

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Spring 2025 Representative Forum

The Representative Forum held an informative and productive two-day meeting March 14-15 in Calgary. AMA President Dr. Shelley Duggan kicked off the forum with some opening remarks providing updates in several key areas while highlighting the issues, challenges and opportunities facing the association. View Dr. Duggan's [Board Report to the Representative Forum](#) (member login required).

Following Dr. Duggan's report were several interesting sessions.

Physician compensation strategy update

RF delegates heard updates from a panel of physicians regarding AMA's Physician Compensation Strategy. The panel provided specific updates on government's 2025/26 Physician Compensation and Development Budget, the Market Rate Review process and how the AMA is responding and preparing for an upcoming mediation and arbitration.

Delegates also learned about and provided feedback on the AMA's compensation strategies to support acute care. This includes increasing ARP uptake and improving after-hours care access. Additionally, the AMA is proposing long-term solutions to the Stipend Working Group that are aimed to retain physicians who are currently paid through an AHS stipend arrangement.

AI in health care: current and future potential

The future of AI is complex, but it offers significant potential to enhance the health system by reducing burnout, reducing administrative burden and supporting clinical decisions. Delegates heard about innovation in artificial intelligence (AI) in Alberta, emphasizing that while AI can aid physicians, it is not intended to replace them. For AI to be effective in medicine, it must be used and interpreted by qualified professionals.

Establishment of a new Section of Indigenous Health

A motion was presented to the RF at the fall 2024 meeting to establish a Section of Indigenous Health at the AMA. Having completed the AMA's diligence and process for establishment of a section, this final step was approval by the RF. The session was led a, highlighted by Dr. Cassandra Felske-Durksen of the AMA's Indigenous Health Committee.

The motion garnered overwhelming support, positioning the AMA as the first Canadian medical organization to create a Section of Indigenous Health. The new non-economic section aims to include all physicians caring for Indigenous patients to foster advocacy for health equality and better patient care and to create a platform for addressing the health challenges of various under-represented groups.

Overview of health care delivery models: solutions for Alberta

Delegates were provided with an overview of private vs. public health care followed by an exploration of the impact private contracting in the public system has had on surgical wait times and access within Alberta. Moderated by Dr. Shazma Mithani and Dr. Thara Kumar, the session included presentations, commentary and personal perspectives from:

- Dr. Fiona Clement, Director of the Health Technology Assessment Unit at O'Brien Institute of Public Health
- Dr. Lorian Hardcastle, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Calgary, with a joint appointment to the Department of Community Health Sciences in the Cumming School of Medicine
- Andrew Longhurst, health policy researcher, political economist and PhD candidate at Simon Fraser University
- Dr. John Sproule, Senior Policy Director with the Institute of Health Economics

There is clearly an appetite for further discussion and exploration of additional perspectives beyond what was provided in this brief session. The AMA will be advancing informed reform with evidence-based discussion of future policy options.

Canadian Medical Association report

The CMA remains focused on advocating for solutions to improve access to care, support doctors and address system issues as outlined in the [Impact 2040](#) strategy.

Delegates were provided with several key CMA updates including its work advocating for pan-Canadian licensure; successful advocacy to defer increases to capital gains inclusion rates on physicians; remarks to the committee of experts advising on *Bill C-64*, the *Pharmacare Act*; and a federal election town hall on held on March 5.

Government relations and advocacy

An expert panel shared insights about Alberta's political climate and AMA's advocacy strategy including specific approaches to enhance public and government relations, specifically the ongoing Informed Reform campaign and the PatientsFirst.ca platform.

The RF was informed that the 2025-26 Business Plan is expected to further expand our programming by adding ways for individual members to engage with MLAs and officials for advocacy.

Re-opener and negotiations

Delegates were briefed on recent activities and upcoming discussions related to the Year 4 re-opener and the 2026 AMA-AH Agreement negotiations. The session aimed to inform delegates and gather their insights on key opportunities and challenges facing the profession as negotiations approach.

Following the presentation to RF, delegates broke into 22 small working groups to discuss several key topics including compensation for unremunerated work; team-based care; ARPs; understanding the needs of primary care physicians and specialist

physicians; and budget management (the degree to which the AMA partners with AH and shares responsibility for managing the Physician Services Budget).

Refocusing Alberta's health system

Matthew Hebert, the assistant deputy minister at the Government of Alberta, provided delegates with an overview of the transformation underway as Alberta Health Services moves from a single entity to four provincial health agencies: Primary Care Alberta, Acute Care Alberta, Assisted Living Alberta and Recovery Alberta.

Following the overview, a panel featuring Cynthia Farmer, Deputy Minister of Seniors; Dr. Chris Eagle, Chair of Acute Care Alberta; Dr. Kimberley Simmonds, CEO of Primary Care Alberta; and Kerry Bales, CEO of Recovery Alberta, shared insights on navigating the transition.

Members time/motions

On both days of the RF, delegates had the opportunity to raise and deal with concerns not covered elsewhere in the agenda.

The motions raised during the Spring 2025 RF are available for review on the [AMA RF Navigator™](#) (member login required).

Learn more

Your RF delegate can provide more details of what was discussed during the sessions. Please contact them at myRFdelegate@albertadoctors.org for more further information.

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