

True North

2016/17 Annual Report



True North
Health Advisory Council

Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors

The health system belongs to over four million Albertans and, as such, their voices need to be heard — and considered — when Alberta Health Services is planning and making decisions about healthcare delivery. Our Health Advisory Councils, Provincial Advisory Councils and Wisdom Council bring the diverse voices of Albertans to the decision-making table, so health services can meet the unique needs of communities across the province.

Our councils are made up of people who are passionate about understanding what's working and where improvements can be made in how health services are delivered in their communities. Advisory councils demonstrate our true commitment to community engagement – their work is strategic and valued, shaping the future of healthcare and enhancing care in communities.



Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn

There was much growth over the past year. It was a year of renewed commitment from Alberta Health Services to ensure councils act as the voices of their communities, supported by extensive recruitment to strengthen the reach and diversity of council members. For the first time, Council Chairs collaborated to share their priorities and identify similar priorities across the province. This approach was valuable and created synergies and linkages between councils across Alberta. At the same time, the collaboration between councils also showed how their priorities clearly aligned with Alberta Health Services' strategic approach and how we are all working towards the same, very important goals.

On behalf of the Alberta Health Services Board of Directors, our leadership team and our workforce, I want to thank you for being our partners. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with councils and the strategic value they offer.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn
Vice Chair, Board of Directors
Chair, Community Engagement Committee of the Board
Alberta Health Services

About community engagement

Alberta Health Services is committed to meaningful and authentic community engagement. Engaging with Albertans means patients, families and members of the public contribute to healthcare solutions and the betterment of our system. They can benefit by having their needs reflected in planning and decision making. Engagement aligns with the Alberta Health Services culture of caring and listening, which results in more patient-centred care, local decision making and more open and trusting relationships.

Role of advisory councils

Alberta Health Services values advisory council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in healthcare planning. They help build a stronger relationship between the people in their communities and those who work in the health system.

Members of Health Advisory Councils, Provincial Advisory Councils, and Wisdom Council are Albertans who care about health of their communities, and are connected to the public in many different ways. They provide a grassroots perspective and an understanding of their communities' health needs, and they're interested in listening to the people. They also:



- share their communities' priorities with Alberta Health Services
- give advice and help to inform the decision-making process
- host public advisory council meetings, in addition to promoting and participating in activities that enhance Albertans' health
- engage with and share information with the community, and follow up on commitments
- give feedback on public education materials, policies, or discussion topics
- share information on health services with the community and provide feedback and input to Alberta Health Services

Councils attend the annual Advisory Councils' Fall Forum to hear a variety of presentations and network with fellow council members, Alberta Health Services staff and members of the Board of Directors.

The Health Advisory Councils and the Provincial Advisory Councils are supported by the Alberta Health Services Community Engagement department, and report through the Council of Chairs to the Community Engagement Committee of the Alberta Health Services Board of Directors. The Wisdom Council reports to the AHS President and CEO.

12 Health Advisory Councils

Bring the voices of Alberta communities to healthcare services.
Each council represents a geographical area within the province.

2 Provincial Advisory Councils

Advise on provincewide services and programs for addiction and mental health, and cancer.

1 Wisdom Council

Provides guidance and recommendations to ensure Alberta Health Services develops and implements culturally appropriate and innovative health service delivery for Indigenous Peoples.

True North Health Advisory Council Annual Report

Albertans are represented by 12 Health Advisory Councils. Areas are determined by population and travel routes, and are detailed on [this map](#).

The two Provincial Advisory Councils and Wisdom Council operate provincially.

Their membership spans all of Alberta.

[View map of treaty areas and indigenous communities in Alberta](#)

For more information on membership:

[Health Advisory Councils](#)

[Addiction and Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council](#)

[Cancer Provincial Advisory Council](#)

[Wisdom Council](#)



Council of Chairs

The Council of Chairs is made up of all advisory council Chairs, who meet five times a year to further the roles, responsibilities, and priorities of councils at a provincial level. The Council of Chairs determines themes or commonalities across different communities to bring forward to Alberta Health Services' leadership and Board of Directors.

Including the public voice in Alberta Health Services planning

In early 2016, Alberta Health Services' Strategic Planning Department met with Health Advisory Councils across the province to gather input for the [2017 - 2020 Health and Business Plan](#). Each council was asked to provide feedback on the plan to ensure the priorities of their communities were considered in the development of the strategic goals for the organization.

Members from various Health Advisory Councils participated in the following provincial committees:

- Apple Magazine Editorial Council
- Continuing Care Quality Committee
- [Health Link](#) and [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#)
- Patient First Steering Committee
- Patient and Family Advisory Council
- Long range planning

Message from the Chair, True North Health Advisory Council

On behalf of the True North Health Advisory Council, I am pleased to submit our annual report for 2016–2017. The report provides details about the activities and feedback from the past year.

I truly appreciate improvements that have been made to healthcare in our area, as our area continues to establish higher healthcare standards and procedures for our residents. The partnership between True North Health Advisory Council, Alberta Health Services, the Northwest Primary Care Network and Northwest Health Foundation continues to be successful, as illustrated by the new endoscopy and colposcopy programs in our region. These potentially lifesaving programs reduce the need for thousands of travel days for our residents. We are also encouraged by the increased use of Telehealth, giving our residents more access to specialized services without the travel.



Michael Osborn

We are pleased that the health facilities in Fort Vermilion and La Crete have added site managers, and we have received many positive comments on the maintenance improvements made to all of our sites.

The restructuring of the Health Advisory Councils and the introduction of the Community Engagement Committee of the Alberta Health Services Board have been challenging, but we are encouraged and hopeful that the strength of the Council of Chairs will continue. We thank our Community Engagement contacts for their dedication and excellent work with us.

Next year, True North Health Advisory Council will explore opportunities to improve Indigenous health services.

The North Zone is divided into 10 operational areas. Area 1 includes the same communities as the True North Health Advisory Council. We commend Dr. Heinrich Brussow, Area 1 Medical Director, North Zone; Angie Mann, Director, Clinical Operations, North Zone; and Clark McAskile, Executive Director, Northwest Primary Care Network. Their hard work and dedication continue to make a huge positive difference in services available for our region. We thank our Community Engagement contacts, Mary Mueller and her coworkers, for their dedication and excellent work with us.

We also thank the members of our communities in the True North area for the time they take to speak with us; we value their thoughtful feedback. We will strive to ensure there is always a way to have an active voice in the development of healthcare in our area.

Sincerely,

Michael Osborn, Chair, True North Health Advisory Council

About us

2016 -2017 Council Members

Current Members

Michael	Osborn (Chair)	High Level
Eric	Jorgensen (Vice Chair)	Fort Vermilion
Gord	Burnell	High Level
Wilma	Cardinal	Paddle Prairie
Rick	Cartier	Rainbow Lake
Joyce	Fehr	La Crete
Dan	Fletcher	High Level
Mary	Janzen	La Crete
Noreen	McAteer	Fort Vermilion
Liane	Mercredi	High Level
Waldemar	Schroeder	La Crete
Wendy	Ward	Fort Vermilion

Past Members

Gary	Callihoo	High Level
Susan	Callihoo	High Level
Danny	Friesen	Fort Vermilion
Matthew	Murphy	High Level
Joyce	Parenteau	Paddle Prairie

5 public meetings were held in Rainbow Lake, Paddle Prairie, High Level, Fort Vermilion and La Crete

4 new members were appointed

Topics on the minds of our council and community members:

- Recruitment of physicians and nurses
- Addiction and mental health services
- Staff housing in Fort Vermilion
- Travel for specialty services and diagnostic services, and the need for closer mobile diabetic screening, dialysis, and diagnostic services



True North council members gather at Annual Fall Forum in Edmonton

What we are proud of

Engaging with the public

- In Rainbow Lake, our council members learned that members of the public had concerns about people being transferred by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to urban facilities and being discharged to the urban surroundings with no means to return to their home (i.e. no clothes, no wallet). Alberta Health Services reported they were raising awareness with physicians and the public about the issue.
- In Paddle Prairie, members of the public advised council that the community is in need of long term care and that they have applied for funding to build a centre. They would like to collaborate with Alberta Health Services on best practices, upon approval. They are also in need of additional addiction counselors.
- In Fort Vermilion, two members of the public shared concerns about staffing in La Crete as the Patient Care Based Funding model was applied and one Nursing Attendant position was removed.
- We partnered with the Addiction and Mental Health program to host three meetings in Fort Vermilion, La Crete, and Rainbow Lake to provide awareness of the addiction and mental health services available in each community.
- Our members engaged their networks regularly and highlighted concerns about recruitment of physicians and nursing staff, staff housing, access to diagnostic services, the need for mobile chronic disease services, and the issue of dialysis services

Enhancing the health of community members

- The North Zone Indigenous Health Program highlighted their priorities at the council meeting in Paddle Prairie, including use of a mobile team and increased video conference utilization.
- A need for enhancement of the urgent care centre in La Crete was provided as feedback including wheelchair access, a privacy issue in the admitting area, and the need for back-up power for the morgue.
- The St. Theresa General Hospital acute care rooms are being used for long term care. Council advised it would be preferable for the rooms to be more home-like rather than institutional.

Providing feedback and advice to Alberta Health Services

- We provided feedback on a report on diagnostic services in the council area, and highlighted the need for enough ultrasound technicians to provide services to the area, to ensure people are not travelling unnecessarily for services.
- We reported that there is a barrier to recruiting staff in Fort Vermilion due to staff housing issues.
- A representative from the Alberta Health Services North Zone Strategic Planning Department provided council with a presentation on the Quadruple Aim Balanced Scorecard approach to planning for the Alberta Health Services 2017 - 2020 Health and Business Plan. Council provided feedback which was incorporated into the plan, and shared priorities for the area as follows:
 - Addiction and mental health support
 - Recruitment and retention of professionals in the rural and remote parts of the north
 - A return to decision-making at the local level
 - Housing for staff in Fort Vermilion
 - Support for patients to return from urban centres when they are transferred
 - Navigator for services
 - Stronger focus on Indigenous health
 - Increased access to prenatal services and services at La Crete Urgent Care Centre
- We heard from the manager for the area for Addiction and Mental Health, and we identified gaps in knowledge about services available, and between discharging facilities and addiction and mental health counseling.
- We provided feedback to North Zone leadership about the lengthy approval period for hiring staff that had caused potential local staff to relocate elsewhere.
- Our Vice-Chair toured with Minister Hoffman in Fort Vermilion and High Level and shared concerns about patient services, mental health and Indigenous health.

Key learnings

- Two of our members attended the Northern Alberta Development Council Health Summit meeting on June 16 & 17 in Peace River. The members met with members from other advisory councils in Northern Alberta, municipal stakeholders, and Alberta Health Services North Zone leadership. Council learned there were common concerns across the North Zone about physician shortages, recruitment and retention issues, limited access to health professionals in Indigenous communities, and ongoing communication issues with Alberta Health Services.

A look ahead

There is so much opportunity in the north for programs and services but it all hinges on the recruitment and retention of medical professionals. Our council hopes to accomplish the following in 2017-2018:

- Address various strategies and barriers to support the recruitment and retention of staff.
- Provide awareness and capacity for mental health support.

Support strategies to continue to provide right services in the right place at the right time for residents in our communities.

Get involved

Think of the difference you can make to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with Alberta Health Services. Get involved:

- Attend an upcoming [Health Advisory Council meeting](#).
- [Make a presentation at a council meeting](#) on a health area of interest or concern.
- Think about volunteering your time as a council member. Recruitment drives happen annually. Members are appointed for three-year terms.

Connect with us:

- [Info on Community Engagement](#)
- truenorth@ahs.ca
- [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)