

Provincial Health Tour | Fall 2022

Airdrie – September 28, 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.

Airdrie

19 Stakeholders participated representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Garth Rowsell (Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright) welcomed stakeholders. MLA Angela Pitt (Airdrie-East) and MLA Leela Aheer (Chestermere-Strathmore) brought greetings and 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.

Interim VP, Provincial Clinical Excellence, Dr Braden Manns, 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 an innovation taking place in Airdrie:

Four new physicians have been hired and \$1 million in new funding will add staffing and three new care spaces to further improve and enhance urgent care services.

AHS will be establishing a new Fast Track care model for patients with less serious health issues. The Fast Track area will have three dedicated care spaces and see medically stable patients with concerns such as sprains and cuts, mild to moderate respiratory illness such as sore throats and coughs, and mild to moderate pain such as headaches, urinary tract infections, skin infections or rashes.

The goal is to enable the other medical staff to focus on those patients with more serious concerns.

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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?*
- *What can you do to improve the provision of health care in your community?*



Here is a sampling of what we heard in Airdrie.

What we are doing well

Airdrie community members praised the progression of **technology** embedded in care delivery, with support for **Connect Care**, **HealthLink** and developments in **virtual health** as major steps in the right direction. Participants report a keen sense of community support for the “*amazing care*”, and what they call a community “*recognition that the system is broken*”.

“The staff here care and they are trying to make a difference.”

Airdrie community members appreciated **resource allocation** to address surgical wait times and said they could see improvements in **communications** between ministries and community partners. They say they sense an overall improvement in awareness of the current situation in Airdrie, with AHS putting resources in place to help. Participants say the greatest resource in Airdrie is the individual staff members who they describe as “*dedicated, patient-centered and engaged*”. **Addiction helplines, diagnostic imaging** and **cancer treatment** were strong points of praise as was collaboration with **community partners** such as the local fire and police departments.

Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

There were repeated calls in Airdrie for resources to address what community members say is a rural system in need of focus. They called for a **fully optimized hospital**, and improvements in **equipment, infrastructure** and **resources**.

“Reduce the red tape and layers within AHS and adopt other programs or models that are working.”

Participants urged greater **education** and **community awareness** around programs and services including the primary care network to reduce the strain on urgent and emergent care. They say they want more **local decision-making** and **influence, advocacy** and better **communication** and **collaboration** between AHS, agencies and community partners.

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Participants called for improvements in resources for **mental health** and **addictions** and reclassifying programs to that end in what they called a chronic model of care as opposed to an acute model; they stated this would better reflect the ongoing addictions challenges across the community.

A common theme for community members in Airdrie was a need to address workforce issues, with calls for renewed **recruitment** and **retention** efforts and **training** to attract all levels of healthcare professionals to Airdrie, as well as enhanced services offered by **nurse practitioners**. One suggestion was to develop a role of a nurse community coordinator as a bridge between community/volunteer and AHS services. Airdrie residents called for help in addressing their **physician** and **nurse shortage** and described the effects of the lack of **access** to care because of the shortages.

Evaluation of event

Of the 13 individuals who completed a survey (both internal and external events in Airdrie):

- 9 (69%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (5 ranked as 5 out of 5; 4 as 4)
- 9 (69%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (3 ranked as 5 out of 5; 6 as 4)

Respondents emphasized the care is excellent when it is accessible and felt hopeful as a result of the opportunity to take part in the dialogue.

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