

Provincial Health Tour | Fall 2022

Claresholm – September 13, 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.

COMMUNITY

22 Stakeholders participated representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Garth Rowswell (Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright) welcomed stakeholders, and MLA Roger Reid (Livingstone-Macleod) sent virtual greetings to those attending 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 Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Francois Belanger 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 Claresholm including:

- The Claresholm and District Health Foundation, through the generosity of its donors, has helped purchase more than \$2 million in equipment since its formation.

He also highlighted the fact that \$1.6 million has been designated for upgrades to the ambulance bay at the Claresholm General Hospital through the government's Rural Health Facilities Revitalization Program.

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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 Claresholm.



What we are doing well

Collaboration was highlighted by the community as a success factor for Claresholm and several commented that this specific event is an example where the community felt their concerns were being heard. They appreciated the opportunity for engagement.

Several also highlighted the excellent **cancer care** being provided across Alberta and commented on the outstanding **local care and service** being provided within Claresholm to local and surrounding residents.

Other success factors identified included **virtual care**, the range of **continuing care** services allowing people to **age in place**, and the value of the **provincial purchasing power** of AHS.

“COVID increased collaboration across the community – the Foundation was there and their support increased quickly.”

Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

“Partnership – keep us updated through quarterly reports on issues. Listen to the issues in the community, identify the opportunity and pull the right groups together.”

Engagement, community collaboration and partnership were raised in many of the discussions as both a challenge and opportunity. Several comments were made about finding ways to connect quarterly and build trust and partnerships to try to address local concerns and challenges. Others suggested engagement should extend to local staff and physicians to gather *“input from people who are actually doing the jobs”*.

EMS and the costs to municipalities was identified as an area of concern by community participants. Towns are spending more on training and equipment and the *“severity of calls is changing”* – one suggestion was to look at a hybrid system where fire and ambulance could collaborate more closely. Several suggested there needs to be Medical First Responder (MFR) funding to offset *“escalating municipal costs”* associated with EMS.

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Workforce concerns mirrored what has been raised throughout similar conversations across the province. The community sees that staff and physicians are stressed and tired and suggested a focus on wellness should be enhanced, even suggesting a billing code for wellness. With respect to recruitment and retention, many discussions referenced education and training and “*grow your own*” options to enhance rural recruitment.

Other challenges and opportunities highlighted in the session included a need for more **local decision-making, continuity of care** between hospital to home and linkages with physicians and pharmacists, investment in **primary care**, and **technology**. At this session, partnership with the community was noted as an important opportunity that should be leveraged.

Evaluation of event

Of the 14 individuals who completed a survey (both internal and external events in Claresholm):

- 13 (93%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (5 ranked as 5 out of 5; 8 as 4)
- 13 (93%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (5 ranked as 5 out of 5; 8 as 4)

Respondents highlighted the importance of ongoing communication and collaboration between AHS and government (Alberta Health) and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the event. Many said they felt heard and enjoyed the face-to-face conversation and hearing from leaders and other community members to broaden their understanding of the issues.

Two commented they thought local media should have been included in the event.

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