

Provincial Health Tour | Fall 2022

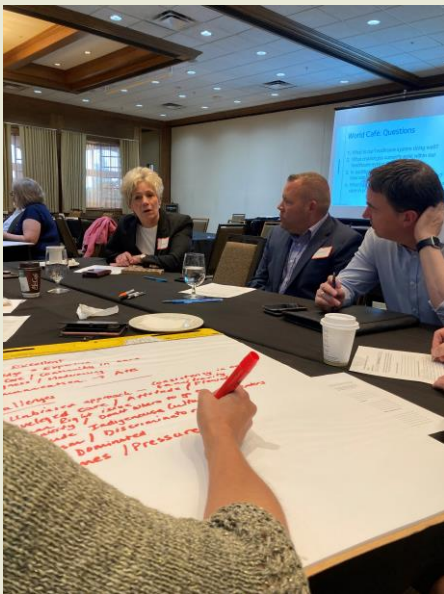
Red Deer – September 29, 2022

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.

Red Deer

37 Stakeholders participated representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Garth Rowswell (Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright) welcomed stakeholders.

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 VP & Chief Operating Officer, Clinical Operations, Deb Gordon, 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 about some of the unique partnerships in Red Deer:

- The Red Deer Hospital Foundation's annual Festival of Trees event raised funds for the hospital's first ENT navigation system, which provides surgeons a 3D look inside to guide endoscopic sinus and nasal surgery.
- The development of a Street Connect team during the height of the pandemic which has helped hundreds of individuals experiencing or at risk for homelessness receive health and social supports where they rest, eat and gather.

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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 sampling of what we heard in Red Deer.



What we are doing well

Red Deer residents say their AHS healthcare staff is **exceptional**. The **EMS community paramedic program** was cited as a **success story**, as were new **mental health** programs.

“The commitment to service and patients is phenomenal.”

Participants detailed enhanced **engagement** with Indigenous communities and said staff leadership is more accessible in many areas and open to dialogue. They highlighted examples of successful **community partnerships** and **collaborations** in the delivery of local care. Red Deer residents also noticed a **consistency** in care, and a willingness toward modernization and improvement. They said they see a recognition that “change needs to happen” and visible steps in that direction in all areas.

Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

Repeatedly, Red Deer participants voiced their concerns over what they call **rural limitations**. They cited **access to specialized services, physician shortages** and **retention, ambulance shortages** and **service**, a lack of **mental health** programs and treatment as significant

“Central Alberta needs to work together for one goal.”

challenges. They say in some cases, including Blackfalds and Sylvan Lake, there are no ambulances and consequentially **long wait-times** for acute care.

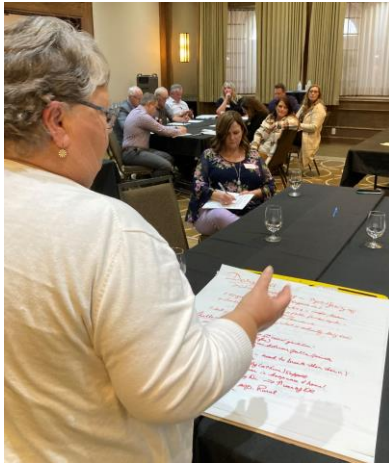
Red Deer residents say **rural transportation** is an increasing problem, as is **staff recruitment** and **retention**. Some voices called for an extension of the

Community Paramedic program to help assuage the demands in rural areas.

They called on community **collaborations** with municipalities to help ease some of the transportation challenges as well as innovative new thinking to ensure **continuity of care** across remote areas. Participants called for an increase in **scope of practice** in nursing to allow for advocacy in schools and seniors’ facilities. They also suggested a need for better **collaboration** with municipalities and other stakeholders in recruiting more nurses and doctors to rural areas.

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Several participants described **cultural safety** including racism and gender biases in the system and called for further education and awareness to ensure safer environments. They repeatedly described a **“burned-out” staff** in healthcare as well as in partner agencies including firefighters and police. Participants called for more recruitment and retention efforts as well as community collaborative thinking to address some of the workforce challenges including **shortages** and **work-life balance** impediments.

Calls for improvements in virtual health including access to Connect Care and other programs were also tabled.

Evaluation of event

Of the 34 individuals who completed a survey (both internal and external events in Red Deer):

- 28 (82%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (18 ranked as 5 out of 5; 10 as 4)
- 26 (76%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (16 ranked as 5 out of 5; 10 as 4)

Participants say overall Red Deer residents have access to a good system of **community supports** and that they see change for the better in the works across the board because of a sense of leadership asking questions and *“hearing what is actually being said”*.

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.

Contact us: community.engagement@ahs.ca