

Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council



Annual Report 2010–2011





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Message from the Chair,

Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council

It is our pleasure to provide you with the 2010-2011 Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council Annual Report. As this was our inaugural year as a Health Advisory Council, we have learned about the current health services and the resident needs in our council area.

As we reflect over the past year, we need to recognize the time and effort it has taken to develop our council and understand our role. Our role over the past year has been to:

- listen to our communities to learn what worked well, identify health needs and see if there are any gaps in the health system;
- look for opportunities and identify areas for improvement;
- provide feedback to Alberta Health Services about the future direction for health care; and
- collaborate with Alberta Health Services to identify areas in need of health care improvements.

The Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council is committed to exploring ways to engage citizens in a dialogue that will benefit the health system and our communities. By bringing the voice of our communities forward, we will build a better health system.

At our April 21, 2010 council meeting, we brainstormed what we thought success would look like in our first year. Reflecting on our work over the past year, we are pleased to see that we have achieved many of our goals, which are highlighted in this report.

We wish to thank the Alberta Health Service Board and the Alberta Health Services Health Advisory Committee of the Board for their guidance. We thank the Community Engagement department for the resources and tools they have made available to us. Ultimately, we thank the citizens of our communities for their willingness to provide input into improving our health services.

By working together, we can continue to maintain and improve the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

Colleen Vennard
Chair, Yellowhead East 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.

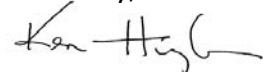
The inaugural year for Health Advisory Councils has been highly effective in establishing processes, connecting with Albertans across the province and building foundational relationships both with communities and the Alberta Health Services Board and Leadership. Continually nurturing these connections 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

This Annual Report summarizes the Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council's work over the past year and highlights our successes. In addition, it provides us with an opportunity to show what we learned and to identify strategies for the upcoming year.

The Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council is located along the eastern side of the province from Tofield and Vegreville to the Saskatchewan border, along the North Saskatchewan River, and south along Highway 13 from Provost to Camrose. The council currently has 12 members who represent the various rural communities in this area. Our role is to represent our communities and to work with the Alberta Health Services Board and leadership to build a better health system.

This year, council spent time developing council processes and establishing tools, such as membership, regular meeting times and developing our first Work Plan.

In spite of the time it took to establish our council, we were able to meet some of the work outlined in our Work Plan. We engaged the citizens in our communities by inviting key community stakeholders to council meetings, received information from Alberta Health Services on various subjects and provided feedback to Alberta Health Services about matters that impacted the health services of residents in our council area.

In conclusion, we recognize the importance and value of community engagement. We are pleased to provide you with this Annual Report, and look forward to continued collaboration with the Alberta Health Services Board and leadership.



Who We Are

The Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council was established by the Alberta Health Services Board on June 30, 2009 under section 9(4) of the Regional Health Authorities Act (1994), to enhance engagement between the communities within our area and Alberta Health Services. Our organizational meeting was held on Thursday, January 14, 2010 at the Wainwright Health Care Centre. *Please see Appendix 1 for the Provincial Map*

The Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council area is located directly east of Edmonton and Sherwood Park, stretching along the North Saskatchewan River and includes the communities of Andrew and Marwayne to Tofield. It continues eastward to Lloydminster and Provost along the Saskatchewan border and southward to Alliance, Bashaw and Camrose in the west. This area includes two cities, 15 towns, 34 villages, seven counties and two municipal districts. These communities are all nestled along the central eastern section of the province from Edmonton and east to the Saskatchewan border. The council's broad geographic area includes all the communities found within the Lamont County, County of Two Hills, Beaver County, County of Minburn, County of Vermilion River, MD of Wainwright, MD of Provost, Flagstaff County, and Camrose County. *Please see Appendix 2 for the Council Map.*

Our council area provides health services to approximately 118,200 people. Our distinct and diverse population includes the Hutterite and Mexican Mennonite populations as well as those of Ukrainian decent (primarily in the northwest section of our council area). While few Aboriginal and First Nations people live in our council area, many use our health services due to the proximity of their reserves and settlements. Our residents live in long-established rural communities where we also have a population of seniors which is larger than any other Health Advisory Council area.

We currently have 12 members on our council. Council members reside within the geographic area of the council to which they are appointed and serve terms of either two or three years to a maximum of five years.

As council members, we aim to provide a voice reflective of our communities, while maintaining a connection to Alberta Health Services.

Current Members	
Ms. Colleen Vennard (Chair)	Camrose
Mr. Glenn Thompson (Vice Chair)	Two Hills
Mr. Robert Bachman	Provost
Ms. Wendy Bannister	Amisk
Mr. Denis Cunninghame	Vermilion
Mr. Barry Hall	Wainwright
Mr. Rod Krips	Viking
Mr. Ken McNeil	Wainwright
Mr. Morris Smith	Lloydminster
Ms. Elaine Sorochan	Two Hills
Ms. Martha Waldorf	Daysland
Mr. Don Whittaker	Lloydminster
Past Members	
Mr. Oleh Shykora	Vegreville
Ms. Terry Tropak	Vegreville
Ms. Barbara Read	Tofield
Mr. Rick Roberts	Vegreville

What We Do

The role of the Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council is to:

- gather information on 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.

The Yellowhead East 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. We met seven times during this fiscal year in addition to promoting the council, and listening to residents in our communities.

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 Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council identified two strategies to engage the public. These strategies are as follows:

1. To promote dialogue with local municipal leaders in order to encourage and improve discussion and local engagement.

The council developed a subcommittee to work with Alberta Health Services to organize a municipal leaders' engagement event located centrally within our council area. Due to the planning required and the timing of this event (municipal elections were held in October 2010), we felt it was necessary to delay the event. It has been rescheduled for Thursday, May 26, 2011 in Kinsella, Alberta. The information gathered from this event will be reported in next year's Annual Report.

We moved our council meetings to various communities within the council area to enable key leaders and stakeholders attendance. In total, 36 community members attended the various meetings. We plan to continue to personally invite community members to our meetings.

2. To improve communication and ensure accurate information regarding health programs and services is reported to council members.

Council identified the need to increase knowledge about the health services available within our area. Information on current work in public health and health promotion, senior's health, provincial changes in Emergency Medical Services, Provincial Menu changes, physician recruitment and retention strategies, community and rural health planning and a primary care strategy. Council also gained knowledge of health services available in the area by touring the various community facilities where council meetings were hosted. For example, council learned about the Stroke and Geriatric Empowerment program and the Provincial Menu changes for the Two Hills Health, Centre and the Primary Care Network at the Provost Health Centre.

Council looked for ways to improve communication with Alberta Health Services. We found it beneficial to have senior zone leadership attend our regular meetings. Time was included on the agenda for updates about current health services in the area and to ask questions.

Additionally, Alberta Health Services initiated an email fan out to inform council members about changes to health services in the area. This gave council an immediate link to information about temporary or permanent changes in health services and any health advisories. In turn, council was better informed when hearing and responding to concerns from the public. In addition to the items identified in the Work Plan, council had other opportunities to engage with the public:

- council provided key community member contact information and host site locations to support the Alberta Health and Wellness Health Act, community engagement consultation, supporting two meetings in our area, including the locations of Vermilion and Camrose;
- council received two letters regarding health services in our area, one letter voicing concern about the loss of funding for nurse practitioners in Vermilion, while the other outlined the challenges with first response emergency medical services. Council was able to provide a response to both concerns; and
- due to our vast council area, council meeting were held in various locations to increase public attendance; at each meeting council allotted time on the agenda for the public to bring forth concerns. In total, 36 public members attended the meetings, providing feedback or concerns on the following health themes:
 - Physician recruitment

- Nutrition and Food Services Provincial Menu
- Emergency Medical Services
- Two Hills helipad

Overall, council feels the implementation of these strategies has been extremely successful.

Provide Feedback and Advice to Alberta Health Services

The Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council identified three strategies to provide feedback and advice to Alberta Health Services:

1. Assess health care themes as they are brought to the Health Advisory Council.

Over the past year, the public identified a number of concerns regarding health services in the area:

- The crisis of physician recruitment and retention was a concern expressed by several communities and a local rural physician. The council heard about the current strategies in place to recruit family physicians to rural Alberta. We submitted a briefing note to Alberta Health Services requesting a provincial, multi-sectorial strategy to address this crisis for the future.
- Council heard about the value of the nurse practitioner to health service delivery in the Vermilion area, and the need to ensure sustained fiscal support to maintain this service. Council submitted a briefing note to Alberta Health Services requesting support for nurse practitioners in this area, and to explore opportunities to offer this service in other communities.
- The challenges of integrating Emergency Medical Services continued to be a resonating theme within the council area. Council had three opportunities to communicate community concerns to senior Alberta Health Services leadership.
- There were challenges with the implementation of the Provincial Menu. Council heard from the Vice President of Nutrition and Food Services about these challenges and we were able to provide direct input to revise and improve this service.

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- 2. Provide consultation and feedback as requested by sectors within Alberta Health Services.

Council was provided with many opportunities over the past year to provide feedback regarding health services planning at both the local and provincial levels. Consultation was provided to the following areas within Alberta Health Services:

- Health Plan
- Nutrition and Food Services Provincial Menu
- Tobacco and Smoke Free Environments Policy for Alberta Health Services locations
- Primary Care Strategy
- Emergency Medical Services
- Community and Rural Health Planning, Vermilion area
- Central Zone Driving Forces Workshop

- 3. Improve health services communication within the area.

Council looked to improve communication with Alberta Health Services by hosting leadership from the council area at our regular meetings. We would like to express our thanks to the support we have received from the Vice President of the Central Zone, Kerry Bales. He was able to attend our meetings and link the council to many senior staff who provided valuable insight and information about the current situation of Alberta Health Services. In addition, council was able to address community concerns and provide potential solutions directly to senior staff. When an issue about implementing emergency department protocol emerged, the Vice President organized a teleconference to ensure all council members were aware of the new strategy formulated to address the issue.

In October 2010, council invited the Alberta Health Services Board or a Board representative to attend a “meet and greet” opportunity. We felt that it was important for the Alberta Health Services Board to meet council members, gain an appreciation for the council area and view the challenges of health services delivery in a rural district. The Alberta Health Services Board has made a commitment to attend two council meetings in the upcoming year.

The Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council had the following opportunity to provide additional health input:

- Alberta Health Act community consultations, council hosted two meetings held in the Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council area of Vermilion and Camrose.

Promote and Participate in Activities that Enhance the Health of Residents

Council saw opportunities to promote and participate in activities that would improve the health of residents in the Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council area:

“Council saw opportunities to promote and participate in activities that would improve the health of residents in the Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council area.”

1. To advocate for and inform the public on health care initiatives in the area.

Council identified the need to provide the public with more information about the Primary Care Networks and to raise awareness of our existence and role. Council developed a requirement for collateral materials to promote the council at community gatherings. In addition, council also wishes to raise public awareness at these gatherings about the initiatives available to support community residents.

Our council received additional information from Alberta Health Services about activities to enhance resident health that was not included in the Work Plan:

- the presentation about Primary Care Networks provided information that council members were able to transfer to community members;
- the presentation about Senior’s Health initiatives provided knowledge about the strategies in place for aging residents;
- the presentation about the provincial plan for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provided council members with an opportunity to inform key stakeholders about the provincial direction for Emergency Medical Services; and
- the presentation about the rural physician health care crisis and the plans for physician recruitment and retention allowed us to inform our communities about strategies in place to fix this problem.



What We Have Learned

“We have gained knowledge about the current health services offered and the challenges facing Alberta Health Services and our communities.”

Our first year has been a significant learning experience for the members of the Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council. We have gained knowledge about the current health services offered and the challenges facing Alberta Health Services and our communities. In addition, we have increased our knowledge about the processes and techniques available from Alberta Health Services to support our council.

It took time for our council to understand our role and develop a working relationship with Alberta Health Services. Our role was to identify health issues impacting our residents. Often, individuals would present their specific concerns about health services, these individuals were redirected to the Patient Concerns department for assistance.

We learned that our community stakeholders were interested in the health of fellow citizens, as well as health services and programs. When community stakeholders were invited to engagement opportunities (such as the Alberta Health Act consultation in Vermilion and Camrose), they were well attended.

In addition to hearing community concerns, council identified the importance of learning about the current levels of service. Council learned about the unique health programs provided at the Two Hills and Provost Health Centers. Council will continue to visit local services unique to our communities.

Logistics and Process

Council learned the following:

- moving the meetings from one community to another was invaluable for getting community members in the area to attend, residents and representatives from local towns and county councils attended the meetings;
- personally informing and inviting key community stakeholders to a meeting ensured that others would also attend, for example, when a physician in one community attended our meeting, other community members were encouraged to attend. Illustrating the importance of connecting with various sectors of the population to build relationships;
- there is a need to use various forms of advertising (outside of community posters and local media) to promote our roles and activities; local health centres and health units were receptive to posting notices about council meetings;
- the council web page was not as initially anticipated for promoting meetings and activities. Promoting the use of this website and investigating the barriers our residents face when they use it is underway;
- council recognized the value of having the Alberta Health Services content expert provide the provincial perspective and plan. Council members were well-informed because of this;

- council identified that sufficient time was required for Alberta Health Services to implement required changes;
- it was challenging to incorporate every item on our agendas over the past year. Scheduling two additional meetings in the coming year to accommodate pressing issues or additional Alberta Health Services consultation requests will facilitate this process; and
- as a council, we identified health service challenges and provided possible solutions, it is encouraging to see that many of our suggestions were implemented.



Looking Forward

2011-2012

In 2011-2012, we will benefit from the planning and processes developed in our inaugural year. We will develop our 2011-2012 Work Plan and analyze the outcomes of the work completed in 2010-2011. Our annual Work Plan will be available to view on the Alberta Health Services website:

www.albertahealthservices.ca/1815.asp

In December 2010, Alberta Health Services announced a proposal to expand and strengthen the role of Health Advisory Councils to increase engagement with Albertans. We are excited about this opportunity and will continue to focus our efforts on promoting our role.

The enhanced role means that councils will connect regularly with the Alberta Health Services Board and leadership about strategic planning initiatives, both locally and provincially. As such, we would be pleased to host Alberta Health Services Board members at future council meetings.

We look forward to networking at our second Annual Provincewide Council Meeting in June 2011. We appreciate the opportunity to connect and build relationships with members from across the province and the Alberta Health Services Board and leadership. By working together, we can identify issues across the province and implement solutions to enhance current services.

In the upcoming year, council will be looking for opportunities to connect with community health services such as parent link centers, interagency groups and covenant health. Council wishes to explore potential partnerships to strengthen current health services for the benefit of our communities.

“Council wishes to explore potential partnerships to strengthen current health services for the benefit of our communities.”

Contact Information 2011-2012

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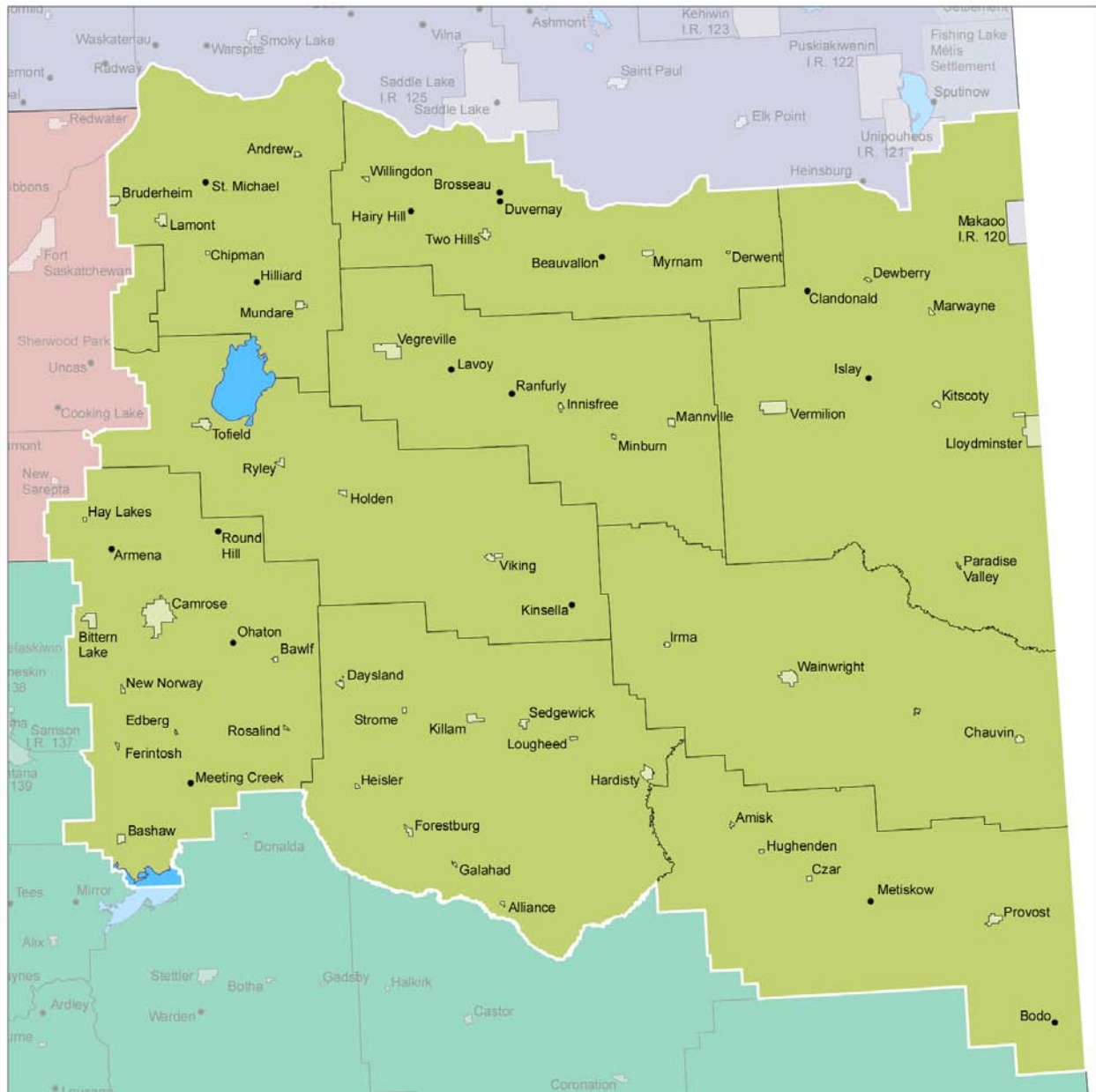
 **Appendix 1 – Provincial Map**





Appendix 2 – Council Map

Yellowhead East Health Advisory Council



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