

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Provincial Day of Action 2026

On March 16, 2026, medical students from both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary gathered at the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton to meet with provincial policymakers at the annual Provincial Day of Action (PDoA).

Students travelled to Edmonton from across Alberta, including representation from the University of Alberta's Northern Alberta Medical Program in Grande Prairie, which launched this past fall. Organized by medical students from both universities, the annual event provides an opportunity for medical students to gain insight into key health system issues, learn to effectively communicate these issues, engage in productive discussions with government officials and hone advocacy skills that will serve them throughout their careers as physicians.

The central advocacy focus of PDoA 2026 was improving timely access to emergency care in Alberta — an increasingly pressing concern for patients and health care providers across the province. As trainees working within Alberta's health care system, medical students shared stories of their experiences caring for patients in overcrowded hospitals and emphasized the importance of practical, system-level solutions that address the root causes of emergency department congestion.

Student delegates presented policy recommendations focused on three key areas:

Reducing avoidable emergency department visits

Students emphasized maintaining harm-reduction supports and expanding rapid-access mental health and addiction services to ensure patients can access appropriate care outside of emergency departments when possible.

Improving emergency department workflow

Second, students advocated for sustainable implementation of the triage liaison physician role, developed collaboratively with emergency physicians and the Alberta Medical Association, to support more efficient patient assessment and improve patient flow.

Optimizing hospital outflow

Finally, students highlighted the importance of expanding continuing care capacity with a focus on the development of high-quality small care homes and implementing seven-day multidisciplinary discharge teams to improve transitions out of acute care and reduce bottlenecks within hospitals.

Collectively, these evidence-based measures aim to reduce pressure on emergency departments and improve timely access to care for Albertans.

During PDoA, medical student delegates met with approximately 20 policymakers. Meetings included discussions with:

- Minister Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services
- Naheed Nenshi, Leader of the Official Opposition
- Multiple members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from both the United Conservative Party (UCP) and the New Democratic Party (NDP)

The impact of these conversations extended beyond the meetings themselves. Delegates also attended question period in the Alberta Legislature, where the recommendations brought forward during PDoA were tabled for discussion, reflecting the attention given to the issues raised by student advocates. Media coverage from CTV News further highlighted the event and the role of medical students in health policy advocacy.

Overall, PDoA 2026 was a very successful and meaningful advocacy initiative that created valuable opportunities for medical students to engage in constructive conversations with policymakers about the future of health care in Alberta. Initiatives like PDoA are important for Alberta's future physicians to have representation in policy conversations and to ensure that the perspectives of those training within the system are heard.

For many students, the day was a formative and positive experience, offering a firsthand view of how advocacy and policy engagement can translate clinical insight into meaningful health system change.

We greatly appreciate the time and engagement of the students who travelled from across the province to participate, as well as the policymakers who welcomed thoughtful discussion and dialogue. Their collective dedication shows that strong advocacy today is what builds a stronger health care system tomorrow.



Authors (L to R)

Venessa Thorsen

Venessa Thorsen is a medical student at the University of Alberta and class president of the Class of 2029. She was a member of the media team for the Provincial Day of Action, supporting medical student advocacy with Alberta MLAs on issues affecting health care in the province.

Noam Sander

Noam Sander is a medical student in the Class of 2028 at the University of Calgary. He's the vice-president external (provincial) for the Calgary Medical Students Association and student observer on the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) Council.

Zoë Anderson

Zoë is a second-year medical student at the University of Alberta and serves as senior chair of the Medical Students' Association Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee. She developed a passion for advocacy prior to medical school while completing a Juris Doctor degree at the University of Alberta Faculty of Law.

Mehul Nimpal

Mehul is a first-year medical student at the University of Alberta, currently serving as the Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee junior chair. After a successful first Provincial Day of Action, Mehul is excited to assume the senior role next year to continue translating student perspectives into meaningful policy change.

Myren Sohn

Myren is a first-year medical student in the MD/PhD program at the University of Calgary, where he is the elected Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee representative for the Class of 2028. Myren has extensive advocacy experience and is passionate about building a health care system that provides accessible, high-quality care to all Albertans.

Editor's note: PDoA 2026 was organized by medical students Noam Sander (U of C), Myren Sohn (U of C), Zoë Anderson (U of A) and Mehul Nimpal (U of A). This article was written in collaboration with Venessa Thorsen (U of A).

The event was photographed by Abhiroop Saha (U of A). [See this link to download a photo montage of PDoA.](#)