

# Provincial Health Tour | Summer 2022

## Grande Prairie, July 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 2022. The Provincial Health Tour was designed to allow Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to engage with healthcare staff, partners and stakeholders in communities across the province; to share current approaches and priorities, discuss current state and future opportunities, celebrate our successes and to work together to identify strategies to address challenges within the healthcare system.

#### Grande Prairie

**54** Community partners participated, representing municipal and community leaders



MLA Tracy Allard welcomed community members.

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

AHS interim CEO Mauro Chies shared the AHS Health Plan and priority areas, as well as the challenges and opportunities for our future vision.

#### The power of partnerships

Healthcare is all about partnerships - with advisory councils, health foundations, social agencies, community organizations and businesses, as well as private citizens that can help make a positive difference.

- This past December, with the opening of the Grande Prairie Regional Hospital, about 50 nursing faculty and students from Northwestern Polytechnic volunteered to help move nearly 100 patients from the QEII Hospital into the new facility.
- During the height of the pandemic, partnerships with local community organizations helped AHS improve community vaccination for COVID-19. This included working with the City of Grande Prairie to offer rapid-flow immunization clinics at Teresa Sargent Hall.
- We are fortunate to have the Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Foundation supporting healthcare in the Grande Prairie region. Through its \$20-million Key to Care campaign, the foundation and its donors aim to support equipment and technology that will enable more people to receive treatment close to home.

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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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The event included 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's a sampling of what we heard in Grande Prairie.



### What we are doing well

- Once a patient is in the system, the healthcare they are provided is great.
- We have a dedicated workforce: passionate people are caring for patients, and providing “exceptional care”; staff show resilience and expertise.
- Virtual Health is improving patient care; Connect Care is improving communication and creating accountability.
- Development of primary care networks, expansion of Primary Care Networks, and team-based care are good for patients.
- New facilities and partnerships with post secondary institutions improve access to healthcare for local patients.

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*“Frontline workers are remarkable and adaptable.”*

*“Facilities being built are top notch.”*

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### Top healthcare challenges and opportunities

- Workforce recruitment and retention was the most significant challenge identified. Both community clinics and hospital are short staffed, wait lists are long, and many healthcare workers are facing burnout. Workplace culture, policy barriers and hiring practices were all highlighted as factors.
- Opportunities were raised for AHS to partner with local governments, schools and community organizations to develop hiring incentives, support healthcare workers with housing and childcare, review education processes, and support rural placements. Ideas about reviewing professional scope of practice, immigration and licensing restrictions were also discussed.
- Access and resources were discussed in regards to Primary Care, rural & remote challenges, and physician billing. Opportunities to direct more resources to homecare and

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*“We have 19 family practitioners to cover 80K+ population. No family doctor is available.”*

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focus on preventative healthcare were raised.

- Mental health and addictions facilities were noted to be limited and not in appropriate places to meet the needs of residents. Suggestions were made to make mental health staff available for home visits, and after care support.
- Opportunities to improve cultural relations were raised, with encouragement to understand and implement Indigenous practices, and to embark on cultural understanding for the many cultures and communities represented in the Grande Prairie area.

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*“Throw ‘jurisdiction’ out the window... Treat chronic users as primary seat then splinter out - aggregation of ministries.”*

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### Evaluation of event

- Of the 52 individuals who completed a survey (both internal and external events in GP):
  - 44 (85%) responded that the topic was highly relevant, and something they wanted to know more about (21 ranked as 5 out of 5; 23 as 4)
  - 40 (77%) felt strongly that the session was a good use of their time (14 ranked as 5 out of 5; 26 as 4)
- Many respondents indicated that the most valuable part of the meeting was the opportunity to share their perspective directly with AHS and the Minister of Health, and to hear the perspective of colleagues.
- Participants indicated a desire for more time to discuss the questions, and stressed the importance of the information and concerns shared being acted upon.

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*“Thank you for listening. Thank you for coming in person.”*  
*“[I] appreciated hearing from everyone.”*

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### 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 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](mailto:community.engagement@ahs.ca)