

Wood Buffalo

Health Advisory Council

2023-24 Annual Report



**Alberta Health
Services**

Wood Buffalo
Health Advisory Council

Message from Athana Mentzelopoulos & Dr. Lyle Oberg

As we reflect on the journey of the Health Advisory Councils over the past 15 years, it is with a profound sense of gratitude and appreciation that we bid farewell. The dedication, passion, and invaluable contributions of each member has left an indelible mark on Alberta's healthcare landscape, touching countless lives across our communities.

Since its beginnings, the Health Advisory Councils have served as a beacon of community engagement and collaboration, bridging the gap between healthcare providers and the diverse needs of Alberta. Your commitment to fostering dialogue, advocating for patient-centred care, and championing initiatives to enhance the quality of care in your respective communities has been truly commendable.

We are deeply indebted to the hundreds of volunteers who have served on the HACs and who have generously devoted their time and expertise, along with their unwavering support to improving healthcare in our province. Your efforts have helped to shape policies, drive innovations and ensure the voices of Albertans were heard by decision-makers.

While this marks the end of an era, we hope many of you are looking at new opportunities with Regional Advisory Councils, and have reached out to express your interest. The Health Advisory Councils may cease to exist in their current form but the bonds forged and the lessons learned will endure; the Regional Advisory Councils can benefit from their history and the commitment of those who have served.

On behalf of Alberta Health Services, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to each and everyone of the members who served on Councils over the past 15 years. Your contributions will continue to inspire us.

Athana Mentzelopoulos
President and CEO, Alberta Health Services

Dr. Lyle Oberg
Executive Board Chair, Alberta Health Services

QUOTE FROM ZONE LEADERSHIP

It has been my pleasure to work with many of our North Zone Councils. Our Council members are dedicated, community builders who are committed to healthcare in the North. I am appreciative of the diversity of opinions and experience that our Council members share leading to rich dialogue and discussion on topics that truly matter to those of us living in the north.

Stacy Greening
Chief Zone Officer, North Zone

WHO WE ARE



Top L-R: Todd Hillier (Chair), Christine Alexander, Jennifer Best, Natalie Gentili
Bottom L-R: Ashley Makey, Kenneth Okwonkwo, Melinda Stewart, Breanna Wallace
Missing: Patience Akenbor, Sonia Burke-Smith (Vice Chair), Tinna Ezekie, Natalie Gentili,
Sandy Grandison, Evelyn Okoh, Carol Theberge, Beverley Tupper

It has truly been an honour to collaborate with the Council, the volunteers, the medical professionals and especially the AHS staff who dedicated their time to the betterment of our community and the province as a whole. It's through their efforts that our healthcare system will continue to grow and improve while supporting Albertans everywhere. On behalf of all Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council members, I say thank you and that we are forever grateful for all the hard work to make this initiative a success over the past 15 years.

Todd Hillier

Chair, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Since their inception in 2009, Advisory Council members have share advice and feedback from their communities with Alberta Health Services (AHS). They've held public meetings and engagement activities virtually or in locations throughout their geographic area that further contributed to improving healthcare services in Alberta.

Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council (WBHAC) held three public meetings during the year. Presentation topics included an overview of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Provincial Advisory Council (PAC), AHS' new Alberta Virtual Chronic Pain Program (AVCPP), and a workforce update from AHS' Talent Acquisition team.

The Council hosted a virtual engagement event focused on addiction and mental health services available in the Wood Buffalo region. Participants heard from local AHS Addiction and Mental Health teams and 12 different community service agencies as they shared addiction and mental health services available in the region. 36 people participated in this community conversation.

Council attended a session with the Health Minister in November to learn about plans to refocus the health system, and subsequent changes to AHS and Health Advisory Councils. In March, Council met in Fort McMurray with MLA Martin Long, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health, and staff from Alberta Health, to discuss successes and opportunities for improvement as government prepared to launch its new Regional Advisory Councils (RAC).

Topics of discussion throughout the year included:

- Workforce recruitment (shortages).
- Addiction and Mental Health services.
- Supporting the LGBTQS+ community.
- Limited seniors care in the region.
- Supports for Indigenous community members.
- Access to services in the region.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 78 public attended meetings and events through the year.
- 4 meetings and events between July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024.
- 4 new members recruited.

THANK YOU MEMBERS PAST AND PRESENT

Afia Waseem	Jennifer Lynn Best
Amanda Nielsen	Jim Moore
Ashley Makey	Jonathan Willcott
Beverley Tupper	Joshua Olawuyi
Blue Eyes Simpson	Keltie Paul
Bonnah Carey	Kenneth Okwonkwo
Breana Wallace	Mark Arthur
Carole Bouchard	Melinda Stewart
Cathryn Beck	Monica Schimanke
Cecile Calliou	Natalie Gentili
Christine Alexander	Nicole Park
Dave Bacon	Oliver Buchmann
David Hodson	Paul McWilliams
Edward Gordon	Pooi Chan Leong
Edwin Rideout	Sonia Burke-Smith
Elaine Read	Syeda Hussain
Evelyn Okoh	Todd Hillier
Gary Exner	Tracy Czuy McKinnon
Heather MacKay	Valerie Hill
Ifeoma Uzorchukwuamaka	Valerie O'Leary
Iris Kirschner	

**Apologies if anyone is missing from this list.*

