

# Tamarack

## 2018-19 Annual Report



## Message from Alberta Health Services Board of Directors

Alberta Health Services values Advisory Council members as volunteers, leaders and partners in healthcare planning. With every year that passes, I see how our Councils continue to grow and expand. They challenge us and ask really great questions, they share the AHS story with their communities, their families and neighbours – helping Albertans everywhere to better understand our complex healthcare system – and they advise AHS on our planning, programs and services.



*Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn*

We have a number of long-time members leaving Councils in 2019-20 and we would like to acknowledge their hard work, dedication and passion. While we will miss them, we also know it's important for new voices to join the conversation and we look forward to building new partnerships, relationships and connections. We hope our departing members will continue to share their advice as members of the public and share their knowledge of the healthcare system.

This year, we added 23 new members to the Advisory Council family, and we also added a new Council. We were pleased to support and nurture the development of the Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) Provincial Advisory Council.

Members have made many contributions in their local areas, and you'll learn more about them in this report. Here are a few general examples from across the province over the past year:

- **Evolution of the Wisdom Council:** new Terms of Reference will guide the work of the Wisdom Council and includes creation of an Elder Circle which gives an enhanced role to Elders in helping to advise AHS on programs and services to best meet the needs of Indigenous people.
- **Connect Care:** a number of members have joined the patient advisory committees.
- **Supporting more addiction and mental health services:** many Councils held information sessions and highlighted the importance of services; their efforts helped support the development of Edmonton's new Access 24/7 Addiction and Mental Health Clinic and enhance awareness on services and access.
- **Expanding relationships:** connecting with the LGBTQ2S+ community through the new SOGIE PAC, meeting with municipal leaders, and holding meetings at Métis Settlements.
- **Connecting with Albertans through [Community Conversations](#):** Health Advisory Councils partnered with AHS to host 12 events across the province, where Albertans shared their views about challenges and solutions to healthcare issues.
- **Highlighting top concerns:** based on feedback from their communities, all Councils advised us on local concerns. AHS tracks and responds to concerns at each Council meeting.
- **Participation in Community Engagement Committee of the Board meetings:** various Council Chairs joined the conversation and shared ideas.

Member satisfaction is important to us, and it was gratifying to learn through the Annual Satisfaction Survey that our members are feeling generally satisfied in their roles. They've also said there's a need for more clarity on their role, and we're listening. We have begun work on an overarching Health Advisory Council review to address some of the gaps, and to ensure all our members fully understand their role.

On behalf of the AHS Board of Directors, our leadership team, and our workforce, thank you for your passion and time. We look forward to continuing to work with you on improving healthcare for Albertans.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn  
Vice Chair, Board of Directors; Chair, AHS Community Engagement Committee of the Board

## Message from the Chair Tamarack Health Advisory Council

A Time for Reflection – A Time to Look Forward

Ten years ago, Health Advisory Councils (HACs) were established to represent the voice of the community for healthcare. I remember the first meeting of the Tamarack HAC when 15 excited individuals met to share their community's concern for improved health delivery.



Ruth Martin-Williams

Through the years and changes that have occurred, the core objective of all members – past and present – continues: identifying healthcare concerns in their community for improved health delivery.

What has Tamarack Health Advisory Council done for you this year?

- Increased connection and collaboration with the Senior North Zone medical team has led to new programs and services in many of Tamarack's communities. Our members have been instrumental in growth of new programs in many Tamarack communities.
- Our members have been passionate in physician recruitment, showing prospective doctors their community, and making community introductions, resulting in additional doctors in many communities.
- Tamarack hosted community information sessions: Two on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID); and one on Opioids and Legalization of Cannabis.
- Tamarack members have supported the new initiatives including: Mental Health Capacity Building and Connect Care.

We were pleased to see a McMasters University study of all provincial healthcare systems that identified AHS as the most efficient national system in delivering healthcare. The report also states this was possible by the voluntary contributions of Health Advisory Council members as the "Voice of the Community".

I completed my term with the Tamarack HAC in June 2019. To all current, past and future members of Tamarack HAC, to all AHS staff who supported us, and to all members of the Advisory Council of Chairs, thank you.

What an amazing 10 years!

Sincerely,

Ruth Martin-Williams  
Chair, Tamarack HAC



## About our Council

### 2018-2019 Council Members

#### Current Members

|          |                         |             |
|----------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Ruth     | Martin-Williams (Chair) | Edson       |
| Denise   | Lambert (Vice Chair)    | Onoway      |
| Liz      | Krawiec                 | Swan Hills  |
| Christie | Homeniuk                | Whitecourt  |
| Debra    | Hagman                  | Mayerthorpe |
| Sherry   | Jeffreys                | Sangudo     |
| Douglas  | Heine                   | Hinton      |
| Daniel   | Pritchard               | Blue Ridge  |
| Linda    | West                    | Westlock    |

#### Past Members

|         |           |            |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| Sheila  | McKeand   | Hinton     |
| Darlene | Chartrand | Whitecourt |
| Gary    | Beeson    | Swan Hills |



*Back row L-R: Doug Heine, Denise Lambert, Daniel Pritchard  
Front row L-R: Ruth Martin-Williams, Sandra Herritt (AHS), Sheila McKeand, Debra Hagman  
Missing: Darlene Chartrand, Christie Homeniuk, Sherry Jeffreys, Linda West, Liz Krawiec*

# Promoting awareness of our Council

We had a very busy year creating awareness of the Council and it proved to be worthwhile as we had 13 members of the public attend our meetings this past year. We hosted our five meetings in different communities, and promoted our meetings through traditional and social media.

We invited specific community stakeholders to the meetings including the municipal governments, local First Nations, Family and Community Health Services (FCSS), Chambers of Commerce, Healthcare Auxiliaries and Foundations.


We promoted awareness about our Council by increasing the profile of members. Some examples include:

- A profile about our Chair to share on the webpage and in social media;
- Our Chair attended the opening of the dialysis at the Edson Healthcare Centre;
- One of our members attended the Medical Skills weekend, a partnership between the Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) and AHS;
- A member attended the Wellness Fair in Swan Hills on May 29 and provided information about the Council; and,
- A member attended the Seniors Resource Fair in Westlock on June 13 and shared information about the Council and gathered feedback.

We partnered with AHS to host a [Community Conversation](#) on Dec. 6 in Hinton. We were delighted that a representative from Bridges, the Hinton Housing and Employment Society, was able to share information about their work and successes with those in attendance. We also networked during the event and shared healthcare successes in our communities as well as challenges. We considered the existing and new community partnerships that could help address the challenges. The many stakeholders from a few of the communities in our Council area were pleased to be able to share thoughts and ideas in a productive way. Their understanding of the AHS focus on wellness, prevention and community care increased.

**13** Members of the public attended our meetings.

**36** People attended the Community Conversation in Hinton.



**2** Information sessions were held in two communities to share information with the public.



## Listening to our communities and sharing information with AHS

We achieved our objectives for this year:

- Gather feedback at information sessions
- Gather feedback at stakeholder presentations
- Hold roundtable and grassroots engagement

We were pleased to:

- Host two information sessions, co-hosted one [Community Conversation](#), held roundtables at each regular meeting, and gathered grassroots feedback organically throughout the year.
- Support the Northern Indigenous Health Alliance by sharing information about the Alliance with AHS, and their success in receiving a community action grant.
- Hear from the public about challenges with a mobile dialysis bus for residents of Hinton and Whitecourt and area. The bus was unable to travel or components on the bus would freeze during extreme weather conditions. These concerns were resolved this year with the opening of permanent dialysis within the healthcare centres in Edson, Hinton and Whitecourt.
- Learn more about physician recruitment, an ongoing issue in our area, through the North Zone physician resource planner update at our regular meetings.
- Focus on two key areas - the restorative care program at Mayerthorpe and the need for rural mental health services, both of which were discussed extensively during roundtable at our meetings. We received a presentation about the restorative care program in Mayerthorpe and continue to share feedback with AHS as we hear it in the community. We followed up on information we received about a Rural Mental Health Project sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association and located at Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) offices across the province. The program funded a few FCSS offices but it is continuing to grow. We wanted to ensure AHS was aware of this initiative and we look forward to seeing how it will be aligned or integrated with AHS services.

The Community Engagement Committee of the Board asked us to share the top concerns we hear in the Council area:

- Availability of transportation, waitlists for services including diagnostics, specialists and addiction and mental health services;
- Rural access to transportation, home care, social supports, physical therapy, seniors' care and telehealth
- Targeted education needs for mental health first aid, sexual health, addictions and diabetes
- Planning on how to support communities with emerging issues
- Communication about engagement with Health Advisory Councils this year.

## Working with AHS to share information with our communities

AHS North Zone shares an information update with us at each meeting. In addition, we received information on the following topics during the year:

- Cannabis Legislation
- Addiction and mental health services
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Restorative Care program in Mayerthorpe
- Community Paramedic Program
- Housing Plus Program in Edson (non AHS)

We partnered with AHS to host an afternoon information session in Westlock on May 25. It was an opportunity for participants to learn more about Continuing Care services such as home care, supportive living and long term care; Enhancing Care in the Community and MAID. There were 35 people in attendance. Two news articles were published in the local newspaper -- an opinion piece, as well as an article about the presenter. Evaluations were very favorable from the event.

We partnered with AHS to host a morning information session on Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> in Whitecourt. The presenter provided information to 22 attendees about the various addictive drugs, mortality rates, short and long term effects, information about withdrawal and community trends. There was also a question/answer period. An [AHS video](#) about fentanyl and how it is made was also played. Evaluations were favorable from the event, and most people were fairly to very satisfied with the information, relevance, interest, and felt it was a good use of their time. We held our regular meeting following the information session. Four members of the public stayed for our regular meeting.



## A look ahead

We have big plans for the upcoming year. We will continue to promote awareness of our Council and the five Council meetings. We will also promote the events we have planned. We are in need of members on Council so we will try a number of strategies to recruit members, and bring additional diversity in age, gender and culture to our Council.

After our success last year with information sessions in Westlock and Whitecourt, we will continue to focus on partnering with AHS to share information with communities in our Council area. This year we look forward to hosting two information sessions about addiction and mental health services in Mayerthorpe in June and in Jasper in the fall. We find these sessions help to promote awareness of our Council, provide relevant information to the community, and support relationship building with community stakeholders. They also help us nurture our relationship with AHS staff and leadership.

We hope we can encourage additional members to complete personal profiles to help local communities get to know us. Profiles are shared in local hospitals and health services offices. We want to provide a Council fact sheet with local AHS staff so they can support us by sharing information about the Council.

We also plan to develop a list of community events, and ensure we have Council members attend. We plan to provide membership applications at these events so we can promote our Council and hopefully increase our membership. We would also like to make two stakeholder presentations in the Council area to service groups such as FCSS, Chambers of Commerce, or municipal governments. We wish to gather feedback at these presentations in addition to the information sessions to support our top concerns document.

We want to learn more information from AHS about addiction and mental health services, public health services, and Indigenous health services. We want to be able to share the information about programs and services with the public.

There are two projects that we will be closely monitoring this year. One is the Rural Mental Health project sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association. We believe that the providers of addiction and mental health services need to work together in rural communities to make a difference. We will monitor this project as we continue to hear about a lack of rural mental health services. We have also heard about a new initiative to provide children and youth with psychiatry services via video conference, also known as tele-psychiatry. We hope that we will hear more information about the project and see if there is an opportunity to provide input.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with AHS as we move into the next decade.





# Learn more

- Visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils)
- Email [Tamarack@ahs.ca](mailto:Tamarack@ahs.ca)
- Check out our Twitter and Facebook accounts, by searching AHS Advisory Councils

# Get involved

You can make a difference to the health and well-being of your family, friends, neighbours and community by sharing your thoughts and ideas with AHS. You can get involved by:

- Attending an upcoming meeting. Agendas and notices are posted on the Advisory Council webpage: [ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca).
- Delivering a presentation at a Council meeting on a health area of interest or concern.
- Volunteering your time as a Council member.

For more information about Health Advisory Councils, [visit ahs.ca](https://ahs.ca)



Tamarack  
Health Advisory Council

Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**