



True North Health Advisory Council Meeting Summary

September 16, 2020/ 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. / Zoom

Introducing your True North Health Advisory Council members:

In attendance: Liane Mercredi (Chair), Richard Cartier (Vice-Chair), Nella Fehr, Ray Toews, Jan Welke, Judith Wiebe

AHS: Maya Atallah, Angie Mann, Carolyn Paradis, Shelly Willsey

Regrets: Caroline Adam-Courtoreille, Pam Boese, Wilma Cardinal, George Fehr, Jessica Juneau, Sharon McLean

Area One - North Zone Update

Angie Mann, Director, Clinical Operations, provided the following update:

- All Connect Care construction is complete. Electronic devices are being delivered to sites and staff training is scheduled to begin November 16, until the go-live date in March 2021.
- Infrastructure: Northwest Health Centre in High Level has completed work on its security system. St. Theresa General Hospital in Fort Vermilion will start work on its security system this fall which includes a key card access system, cameras, monitors, outdoor lighting and call bells for patients. Fort Vermilion has also received approval for sidewalk upgrades. The new doors installed at the La Crete Medical Building and the Advanced Ambulatory Care Centre in La Crete are getting great feedback.
- The Area One security team based in High Level and Fort Vermilion is encouraging masking and that Medical Officers of Health (MOH) orders are followed. They help track complaints and calls as well as do one-on-one patient watch.
- Surgical programs started back up in June and will gradually increase hours of service.
- Commercial flight services are back up and running. It is exciting as it means returned access to some specialty services.
- Recruitment: posting is out for a Gynecologist, Pediatrician and a Protective Services Officer. A temp Obstetrics Educator has also been hired and one of our LPN's will begin peri-operative training this fall.
- An overview of the Mental Health and Public Health Report. A copy of the report was shared with Council members.
- Influenza immunization begins starting October 19; AHS will offer vaccination through a pre-booked appointment to keep patients distanced. For more information visit the [AHS website](#).
- Specialty/Surgical and Medical Clinics are doing pre-screening for COVID symptoms over the phone and asking patients to wait in vehicles until their appointment time to avoid spread and contact with each other.

Questions and comments from Council:

Q. Some provinces are cutting back on asymptomatic testing, will that be the case in Alberta?

A. AHS encourage everyone to book their tests through Public Health. It is encouraged that people seek the proper support as soon as they think they are experiencing symptoms to help eliminate possible



spread, and so they can get the support they need before it gets worse. Educating the community on COVID is going to be important now with schools reopening.

Q. How many doctors are in Fort Vermilion?

A. There are three physicians.

Q. What can be done to encourage health workers to stay working and living in Area one?

A. Angie gave her thoughts and invited Council to share their thoughts. Thoughts that were discussed: the need for a sense of community, having family living with them, personal roots and connection to the area. Council suggested a professional video presentation could help. It will be important to showcase and promote the benefits of the local area, outside of work. Ideally, this is a collaborative effort between AHS and community partners.

Actions/next steps:

- Maya will look into information on the Northern Incentives Program.
- Angie will share information on local recruitment for environmental services in Fort Vermilion so Council members can help spread the word.
- Maya will share breast screening information with Council to share with their communities, when mobile screening is scheduled.
- Angie will share information on influenza vaccines when Public Health shares its posters.

Council Roundtable

Nella Fehr and Judith Wiebe shared their communities are waiting for life to be back to how it was before COVID.

Richard Cartier shared the Honourable Nathan Grove and Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Dan Williams, toured the Town of Rainbow Lake on August 12. They commented on health services and community services in Rainbow Lake and how impressed they are with how the community pulls together to get things done.

Ray Toews shared that Fort Vermilion is slowly recovering from the flood. He shared a story about a friend in the hospital who has been unable to have visitors and he would like some information on the visitation policy. Angie responded that visitation regulations in acute care are directed by the government's MOH. She advises members to visit the [AHS website](#) for the most up-to-date information.

Ray also shared that medevac services have been down in Fort Vermilion for one week and are anticipated to be down for another week. High Level is the only town that has its medevac running now. **Jan Welke** shared his pharmacy in High Level has made it mandatory for clients to do temperature checks, masking and hand sanitizing before entering. Nobody is refused and masks are provided to those without. Alternately, staff will meet clients in the parking lot, who do not or cannot wear a mask. Jan shared that the Town is undergoing a review of its mandatory mask bylaw. More public engagement is needed before a decision is made



Actions/next steps:

- Angie will look into the reason medevac services have been down in Fort Vermilion.

Voices of the Community

Cheryll Welke, Rural Community Consultant in the North West Zone with Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), shared that its Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 is ready and available on the [RhPAP website](#). As well, RhPAP has made the difficult decision to postpone its 2020 Rural Community Health Provider Attraction and Retention Conference due to COVID. It is rescheduled to May 25 – 27, 2021. She encouraged HAC members to join the local Attraction and Retention Committee as it would be a great benefit to help with retention for the area.

Actions/next steps:

- Cheryll will provide information on RhPAP and her role.

Council Chair Update

Liane Mercredi shared there is a Council of Chairs meeting on September 23. Members asked her to share their concern over challenges to recruit and retain allied health workers to the area. Liane added she would like to know more about the northern living allowance and why the amounts vary in different parts of northern Alberta. She would also like to know what AHS is doing to support recruitment and retention in the area. Angie explains that the Northern Incentives Program is a government initiative. Allowances are one of several factors that help with retention. HR is also doing targeted recruitment for the area to make sure the positions needed are filled.

Liane shared that in Indigenous communities the main focus is following COVID protocols to keeping the community safe. There have been some random cases but the community has worked hard to keep it contained by word of mouth and contacting each other when there are cases. Liane also shared a concern from a community member about an AHS facility that was not following proper COVID safety measures. Liane would like to know what the protocols and consequences are for sites who fail to follow them. Angie responded asked for more details and suggested the community member report it directly to the site manager so they can look into it.

Actions/next steps:

- Maya will look into more information on the Northern Incentives Program.
- Liane will speak to community members to encourage concerns of a specific site be reported in writing to the site manager so a proper investigation can take place.

Council members are working to recruit more members to the Council. Anyone interested in applying can do so through the [AHS website](#). The next meeting of the True North HAC is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom..



Learn about the four organizational goals of AHS in
the [2017-2020 AHS Health Plan and Business Plan](#).

Join us in changing the conversation from [illness to wellness](#).

Our meetings are open to the public. Dates and locations are [available here](#).
[Find your Health Advisory Council here](#). Visit the [webpage](#) for more info.

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