





MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER OF ALBERTA

On behalf of the Government of Alberta, welcome to the Alberta First Responders Association (AFRA) 2nd annual First Responders Appreciation Gala.

First responders help us in some of the worst moments of our lives and work every day to build stronger, more resilient communities. The sacrifices they make come at a cost, and it is always an honour to have the chance to express our gratitude to them and the loved ones who support them. This gala, and the mental health conference before it, are great ways for attendees to learn together, connect with colleagues and community members, and help give something back.

Thank you to the AFRA and the sponsors who have made this special evening possible. I appreciate your vision to create a network of support for first responders and their families.

Best wishes for an enjoyable evening.



Danielle Smith

Honourable Danielle Smith, Premier of Alberta





Alberta First Responders Association
Empowering mental health support and suicide prevention

www.ourAFRA.ca



Alberta's population is expected to reach over 5 million people in 2025. It is estimated that over 1% of that population (over 50,000) is past or present First Responders. How do we ensure we have the support systems in place that they need?



About Us:

The Alberta First Responders Association (AFRA) began as a Peer Support private group on Facebook on February 28, 2023. It has quickly grown into an active community of over 2,600 Alberta First Responders. It now operates as a not-for-profit advocacy organization.

Round Table



Symposium

**Conference Room #6, FANTASYLAND HOTEL
17700 - 87 Ave NW Edmonton AB, Canada T5T 4V4**

The AFRA Round Table Symposium:

The AFRA Round Table Symposium brings together government agencies, charities, nonprofit organizations and key first responder stakeholders to collaborate on ways to improve the implementation of practical and immediate solutions for mental health support and suicide prevention for all Alberta First Responders on a priority basis. The focus is to facilitate meaningful dialogue that results in better and quicker solutions and support for the first responder community.

Participants:

There is no cost and no remuneration to participate in the AFRA Round Table Symposium. The participants involved believe that significant improvements can be made to the current mental health support system for First Responders by having meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders.

Who are First Responders?

The AFRA considers First Responders to be individuals who are or have been employed by or volunteered with an organization governed by a Code of Conduct, which provides operational oversight. These individuals, by the nature of their work, prioritize the safety and/or well-being of the general public above their own.

What is your role?

Our focus is to build an Alberta First Responder community based approach to mental health support and suicide prevention. As individuals in this process, here are our roles:

Panelists: Initiate topic conversations, share their professional insights on the topic and engage with delegates to help establish key points to document.

Moderators: Help prompt conversations with questions, help keep conversations on topic, and manage time. They help us build upon and focus our conversations so we can establish key take-aways.

Delegates: Contribute to conversations with relevant insights through open mic sessions, online polls, online surveys and anonymous comment cards at the end of each session.

The Key Focus Topics:

Our prior events have shown the value of collaboration to create a better first responder community in Alberta. The AFRA Round Table Symposium discussions create a documented mental health support plan as a community. The Key Focus Topics are listed below with potential discussion questions.

Topic #1 - What are the challenges to accessing funding for support programs?

- what funding is currently available for mental health support programs?
- what kinds of programs are eligible for funding and which are not?
- how can we improve the way support programs access funding through the government.

Topic #2 - How do we effectively identify priorities in a timely manner?

- how do we define priorities in terms of mental health support and suicide prevention?
- is there a way to use current resources to identify problems in support geographically?
- as an example, the AFRA is looking to create a centralized support database for the community to access. Does this make sense? Is this needed? Is it a priority?
- is the sharing of unified best practices as a community a priority?

Topic #3 - What are the hurdles to implementing solutions?

- are personal, organizational and occupational stigmas an issue?
- rural vs urban challenges
- isolation vs highly staffed organizational challenges
- how do third party, peer support and other third party programs fit in with existing organizational support systems?
- how do we break down organization silos and embrace a community approach?

Goals:

These moderated discussions will create the template for a provincial “report card” on how we are doing for mental health support and suicide prevention as a first responder community. This document which records all key take-aways from the conversations will be shared with all participants, their respective organizations and the AFRA community. The ultimate goal is to build upon best practices and implement solutions on a priority basis.

Participating Organizations:

Government of Alberta -OHS Prevention Services Branch

is dedicated to preventing work-related injuries, illnesses and fatalities by working with employers and workers. The Supporting Psychological Health in First Responders (SPHIFR) grant program focuses on Alberta's firefighters, police officers, paramedics, sheriffs, corrections officers and emergency workers who often deal with stressful, dangerous and traumatic situations. This stress has a negative impact on first responders and emergency workers and they experience post-traumatic stress injuries (PTSI) at significantly higher rates than the general population.

<https://www.alberta.ca/first-responders-mental-health-grants>



Boots on the Ground Alberta (BOTG-AB) is the first chapter of BOTG. Their aim is to provide an anonymous helpline specifically for First Responders and Military Members based in Alberta. They are trained volunteer professionals. They are not therapists. Their central goal is to actively listen to First Responders on their 24 hour helpline. Colleagues phone their helpline when they are in need of having difficult conversations, when they are in despair, when they are going through hidden trauma, and when they are temporarily away from the job due to work related stress or injury. BOTG has no call display and they do not judge the caller.

www.botgalberta.com



Driving Forward is a registered not-for-profit based out of High Level, AB. Their program focuses on using the power of sport to help build healing through mindfulness and resiliency techniques, helping our military, first responders and their families in the journey toward post traumatic growth.

<http://www.drivingforward.ca/>



ALBERTA FIRST RESPONDERS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 1ST 2025 FANTASYLAND HOTEL

ROUND TABLE SYMPOSIUM

SESSION # 1

FUNDING PROGRAMS WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING
FUNDING FOR SUPPORT PROGRAMS?



Karina Thomas
Panelist

MSc, PhD Occupational Disease Scientific Lead Research, Evaluation, and
Programs OHS Prevention Services Branch

The "Supporting Psychological Health in First Responders" grant program aims to fund projects that enhance mental health support for first responders. We'll discuss past funded projects, challenges faced by recipients, and the application process. A call for applications will open in late March or early April.

Chris Scheetz
Moderator

Ret. CISN FM Radio Host, 30 years.



Who should attend? NONPROFITS and Charities who help first responders.

For more information: www.ourafra.ca jerryg@ourafra.ca

ALBERTA FIRST RESPONDERS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 1ST 2025 FANTASYLAND HOTEL

ROUND TABLE SYMPOSIUM

*SESSION # 2 IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES. HOW DO WE EFFECTIVELY IDENTIFY
PRIORITIES IN A TIMELY MANNER?*

The AFRA Round Table Symposium unites key stakeholders to develop practical solutions for mental health support and suicide prevention for Alberta First Responders, focusing on faster, more effective support.



Craig Hrynychuk
Panelist

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AMHSA

Mo Fahad Shaukat
Panelist

BOOTS ON THE GROUND AB



Kent Morrison CTV Edm

MODERATOR

For more information:

www.ourafra.ca

ALBERTA FIRST RESPONDERS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 1ST 2025 FANTASYLAND HOTEL

ROUND TABLE SYMPOSIUM

SESSION # 3 – CHALLENGES WHAT ARE THE HURDLES TO IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS?

The AFRA Round Table Symposium unites key stakeholders to develop practical solutions for mental health support and suicide prevention for Alberta First Responders, focusing on faster, more effective support.



Diana Festejo
Panelist

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LEGACY PLACE SOCIETY

Dr Kelly Dean Schwartz
Panelist

FAMILY FIRST RESPONDER INC



Carole Anne Devaney –
Global News

MODERATOR

For more information: www.ourafra.ca

AFRA Round Table Symposium

March 1, 2025

Saturday

Itinerary

8:00am

Registration

8:20am

Opening Address

8:30am

Topic #1 - ***Funding Programs***

What are the challenges to accessing funding for support programs?

~Panelist:

*Karina Thomas, MSc, PhD
Occupational Disease Scientific Lead
Research, Evaluation, and Programs
OHS Prevention Services Branch*

~Moderated by:

Chris Scheetz – Retired Radio Announcer ~ 35 years CISN

9:45am

Break

10:00am

Topic #2 – Identifying Priorities

How do we effectively identify priorities in a timely manner?

~Panelist:

*Craig Hrynychuk – CAO, A.M.H.S.A.
Mo Fahad Shaikat – President, Boots on the Ground AB*

~Moderated by:

Kent Morrison – CTV News

11:30pm

Lunch Break

12:30pm

Topic #3 – Challenges

What are the hurdles to implementing solutions?

~Panelist:

*Diana Festejo - Executive Director Legacy Place Society
Dr. Kelly Schwartz – Director Family First Responder Inc.*

~Moderated by:

Carole Anne Devaney – Global News

2:00pm

Break

2:15pm

Final Overview with Q&A

Panelists highlight key best practices and take-aways with stakeholders.

3:00pm

End of Symposium

4:30pm

Gala Event – Cocktails start

AFRA Round Table Symposium Delegate List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Category</u>
1. Jerry Galliford	President	Alberta First Responders Association	NFP
2. Mo Fahad Shaukat	President	Boots on the Ground – Alberta	NFP
3. Sue Harvey	President	Driving Foreward	NFP
4. Stacie Bourdon	Director	CX Solid Foundation	NFP
5. Karlina Shultz	Director	CX Solid Foundation	NFP
6. Theus Svoboda	Director	CX Solid Foundation	NFP
7. Karina Thomas, MSc, PhD	Lead	OHS Prevention Services Branch	Government
8. Tim Carson	CEO	A.A.G.S.	NFP
9. Dr. Kelly Schwartz RPsych	Director	Family First Responder Inc.	NFP
10. Daniel Sundahl (DanSun)	President	The Recovery and Resiliency Foundation	NFP
11. Craig Hrynychuk	CAO	A.M.H.S.A.	NFP
12. Nicole LeBlanc	Services Agent	Veterans Affairs Canada	Government
13. Julie Keates	Case Manager	Veterans Affairs Canada	Government
14. Si Liew	Director	NAAAP	NFP
15. Janet Wiszowaty	Retired	RCMP	NFP
16. Tyler Ellsworth	MCpl	4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group	1 st Responder
17. Warren Cave	CD	The Rolling Barrage PTSD Foundation (Army - Retired)	NFP
18. Theresa Traverse	CD	The Rolling Barrage PTSD Foundation (Navy – Retired)	NFP
19. Phil Wolfrey	CD	The Rolling Barrage PTSD Foundation (Army & Alberta Sheriff – Retired)	NFP
20. Diana Festejo	Executive Director	Legacy Place Society For First Responders	NFP
21. Melissa Osborne	Clinic Manager	CannaConnect Edmonton	Clinic
22. Andy Social	Veteran Ambassador	CannaConnect Edmonton	Clinic
23. Dario Barahona	Founder	Veteran Visions (Military Veteran & Social Worker)	Enterprise
24. Kelly Campbell	Sergeant	Edmonton Police Services Employee & Family Assistance Section	1 st Responder

25.	Caroline Cheng	Mental Health Educator	RCMP – Alberta & NWT	1 st Responder
26.	Gwen Krawczy	Manager	RCMP – Divisional Wellness	1 st Responder
27.	David S. Blackburn	Senior Manager	Prospect Human Services (Military Employment Services Division)	Enterprise
28.	Pattie Atwell	Team Lead	Prospect Human Services (Forces @ Work Program)	Enterprise
29.	Erin Blackmore	Observer	Alberta Women in Public Safety (AWIPS)	NFP
30.	Lacey Teske Allison	Observer	Alberta Women in Public Safety (AWIPS)	NFP
31.	Lauren Cleveland	Founder	To Serve and Connect Society of Canada	NFP
32.	Deven Kennedy	Founder	Resilience Through Fitness (Active First Responder)	Enterprise
33.	Jay Millante	Superintendent	City of Edmonton Community Standards Branch	Government
34.	Matthew Fitzgerald	Founder	F3 Ranch Alberta (Active First Responder)	NFP
35.	Michael Skinner	Provincial Coordinator Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta and Centre for Suicide Prevention	OSI-CAN AB Peer Initiative	NFP
36.	Megan Beatch	Director	WCB – Millard Health	Enterprise
37.	Kyle Schalk	Psychology Lead	WCB – Millard Health	Enterprise
38.	Joanne Pawluk	Health Care Consultant	WCB	Enterprise
39.	Lauran Chittim	Health Care Consultant	WCB	Enterprise
40.	Gina Savoie	Manager	WCB - Special Care & Psychological Support Services	Enterprise
41.	Jennifer McKinnon	Supervisor	WCB - Special Care Services	Enterprise
42.	Andrea Hunt	Director	WCB - Special Care Services & Health Care Strategy	Enterprise
43.	Jason Luchko	Founder	mPath Focus (Retired First Responder)	Enterprise
43.	Peter Vermeulen	Consultant Professional Practice	Recovery Alberta (Addiction & Mental Health, Edmonton Zone.)	Government
44.	Tim Williams	Chair	MacEwan University (Public Safety & Justice Studies)	Educational
45.	Doug Johnson, M.A.	Instructor & Researcher	MacEwan University (Public Safety & Justice Studies)	Educational

Free Gala Tickets for all Symposium participants provided by
The Kinsmen Club of St Albert.

ALBERTA
FIRST RESPONDERS

PROTECTION HONOU

YOU ARE INVITED!
This Event is Open to the Public!

March 1, 2025

2nd Annual Gala
DINNER

ALBERTA FIRST RESPONDERS FUNDRAISER

Hosted by **FANTASYLAND**
HOTEL

IN SUPPORT OF

little warriors

DRIVING FORWARD

BOOTS ON THE GROUND
Peer Support for First Responders

For more information go to www.ourAFRA.ca

They save lives, change lives and make a world of difference.
Let's share a meal together and celebrate them!