

Bringing Hearts Home

A man and a woman are shown from behind, embracing each other in a hospital hallway. The man is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, and the woman is wearing a grey sweater. The background is a blurred hospital corridor with fluorescent lights and medical equipment.

The Road
to Southern
Alberta's
Cardiac
Centre of
Excellence

**Heart disease is the
#2 cause of death
in Canada.**

**In southern Alberta
it is the #1 cause
of death.**

Why?





You feel a pain in your chest while driving to work.

Soon, you feel nauseous, dizzy, and numb. You pull to the side of the highway... You're having a heart attack. You need life-saving intervention within ninety minutes to ensure your best chance of survival. Every second counts. But the treatment you need is three hours' drive away in Calgary, and there are no air ambulances available to fly you.

You're diagnosed with a chronic and life-threatening heart condition.

You're forced to drive through Alberta winter conditions for hours just to get care. Then, you sit strapped to complicated machines far from your friends, family, and home – knowing you have the same drive back ahead of you multiple times each year.





**It's someone else
experiencing this.
It's your parents,
your spouse, your
child, or a friend.**

Your hard-working neighbours
who helped shape your community.
Farmers. Energy workers. Teachers.
Doctors. College students. Retirees.
Pregnant mothers and newborn babies.

When it comes to cardiac care,
it's all of us in this together,
because cardiac issues affect
everyone at every stage of life.

15.5% higher risk factor of heart attack in southern Alberta (compared to rest of Alberta)¹

Death from all cardiac issues is 26.6% higher¹ in southern Alberta than in the rest of Alberta²

These shocking figures need to change. We're the descendants of pioneers and trailblazers who met hardship head-on. When a wildfire or a flood strikes, we're the ones who open our doors and offer shelter. When the thermometer drops to -40° C, we're the ones who share the fire.

It's time we took action. It's time to save lives right here, right now, and strengthen the future of every community within southern Alberta.

¹ SOURCE: Government of Alberta (2024). Retrieved on May 1, 2024 from: Interactive Health Data Application - Select Data Set (gov.ab.ca)

² SOURCE: Dr. S. Zielke et al, South Zone Cardiac Services Plan: Informing Cardiac Services from a Systems Perspective, May 2022



How we're going to make this right.

In partnership, the Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation (CRHF), the Cardiac Sciences Advisory Cabinet, and AHS South Zone leadership intend to alleviate this healthcare crisis by raising an estimated \$30M in donations by winter of 2027.

This \$30M – along with funding from the Government of Alberta – will allow us to:

- Upgrade or renovate existing cardiac care facilities, equipment and services at hospitals across the South Zone
- Secure the purchase of new technology to put us on par with other regions in Alberta
- Improve access to cardiac care for all southern Albertans
- Prioritize excellence in heart health by focusing on prevention, detection, and treatment
- Recruit and nurture leading cardiology talent

It's an ambitious vision. But with the support of southern Albertans like **you**, anything is possible.

Why is There a Cardiac Crisis in Southern Alberta?

As of 2024, southern Alberta is serviced by two regional hospitals located in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, and 14 other acute care/community healthcare centres in rural areas.

Not one of these facilities is equipped to provide cutting-edge cardiac treatment that could save many lives each year.

“Because of the lack of facilities in southern Alberta, we have to send over 1,300 patients to Foothills Hospital to receive treatment every year,” says Dr. Sayeh Zielke, AHS South Zone Cardiac Services Physician Lead. “That’s over 1,300 patients driving or being driven on up to seven-hour round trips to regularly receive treatment. Just think of how many thousands of kilometres of travel that is each year. Let’s do something about it – let’s make this familiar burden the road less travelled for our community.”

The Vision: The Southern Alberta Cardiac Centre of Excellence

Dr. Sayeh Zielke (AHS South Zone Cardiac Sciences Physician Lead), alongside CRHF and the Cardiac Sciences Advisory Cabinet, have a different idea. We imagine the creation of a Southern Alberta Cardiac Centre of Excellence, ready to provide and deliver the same excellent standards of cardiac healthcare that other Albertans receive. We imagine giving patients with acute or ongoing heart conditions in rural communities the ability to get help closer to home. Providing doctors and nurses the right equipment to better to support patients. Enabling our healthcare system to react faster and better in critical situations, and ultimately, save more lives.

This shared vision is not an outlandish dream or an impossible fantasy. Together, with the power of our community – all our hearts beating as one – **we can achieve this ambitious and transformative vision.**



Jackie's Story

In 2020, Jackie Rogers, a 53-year-old southern Albertan mother of four, was diagnosed with the rare condition of pericarditis – an inflammation of the lining around the heart. Her treatment included 15 echocardiograms, several MRIs, and multiple journeys to specialists in Calgary and Edmonton, with each round trip taking hours and hours.

“My husband had to take time off work,” explains Jackie, “Traveling was hard because my feet would swell from the heart problems... It’s not just the physical burden but the financial and emotional stress on top of it all.”



Scan to learn more about Jackie's struggles with long-distance cardiac care.

The Heart of the Matter

Southern Alberta Cardiac Services Plan: Care Closer to Home

To make our shared vision a reality, we need to **raise approximately \$30M through donations by Winter 2027.**

The majority of these donations will come from generous individuals like you.

Using your incredible charitable gesture as evidence of community desire and commitment, we will continue to negotiate a funding partnership with the Government of Alberta regarding the 2025, 2026, and 2027 GOA budgets.

The combined total will be put towards achieving four clearly defined goals:

Goal 1: More Cardiac Diagnostic Support

- Equipment upgrades at Chinook Regional Hospital and Medicine Hat Regional Hospital
- Creation of Echocardiography Labs at Chinook Regional Hospital and Medicine Hat Regional Hospital
- Purchase of cardiac MRI machine and two cardiac CT Scanners

RESULT: Southern Albertans receive accurate and earlier diagnoses of cardiac issues, improving patient outcomes.

Goal 2: More Critical Care and Inpatient Beds

- Cardiac / Intensive Care Beds at Chinook Regional Hospital
- Cardiac / Intensive Care Beds at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital

RESULT: More southern Albertan cardiac patients receive care locally, not in Calgary or even further away.

Goal 3: Improve Interventional Cardiac Services

- Purchase new cardiac equipment for Chinook Regional Hospital
- Create Cardiac Catheterization Lab at Chinook Regional Hospital
- Create Electrophysiology Lab at Chinook Regional Hospital

RESULT: Greatly reduced response times to life-threatening cardiac events for southern Albertans.

Goal 4: Increase Primary and Secondary Prevention

- Community-based cardiac health education all across southern Alberta

RESULT: Southern Albertans can make healthier lifestyle choices to mitigate the risk and growing prevalence of heart disease – solving many cardiac issues before they even occur.



Want to know more details about our plans for creating, developing, and redeveloping our hospitals, facilities and programs? Scan to visit our website.

Your Donations Make a Difference

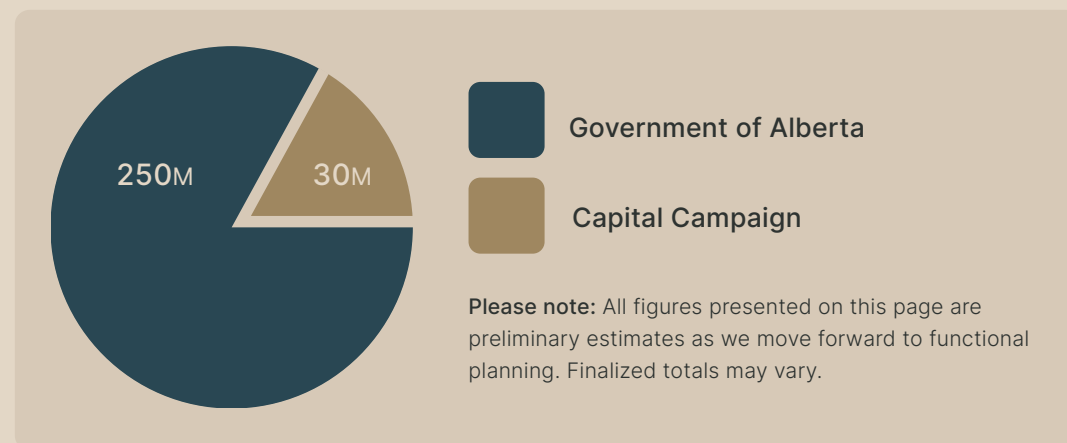
We know \$30M is an ambitious ask. But by fundraising this amount, and with the Government of Alberta contributing the remainder for the Southern Alberta Cardiac Centre of Excellence, just imagine what we can achieve.

Revitalized facilities and programs will go far beyond what they offer in a medical sense. They will offer **the hope of dignity and comfort** when undergoing the hardest of times. They will offer the chance for **families to spend more precious moments together**. And they will offer a **brighter future for our entire region**, letting people from all walks of life live longer, healthier, more fulfilling lives.

All because you chose to act.

Southern Alberta Cardiac Centre of Excellence

(In \$ Millions)



Who Benefits From Improved Cardiac Care in Southern Alberta?

Critically, Acutely, and Chronically ill

Chronic and acute sufferers of cardiac disease will have life-saving or life-lengthening care closer to home.



Caregivers

Caregivers of cardiac sufferers will have their burdens reduced and be able to spend more quality time with their loved one.



Children

The pediatric and neo-natal population of southern Alberta will be substantially impacted by this campaign with the addition of Echocardiography Labs at CRH and MHRH.



First Nations

Indigenous peoples have higher rates of cardiac death than non-Indigenous peoples – +30% for men and +76% for women – and no other population has worse outcomes.



Community

Anyone entering a hospital for cardiac or critical care will benefit from advanced services, expanded programs, infrastructure that meets current standards, and state-of-the-art technology.



Father Prince's Story

Father Prince M. is a chaplain and community leader working in Lethbridge who has been living with cardiac issues since 2004. He has had six angioplasties, one bypass surgery, and 10 stents implanted into his heart. His condition requires ongoing treatment, and in 2022 a particularly severe episode required immediate attention – immediate attention that was only available hours away in Calgary.



“I came to [Chinook Regional Hospital] by ambulance, but unfortunately there was no lab here to perform the necessary procedures. They stabilized me and tried to arrange for an air ambulance, but that didn't happen...”

Father Prince,
Cardiac Patient



Discover how Father Prince overcame that episode, and how the Southern Alberta Cardiac Centre of Excellence would improve his quality of life by visiting our website.

Chinook Regional Hospital and Medicine Hat Regional Hospital

How Will Funds Be Used?

The majority will be directed towards revitalizing and upgrading Chinook Regional Hospital and Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, as these two facilities serve all communities of SW and SE Alberta. Fully upgraded, these expanded and improved sites will be ready to serve as the true bastions of cardiac health our southern Alberta communities deserve, today AND tomorrow.

Critical purchases for Chinook Regional Hospital and Medicine Hat Regional Hospital:

Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory	\$20M (CRH)
Cardiac CT Scanner	\$5.0M (MHRH, CRH)
Cardiac MRI Machine	\$2.3M (CRH)
Electrophysiology Laboratory	\$10M (CRH)
Echocardiography Laboratories at both regional facilities	\$1.2M
Specialized ICU/CCU beds for expansion at both regional facilities	\$2.0M
Cardiac monitors for service expansion at both regional facilities	\$1.0M
Other specialized equipment (e.g., resuscitation monitors/defibrillators, mechanical ventilators, cardiac stress testing machines, patient lifts, transport stretchers, dialysis machines) at both regional facilities	\$13M



For fuller and more precise details of the expected additions and upgrades for each hospital, scan the QR Code.

Impactful Insight: Dr. Sayeh Zielke



Dr. Sayeh Zielke plays a vital role in this project as the Cardiac Sciences Physician Lead for the AHS South Zone. She earned her medical degree from the University of Ottawa, and completed her Internal Medicine and Cardiology training at the University of Calgary. She received additional specialization in advanced cardiac imaging at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and the Royal Brompton Hospital in London, UK. In 2013, she began her cardiology practice in Lethbridge, becoming the first permanent cardiologist in the South Zone. Her extensive experience and understanding of the specific needs of cardiac patients in southern Alberta is invaluable. Dr. Zielke's insights have been instrumental in shaping the project's direction, aiming for significant life-saving improvements in patient care for residents of southern Alberta.

Southern Alberta has the highest need for coordinated cardiac care, yet many patients need to be transported 2-3 hours away to the Foothills Hospital in Calgary. I felt called to serve this community with my cardiac training and medical skillset but also to help build critically needed services that would save and improve lives for generations to come. Over a decade later I am still here and have fallen in love with the area and its people. We are going to address the problem of having the highest cardiovascular death rate in the province and will do so not in 2 or 3 decades but in 2 or 3 years – we're going to move at the speed of cardiology."

Dr. Sayeh Zielke,
AHS South Zone Cardiac
Sciences Physician Lead
and Campaign Chair

In Her Own Words

"As I was finishing up my education and training at Oxford University Hospitals, I had a clear vision for my career as a cardiologist. My plan included returning to Calgary or a similarly large academic medical centre. However, during my training, I worked as a locum physician at the Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge and the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital periodically. That was over 12 years ago, but what I experienced during these visits astonished me and grieved my heart. I couldn't believe that this vibrant corridor of wealth and industry in agriculture, processing, manufacturing, oil and gas – with the 3rd and 6th most populous cities in the province – was so dramatically underserved in terms of access to life-saving cardiac care.



Every Beat Counts

The Spirit of Alberta

When we discuss a figure of \$30M, it can seem very overwhelming. You might ask yourself, “I’m just one person, group, or company – how can I add anything meaningful towards that sum?”

Here’s a fact we believe in strongly:

every dollar matters, just like every heartbeat of every member of our community matters.

Since Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation began in 1988, we’ve been very grateful to have the support of many organizations who donate larger sums. However, the driving force behind us always has and always will be the kindness of individuals of all ages from every walk of life. And believe us – that force is a force to be reckoned with.

Here’s some simple math to show how our collective action can really add up:

if every person in southern Alberta donated the price of one cup of coffee, every month for a year, we’d raise \$7,973,739.36 annually.

But that’s all it takes: the decision by all of us to say our friends, our families, and our loved ones deserve better. Together, dollar by dollar, heartbeat by heartbeat, we can climb this mountain. **And if there’s one thing Albertans know, it’s mountains.**

Current Cardiac Sciences Advisory Cabinet

Dr. Sayeh Zielke and the AHS South Zone leadership team are not alone in backing our campaign. Alongside Dr. Zielke’s expertise, we have assembled a formidable group of healthcare professionals, local government officials, academic heads, community leaders, and engaged citizens to champion our cause and drive it forward to the finish line.

Honorary Chairs	Ron Sakamoto	President and Owner, Gold and Gold Productions Ltd. CCMA Hall of Fame Member Alberta Order of Excellence
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	Paul Carolan	CEO HALO Air Ambulance, Medicine Hat
Chair	Sayeh Zielke	AHS South Zone Cardiac Science Physician Lead
Co-Chairs	Blaine Hyggen	Mayor, City of Lethbridge
	James Van Leeuwen	Rural Development Consultant, Pincher Creek and Area
Members	Linnsie Clark	Mayor, City of Medicine Hat
	Bob Dhillon	President/Founder & CEO Mainstreet Equity Corporation Honourable Consultant General for Belize in Canada Officer of the Order of Canada
	Rajko Dodic	Councillor, City of Lethbridge
	Laura Getkate	Patient Ambassador
	Don Hubble	Owner and Operator, Chin Ridge Seeds Ltd., Taber and Area
	Shahin Mehdizadeh	Chief of Police, City of Lethbridge
	Robert Sutherland	Professor and Director, Canadian Centre for Behavioral Neuroscience, University of Lethbridge
	Charles Weasel Head	Chancellor Emeritus, University of Lethbridge Former Blood Tribe Chief & Treaty 7 Grand Chief Member, Blood Tribe Department of Health Inc. Board of Directors Aboriginal Liaison, Red Cross Indigenous Knowledge Wisdom Centre Board in partnership with Treaty 6, 7, 8, Provincial & Federal Education Depts.
	Susan Witt	Family Physician, Medicine Hat
	Keith Ypma	Entrepreneur, Taber and Area
Ex-Officio	Dale Zielke	Entrepreneur, Lethbridge and Area
	Amber Darroch	Chair, Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation
	Crystal Elliott	Chief Executive Officer, Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation
	Heather Bach	Executive Director, Medicine Hat Regional Hospital Foundation
	Marilyn Bartoszyk	Director, Cardiac Sciences/Critical Care/Respiratory Health South Zone, Alberta Health Services

Southern Alberta Foundations

Together, We Can

Bringing improved cardiac care to southern Alberta isn't an isolated mission. There are many incredible Health Foundations across communities within southern Alberta who are united in endorsing this campaign. Reach out to the Foundation within your community to discuss more about how you can get involved and support our collective goal.

Your donations WILL make our shared goals a reality by the end of 2027. Within a few short years, you will have made an incredible impact for current and future generations.

AHS SOUTH ZONE

Crowsnest Pass Health Foundation

Windy Slopes Health Foundation

Cardston & District Health Foundation

Fort Macleod & District Health Foundation

Chinook Regional Hospital Foundation

Taber & District Health Foundation

Bassano & District Health Foundation

Brooks & District Health Foundation

Bow Island & District Health Foundation

Oyen & District Health Care Foundation

Medicine Hat & District Health Foundation

Every Beat Counts... Starting Now

Your donations can make our goals a reality by the end of 2027. That means within a few years, you could have made an incredible impact to the future of our community, a long-lasting achievement that will benefit our grandchildren as much as it benefits us.

How many lives will we have changed by that time?

How many **emergency interventions, critical surgeries, and successful hospital visits** will we have enabled for the old and the young, for men and women, for Indigenous and others?

How many **countless, invaluable moments between patients and their families will we have allowed to take place in comfort and security**, so very close to home?

We know this isn't just a pipe dream because **our Foundation and the healthcare professionals we serve** are proud to stand as the beating heart of our community – a community filled with people like you.

Together we WILL make a difference:

Address the #1 cause of death

in southern Alberta and increase the short-term health of our friends, family, and loved ones who experience an acute cardiac event

Increase the long-term health

of our entire community, no matter their age

Keep the members of our community closer to home

as they receive cardiac treatment – because home is where the heart beats

Empower our economy

with a healthier workforce ready to work harder, do more, and live longer, happier lives

Build a brighter future for generations to come

so your legacy gift can have enduring value

Your Help is Critical

The Highway 3 corridor of southern Alberta is a major economic engine for the province and the nation. We are growing in people and industry, and the fact is plain to see: our current cardiac infrastructure cannot and will not keep up.

So, even though it may seem like just another day, we can choose to make it something more. We can choose to pursue the future that we need and deserve. We know we can afford to do it. **Moreover, we can't afford NOT to do this.**

Southern Alberta's hospitals have always been there for you. **Will you be there for them, too?**

Phone (403) 388-6001 to talk with someone about making a missional, critical, and tax-deductible donation.

From CRHF's CEO



Crystal Elliott,
CEO, Chinook
Regional Hospital
Foundation

“Together, our Foundation and our community have already done so much. Today, we’re asking for just a little bit more. We need your voices to echo our message of heart health and cardiac care for southern Alberta so that they cannot be ignored. We need your generosity to fuel our initiatives, ensuring that our communities are no longer left behind. And we need your compassion to make sure families can stay together while undergoing treatment, that beloved friends and relatives live longer and healthier lives, and that long drives along the road less travelled are a thing of the past.

Your involvement in this campaign can and will make a difference. Why? Because we’re Albertans with a challenge put in front of us. History proves that when we need to, we make it happen. So, let’s roll up our sleeves and make every heartbeat count.”

The Road to Southern Alberta's Cardiac Centre of Excellence



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