

# Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council



## *Annual Report 2010–2011*







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## Message from the Chair, Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council

It is our pleasure to provide you with the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council Annual Report for 2010-2011. This report contains an outline of our mandate, as well as activities and accomplishments over the past year.

To achieve our vision, our Health Advisory Council has also included a brief overview of the direction for 2011-2012. We have four key strategic priorities: understand our residents' community health experience; contribute to safe and healthy communities through participation in key events; keep our community and Health Advisory Council members informed of local and provincial services; and enhance the awareness and education of health and wellness for all of our residents.

We found the quarterly provincewide Chairs' meetings with the Alberta Health Services Board Chair, President and Chief Executive Officer and Minister of Health and Wellness to be of particular benefit. These meetings serve as a communication and networking tool, giving us an opportunity to express our successes and challenges, and learn about best practices. We note that our council area still lags behind the province with respect to providing continuing care and assisted living spaces and facilities. We hope to see work start on a new local facility next year.

Over the next year, the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council will continue to focus on connecting with the region's diverse population, raising our profile and working with our many community partners.

On behalf of the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council, I want to thank Alberta Health Services staff for providing outstanding services to us as members and to the residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. I would also like to commend the council members who stepped forward to support the important role of councils in our region. Together, as citizens, partners and committee members, we know we are truly making a difference.

Sincerely,

Iris Kirschner  
Chair, Wood Buffalo 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

The Annual Report for the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council provides an overview of the past year and the accomplishments we achieved.

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*“Our council looks forward to being a conduit between the public and Alberta Health Services.”*

The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council is located in northeastern Alberta, at the centre of oil sands exploration. The council area stretches from the Alberta and Northwest Territories border, south to the hamlet of Wandering River, and encompasses approximately one-third of the province from east to west.

The first year was one of development for the council. Membership, regular meeting dates and a Work Plan were developed. The council fluctuated this year from nine to 14 members. The population in Fort McMurray is transitional, making it difficult to retain members.

We worked diligently to raise awareness about the council. Meeting notices were posted at health offices and a council meeting was held in the rural community of Anzac to engage citizens and promote awareness. The media supported our awareness drive: a local reporter attended the council meetings and wrote informative articles for the local “Fort McMurray Today” newspaper, radio programs were receptive to promoting the health council and the council Chair was featured on two 30 minute radio programs.

Council members attended three events in the council area to engage citizens. In addition to attending events, council members brought forth information and queries to council meetings from their membership on formal and informal committees. Concerns with the Primary Care Network, the hospitalist program, emergency response services and the continuing care centre were brought forward.

Information was received regarding the many programs and services within Alberta Health Services. Feedback was provided to Alberta Health Services on presentations made to the council.

The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council supported the promotion of wellness at events and in the media.

There are many opportunities and challenges ahead in the delivery of health programs and services. Our council looks forward to being a conduit between the public and Alberta Health Services.



## Who We Are

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

*“The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council area covers 68,454 square kilometers in northeastern Alberta.”*

The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council area covers 68,454 square kilometers in northeastern Alberta, stretching from the northern border of Alberta and the Northwest Territories, south to Wandering River and west across one-third of the province. The council area is a mixture of over ten communities spread across forests, foothills, rivers and lakes. The oil and gas industry, plus the oil sands mining development are key drivers to the prosperity in the area. The enormous shadow population has a direct impact on the health services required in the local communities. *Please see Appendix 2 for the Council Map.*

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo includes: Fort McMurray, Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Fitzgerald, Fort Mackay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier, Mariana Lake and Saprae Creeks Estates. It also includes five First Nations and 36 Indian Reserves (IR) within its borders. The aboriginal populations live in long-established remote communities. Employment with the oil sands attracts people from all over the world, thus Fort McMurray is a quickly expanding urban centre that is home to a very diverse population. The various language and cultural needs can be a barrier to health.

We would like our members to be located in various communities across our council area, however; all of the members currently reside in Fort McMurray. As council members, we aim to provide a voice for our communities and a connection to Alberta Health Services.

Current Members	
Ms. Iris Kirschner (Chair)	Fort McMurray
Mr. Gary Exner (Vice Chair)	Fort McMurray
Ms. Carole Bouchard	Fort McMurray
Mr. Oliver Buchmann	Fort McMurray
Ms. Christy Fong	Fort McMurray
Mr. Peter Forster	Fort McMurray
Ms. Karen Gooden	Fort McMurray
Mr. Jim Moore	Fort McMurray
Dr. Joshua Olawuyi	Fort McMurray
Ms. Elaine Read	Fort McMurray

Past Members	
Mr. Edward Gordon	Fort McMurray
Ms. Keltie Paul	Fort McMurray
Ms. Nicole Park	Fort McMurray
Ms. Monica Schimanke	Fort McMurray



## What We Do

*“Wood Buffalo 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.”*

The role of the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council is to:

- gather information including public input regarding health, health needs and health services for the residents of the community served by the council;
- provide advice to Alberta Health Services regarding health issues, needs and 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.

Wood Buffalo 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

The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council worked on various strategies to engage the public. To increase awareness of the role of the Health Advisory Council among community members and gather input from stakeholders, we identified opportunities for the council to participate in events. We gathered calendars and event listings from the many communities in our council area. We attended the Fort McMurray Family Safety Day on Saturday, May 1, 2010, the Seniors' Advisory Council meeting held in Fort McMurray on Friday, October 15, 2010 and the "World Health Organization Designation of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as a Safe Community" on Wednesday, November 17, 2010. We also received print materials to support awareness of the Health Advisory Council including business cards, a banner and bookmarks.

*"We considered ways to foster opportunities to engage with and address the unique needs of the shadow population."*

To promote awareness of our regular council meetings, we posted meeting notices at numerous health locations one month prior to each meeting. We also placed an advertisement in the Fort McMurray Today newspaper. The reporter from the newspaper attended council meetings and wrote stories for the paper based on the subject matter from each meeting. Highlights from the meeting were also distributed to all of the newspapers and radio stations in the council area following the meeting and shared with the local municipal governments. The Chair participated in two 30-minute radio programs in Fort McMurray: "McMurray Matters," which aired on Thursday, November 25, 2010 and "Community Profiles," which aired on Tuesday, November 30, 2010. The interview topics covered the role of the Health Advisory Council, the communities served, the members on the council, the positions that were available, what actions were completed and what needed to be accomplished in the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council area.

One of the regular council meetings was held in Anzac, a community south of Fort McMurray. Regular council meetings were held in Fort McMurray as many council members work there.

We considered ways to engage with and address the unique needs of the shadow population. We determined that the most appropriate committee to

engage in conversation regarding health care delivery to the shadow population, was the Oil Sands Developer Group Health Committee.

We continue to explore opportunities to support the integration of international medical staff into the community. We made contact with the following organizations to move this opportunity and many others forward:

*“We welcome cultural groups to our meetings as a mechanism to connect with our council.”*

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- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo;
- Keyano College;
- Fort McMurray Public School Division;
- Fort McMurray Catholic School Division;
- Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce;
- Oil Sands Secretariat; and
- Oil Sands Developers Group

We welcome cultural groups to our meetings as a mechanism to connect with our council. We identified the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) Immigrant Settlement Program and the Multi-Cultural Association as cultural groups to contact. We have contacted both organizations and will work to ensure they are aware of the health programs and services available in the council area.

### **Provide Feedback and Advice to Alberta Health Services**

We were able to regularly communicate successes and challenges to Alberta Health Services through the submission of our council meetings minutes.

Alberta Health Services shared information and we provided feedback on the following topics:

- Population Health in the North Zone (Tuesday, March 2, 2010);
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS), A Discussion Paper on Service and Performance Requirements for EMS (Tuesday, April 20, 2010);
- Building a Primary Care Foundation, Primary Care in a Primary Health Care System (Tuesday, June 8, 2010);
- Community and Rural Health Planning (Tuesday, September 14, 2010);
- Emergency Department Wait Times, Northern Lights Health Centre (Tuesday, November 9, 2010);
- Driving Forces-Strategic Planning-2030 (Tuesday, February 7, 2011); and
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) 5-Year Strategic Plan (Tuesday, March 8, 2011).

We also provided feedback on the Alberta Health Act during a consultation with Mr. Fred Horne, MLA Edmonton-Rutherford, Parliamentary Assistant to Health and Wellness, member of the Standing Committee, on Tuesday, June 22, 2010 in Fort McMurray.

Another strategy to provide feedback to Alberta Health Services was to consider opportunities to obtain information that acknowledges and suggests solutions regarding disparities in the delivery of services in the area. We were able to provide feedback specific to disparities in our service area regarding the following subjects:

- Primary Care Network - The Primary Care Network is located in downtown Fort McMurray. There is a lack of parking and hours of access are restricted, plus, there has been little awareness of the program;
- Northern Lights Health Centre Hospitalist program - Membership and funding for the sustainability of the Hospitalist program was discussed;
- Continuing Care Centre - There has been very little information provided by Alberta Infrastructure to the community regarding this project;
- Morgue policy and access - A request was put forward to allow family access to the morgue and further time to view the deceased;
- Helipad access - The use of a helipad at the Fort McMurray Fire Hall versus the Northern Lights Health Centre was noted as an access and efficiency issue; and
- Highway 63 and Plamondon Fire Department service - A request was put forward for further information regarding the discontinuation of service by the Plamondon Fire Department to motor vehicle accidents on Highway 63.

## **Promote and Participate in Activities that Enhance the Health of Residents**

### **Community Events**

The Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council was pleased to attend and advocate for wellness and prevention at the following community events:

- the “Family Safety Day” held on Saturday, May 8, 2010 at the Casman Centre in Fort McMurray;
- the “World Health Organization Designation of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as a Safe Community” held on Wednesday, November 17, 2010 at the Suncor Community Leisure Centre in Fort McMurray; and
- an “Open House” for the Addiction Day Treatment Program held Wednesday, March 16, 2011 at the Alberta Health Services Addiction and Mental Health Services office in Fort McMurray.

## Radio Programs

We were able to contribute to messaging that reinforces a healthy lifestyle during the time spent on two radio shows: “*McMurray Matters*” on Thursday, November 25, 2010 and “*Community Profiles*” on Tuesday, November 30, 2010.

## Partnerships

Our council supports the initiative between Shell Albian Sands and Alberta Health Services to improve the health and wellness of the inner city homeless population in Fort McMurray. This initiative aims to help the homeless population with some of the health issues that they are most susceptible to such as arthritis, mental health and HIV.

We also support the addition of new residential treatment beds received through funding from the Safe Communities initiative from Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services. This initiative is needed in our community and offers a therapeutic detoxification treatment program for individuals in a safe and secure environment.



## What We Have Learned

The first year has been a learning experience for the Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council. We have heightened our awareness of community priorities and strengthened our connection with Alberta Health Services. The council has gained a greater understanding of our role and the processes associated with council operation.

*“We have heightened our awareness of community priorities and strengthened our connection with Alberta Health Services.”*

- We identified community groups to connect with to learn about multi-cultural needs and health programs provided by the oil sands industry within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.
- We identified a linkage with Safe Communities Wood Buffalo in order to support the mandate of safety and wellness.
- We have made a great effort to include rural issues and promote rural health services enhancement, while being cognizant that health council members live in the urban centre.

## Logistics and Process

- Local health offices were receptive to posting notices about our council meetings.
- Meeting notices were well received by the rural hamlet newsletters.
- We found it very convenient to hold most of our meetings in the major health centre for the region.
- Initially we experienced some challenges achieving quorum for our meetings, however; considering that we have experienced significant changes in

membership over the past year, we are proud to have reached a quorum at all of our meetings.

## Looking Forward

### 2011-2012

We look forward to a productive year ahead in 2011-2012. We hail from the busiest part of the province and health needs are top of mind in our council area.

Across Canada, more than 456,000 jobs are directly or indirectly linked to the construction and operation of the oil sands in the Fort McMurray area. Fort McMurray has experienced a 9% annual growth rate over the past seven years. Associated with the job market and rate of growth is the need for appropriate and sustainable health programs and services.

We look forward to addressing the health needs of our residents and forwarding them to Alberta Health Services. To achieve our vision, our Health Advisory Council will continue to focus and expand upon four key strategic priorities during the 2011-2012 fiscal year. These priorities are:

- to understand our community members' health experiences;
- to contribute to healthy communities through the participation in key events;
- to keep our community and Health Advisory Council members informed of local and provincial services; and
- to enhance the awareness and education of health and wellness.

We look forward to full membership on our council, in addition to our expanded and strengthened role as a council, which will enable us to further engage our residents in health care service delivery in our communities.

We will develop our 2011-2012 Work Plan and assess the outcomes of the work completed in 2010-2011. We look forward to connecting with community groups in order to garner an understanding of needs in the community as well as gaps in services.

We look forward to connecting regularly with the Alberta Health Services Board and management on strategic planning initiatives, both locally and provincially.

We will continue to partner with Alberta Health Services to learn about the programs and services they provide. We will also supply them with feedback from the community regarding what is working well and areas in need of improvement.

*"We look forward to addressing the health needs of our residents and forwarding them to Alberta Health Services."*

We will continue to highlight the trend of increasing oil sands exploration in our area. The increased activity will have a major impact on health services in the years ahead.

Our annual Work Plan will be available to view on the Alberta Health Services website [www.albertahealthservices.ca/1811.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/1811.asp)



## Contact Information 2011-2012

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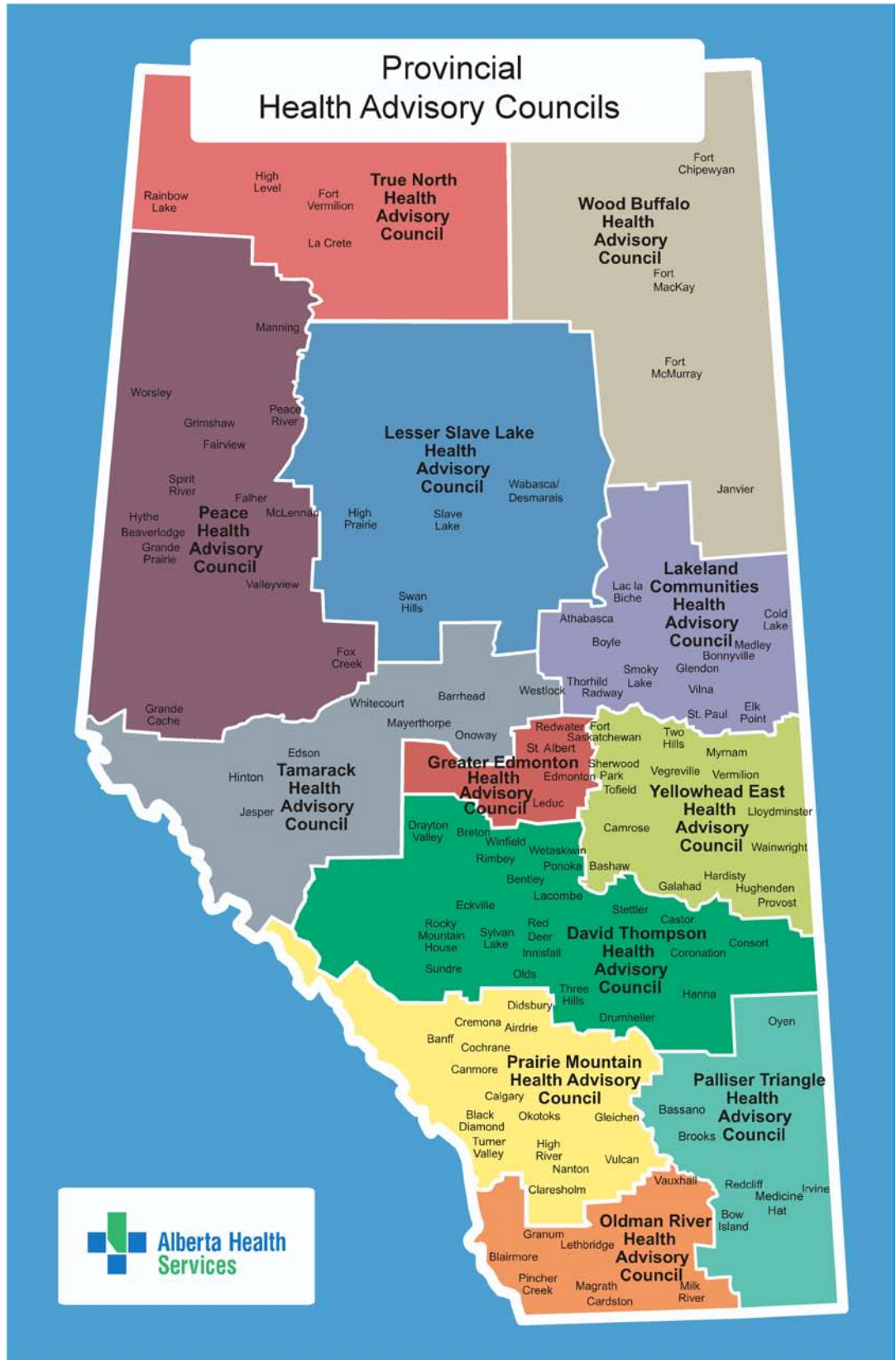
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Council Web Page:  
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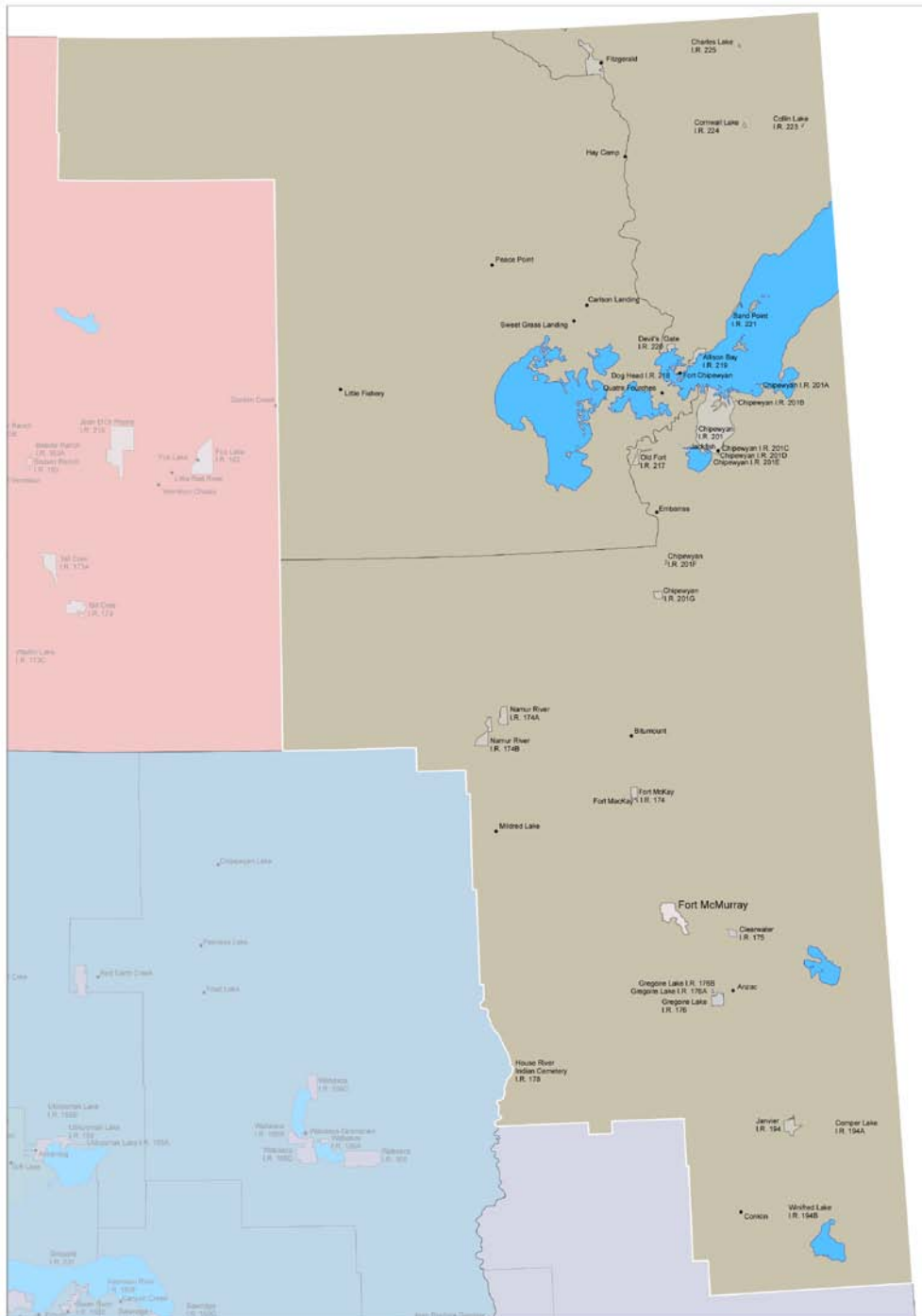
Council Email:  
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 **Appendix 1 – Provincial Map**



# Appendix 2 – Council Map

## Wood Buffalo Health Advisory Council Map



	City or Town
	Indian Reserve
	Métis Settlement

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