

Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council



Annual Report 2010–2011





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Message from the Chair, Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council

Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council, initially known as Health Advisory Council 11, was established in June 2009. An orientation session was held in early January 2010, where members were provided with information about the roles and responsibilities of Health Advisory Councils and the processes and procedures for holding meetings.

A Work Plan, identifying the main priorities for 2010-2011, was established. The key aspects of the Work Plan called for public engagement with the various communities in the region. There was no doubt that individuals and groups had many concerns regarding the delivery of health services. The move from Regional Health Authorities to a provincial centralized Health Services Board was perceived by constituents as removing the opportunity to receive information on their health needs in a timely manner.

The Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council assumed the role of attempting to close the perceived “communication gap” by holding public meetings in each of the larger communities in the region. Presenters were asked to identify their area of concern and to present a suggested solution. Both the issues and suggested solutions were forwarded to Ken Hughes, Chair, Alberta Health Services Board. Unfortunately, an extended delay in responding to these issues of concern from personnel at Alberta Health Services was perceived as a lack of action by the Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council.

As the first year of operations progressed, several conference call discussions with members of the Alberta Health Services Board brought about some improvement. One of the main outcomes was the promise to respond to local Health Advisory Council concerns within 14 days, or at least with an explanation as to the status of the health services delivery issue raised. In other conference calls that included the Alberta Health Services Board, the Minister of Health and Wellness and management from Alberta Health Services, a promise was made that a more proactive approach would be implemented. We look forward to these promises being fulfilled.

Joint efforts are required if the delivery of health services can be responsive to the needs of patients and their caregivers. Moving from regional health boards to a centralized management precludes a better understanding of the unique concerns of various regions across the province. The Health Advisory Councils across the province are made up of volunteers who are passionate about the positive delivery of health care services in their regions and in the province. Support must be given to their efforts, especially in communications. If there are inordinate delays in response to health care issues raised, it is the Health

Advisory Councils who are perceived as merely “window dressing.” Community engagement means more than listening; people want information even if it is only to provide an answer about the status of an issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ken Sauer,
Chair, Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council



Message from the Chair, Alberta Health Services Board

Health Advisory Councils are an important link between Alberta Health Services and the people we serve. We can only be genuinely responsive to Albertans if we understand their needs and listen to their concerns, which include hearing directly from councils.

Health Advisory Councils were established to engage local community members to provide feedback on what is working well within the health care system, suggest areas for improvement, and identify local issues and concerns.

The inaugural year for Health Advisory Councils has been highly effective in establishing processes, connecting with Albertans across the province and building foundational relationships both with communities and the Alberta Health Services Board and Leadership. Continually nurturing these connections will enable councils to be better informed and work more effectively in bringing the voice of communities to improve health care across the province.

In the first year of operation, councils have contributed significantly to key Alberta Health Services strategic planning initiatives. Key consultations included the 2010-2015 Health Plan, Alberta Health Act, Accreditation Canada consultation, Provincial Menu, Community and Rural health planning initiatives and the Strategic Scenarios 2030 “Driving Forces Workshops” which centered around health planning for the next 20 years.

Building on these successes over the next year will provide a valuable mechanism for communication and information flow between communities and Alberta Health Services. The Alberta Health Services Board and Leadership are committed to ensuring that Health Advisory Councils are successful in their work now and into the future. Board members will continue to increase engagement opportunities with councils, and attend council meetings, engagement events and community consultations.

In closing, we would like to thank all council members past and present, for the time, effort and expertise they have dedicated to bringing the public perspective forward to improve health care planning across the province.

Sincerely,

Ken Hughes
Chair, Alberta Health Services Board



The Year in Review

Executive Summary

“Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council has worked industriously to be the “feedback” mechanism for the Alberta Health Services Board.”

The appointment of members to the Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council was through self-nomination, followed by a selection panel that interviewed each candidate. The panel’s recommendation to the Alberta Health Services Board resulted in appointment letters to selected candidates from the Chair of the Alberta Health Services Board, Ken Hughes.

The orientation of the Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council focused on the key aspects of the Health Advisory Handbook prepared by Alberta Health Services. The main aspects highlighted in the Handbook included the roles and functions of Health Advisory Councils, governance and accountability in their operations, establishment of Work Plans and communication with the citizens in the region. In addition, procedures for council meetings were outlined.

At the first meeting the Advisory Council identified five key priorities that needed attention during the first year of operations. These key priorities served as the basis for the Work Plan that was developed.

Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council has worked industriously to be the “feedback” mechanism for the Alberta Health Services Board. Issues of concern about the delivery of health services were considered and forwarded to Alberta Health Services with recommended solutions for consideration.



Who We Are

The Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council was established in June 30 2009 under section 9(4) of the Regional Health Authorities Act (1994). The Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council was established to enhance engagement between communities and Alberta Health Services. *Please see Appendix 1 for the Provincial Map.*

“Members of the Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council come from diverse backgrounds, such as health care, municipal government, education, family services, scientific organizations and mental health.”

The Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council area stretches from Oyen in the north, to Bassano in the west, continuing eastward to the Saskatchewan border and southward to Bow Island and the United States border. The area includes the major communities of Bassano, Oyen, Brooks, Redcliff, Medicine Hat, Bow Island, Seven Persons and Foremost. *Please see Appendix 2 for the Council Map.*

Members of the Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council come from diverse backgrounds, such as health care, municipal government, education, family services, scientific organizations and mental health. All members are passionate about health care delivery and care about all citizens in their communities.

Current Members	
Dr. Kenneth Sauer (Chair)	Medicine Hat
Mr. Martin Shields (Vice Chair)	Brooks
Ms. Ruth Babcock	Bow Island
Mr. Jim Black	Medicine Hat
Mr. Rudi Brockman	Oyen
Ms. Kelly Christman	Bassano
Mr. Warren Drefs	Medicine Hat
Ms. Linda Gale	Medicine Hat
Ms. Carol Lees	Medicine Hat
Ms. Diane MacNaughton	Redcliff
Ms. Marjorie Moncrieff	Bow Island
Mr. Robert Oliver	Oyen
Ms. Sharon Reid	Brooks
Ms. Patty Rooks	Seven Persons
Ms. Natasha Ruskowski	Medicine Hat



What We Do

The role of the Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council is to:

- gather information on public input regarding health, health needs and health services for the residents of the communities served by the council;

- provide advice to Alberta Health Services regarding health issues, health needs and health priorities, access to health services, the promotion of health and other matters requested by Alberta Health Services; and
- promote and participate in activities that enhance the health of residents in the communities served by the council.

Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council members reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and have a broad interest in health issues as well as the health and well-being of the communities they represent.



How We Are Accountable

Health Advisory Councils were established on June 30, 2009 under section 9(4) of the Regional Health Authorities Act (1994). The Alberta Health Services Board approved the Bylaw by which the councils were established, which was then approved by the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Alberta Health Services Board appointed members to each council following a provincewide recruitment drive in September 2009. Councils act as an advisory body to Alberta Health Services according to the council Charter and Bylaw. Council members are required to reside within the geographic area of the council to which they are appointed and serve terms of two or three years to a maximum of five years.

Councils act as an advisory body to Alberta Health Services, providing feedback from the public to support the strategic direction of Alberta Health Services. In this role, councils:

- provide feedback about what is working well in the health care system and areas for improvement;
- engage residents by talking to members of the community and advise of what they are saying about health services in their area;
- consider information provided by Alberta Health Services and identify issues or trends from a local perspective;
- provide feedback to Alberta Health Services on matters pertaining to health services and service delivery on an ongoing basis; and
- provide feedback to Alberta Health Services about strategies to further engage the community on health care delivery.



What We Have Accomplished

Engagement of the Public

Public meetings were held in the major centres of the region in the communities of Medicine Hat, Brooks, Bassano, Bow Island, Oyen and, in Spring, a meeting will be held in Foremost. Community members were invited to the

meetings where they were able to present health issues and concerns, and provide suggested solutions, which were then forwarded to Alberta Health Services.

Council received presentations from various groups at our regular council meetings. Topics that were brought to the attention of council included:

- Residential Detox Centre,
- Hospice/Palliative Care Centre in Medicine Hat,
- Helicopter Air Lift Operations (H.A.L.O.) Organization,
- Friends of Medicare; and
- Physician Recruitment.

Dr. Ken Sauer, Chair, Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council, has spoken to over 500 people at service clubs, public organizations and advisory groups. Every group was interested in the delivery of health services in this region and several groups have asked for a return visit with a status update.

Council provided support to Mr. Fred Horne, MLA Edmonton-Rutherford, Parliamentary Assistant to Health and Wellness, and member of the Standing Committee on Health, by hosting community consultation sessions regarding the new Alberta Health Act.

Issues of concern identified at public meetings appear to have been addressed with progress reports being supplied by the Community Engagement Officer. Several issues of concern are still not solved or clarified; however, the Community Engagement Officer is working through the various levels of Alberta Health Services management to get answers. An Alberta Health Services Board member has indicated there will be an attempt to have an answer back within 14 days, or with a reason as to why it is not possible to provide the information.

Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council is pleased that action has been taken in the following areas of concern in the region:

- A Residential Detox Treatment Centre is in the planning stages for Medicine Hat, as this was the only region in the province lacking such an important facility (Police Services indicate that 85% to 90% of the people with whom they deal have either alcohol or drug related conditions).
- A Hospice/Palliative Care unit is being established in Medicine Hat, separate from the acute care Regional Hospital.
- The long awaited redevelopment of the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital and the renovations to the Bow Island Health Centre are moving forward.
- Concerns about the rigidity of the Provincial Menu have been corrected and positive results are being heard from our continuing care facilities.

Provide Feedback and Advice to Alberta Health Services

The Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council has discussed the importance of recruiting and retaining health care professionals. We have emphasized the need for improvement in this area by Alberta Health Services. Health Advisory Council members, in conjunction with municipal leaders, can contribute to improvement in this area.

Representatives have been able to attend provincial sessions dealing with various health-related issues. The involvement of Health Advisory Council members has been beneficial.

- Ruth Babcock attended the provincial Primary Care Open Spaces Forum and reported back to the council;
- Patty Rooks was selected to serve on the planning team for the annual Provincewide Health Advisory Council meeting; and
- Kelly Christman represented council at the Driving Forces Strategic Planning Workshop and attended two Community and Rural Health Planning community consultation sessions in Bassano.

Council has received the following presentations from Alberta Health Services, which have increased our knowledge and awareness of health care services and programs:

- Emergency Medical Services: Contract Service and Performance Requirements, Public Health, Primary Care and Chronic Disease Management;
- Primary Care Networks;
- Seniors Health and Levels of Continuing Care;
- Nutrition and Food Services Provincial Menu;
- Rural and Community Health Care Planning; and
- Primary Care Model Development.

Promote and Participate in Activities that Enhance the Health of Residents

Council has promoted the use of HealthLink during public meetings.



What We Have Learned

This first year has been a learning experience for our council.

Communities, and their respective citizens, are acutely aware of the changes to the health system with the termination of regional health authorities. These communities have voiced their concern regarding how difficult it is to obtain answers to their questions, or even find someone to contact. While there is an opportunity to complete a Patient Feedback from outlining their concerns or complaints, not everyone has access or wishes to make a trip to a hospital to pick up a form. A recommendation has been made to have these forms available in doctor's offices and in the community libraries.

“By moving the location of the community meetings between communities, the council can ascertain the needs and differing issues faced by the individual communities, and respond in a respectful and understanding way.”

The Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council is pleased that the Minister of Health and Wellness emphasized that we could meet with physicians and other health professionals; this was not clear prior to meeting with him. The council found it interesting to know that the regional Medical Advisory Committee had many of the same concerns that were prevalent at the public meetings.

By moving the location of the community meetings between communities, the council can ascertain the needs and differing issues faced by the individual communities, and respond in a respectful and understanding way.

The development of a communication plan has helped promote the council by publicizing our roles and responsibilities. News releases have also been issued to advertise public and council meetings.

Most members attended a Provincewide Health Advisory Council meeting focusing on the following themes:

- improving access to all aspects of health care;
- health promotion is a priority and requires greater emphasis;
- local needs and circumstances require innovative service delivery and technology;
- strengthen relationships with communities and local stakeholders; and
- optimize the roles of health care providers.

Earlier periods of anxiety regarding roles and responsibilities have been alleviated as a result of several conference calls and telephone conversations with John Lehnert, Chair of the Health Advisory Committee of the Board. He indicated that our Health Advisory Council was not alone in these misgivings.

Subsequent conference calls with the Minister of Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services personnel resulted in the promise to review and revise

the original roles and responsibilities found in the Handbook because current knowledge and practices were different.

Looking Forward

2011-2012

A Work Plan for 2011–2012 will be developed outlining strategies to address existing and potentially new issues.

The Minister of Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services has announced plans to expand the role and responsibilities of Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council to provide greater engagement with Albertans. The current roles and responsibilities will be reviewed by Alberta Health Services and revised to reflect current and future conditions.

Provincial meetings of Health Advisory Councils should update the practices and procedures used by the individual councils with mutual benefits accruing to all.

The interest, participation and attendance by Palliser Triangle Health Advisory Council is commendable, with maximum participation at council meetings. Council members are ready, willing and able to attend Alberta Health Services workshops or other initiatives, and are able to share their experiences with other members. We appreciate the involvement of Alberta Health Services in our initiatives.

The Community Engagement Officer allocated to our Health Advisory Council is extremely competent and works industriously to follow up on health system issues. Health Advisory Council members, in conjunction with municipal leaders, are key partners in this enterprise.

Our annual Work Plan will be available to view on the Alberta Health Services website www.albertahealthservices.ca/1803.asp



Contact Information 2011-2012

We welcome the opportunity to hear your voice. Please contact us at:

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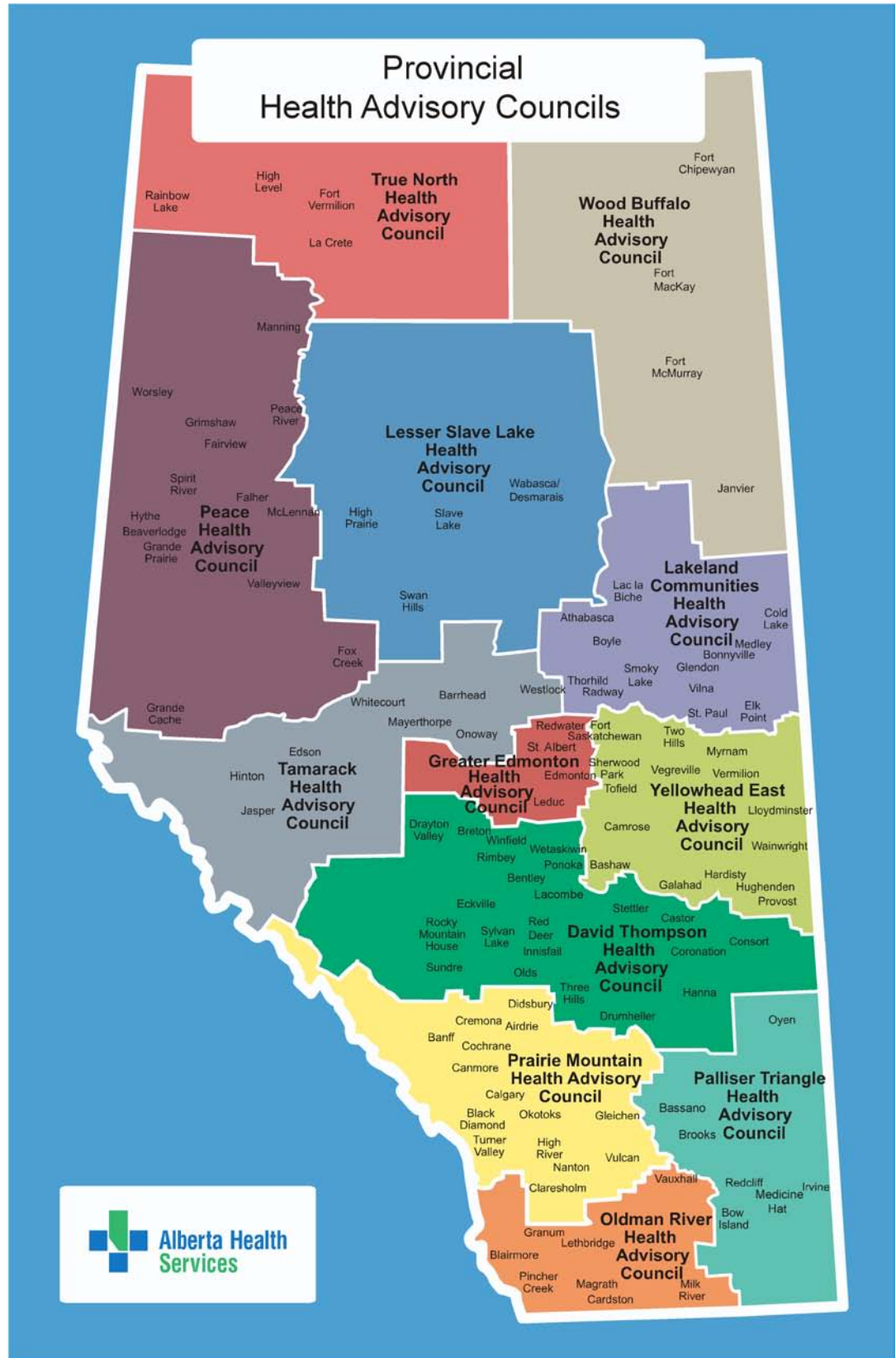
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 **Appendix 1 – Provincial Map**



*Bringing the voice of
communities to build
a better health system*