

Provincial Health Tour | Fall 2022

Calgary – September 27, 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 and Fall 2022. The Provincial Health Tour has been designed to allow for Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to engage with our 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.

Calgary

40 Stakeholders participated representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Garth Rowsell (Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright) welcomed stakeholders. MLA Matt Jones (Calgary South-East) and MLA Richard Gotfried (Calgary Fish Creek) participated in the session.

Minister of Health Jason Copping provided an update on healthcare including sharing successes and an update on Government investment and areas of focus.

AHS Board Chair Gregory Turnbull and Interim VP, Cancer Care Alberta & Clinical Support Services, Karen Horon, shared the AHS Health Plan and priority areas, as well as the challenges and opportunities for our future vision.

The power of partnerships

AHS Board Chair, Gregory Turnbull shared a number of partnerships unique to Calgary including:

- 32 new complex mental health beds will be opening in November 2022. These beds will be for patients 18+ with complex mental health issues who have extended rehabilitation and support needs.
- The new Centre for Child and Adolescent Addiction and Mental Health will open in the coming months, which will offer walk-in, intensive outpatient and day treatment services seven days a week.
- 40 new funded and staffed acute care beds for Calgary Zone at the Rockyview General Hospital and South Health Campus.

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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:

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|---|--------|---|--------|
| 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 sampling of what we heard in Calgary.



What we are doing well

Homecare, including the specialty teams offered through the program in Alberta, was cited by Calgary participants as a major success story. **Primary Care** was also touted as a positive, with increasing capacity.

“We have the best homecare system preventing hospital admissions.”

An overall platform of **innovation** and **leading-edge care** delivery was expressed as a success by the Calgary stakeholders in attendance. Participants articulated praise for **continuity of care** throughout the province, and a **strong, unified** healthcare system.

The **COVID response**, including accessibility of vaccines and testing was marked as a high point of success with *“good leadership”* throughout the pandemic.

Participants cited transparency and honesty amongst local teams as a positive force of overall **psychological safety** in the healthcare system, with local management described as positive.

They felt decisions were increasingly being made at a local level, empowering teams with **autonomy** and **flexibility**.

The **care** provided in Calgary was highlighted for its **quality** and **strength**. A **unified system** across the board was viewed as a success story, with participants adding stories of the benefits of an integrated platform of care delivery. Stakeholders praised initiatives such as the Rapid Access Addiction Medicine clinical pilot and said they experienced an increase in program-based structures overall. An **enhanced rural voice** and presence was noted as adding to the sense of a unified and integrated system.

Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

Improvements to **EMS** overall, including **dispatch**, **accessibility** and **shortages** was raised repeatedly as a challenge and opportunity by participants.

Access was amongst the top concerns with stakeholders strongly expressing limitations in access to physicians, lab and diagnostics and care more broadly. Participants said **Connect Care** needs work ensuring proper connection to rural physicians and primary care providers.

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Stakeholders called for more **nurse practitioners** as well as enhanced recruitment and training. There were also calls for recognition of what participants called a “**nurse practitioner staffing crisis**,” and other shortage-related barriers.

One participant called for a reimagining of a vision of **community-based care** that would better connect physicians and other staff to patients.

Calls for modernized **homecare** with improved contracts and capabilities of handling more complex cases were issued, as well as increased training in “*new models of care*,” including respiratory and anesthesiology-based initiatives. Several participants said there is a demand for increased **cultural awareness** across the board in care delivery.

Staff burnout and **fatigue** were of major concern to participants, with calls for better incentives and more projects aimed at enhancing workplace positivity.

Several participants cited mental health programs in need of improvement. One stakeholder described a “*mental-health emergency system in crisis*” with **mental health** programs being “*politicized and not evidence based or patient-centric*”. Participants called for **investment** in staff including middle management and frontline to help meet the current demands, as well as an examination of **scope of practice** amongst staff. There were calls for increased communication around **prevention** and **health promotion**.

Evaluation of event

Of the 40 individuals who completed a survey (for the internal and external events in Calgary):

- 34 (85%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (20 ranked as 5 out of 5; 14 as 4)
- 33 (83%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (18 ranked as 5 out of 5; 15 as 4)

Respondents felt healthcare delivery in Alberta was becoming more “patient centered,” and the current acknowledgement of the state of the system was a positive step forward.

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 regular newsletter is being distributed to event registrants and participants.
- 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.