

Provincial Health Tour | Summer 2022

Medicine Hat – June 23, 2022

What We Heard Summary

The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are jointly hosting a series of engagement conversations across Alberta over Summer 2022. The Provincial Health Tour has been designed to allow for Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to engage with healthcare staff, partners and stakeholders in communities from across the province; to share current approach and priorities, discuss current state and future opportunities, celebrate our successes and work together to identify strategies to address challenges within the healthcare system.

Medicine Hat

26 Stakeholders participated, representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Michaela Frey (Brooks-Medicine Hat) and MLA Garth Rowswell (Vermillion-Lloydminster-Wainwright) welcomed stakeholders.

The Minister of Health, Jason Copping, attended and gave an update on healthcare including sharing successes and an update on Government investment and areas of focus.

AHS Board Chair Gregory Turnbull and AHS Interim CEO Mauro Chies shared the AHS Health Plan and priority areas, as well as the challenges and opportunities for our future vision.

The power of partnerships

Healthcare is all about partnerships, AHS Board Chair, Gregory Turnbull highlighted a number of Medicine Hat's unique partnerships including:

- The Medicine Hat Hospital Foundation celebrated 25 years in April 2022 and have raised more than \$18 million for healthcare in the area. Recently the Foundation has helped to fund:
 - A new ventilator for the local air ambulance,
 - Additional pulse oximeters and blood pressure cuffs in support of home-based rehabilitation for patients with ongoing COVID-19 and
 - The Giving Hope for Health Mental Health Campaign raised \$400,000 contributing to all areas of mental health within AHS, including renovation of a pediatric room into a youth mental health room at the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital.
- The Medicine Hat Public Library and the Mustard Seed helped to improve COVID-19 vaccination rates for vulnerable populations.
- The support of partners from surrounding communities like Brooks, Bassano and others who contribute to wellness in their communities.

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Alberta Health Highlights

Budget

Alberta Health’s budget is \$22B, and anticipated to increase by \$600M a year over the next three years including key investments as follows:

- \$64M increase to EMS budget
- \$60M in new funding over three years to expand recovery-oriented support for people experiencing addiction and mental health issues
- \$3.7B for continuing care, community care and home care programs
- \$3.5B over three years in capital funding for health facilities, equipment and IT systems across the province.

The Health Capital plan also includes \$45M over three years for the Rural Health Facilities Revitalization Program.

Physician Recruitment

Approximately \$90M is being spent in 2022 including:

Rural Remote Northern Program:	~\$57M	Rural Medical Education:	~\$6M
Rural Integrated Community Clerkship Program:	~\$4M	Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP):	~\$9M
Locum Program:	~\$3M	Rural Physician On-Call program:	~\$12M

Alberta Health is working with RhPAP on its Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience (RESIDE) program to help address challenges in rural and remote areas.

System Recovery

Over the next three years, AHS will perform between 20 and 23 per cent more surgeries compared to 2018-19 to reduce surgical wait lists.

AHS will return to pre-pandemic surgery wait list status by the end of 2022-23.

AHS is resuming many regular public health activities in 2022-23.

AHS will add 50 permanent, fully staffed ICU spaces by the second quarter of 2022-23.

Government is providing funding for more ground ambulances and additional EMS staff.

In each of the next three years, AHS will add about 1,000 new continuing care spaces and increase the number of unique home care clients by four per cent.

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AHS Health Plan 2022-25

AHS is entering a new era of transformation and innovation. The Health Plan 2022-25 is the roadmap for this exciting journey. At the heart of this plan are the 10 priorities that align with direction from the Minister of Health and reflect feedback from patients, clients and families who have received care from AHS.

The 10 priorities are:



1. Alberta Surgical Initiative

Implementation of the Alberta Surgical Initiative, ensuring that, by 2025, all Albertans receive their scheduled surgeries within clinically approved wait times.



6. Rural Initiatives and Engagement

Rural engagement and rural initiatives, to strengthen partnerships with rural communities, to better support the rural healthcare workforce and to better meet the unique needs of Albertans living in non-urban communities.



2. EMS 10-Point Plan

Implementation of the EMS 10-Point Plan, designed to improve EMS services and availability, especially in rural and remote communities.



7. Continuing Care

Continuing care, increasing the numbers of continuing care spaces and living options, expanding home care hours, and shifting reliance from facility – to home-based care when appropriate.



3. Mental Health and Substance Use Recovery

Mental health and opioid recovery, which includes adding AHS-managed treatment spaces, and expanding in-person and virtual recovery-oriented programs and services.



8. Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Workforce recruitment and retention, which involved supporting our current workforce following more than two years of pandemic response, as well as recruiting and retaining needed healthcare workers.



4. Pandemic Response and Recovery

Pandemic recovery, which involves adding acute care spaces (ICE beds), supporting continued access to vaccines and treatments to COVID-19, and establishing specialty clinics to support Albertans with ongoing COVID-19 symptoms.



9. Quality of Patient Outcomes

Quality of Patient Outcomes, ensuring patient safety and high-quality care are maintained and enhanced during a period of transformative change in the organization.



5. Digital Health Evolution and Innovation

Digital health evolution and innovation, including the ongoing rollout of Connect Care and continued expansion of virtual health to support more community – and home-based care, programs and services.



10. Sustainability

Financial sustainability, ensuring that AHS is run efficiently, with Albertans getting full value for every health dollar.

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At the event, we held a working session where participants reflected on the following questions:

- *What is our healthcare system doing well?*
- *What challenges currently exist within the system?*
- *In addition to what is currently being done, how can we better address challenges?*



Here's a small sampling of what we heard in Medicine Hat.

What we are doing well

Overwhelmingly, we heard that despite difficult circumstances, our people are dedicated and provide excellent care. In the face of a crisis, physicians, nurses and staff have adapted and come together like never before. We heard that virtual care and technology have been integrated and is being used more effectively. To a degree, this has resulted in increased access for patients.

“Quality healthcare professionals who are caring and passionate about keeping their patients well.”

We heard that communication has improved – resulting in increased knowledge sharing and for pooling of resources.

Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

- **Workforce:** Recruitment and retention of physicians, specialists, and all healthcare professionals topped the list of challenges for Medicine Hat community stakeholders with more than a dozen references collected. Many indicated concern for a “tired workforce” and referenced burnout, compensation, scope of practice, education and training, and scope of practice as key concerns.

Participants consistently praised staff for their professionalism saying there is a “high quality of healthcare professionals who are caring and passionate about keeping their patients well”.

- **Organization Structure:** Participants called for continued transparency and accountability especially with respect to major changes such as the shift from Alberta Precision Labs to Dynalife. Many raised engagement as a key to success suggesting more conversations with staff and with community should be considered.

Encouragement for more local-decision making was another recommendation from several participants.

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- **Access:** Helping connect patients with the right providers was highlighted as a significant need (“break down barriers and open up pathways”) – several highlighted access to cancer care and treatment as a good model for other specialities to follow.

One participant suggested a “roving/mobile team of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc. to travel to rural communities”.

Access to primary care was another topic of concern. (“You go to primary care, you can’t get in. You go to a walk-in clinic, it’s full. You go to the ED. It’s all trickling down.”)

- **Other:** Participants also provided comments on the following topics: equity, care pathways and flexibility.

Evaluation of event

Participants told us:

- Participation and interaction were encouraged at this event.
- The topic was relevant and was something they wanted to know more about.
- Being at the meeting was a valuable use of their time.

“The information provided was excellent and there was a feeling like things that matter at many levels are either being considered or heard.”



Next steps

All notes and partnership ideas generated from the Provincial Health tour will be shared with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services leadership.

A report and recommendations will be produced by Alberta Health.

Thank you

We are grateful to all who took the time to meet with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services leadership to discuss the future of healthcare in Alberta. Your experience and personal insights will inform future planning and changes that will improve healthcare for all Albertans.

Contact us: community.engagement@ahs.ca