



Alberta Precision Laboratories | APL

2019-20 Annual Report

Delivering the Transformative Power of Laboratory Medicine
to Improve Health for all Albertans.

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This Annual Report covers the time period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. It highlights recent changes, successes and the next steps for APL.

Message from Chief Operating Officer & Chief Medical Laboratory Officer

In the interest of Albertans, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has an active role in the transformation of health services in the province of Alberta. An ‘all hands on deck’ commitment to bending the curve on health spending while, at the same time, improving outcomes for patients is a required state of being for all health service delivery partners in the province. As an integral player in health services delivery, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has the opportunity to demonstrate the transformative power of laboratory medicine in improving the health system and the health of Albertans.

Change and transformation are two words that aptly describe laboratory medicine in Alberta over the past few years, with seismic change occurring in the past 24 months. In 2018, Alberta Public Laboratories (APL) was formed through the transition of four Alberta legacy laboratory organizations into one provincial wholly owned subsidiary of Alberta Health Services (AHS). This transition was followed with a second restructuring mid-year 2019 that included: further edits to our governance and accountability structure, changes to our funding framework, infrastructure changes (cancellation of the ‘hub’ laboratory), revision of our AHS shared services roles and responsibilities, as well as a second name change.

The new name, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) and tagline “Leaders in Laboratory Medicine” is reflective of the rapidly evolving era of precision medicine and the importance of world-class laboratory diagnostics in the screening, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring, surveillance, and outcomes of patients. The recent role of our Public Health Laboratory in the COVID-19 response is a perfect example of how critical coordinated laboratory testing and reporting is to the healthcare system and all Albertans.

As part of its active role, the MOH initiated a review of health service delivery in the province. Albertans had the opportunity to participate, and many did, including a number of our staff members. The review was conducted by Ernst & Young and produced 57 recommendations and 72 cost savings opportunities identified to improve the quality and long-term sustainability of the overall health system. Three specific recommendations were made with regards to the delivery of laboratory services: 1) explore the closure of underutilized sites; 2) continue to explore the outsourcing of lab services; and 3) improve adherence to test appropriateness. In anticipation of these recommendations and in line with APL’s commitment to continuous improvement, many initiatives, in all three areas, were already underway prior to the release of the report.

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Our laboratory professionals are making a difference to patient care in Alberta and the teamwork demonstrated has been remarkable.

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Q4 brought us the coronavirus and COVID-19. While the outbreak challenged our capacity and added new and multiple layers of complexity to service delivery, it also shone a positive light on critical role Alberta's integrated and coordinated laboratory structure plays in the health of Albertans. From the beginning, Alberta has led the country in testing volumes. Our teams have worked tirelessly and continue to face multiple challenges, including access to high-throughput testing platforms and sustaining sufficient testing redundancy in times of unstable supply chains from vendors. Every effort is being made to leverage our strategic partners, expand testing and equipment as quickly as possible, redeploy and train staff to support testing, and continue to meet the public health needs of Albertans.

Over the past year APL achieved significant successes that saw improved efficiencies and set in place a solid foundation for the future delivery of patient laboratory services – most notably, the provincial standardization of many testing protocols and system practices, the development of a shared corporate service model, and the successful implementation of Connect Care Wave 1. The expansion of the laboratory screening panel for newborns meant that the early detection of a rare disease resulted in significantly improved outcomes for an Alberta baby.

Our laboratory professionals are making a difference to patient care in Alberta and the teamwork demonstrated has been remarkable. Their dedication to finding the best ways to serve Albertans is what makes this possible, and we are pleased to be on this journey together.



Tammy Hofer
Chief Operating Officer



Dr. Carolyn O'Hara
Chief Medical Laboratory Officer (Interim)

Who We Are

APL is a wholly owned subsidiary of AHS and is the largest provider of laboratory medicine and pathology services in the province of Alberta. We employ 5,200 health professionals and performed 62.8 million laboratory tests over the past year. We are accountable to AHS as a wholly owned subsidiary and, in turn, the Ministry of Health for the provision of all laboratory services including: hospital and community laboratories; mobile collections; cardiac diagnostic services; on-call services; reference laboratories; public health laboratories; patient service centres; and transportation services.

The majority downstream medical decisions across the continuum of care are based on diagnostic laboratory results, making laboratory medicine a keystone component of healthcare, and a service that impacts all Albertans. An integrated model allows APL to be more strategic in our efforts and streamline and optimize our processes, which results in a multitude of benefits, including: equitable access to high-quality services for patients; timely and consistent results to patients and providers; and optimized resources for increased financial health.

Mission

We believe in the transformative power of laboratory medicine to improve health for all Albertans.

Vision

Health informed by world-class integrated laboratory diagnostics.

Values

- Kindness
- Inclusion
- Innovation
- Agility
- Accuracy

Laboratory Infrastructure

AHS is organized into five geographic zones: South, Calgary, Central, Edmonton and North (Appendix A). APL is composed of two sectors — North and South — with the further identification of city, urban and rural locations.

The complexity, scope and volume of diagnostic testing required to support Albertans continues to grow. To support this demand, APL has formed strategic partnerships to meet evolving patient needs. DynaLIFE is the primary laboratory system partner engaged by AHS to partner with APL to deliver laboratory services in Alberta. DynaLIFE provides community and high-volume, low-complexity laboratory services, including collections, courier services and testing to Edmonton. Together, APL and DynaLIFE support laboratory testing sites and patient collection facilities across Alberta that include primary care clinics, physician offices, diagnostic centres, and patient service centres (Appendix B).

North and South Sectors

APL is structured into North and South Sectors. The North and South Medical Directors, along with their operational administrative dyad partners, are responsible for the clinical diagnostic testing in their respective sectors. This responsibility includes oversight and support for satellite laboratories. The laboratory system is designed to offer on-site laboratory testing to ensure urgent acute care needs are met. Smaller rural hospitals refer non-urgent and more complex testing to their regional hospitals or the referral laboratories located in Calgary or Edmonton.

Community and Academic Partners

APL has, and continues to develop, a number of key partnerships to support our operations. These include strong connections with Alberta's academic research institutions, including the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, technical institutions including SAIT and NAIT, funding agencies, foundations, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics companies including global vendors and small- to medium-sized local enterprises, and community partners. Through strong strategic partnerships, APL will be able to continue to leverage the support across Alberta to enable effective delivery of service and execution of our business plan.

Governance

The Board that helped establish APL as a subsidiary was dissolved in October 2019 and a new, more streamlined corporate governance model was established that saw the restructuring of the APL Executive Leadership Team and the creation of a direct reporting process to the AHS President and CEO via a sole board chair. APL executives work closely with AHS executives to ensure all Albertans have access to high-quality laboratory services across the province. The new APL governance structure ensures integrated laboratory services are embedded into clinical decisions and operations to improve quality and appropriateness of care.

APL Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

ELT is a standing committee composed of the senior executive leadership of APL. The purpose of this committee is to set the broad vision, strategic direction and priorities for the organization, in collaboration with the board chair, AHS executives and the APL Senior Leadership Council.

Membership

Chief Operating Officer
Chief Medical Laboratory Officer
North Sector Medical Director
South Sector Medical Director
Executive Director of Business Advisory Services
Director, HR Business Partnerships and Human Resources

Senior Leadership Council (SLC)

SLC is a standing committee composed of the South Sector Medical Advisory Committee, North Sector Medical Advisory Committee, APL Planning and representatives from shared services disciplines. The purpose of this committee is to guide APL leadership in collaborative decision making and shared accountability within the context of the entire organization, ensuring the best use of APL's resources.

Discipline Councils

Discipline Councils were created to support the prioritization, coordination, standardization and optimization of clinical diagnostic testing across the province. These councils are led by experts in their discipline areas and comprise medical, scientific, operational, and administrative stakeholders to ensure the appropriate ad hoc engagement of both internal and external stakeholders.

Steering Committees

Operational, medical, research, and administrative steering committees and working groups have been developed to support the planning and implementation of priority initiatives in the organization, including timelines and milestones, budget, and an accountability structure.

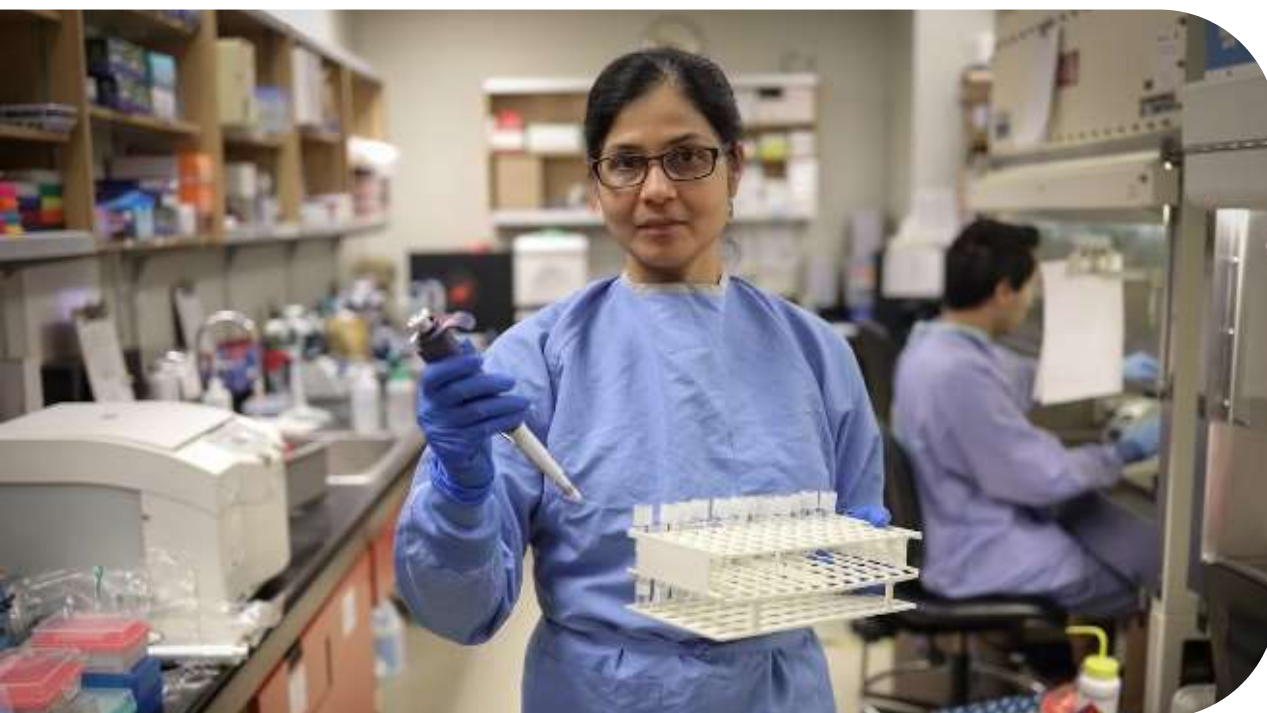
Shared Services

AHS and APL have worked collaboratively to identify key support services that could be provided by AHS, with APL benefiting from AHS' systems, processes and economies of scale. A Shared Services Agreement (SSA) between APL and AHS became effective Jan. 1, 2019 and sets out the scope of services, accountabilities, service delivery expectations and key parameters for each of the service areas that AHS will provide to APL. The SSA was renegotiated to transition all corporate services for APL to a centralized service delivery model that leverages the scope of services already in place at AHS. This will be enacted Q1 2020-21. Delivery of the services

provided to APL under the SSA is monitored through collaboration between APL ELT and AHS medical and administrative leads.

Our People

APL employs 5,200 health professionals, support staff, and medical and scientific and staff and contractors. Our employees hold clinical and technical expertise in laboratory medicine and pathology and are sought out by health industry partners and academic collaborators for translational research initiatives and in the development of novel diagnostics.

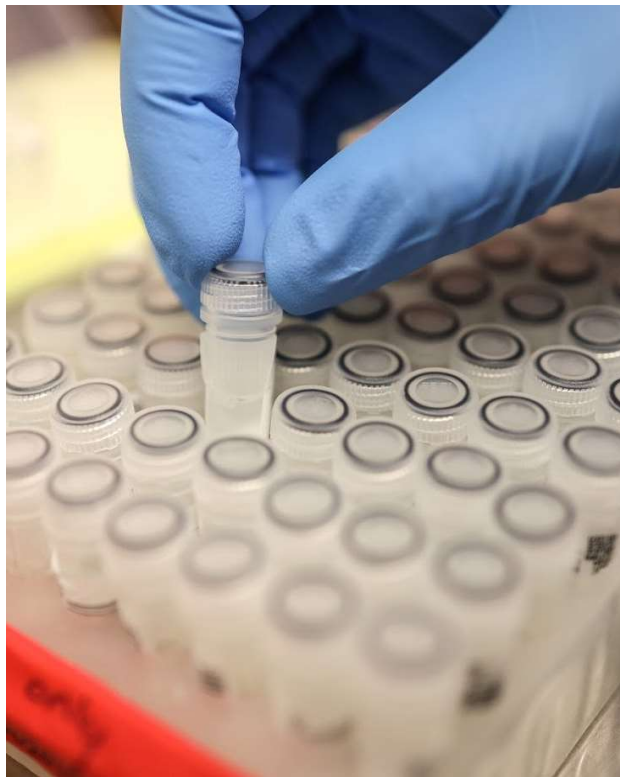


What We Do

At APL, we lead healthcare innovation in laboratory medicine by continually seeking improvements in preventing, detecting and diagnosing, treating, and managing diseases or medical conditions. Management of laboratory services across the province puts APL in a unique position to optimize service delivery across the province. This includes making decisions on how that service is best delivered while ensuring high quality, meeting the needs and expectations of patients. We research, develop, test and implement new personalized treatments and interventions and interface directly with patients by providing patient specimen collection, logistics, testing and diagnostic services.

Research and Development

Research and development is a foundational underpinning to all laboratory services by supporting vital research directions used to improve healthcare delivery to those patients that need it most. Research initiatives take place in all major tertiary care centres in Alberta and we maintain strong relationships locally and internationally to continue to advance our research agenda. Key collaborators include: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Canadian Blood Services, United States National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). APL possesses unique, invaluable laboratory datasets that are used to study the patterns, presentation, progression and treatment outcomes of disease.



Clinical trials, research in basic laboratory sciences, and epidemiological studies are used to identify, refine and explore laboratory diagnostic scientific questions and support the translation of today's research into tomorrow's treatments.

Every year, APL has in excess of 1,700 active clinical scientific research protocols underway at various sites across Alberta. We are a key partner in the development of future research initiatives in cancer care, and are a central critical component in the new Cancer Care Centre in Calgary. Not only do laboratory services touch all cancer-care diagnostic decisions, APL provides services, in collaboration with the cancer centres and pediatric hospitals, for cancer clinical trials that involve providing the latest care and targeted cancer treatments for Albertans.

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We are a key player in local, national and international research related to, but not limited to, non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and vascular diseases such as stroke; the pathological progression of crippling conditions such as Alzheimer's, irritable bowel and chronic kidney disease; organ transplantation; identification of organisms at a genetic level that informs treatment for critically ill patients; mapping the appearance and prevalence of disease-causing pathogens in the community; and identification of genetic markers playing a role in rare diseases in adults and children.

All of this research and knowledge is used to develop and refine diagnostics and detection methods that aid clinicians in making effective treatment decisions. APL is committed to the development of novel diagnostic devices, laboratory biomarkers and next-generation technologies in pathology and laboratory medicine that will allow us to continue to deliver cutting edge healthcare and advance precision medicine healthcare to Albertans. Frequently, these developments happen through partnerships with pharmaceuticals and/or diagnostics companies as part of the companion diagnostic development and regulatory approval pathway.

In addition, APL is a critical partner for local small- and medium-sized diagnostic companies, including those spun out from the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. APL plays an increasing role in developing a diagnostic biotech industry in Alberta, thus contributing to economic diversification in Alberta.

Quality and Safety

APL is committed to providing high-quality laboratory services to the patients and clients served by Alberta Health Services. We use the QMS model as described by the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute to maintain a quality management system that meets accreditation, legislation, and regulatory requirements for the sustainment and continual improvement of laboratory services. This integrated model coordinates activities that direct, control and guide the organization with regards to quality throughout the entire path of workflow, including pre-examination, examination and post examination.

APL promotes the development of a safety culture where patients, staff and physicians feel safe in reporting and discussing safety concerns. Quality assurance activities include evaluating patient safety concerns as well as investigating and reviewing reported adverse events with the goal of continual improvement of the quality of healthcare or services provided. We are dedicated to providing a safe, healthy, and secure work environment and to manage laboratory operations and processes in a manner that protects the health and safety of all staff.

The health and safety of our workers is fundamental to the provision of safe and quality laboratory services and APL has a comprehensive suite of documents and tools to promote, educate and maintain staff safety within the workplace. All employees of Laboratory Services are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of co-workers, patients, visitors, and themselves through understanding their roles and responsibilities and adherence to all pertinent legislation, standards, safe work practices, and industry best practices. Laboratories are governed by various accreditation organizations and follow a stringent accreditation process.

Laboratories are accredited by the applicable accreditation organizations that may include:

- American Association of Blood Banks (AABB)
- American Society of Histocompatibility & Immunogenetics (ASHI)
- Canadian Association of Accreditation (CAA)
- Canadian College of Medical Genetics (CCMG)
- College of American Pathologists (CAP)
- College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA)
- Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT)

Collection and Logistics

APL and DynaLIFE offer collection sites covering the province to ensure Albertans have access to laboratory testing. Specimens are collected and transported back to a laboratory for testing and analysis. Logistics are responsible for the efficient transfer of specimens, reports and supplies for APL. An internally operated courier system helps facilitate accurate test results by maintaining high quality standards in specimen integrity during transport.

Testing

Biochemistry

The majority of diagnostic tests performed at APL are within the discipline of biochemistry. This area provides extensive support to clinicians who use the results provided to make treatment decisions. These services include clinical chemistry, endocrinology, and therapeutic drug monitoring and clinical toxicology. This division includes our “high-volume” laboratory, where we have analyzers able to process many patient samples at once.

Cellular Therapy Laboratory

The Cellular Therapy Laboratory is involved in transplant medicine and making tailored treatments using patients’ own blood to treat and fight diseases such as cancer and other immune system disorders.

Hematopathology

The discipline of hematopathology provides services in hematology — the study of disease conditions that affect blood and related organs. Samples analyzed can be from blood or other blood components such as bone marrow, lymph nodes, spleen, thymus and other lymphoid tissues. This area supports the diagnosis of anemia, blood cancers, and inflammatory conditions.

Genetics and Genomics (G&G)

G&G is a provincial program operating at locations in Calgary and Edmonton. It provides testing for diseases that are caused by changes in the genetic makeup of patients and completes highly specialized testing for a significant number of hereditary genetic conditions, including the provincial Newborn Metabolic Screening Program. This testing is often seen as the future of laboratory medicine and involves examining the DNA of patients.

Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) Testing & Immunogenetics Laboratory

Alberta has the largest Canadian solid organ and bone marrow transplant program outside Toronto. Testing for the match ability between donor and recipient as well as post-transplant monitoring for rejection is a critical component of the Alberta transplant program. Together with our sub-specialized transplantation pathologists, the HLA Testing & Immunogenetics Laboratories in Edmonton and Calgary are crucial to the Alberta transplant program.

Microbiology

The discipline of microbiological testing includes bacteriology, mycology, rapid virology, molecular diagnostics and parasitology. Microbiology provides diagnosis on many types of microorganisms that may have infected tissues or bodily fluids. This sector processes the swabs and blood for microbes to provide information such as antibiotic resistant bacteria out in the public.

Point of Care Testing (POCT)

Diagnostic testing doesn't only reside within the testing facilities of APL. POCT devices provide quick feedback to allow providers to make decisions on the spot and provide healthcare providers and patients with a timely and convenient option of performing laboratory tests at the bedside and physicians' offices, as well as more novel care environments such as paramedic programs, COVID-19 Secondary Assessment and Treatment Centres, and Alberta Stroke Ambulance. Very few laboratory medicine providers in Canada, if any, can claim to support POCT in such a diverse array of care environments.

Public Health Laboratory

Public health laboratories focus on infectious disease diagnosis and surveillance, assist in outbreak management diseases, and provide emergency response leadership when required. The role of the Public Health Laboratory in public health surveillance and the identification and confirmation of disease outbreaks is critically linked to the legislated responsibilities of Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health and duties of the Medical Officers of Health prescribed in the Public Health Act. The following distinct public health core functions of the Public Health Laboratory include: Environmental Microbiology and Food Microbiology; Public Health Surveillance: Communicable Disease Outbreak Detection and Investigation; Public Health Emergency Response; Biosafety, Bio-hazard Containment and Response; Reference Laboratory for Specialized Testing; and Quality Assurance.

Transfusion Medicine

Transfusion medicine provides all blood components and products distributed by Canadian Blood Services. They are involved with providing critical blood-transfusion products and testing services for patients requiring blood transfusions to support trauma, transplant, surgery, congenital disorder and oncology patients. They provide expert clinical support for bleeding and clotting disorders, ensure appropriate use of this scarce resource and play a vital role during catastrophes with mass casualties.

Reporting Results

Test results are reported to clinicians either electronically to the clinical information system or physician electronic medical record system, fax or paper report.

Results are also uploaded to Alberta Netcare, an electronic system accessible to health professionals to retrieve patient health information. Patients can now also access over 50 of their most common laboratory results via online government platforms that include Alberta Netcare and the Alberta Health information portal for patients.

How Do We Know We Are Succeeding?

AHS is a public body accountable for the provision of healthcare services and the expenditure of public funds. Performance mechanisms are in place in order to establish performance standards, ensure they are met, and support decision making when remedies are required to improve performance. In its truest form, a decision support system (DSS) is an information system, with supporting infrastructure and processes, to support all business and organizational decision-making activities. Our commitment to this will result in a high-functioning, performance-driven, fiscally sustainable, provincial laboratory that's both strategic and responsive in its planning and operations.

The APL analytics and reporting structure is in the early phases of design. This year we reviewed and corrected discrepancies in regional reporting and data quality, worked toward provincially understood definitions and reporting practices, and laid the foundation for a high-functioning decision support, measurement and reporting system.

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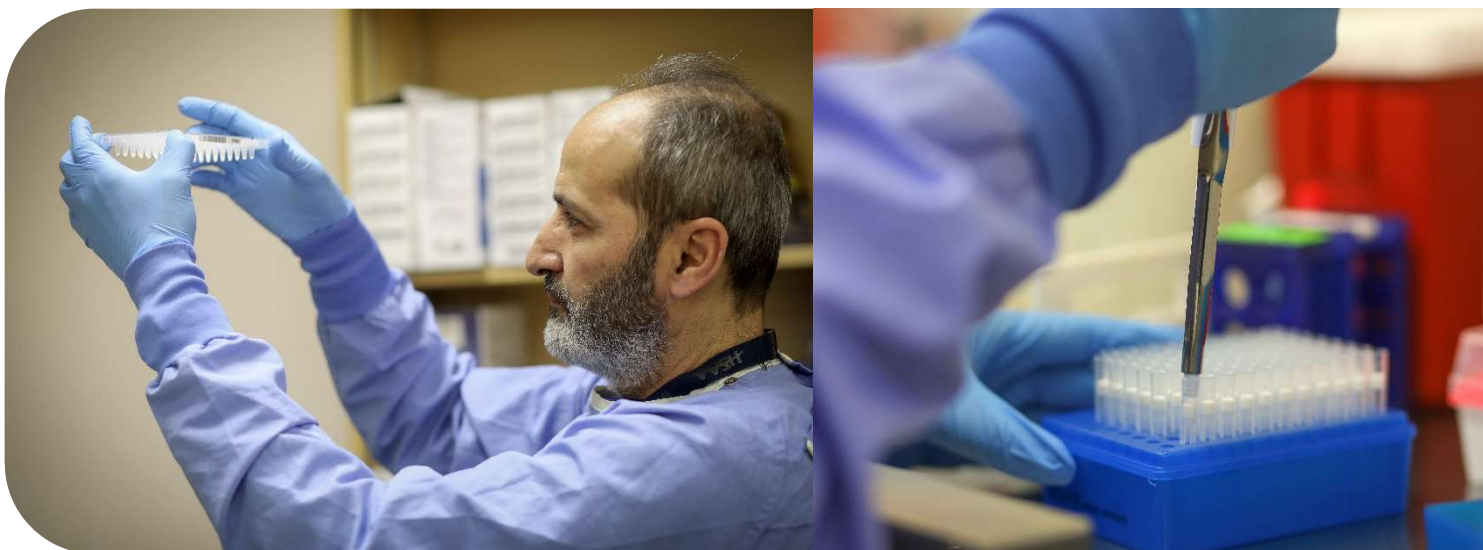
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Notable Accomplishments

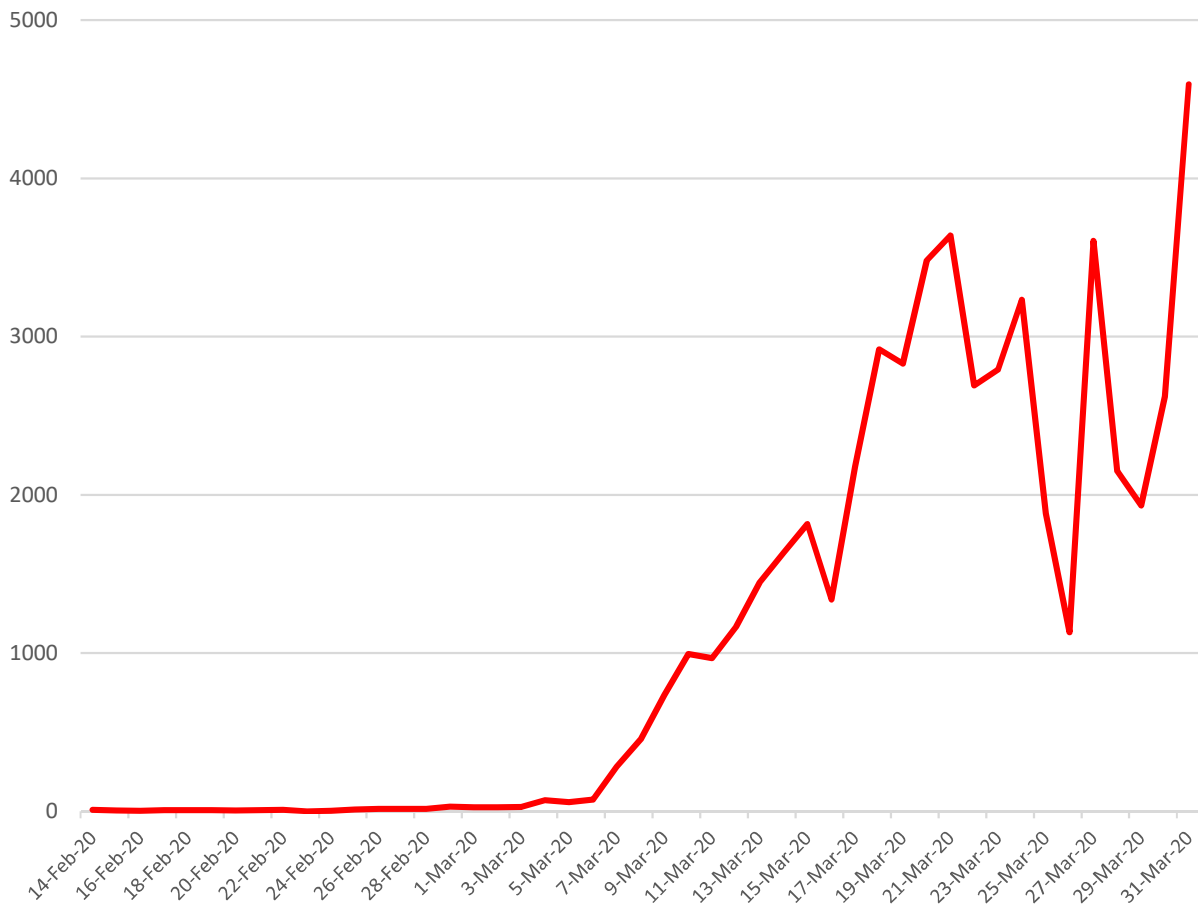
COVID-19

APL played a vital role in the provincial and national response to COVID-19 in Q4 and will continue into 2020 working to rapidly expand testing capacity to meet the evolving needs of public health officials. Testing is a crucial component in the diagnosis and monitoring of infection required by our public health teams and is key to curbing the spread of COVID-19. Our integrated lab system quickly moved forward on several fronts to respond to the pandemic:



- An in-house developed laboratory COVID-19 test enabled Alberta to quickly identify the first case of COVID-19 in early February.
- The testing capacity expected from our public health system started at 50 a day. This number grew over four weeks to more than 4,000 tests per day. Our integrated laboratory system established the largest capacity COVID-19 testing system in Canada, setting the foundation for the expected exponential growth of testing to come.
- Supply availability was quickly identified as a huge risk to further testing capacity and joint teams with our Contract, Procurement and Supply Management teams found innovative ways to secure our access to needed reagents and swabs supplies.

Alberta Precision Laboratories COVID-19 Testing Volumes: February – March, 2020



Connect Care

Connect Care is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Health and AHS staff, clinicians and patients to improve patient experiences and the quality and safety of patient care by creating common clinical standards and processes to manage and share information across the healthcare continuum. The laboratory information system (LIS) is the foundation for laboratory operations and the information highway to and from ordering physicians, their patients and other providers. This single enterprise-wide LIS is a foundational step toward integrated laboratory services in the province that will allow laboratory test results to be available to providers faster and be accessible to all Albertans. The first wave of Connect Care was launched in multiple sites across the North Sector on November 3, 2019.

APL, AHS, DynaLIFE, and Epic Systems Corporation (the Connect Care vendor) displayed an incredible collaborative effort and united front in addressing pre- and post-launch issues, including a massive and collaborative effort to correct results delivery. Significant strides have also been made in preparation for Wave 2 and Wave 3 implementation, including completion of Super User training and proceeding ahead of schedule with Wave 3 testing. Due to operational attention being diverted to the COVID-19 response, the Connect Care rollout was slowed in Q4.

Point of Care Testing (POCT)

In 2019-2020 APL purchased and began to implement a new POCT middleware. This middleware will eventually enable all POCT devices to stream patient results straight into Epic and Netcare. Alberta is truly a leader in this effort; no other province (or state) has undertaken such a large and complex POCT initiative. The following devices were connected into the middleware and are now streaming results into Epic/Netcare at Wave 1 sites: Radiometer benchtop blood gas analyzers, i-STATs, and glucose meters.

Human Resources and Corporate Services

There were three primary areas of focus related to Our People in 2019-20:

- Integrating and streamlining the numerous disparate workforce practices that came together in the creation of APL;
- Identifying areas where best practices could be introduced to engage our people in our common goal of delivering appropriate health and healthcare across Alberta;
- Forging relationships with our various union, strategic, shared service and government partners.

As noted previously, a great deal of effort was required by both APL and AHS to implement the first iteration of the Shared Services Agreement and again to support the revisions we saw introduced mid-year that included the complete transition all corporate services for APL to a centralized service delivery model. The transition ultimately resulted in the transfer of 46 union and non-union employees from APL to various corporate teams within AHS, and the elimination of 12 former APL corporate service positions.

In 2019-20, APL also successfully standardized the terms and conditions of employment for all non-union and exempt employees, and negotiated transition agreements with the Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA). This transition work successfully consolidated agreements with three

unions and 10 collective agreements to one Technical and one Clerical agreement with HSAA. Bargaining remains underway on a first collective agreement with the Canadian Union of Public Employees – the new bargaining agent for APL courier drivers.

Further efficiencies have been gained through the consolidation of all APL employees into a single HR information and payroll system administered through AHS, and we continue to work towards the implementation of a unified HR policy and program suite for APL.

Operational Standardization and Improvement

General Laboratory Requisition

A single General Laboratory Requisition was released to replace the multiple requisitions that existed previously in the province. The new requisition offers an additional selection for gender and aligns provider information with the Connect Care system.

APL Test Directory

A single APL Test Directory is in development to consolidate the existing test directories from AHS Laboratory Services, Genetics & Genomics, Public Health Laboratory and Calgary Laboratory Services. The new Test Directory will feature a more modern, user-friendly interface. An interim state Test Directory was released in November 2019 for feedback from staff and physicians.

Blood Culture Protocol Change

Blood culture practices across the province were aligned to meet international standards of a minimum four bottles drawn, an increase for areas in Alberta that only collected three bottles. Ensuring provincial alignment to international standards resolved a critical patient safety issue.

Fetal Neural Tube Defect (NTD) Screening

APL standardized processes and adopted best practice across the province for fetal neural tube defect (NTD) screening by restricting maternal serum alpha fetoprotein (AFP) testing performed at the University of Alberta Hospital (UAH) in Edmonton to Society of Obstetricians & Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) recommended clinical indications and discontinuing out-of-date and incorrect maternal prenatal screen requisitions in Alberta.

Provincial Request for Proposals (RFPs) Supporting Standardization

The consolidation of laboratory services offers the opportunity to seek provincial RFPs for standardized and cost-effective solutions. Provincial RFPs were awarded for referred-out testing and chemistry equipment, consumables and pre- and post-analytic automation.

Consolidation of Immunohistochemistry to Enterprise Square

Immunohistochemistry was consolidated to Enterprise Square in Edmonton as a way to optimize space utilization and laboratory capacity in response to the needs of the growing population of Alberta. A focus over the past year has been the development of APL's infrastructure to support the transition to a provincial delivery model while continuing to deliver high-quality services.

Best Practice and Patient Experience

Newborn Metabolic Screening (NMS)

The expanded Newborn Metabolic Screening (NMS) Program is about healthcare providers working together with parents and guardians to screen for treatable conditions. Last year the NMS program added four more conditions, based on national recommendations, bringing the total to 21 conditions. The laboratory screening panel was updated to include all of these conditions; now, all Alberta babies will be screened for all of the conditions.

Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) Stool Antigen Testing

Changes to laboratory testing protocols were made to implement Stool Antigen testing as the main diagnostic test for H. pylori infection across all APL sites, starting with the Calgary, South and Edmonton Zones. This new standard replaces the more invasive Urea Breath Test and reduces patient wait times across the province. Implementation in the North and Central Zones is planned for go live at a later date.

Public Health Laboratory

Public Health Laboratory continues its mission to deliver public health and specialized microbiology for Alberta. Accomplishments over the past year include moving to a qPCR enterococcus methodology for more accurate waters testing results, implementing a methodology change in Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS), and offering Pneumocystis Jiroveci pneumonia (PJP) testing provincially.

Commitment to Comfort

Commitment to Comfort is an initiative adapted from the Alberta Children's Hospital (ACH) that aims to improve the experience of patients and their families when they come for blood work by reducing pain and distress. Piloted at APL's ACH outpatient collection laboratory last year, the program has now been implemented at Calgary Patient Service Centres, Lacombe Hospital, South Health Campus and Sundre Hospital with plans for more sites in the future. This initiative has been the subject of various information sharing opportunities and work to prepare a peer-reviewed publication is underway.

Laboratory Influence in the Health System

Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) Excellence Award

APL is honored to have received the CLSI 2020 Excellence Award for Membership Organization. The award recognizes the volunteers from APL who have participated in CLSI committees to create and revise laboratory standards in areas such as general microbiology, evaluation protocols, molecular methods and quality management systems. The relevance of the standards have had a global impact beyond the borders of Alberta.

New Logo and Branding

In November 2019, APL announced its new logo and tagline: *Leaders in Laboratory Medicine*. Together, the logo and tagline are the cornerstone of APL's visual identity and are one way APL continues to develop a shared sense of corporate culture and identity.

Next Steps

The final report and recommendations from the AHS Review conducted by EY for the Government of Alberta was released on Feb. 3, 2020. It contained 57 recommendations and 72 cost savings opportunities identified to improve the quality and long-term sustainability of health services. Ten separate work streams were identified to guide the work and 44 of the 72 opportunities are already underway. The timeline for AHS response was initially identified as 100 days; however, given the current pandemic landscape, timelines are being revisited to ensure the required resources can be dedicated to the health of Albertans.

Three specific recommendations were made for APL: 1) Explore the closure of underutilized sites; 2) Explore the outsourcing of community based lab services; and 3) Improve adherence to test appropriateness (Report Recommendation 29). APL had initiated responses to these recommendations early, in anticipation of the report and will continue its efforts, in collaboration with its parent AHS, to identify, design, and validate opportunities, as well as measure the benefits realized for both laboratory medicine and the health system.

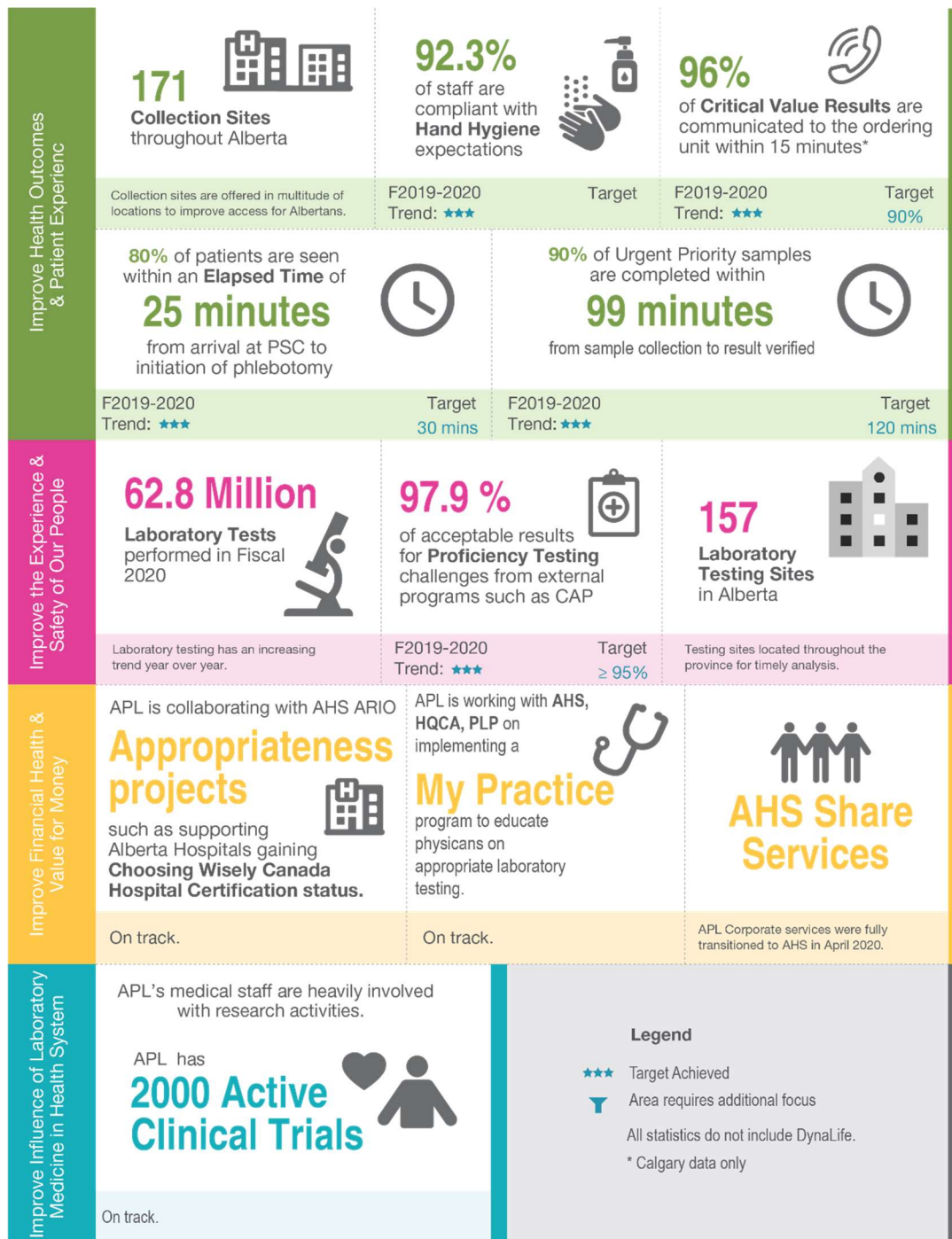
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APL's 2020-21 Business Plan will ensure it is doing the right things at the right time.

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APL's 2020-21 Business Plan will ensure it is doing the right things at the right time. The plan houses 27 priority initiatives that will move APL towards its 16 Strategic Objectives and four Strategic Goals. The EY Report Recommendation 29 and its prioritized initiatives will make up a considerable portion of priority Business Plan initiatives for 2020-21 and years to come. Priority initiatives have been set in collaboration with AHS to consider the benefits within the context of the entire health system.

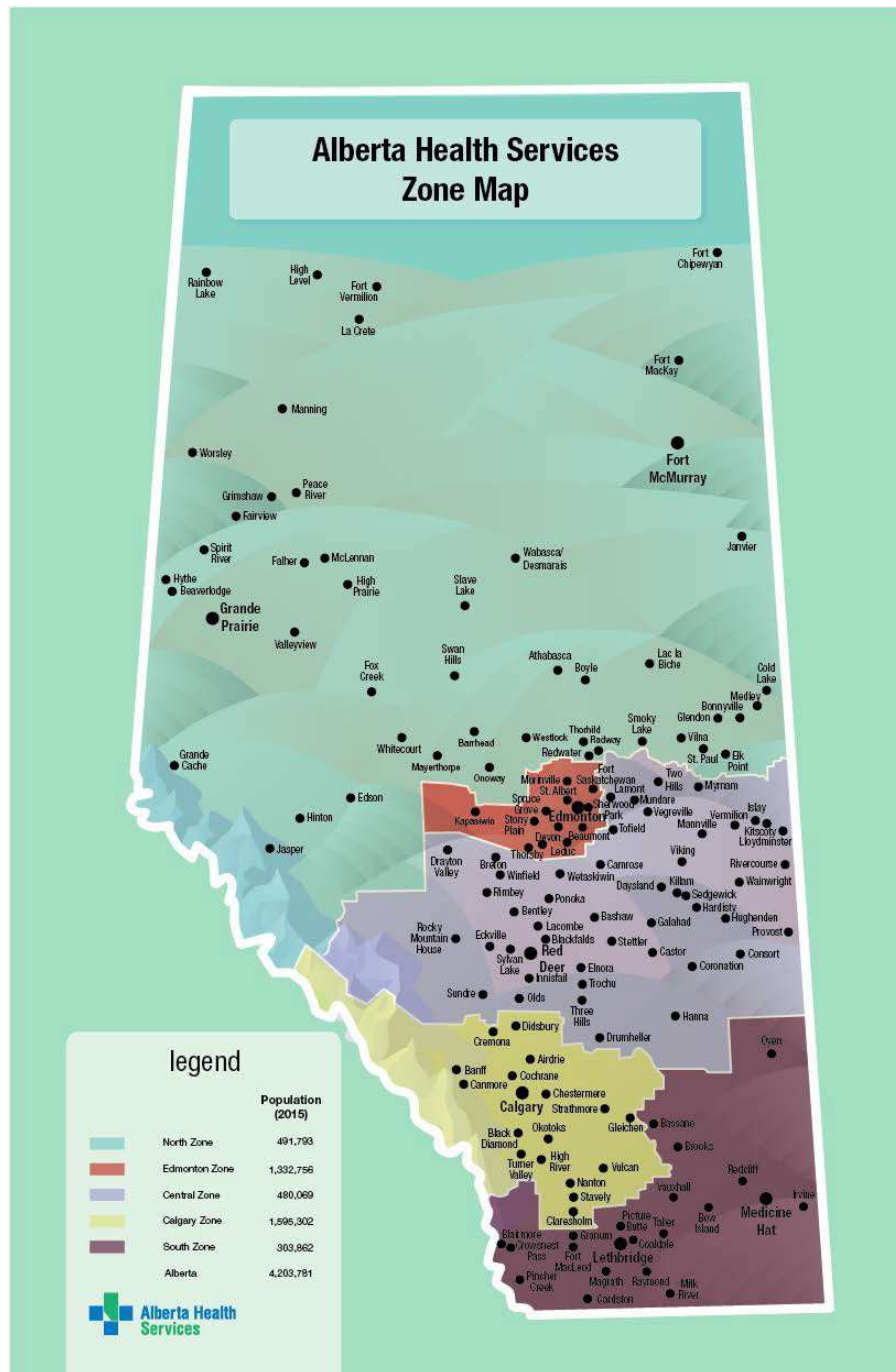
Moving into Q1 2020, APL continues to work with AHS to identify, design, and validate transformational opportunities for laboratory medicine. These opportunities, in addition to continued transition work, Connect Care efforts, and our COVID-19 response will drive decision making and the strategic management of the Business Plan. While instability and potential for significant change still exist for laboratory services in Alberta, APL knows that Albertans continue to expect the very best from their health care system.



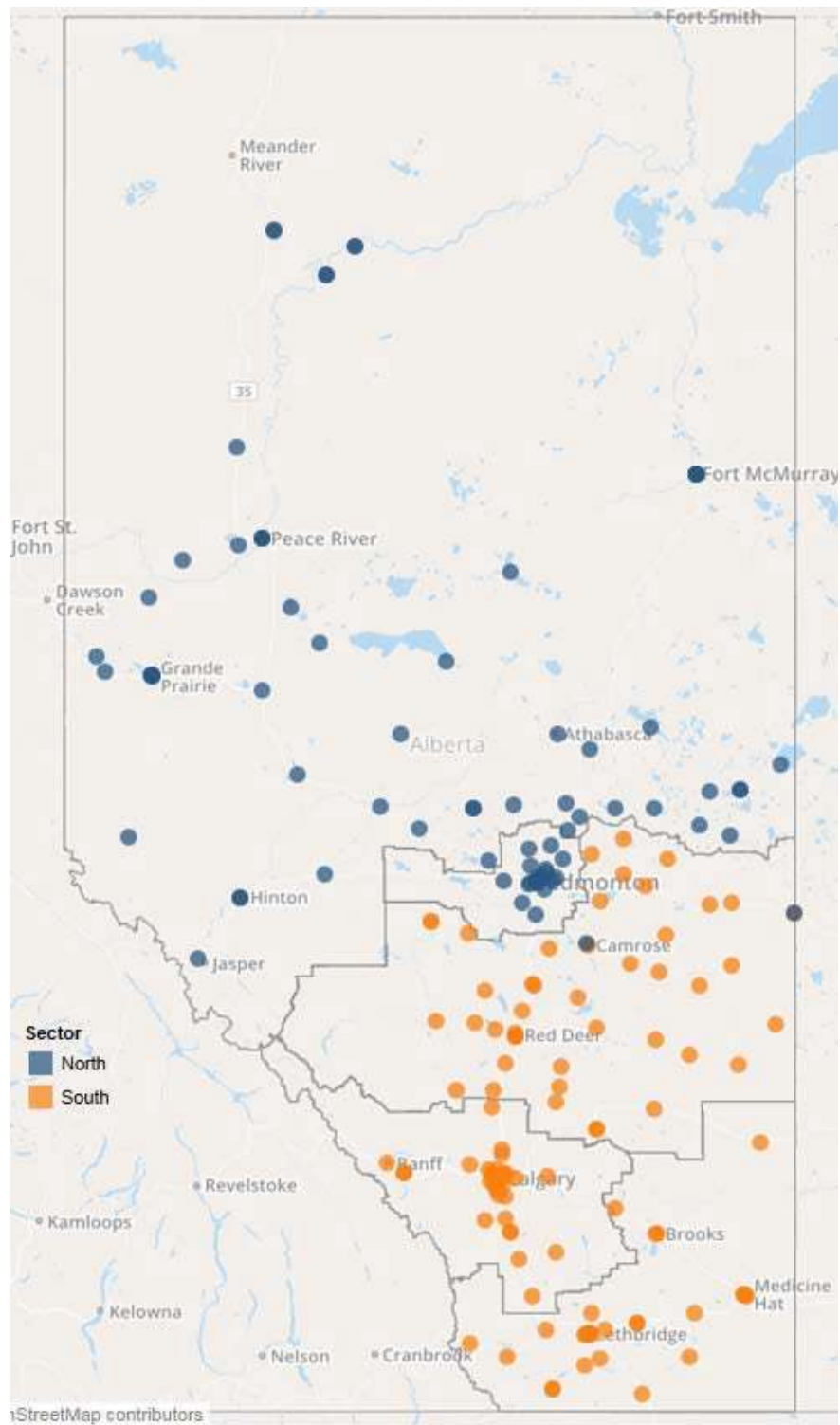
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Appendix A: AHS Zone Map



Appendix B: Laboratory Collection Sites



Appendix C: Laboratory Testing Sites

