

# Wood Buffalo

## 2018-19 Annual Report



Wood Buffalo  
Health Advisory Council

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

## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors

Alberta Health Services values Advisory Council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in healthcare planning. With every year that passes, I see how our Councils continue to grow and expand. They challenge us and ask really great questions, they share the AHS story with their communities, their families and neighbours – helping Albertans everywhere to better understand our complex healthcare system – and they advise AHS on our planning, programs and services.



*Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn*

We have a number of long-time members leaving Councils in 2019-20 and we would like to acknowledge their hard work, dedication and passion. While we will miss them, we also know it's important for new voices to join the conversation and we look forward to building new partnerships, relationships and connections. We hope our departing members will continue to share their advice as members of the public and share their knowledge of the healthcare system.

This year, we added 23 new members to the Advisory Council family, and we also added a new Council. We were pleased to support and nurture the development of the Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) Provincial Advisory Council.

Members have made many contributions in their local areas, and you'll learn more about them in this report. Here are a few general examples from across the province over the past year:

- **Evolution of the Wisdom Council:** new Terms of Reference will guide the work of the Wisdom Council and includes creation of an Elder Circle which gives an enhanced role to Elders in helping to advise AHS on programs and services to best meet the needs of Indigenous people.
- **Connect Care:** a number of members have joined the patient advisory committees.
- **Supporting more addiction and mental health services:** many Councils held information sessions and highlighted the importance of services; their efforts helped support the development of Edmonton's new Access 24/7 Addiction and Mental Health Clinic and enhance awareness on services and access.
- **Expanding relationships:** connecting with the LGBTQ2S+ community through the new SOGIE PAC, meeting with municipal leaders, and holding meetings at Métis Settlements.
- **Connecting with Albertans through [Community Conversations](#):** Health Advisory Councils partnered with AHS to host 12 events across the province, where Albertans shared their views about challenges and solutions to healthcare issues.
- **Highlighting top concerns:** based on feedback from their communities, all Councils advised us on local concerns. AHS tracks and responds to concerns at each Council meeting.
- **Participation in Community Engagement Committee of the Board meetings:** various Council Chairs joined the conversation and shared ideas.

Member satisfaction is important to us, and it was gratifying to learn through the Annual Satisfaction Survey that our members are feeling generally satisfied in their roles. They've also said there's a need for more clarity on their role, and we're listening. We have begun work on an overarching Health Advisory Council review to address some of the gaps, and to ensure all our members fully understand their role.

On behalf of the AHS Board of Directors, our leadership team, and our workforce, thank you for your passion and time. We look forward to continuing to work with you on improving healthcare for Albertans.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn  
Vice Chair, Board of Directors; Chair, AHS Community Engagement Committee of the Board

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



*Valerie O'Leary*

I first joined the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council in 2017 in hopes of being a voice for my community and bringing awareness to AHS. It didn't take long for me to realize that this was a two-way street and I was pleased to learn the wonderful initiatives happening in our community that I was not aware of.

In September 2018, I accepted the nomination for Chair of the Wood Buffalo Advisory Committee when Jim Moore stepped down. Being new to this role, I was welcomed by all and began my journey.

Over the last few years since the wildfires in 2016, we have seen many challenges to the residents of Wood Buffalo, especially when it comes to mental health but we have seen AHS quickly respond and activate new services to help. One example that I believe is a huge success in the community is the Walk-In Counselling Clinic.

There are some huge projects happening in our community including Willow Square and the Helipad at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre. Expected to open in early 2020, the Willow Square facility includes a total of 144 beds for long term care with 108 ready upon opening, 36 for long term care and palliative, and 72 for supportive living. The Northern Lights Regional Health Centre recently announced the Helipad is now complete and operational.

Some of the other events and initiatives over the past year include the Mental Health Travel Team, HeartMath, and the Janvier Garden Project. But one event in particular that I was honored to be part of was the Fort McMurray Community Conversation. When we found out that Fort McMurray was one of 12 communities chosen for this event, I was very excited to see our town be part of the AHS 10-year anniversary and show our successes.

I'm looking forward to this coming year and 2020 as we have awesome committee members who share my passion for making a difference in our community.

Sincerely,

Valerie O'Leary  
Chair, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council

## About our Council

### 2018-2019 Council Members

#### Current Members

|               |                      |               |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Valerie       | O'Leary              | Fort McMurray |
| Tinna         | Ezekiel (Vice Chair) | Fort McMurray |
| Jim           | Moore                | Fort McMurray |
| Cathryn       | Beck                 | Fort McMurray |
| Natalie       | Castro - Gentili     | Fort McMurray |
| Mary          | Gerosa               | Fort McMurray |
| Sandra        | Grandison            | Fort McMurray |
| Jim           | Moore                | Fort McMurray |
| Carol         | Theberge             | Fort McMurray |
| Ifeoma (Rita) | Uzorchukwuamaka      | Fort McMurray |
| Patience      | Akenbor              | Fort McMurray |
| Evelyn        | Okoh                 | Fort McMurray |
| Lisa          | Barter               | Fort McMurray |

#### Past Members

|          |          |               |
|----------|----------|---------------|
| Bonnah   | Carey    | Fort McMurray |
| Todd     | Hillier  | Fort McMurray |
| Jonathan | Willcott | Fort McMurray |



*Back row left to right: Evelyn Okoh, Valerie O'Leary, Murray Crawford, North Zone Senior Operating Officer, Patience Akenbor  
Front row left to right: Mary Gerosa, Natalie Castro – Gentili, Carol Theberge, Ifeoma (Rita) Uzorchukwuamaka  
Missing: Jim Moore, Cathryn Beck, Tinna Ezekiel, Sandra Grandison, Lisa Barter*

## Promoting awareness of our Council

Our Council has been very active in promoting awareness of the Council through community associations and organizations, as well as through use of social media. We:

- Participated in two events, an open house in April and a Community Conversation in January, to promote awareness of the Council, and provide an avenue to engage with the public.
- Partnered with AHS to host the [Community Conversation in Fort McMurray](#) at the Keyano College on January 24<sup>th</sup>. There were 12 members of the public in attendance. The event provided a venue for AHS and the community to celebrate local successes as a reflection of AHS' 10 year anniversary, and to discuss ways to work together to improve healthcare for all Albertans. The event included:
  - Hands-on activities where members of the community shared feedback about top challenges in healthcare and they suggested partnerships and solutions to address the ideas. Some of the challenges identified were:
    - Wait times for counselling, specialists and testing
    - Access challenges due to distances and being remote
    - Coordination of services and service providers
    - Lack of communication about services
  - A presentation from [Waypoints](#), an organization dedicated to protecting citizens provided information about how they assist in rebuilding lives by implementing crisis intervention and a range of support services while acknowledging the multitude of issues facing survivors of abuse.

The information from the Community Conversation will be shared as follows:

- All outputs from the event will be shared with North Zone leadership for review.
- An action list will be put forward, and AHS will reach out to community groups to share the information and ideas collected.
- Information will be shared with the Health Plan and Business Plan and Enhancing Care in the Community (ECC) team.

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- Open House was held on April 5
- Community Conversation was hosted in Fort McMurray January 24

11

Members of the public attended meetings

5

Meetings were held during the year



## Listening to our communities and sharing information with AHS

Our Council members participate on various associations and organizations in the community. We listen to the voices of the community and bring their concerns to the meetings. We also welcome the public to our meetings and listen to their concerns at the meetings. Some of the concerns brought forward to the meetings during the year were:

- Lack of midwifery services in the community
- Access to palliative care
- Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) services at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre
- Costs for telemedicine

Recruitment and retention of physicians and specialists is difficult in Fort McMurray as it is located five hours north of Edmonton. One of the North Zone Physician Resource planners attends each meeting to advise Council on the status of recruitment for these positions in the Wood Buffalo area.

Members of our Council also sit on AHS and community committees to promote awareness of the Council and to provide input. Those committees are:

- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Advisory Committee on Aging
- North Zone Primary Care Network Committee
- Enhancing Care in the Community Committee
- North Lights Regional Health Centre Patient and Family Advisory Committee
- Advisory Council Relations Social Media Champions Committee

The Community Engagement Committee of the AHS Board expressed an interest in understanding the top health-related concerns from across the province. Our Council identified the following:

- Access to addiction services
- Access to mental health services
- Continuing care facilities
- Access to specialists
- Service integration
- Services to help residents recover from the fire
- Supervised Consumption Services
- Access to sexual health clinics

*For more information about Health Advisory Councils, visit [ahs.ca](https://www.ahs.ca)*

## Working with AHS to share information with our communities

AHS participates in each Council meeting and provides us with a regular report on workforce information, capital projects, innovation and new programs or services.

When we have questions or require information on specific topics, we invite members of AHS to present. Council received the following presentations this past year:

- Cannabis legalization
- Population, Public and Indigenous Health Strategic Plan
- Community Wellness Team
- Street Connect Team

We hosted an Open House on April 6 at the Redpoll Centre at Shell Place, located at MacDonald Island. Our Council partnered with AHS to provide information to the public on a number of topics that were of interest to the community including:

- Update on Willow Square – the supportive living complex under development
- Seniors Health – programs and information
- Addiction and Mental Health – information from AHS Community Wellness Team, Canadian Mental Health Association and a private provider
- Wood Buffalo HAC – with information about the Council

AHS North Zone leadership were there to answer any questions from the public.



*Open House April 5<sup>th</sup> at the Redpoll Boardroom in Shell Place*

## A look ahead

The members of our Council are well connected to a variety of organizations in the community. We plan to continue to connect with the organizations and bring feedback to our regular meetings to share with AHS. Some of the activities we have planned include:

- We will encourage rural community leaders to attend our meetings. We are actively working on building relationships with the many Indigenous communities in our Council area. We plan to hold our May meeting at the Nistawoyou Friendship Centre in Fort McMurray and host a presentation on the Indigenous Health Program in our area.
- We also want to partner with the Wood Buffalo Primary Care Network and Pride YMM to share information and resources with the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Two Spirited (LGBTQS+) communities.
- We will be going out into the community to events to promote the Council and to gather feedback.
- We plan to attend the local “Time Raiser” event on April 11 in Fort McMurray. This is a very popular event where people offer volunteer time in the community in exchange for art from artists in the community. We hope to raise awareness of our Council at this event.
- Our Council is also working closely to determine a strategy to promote an increase in immunizations in the community. We are going to join AHS at the HUB Community Resource Centre in September, and we look forward to partnering with the Medical Officer of Health and staff members from Public Health to share information with the public about immunizations.

Council is excited about the many large projects that AHS has underway. We look forward to learning more about Connect Care, Enhancing Care in the Community and Collaborative Care during our upcoming year.

We are at full capacity on our Council and we look forward to generating new ideas for the promotion of our Council and providing feedback to AHS. The year ahead is going to be exciting.





# Learn more

- Visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils)
- Email [woodbuffalo@ahs.ca](mailto:woodbuffalo@ahs.ca)
- Check out our Twitter and Facebook accounts, by searching AHS Advisory Councils

# Get involved

You can make a difference to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS. You can get involved by:

- Attending an upcoming meeting. Agendas and notices are posted on the Advisory Council webpage: [ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca).
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest or concern.
- Volunteering your time as a Council member.

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