

# True North

## 2018-19 Annual Report



True North  
Health Advisory Council

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

## 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

### True North Health Advisory Council

On behalf of the True North Health Advisory Council (HAC), I am pleased to submit our annual report for 2018/19.



*Eric Jorgenson*

Our Council was excited to see many community members participating in our meetings and special events over the year. We held these meetings in each of the five major communities of Rainbow Lake, Paddle Prairie, La Crete, Fort Vermilion and High Level. We met regularly with the North Zone Chief Zone Officer and discussed concerns from within our communities, as well as ways we may be able to partner to address them.

True North HAC was pleased to cohost a Community Conversation in High Level where stakeholders from across the area were invited. This included 24 community leaders from multiple organizations. The event gave our communities the opportunity to celebrate local successes and to discuss ways to work together to improve healthcare for all Albertans. It also gave us the opportunity to promote our Council and to encourage community members to become more involved.

The feedback we've received from public at our meetings and at the Community Conversation is very important and we value it tremendously. One theme we heard is that recruitment and retention of physicians and health professionals is an ongoing concern in our region. We now have an AHS physician resource planner who provides a physician recruitment update at each of our meetings. In addition, a Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) Rural Community Consultant attends our meetings to inform us about attraction and retention efforts in the area.

Another theme we've heard is the need for additional addiction and mental health services. At each of our meetings we now have AHS Addiction and Mental Health leadership provide an update on workforce, programs and initiatives in the region.

We commend all AHS leadership for their work with us throughout the last decade. We look forward to continuing to work together to make a positive difference in health services for our area. We also thank our Council Coordinator Shannon Gallant for her dedication and hard work over the past year. Finally, I'd like to thank all our Council members for their time, commitment and the feedback they provided to ensure each of our communities have a voice in health.

Sincerely,

Eric Jorgenson  
Acting Chair, True North Health Advisory Council

## About our Council

### 2018-2019 Council Members

#### Current Members

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



*Back row left to right: George Fehr, Michael Osborn, Waldemar Schroeder*

*Front row left to right: Liane Mercredi, Joyce Fehr, Mary Janzen, Eric Jorgensen*

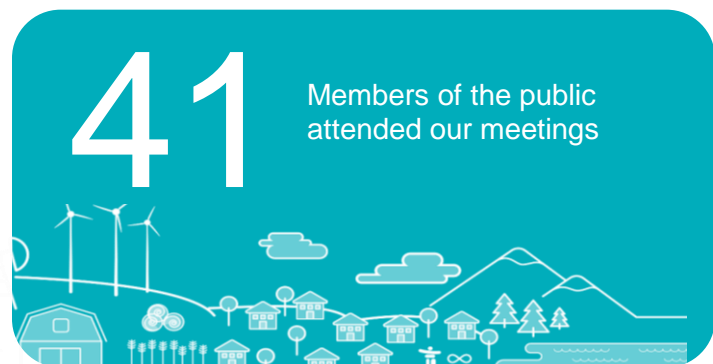
*Missing: Wilma Cardinal, Richard Cartier, Dan Fletcher, Noreen McAteer, Wendy Ward*

## Promoting awareness of our Council

Our Council held four meetings this year and participated in a [Community Conversation](#) in High Level in November 2018. Our members shared information with their communities through word-of-mouth and social media. We were pleased to have many community members participating in our regular meetings and special events. Details of our activities and meetings include:

- Our Chair met regularly with the Chief Zone Officer of the North Zone. They met to discuss concerns in communities and how AHS and the Council can partner to address local needs.
- We held a regular Council meeting in each of our five major communities of Rainbow Lake, Paddle Prairie, La Crete, Fort Vermilion and High Level.
- We co-hosted a [Community Conversation](#) for the Council area, and stakeholders from communities in the Council area were invited. 24 community members participated from various organizations including High Level Town Council, Fort Vermilion School Division, Mackenzie County, Chateh First Nation, Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), RCMP, Community Policing Society, the Boreal Housing Foundation and White Spruce Village.

The Community Conversation was designed to give AHS and the communities in the True North area the opportunity to celebrate local successes leading up to AHS' 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary – and to discuss ways we can work together to improve healthcare for all Albertans. The event was also an opportunity for us to promote the Council and encourage community members to become involved.



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

## Listening to our communities and sharing feedback with AHS

We travel to each major community during the year. Below is some of the feedback heard from the public at our meetings:

- La Crete – wheelchair access including power doors to the Ambulatory Care Clinic; the community has expressed a desire for a 24-hour birthing centre/hospital;
- Rainbow Lake – recruitment and retention; EMS availability in the community and backfill policy associated with EMS; need to use more video conferencing (Telehealth) for the provision of mental health services;
- Fort Vermilion – maintenance at St. Theresa’s Hospital and services diminishing from the community;
- Paddle Prairie – access to physicians; there are barriers to getting to medical appointments plus funding and access to transportation is an issue.
- High Level – recruitment and/or access to specialists by providing services in High Level; recruitment of mental health staff for the entire Council area.

Our members share feedback at each meeting as well as welcome input from the public.

The Community Engagement Committee of the AHS Board expressed an interest in understanding the top health-related concerns from across the province. Our Council identified the following:

- Lack of regular and speciality services in the region
- Recruitment of professionals and recruitment incentives
- Loss of staff positions in the area
- Space for the provision of clinics
- Transportation
- Improvements for Indigenous health
- Rural and remote challenges

Participants at the Community Conversations talked about the following key themes during the event:

- Health facility space for wellness programs
- Distances between services and communities
- Expansion of birthing services in La Crete
- Decentralization of services
- Cost of healthy foods
- Misuse of services
- Lack of referral resources
- Mental health services and stigma
- Lack of staff
- Medical care coordination
- Need for professional resources

## Working with AHS to share information with our communities

Council receives a regular update at each meeting from AHS North Zone leadership. The update includes data and current information about programs and services.

We also requested presentations when Council required further information on various subject matter. Some of the presentations we heard include:

- Mental health and addictions update (received at each meeting)
- EMS presentation
- Cannabis legislation
- Supporting Healthy School Communities
- Patient Concerns and Feedback
- Northwest Primary Care Network (NWPCN)

In addition, we heard from the High Level Native Friendship Centre Society. The group spoke about a public health nurse that is providing services in the community through a partnership with AHS.

The Health Director from the North Peace Tribal Council attended a meeting and provided an overview of the supports available through its Council. Supports include: homecare, public health, training for crisis response, Indian Residential Schools Health Support Program, medical transportation and support for families required to be away from home to birth their babies. As well, they spoke about work underway to build relationships with communities and building cultural awareness.

The Health Promotion Coordinator for the AHS Healthy Children and Youth shared information about its work to partner with school jurisdictions to provide comprehensive school health programming. This includes healthy eating, active living and positive mental health using the comprehensive school health approach.

The Community Policing Society presented at the Community Conversation in High Level and shared information about successes it's had in the area, including the Healthy Youth Relationships Program, Victim Services Program and anger management classes.

Recruitment and retention of physicians remains a top concern for our area. The AHS North Zone Physician Resource planner attended each of our meetings to advise us on the status of recruitment of various positions in our Council area.

The Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) attended the Community Conversation and advised a Rural Community Consultant will be hired shortly, who will address attraction and retention in our Council area. Its mandate has expanded from a focus on physicians and specialists to include all health professionals. We look forward to continuing to work closely with RhPAP in the future.

## A look ahead

Our meetings are open to the public and we want to increase the number of public who attend. We look forward to engaging our new members on ideas of how to generate interest for the public to attend our meetings.

We look forward to hearing back from members participating on other community organizations and hearing the input of those organizations. We feel participation with other groups enriches the feedback brought forth by each Council member.

We will continue to explore ideas for recruitment and share ideas with AHS and with RhPAP. We believe the 'grow our own' personnel strategy is very important to our Council area. We will continue to support AHS with the high school careers' days, the need for local training for post-secondary students and the need for bursaries and financial support for students.

We look forward to working with the new RhPAP Consultant for our Council area, and to working closely with them to highlight our communities and the great advantages of working in the North.

Building on our relationship with AHS' North Zone Chief Zone Officer and other senior leadership in the Zone will remain a priority for our Council, as will continuing to share information with the public and gather public feedback to share with AHS.

Our Council is facing a big change in membership. We will miss the six outgoing members who have been passionately involved in healthcare in our communities. We thank those who have dedicated 10 years of their time to making a difference in healthcare in this area. We look forward to welcoming new members to Council and gathering new perspectives from them. There is so much to learn about the many programs and services offered by AHS. We are glad we will be able to share it with additional community members.



# Learn more

- Visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](https://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils)
- Email [truenorth@ahs.ca](mailto:truenorth@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.

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