- host public advisory council meetings, in addition to promoting and participating in activities that enhance Albertans' health
- engage with and share information with the community, and follow up on commitments
- give feedback on public education materials, policies, or discussion topics
- share information on health services with the community and provide feedback and input to Alberta Health Services

Councils attend the annual Advisory Councils' Fall Forum to hear a variety of presentations and network with fellow council members, Alberta Health Services staff and members of the Board of Directors.

The Health Advisory Councils and the Provincial Advisory Councils are supported by the Alberta Health Services Community Engagement department, and report through the Council of Chairs to the Community Engagement Committee of the Alberta Health Services Board of Directors. The Wisdom Council reports to the AHS President and CEO.

## **12 Health Advisory Councils**

Bring the voices of Alberta communities to healthcare services.  
Each council represents a geographical area within the province.

## **2 Provincial Advisory Councils**

Advise on provincewide services and programs for addiction and mental health, and cancer.

## **1 Wisdom Council**

Provides guidance and recommendations to ensure Alberta Health Services develops and implements culturally appropriate and innovative health service delivery for Indigenous Peoples.

Albertans are represented by 12 Health Advisory Councils. Areas are determined by population and travel routes, and are detailed on [this map](#).

The two Provincial Advisory Councils and Wisdom Council operate provincially. Their membership spans all of Alberta.

[View map of treaty areas and indigenous communities in Alberta](#)

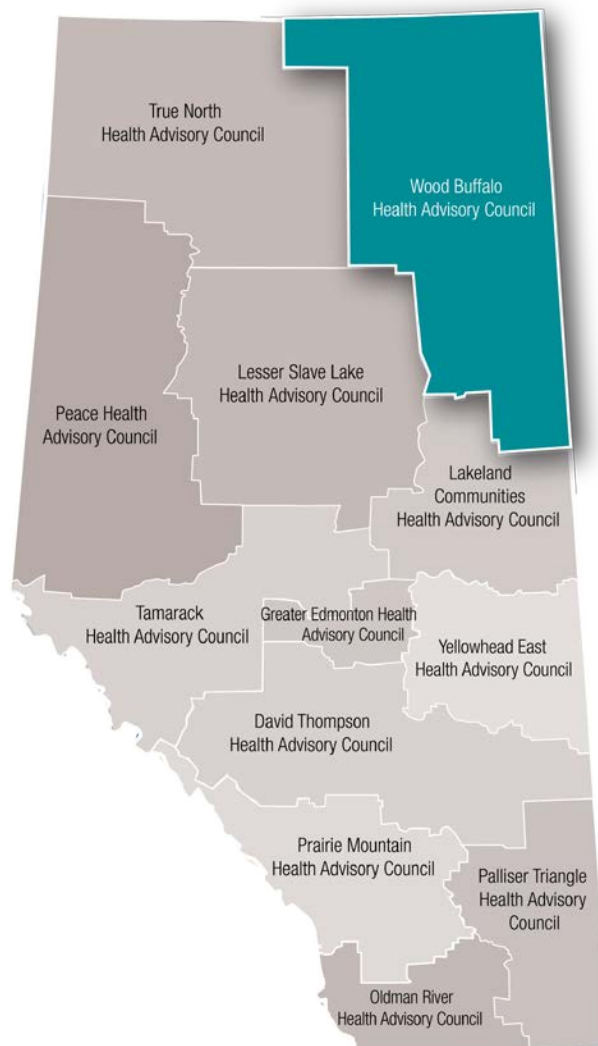
For more information on membership:

[Health Advisory Councils](#)

[Addiction and Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council](#)

[Cancer Provincial Advisory Council](#)

[Wisdom Council](#)



## Council of Chairs

The Council of Chairs is made up of all advisory council Chairs, who meet five times a year to further the roles, responsibilities, and priorities of councils at a provincial level. The Council of Chairs determines themes or commonalities across different communities to bring forward to Alberta Health Services' leadership and Board of Directors.

## Including the public voice in Alberta Health Services planning

In early 2016, Alberta Health Services' Strategic Planning Department met with Health Advisory Councils across the province to gather input for the [2017 - 2020 Health and Business Plan](#). Each council was asked to provide feedback on the plan to ensure the priorities of their communities were considered in the development of the strategic goals for the organization.

Members from various Health Advisory Councils participated in the following provincial committees:

- Apple Magazine Editorial Council
- Continuing Care Quality Committee
- [Health Link](#) and [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#)
- Patient First Steering Committee
- Patient and Family Advisory Council
- Long range planning

## Message from the Chair, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council

2016 presented many challenges for the residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. More than 88,000 of us were forced to flee from our homes as the Horse River Wildfire swept through our community in early May. We have rallied together and with the help of friends and family from across the country and around the world, many of us are back where we belong – and many of us are still working to achieve that outcome.

Our Health Advisory Council has been able to make some meaningful progress in terms of engaging the community in healthcare related discussions. During our conversations with community members over the past year, we have identified a number of the most prevalent concerns and successfully developed a work plan to reflect these priorities:

- Recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals
- Community engagement and Health Advisory Council awareness

The establishment of these priorities provides clarity for the direction of our council.

I would like to thank the previous Chair, Paul McWilliams, for his vision and leadership as well as the other council members for their tireless efforts and passion for community engagement in healthcare.

In an effort to build on the engagement over the past year, my vision for this year's council is to focus on enhancement. We must continue to inspire our community to provide feedback that will enable us to enhance the quality of healthcare in our region. We will achieve this outcome by working collaboratively with our partners in the community while focusing on the priorities outlined above.

Given the tremendous community spirit displayed by the residents of Wood Buffalo over the past year, there is no doubt in my mind that we will continue to make great strides in giving our community a voice on regional healthcare related concerns.

Sincerely,

Jon Willcott, Chair  
Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council



*Jon Willcott*

## About us

### 2016 -2017 Council Members

#### Current Members

Jonathan	Willcott (Chair)	Fort McMurray
Bonnah	Carey	Fort McMurray
Valerie	Hill	Fort McMurray
Heather	MacKay	Fort McMurray
Jim	Moore	Fort McMurray
Cathy	Underhill	Fort McMurray

#### Past Members

Paul	McWilliams	Fort McMurray
Joshua	Olawuyi	Fort McMurray
Ahmad	Qayyum	Fort McMurray
Edwin	Rideout	Fort McMurray

4

public meetings  
were held in Fort  
McMurray

new members  
were appointed

#### Topics on the minds of our council and community members:

- Addiction and mental health needs and services
- Recruitment and retention of medical professionals
- Indigenous health
- Early childhood development



*Wood Buffalo council members gather at Annual Fall Forum in Edmonton*



## What we are proud of

### Providing feedback and advice to Alberta Health Services

- We were given the opportunity to learn about the newly developed Alberta Health Services community engagement framework and provide our feedback.
- We have also ensured that we continue to be informed about the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre building envelope, as well as the proposed heliport. We heard various updates and provided community input throughout the year.

### Enhancing the health of community members

- Council received a presentation from the Wood Buffalo Family and Community Support Services at our November 2016 meeting, and we shared what we learned with our community.
- At our March 2017 meeting, council was given an overview of the Fostering Open Conversations that Unleash Solutions (FOCUS) website. This website is designed to provide information on Alberta's 16 busiest emergency departments.
- In the spring of 2017, we reached out to members of the community who had been utilizing social media to voice feedback on their healthcare experiences. We invited them to attend council meetings, and were able to connect these community members with the Alberta Health Services leadership team for further conversations and follow-up.

### Key learnings

- At each council meeting, Alberta Health Services North Zone leaders provided our council with updates on key initiatives and available services in the area. We have been able to share this information with members of our communities, and also take this opportunity to bring forward public questions and feedback.

## A look ahead

As our community continues to rebuild, we will continue working with our rural and urban friends, family, neighbours and Alberta Health Services to advise on community health promotion, priorities, and projects.

Throughout the year, we heard significant feedback on the need for more medical professionals in the region. As a council, we intend to support this need by:

- Welcoming the professionals and their families into the community.
- Developing a welcome package for health professionals and their families.
- Collaborating with Rural Recruitment Action Plan (RPAP) as they help facilitate the formation of a community medical professional recruitment committee.

We also view community engagement and Health Advisory Council awareness to be a main priority for our council and for our region, and would like to focus on the following:

- Promote themed meetings during the year to encourage education on specific areas of healthcare.
- Represent and promote the council at community events.
- Create opportunities for enhanced council awareness in the community.

As a council, we strongly believe in being able to access the right kind of care in the right place, at the right time, and will carry on advocating for regional standards of care, service, assessment and treatment within our council area.

# Get involved

Think of the difference you can make to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with Alberta Health Services. Get involved:

- Attend an upcoming [Health Advisory Council meeting](#).
- [Make a presentation at a council meeting](#) on a health area of interest or concern.
- Think about volunteering your time as a council member. Recruitment drives happen annually. Members are appointed for three-year terms.

Connect with us:

- [Info on Community Engagement](#)
- [woodbuffalo@ahs.ca](mailto:woodbuffalo@ahs.ca)
- [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)