

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS: Healthy Aging and Continuing Care in Alberta

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Aging in Place Strategy Implemented: Part of Six-Point Plan for Health

An additional \$20 million is being provided to expand long term care and home care in Alberta, and to support a new strategic plan for healthy aging in the province. The initiative is part of government's broader Six-Point Plan for health and brings the total funding increase for long term care to \$40 million over two years.

The new strategic plan for healthy aging, *Strategic Directions and Future Actions: Healthy Aging and Continuing Care in Alberta*, will enable the health system to provide Albertans and especially seniors with the health services they need as they age.

The strategic plan is the Alberta government's comprehensive response to the final report of the Long Term Care Review, entitled *Healthy Aging: New Directions for Care*. The plan advocates a new way of providing services to help Albertans "age in place" that places a priority on people remaining in their homes with supportive arrangements enabling them to remain healthy in the community.

"Our government supports the vision of 'healthy aging' as a priority goal for the province," says Health and Wellness Minister Halvar Jonson. "We are following through on our commitment to provide more accessible and comprehensive long term care and home care services to Albertans who need them."

Of the \$40 million, \$37.5 million has been allocated to regional health authorities to enhance home care, long term care, and coordinated access services. The funds will also be used to expand care services in supportive housing, health promotion and prevention services for the

elderly, services for persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and comprehensive care for the elderly.

Funding has also been provided for in-service education in continuing care, and a new provincial Alzheimer's initiative that will include education and training for health care providers, and support for caregivers. It will also develop and evaluate innovative models of care for persons with Alzheimer's disease in the community and residential setting.

"The new strategic plan for healthy aging is a prime example of how Alberta leads the nation in developing and implementing innovative approaches to meet the long term care needs of Albertans," says Jonson. "I am also encouraged that support for the recommendations of *Healthy Aging* report has been very strong from the both the general public and key health stakeholders."

"We are pleased by the many recommendations that are made to improve the health, health system and well-being of seniors," said Wanda Cree, Chair, Seniors Community Health Council. "We commend the committee's comprehensive and thorough coverage."

The new strategic plan includes healthy aging initiatives in which government will work with health authorities, professional associations, voluntary, private and community agencies to develop health promotion, injury and disease prevention, and empowerment programs and services for older Albertans. It identifies a total of nine strategic directions including: healthy aging; continuing care services; coordinated access; supportive housing; home care and community care; regeneration of long term

care centres; needs for persons with Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and special needs; comprehensive care for the elderly and primary health care; and human resources (see below).

“The strategic plan recognizes that where people live and their ability to maintain contacts with family and friends are all part of healthy aging,” explains Jonson.

“Communities that combine care and housing and that create barrier-free environments enable seniors to remain at home longer. As a result, seniors don’t have to move to a long-term care facility before they really need to.”

In response to the final report of the Long Term Care Review, government has already introduced the following initiatives:

- In November 1999:
 - \$265.8 million was allocated for capital investment for 658 long term beds, and 1,325 replacement and upgraded beds.

- \$10 million was provided to the Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative to expand supportive housing spaces in rural areas.
- Up to \$4 million to provide the drug Aricept to assist Alzheimer patients.
- \$15 million was provided to address immediate pressure points, enhance home care and long term care services, and expand pre-service and in-service staff training for health care workers.
- In January 1999, \$3 million was placed into a palliative drug program for people receiving palliative care in their home.

The Long Term Care Review was announced by Jonson in November 1997. The review was guided by the Long Term Care Policy Advisory Committee, chaired by Dave Broda, MLA, Redwater, with Karen Kryczka, MLA, Calgary West, as vice-chair. Other committee members represented seniors, physicians, health authorities, and provincial organizations.

Strategic Directions for Healthy Aging

The Aging in Place strategy identifies nine strategic directions and future actions for government to follow as it works, in cooperation with Alberta’s health authorities and key health stakeholders, to implement recommendations of the Long Term Care Review. The following strategic directions were developed based on the results of stakeholder and public response to the final report of the Long Term Care Review.

1 Healthy Aging:

Promote “healthy aging” as a priority goal for Alberta to ensure that Albertans are healthy and independent as they age

ACTIONS:

- Develop a healthy aging strategy outlining approaches to promote healthy aging for older adults.
- Promote the development of senior friendly

communities with barrier-free environments and support networks to assist Albertans to age in the community.

- Promote public awareness and discussion, and explore ethical issues on seniors’ health.
- Review transportation policies to assist Albertans to have easier access to health services.

2 Continuing Care Services

Modify and enhance continuing care services to respond to the aging population with the goal of supporting Albertans to “age in place” in the community

ACTIONS:

- Review ten-year service plans submitted by the regions to ensure continuing care service needs of residents of all regions are addressed.

- Strive toward excellence and improvement of continuing care services by improving Alberta benchmarks for continuing care services in comparison with other provinces and countries.
- Refine models to project future service needs and costs.

3 Coordinated access

Implement “coordinated access” province-wide to ensure that there is no barrier to Albertans in receiving continuing care services

ACTIONS:

- Implement a demonstration project to validate a new assessment tool.
- Implement the new standardized assessment tool province-wide after testing and validation.
- Implement policies for “coordinated access.”

4 Supportive Housing

Expand care services in supportive housing to meet the needs of the new aging population

ACTIONS:

- Develop policies and standards for services delivered in supportive housing through a multi-sector Health and Housing Partnership Committee.
- Implement the Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative to create additional supportive housing spaces.

5 Home Care and Community Care

Expand home care and community care services to meet the increased needs of Albertans in the community

ACTIONS:

- Review and amend home care policies regarding service limits, exemptions and flexibility for self managed care.
- Continue implementation of the palliative care drug program for palliative clients in the community.
- Implement a short term home intravenous therapy program for clients in the community with parenteral anti-infectives as the first priority.

The action plan for continuing care in Alberta includes:

- 1 Healthy Aging:** Promote “healthy aging” as a priority goal for Alberta to ensure that Albertans are healthy and independent as they age
- 2 Continuing Care Services:** Modify and enhance continuing care services to respond to the aging population with the goal of supporting Albertans to “age in place” in the community
- 3 Coordinated access:** Implement “coordinated access” province-wide to ensure that there is no barrier to Albertans in receiving continuing care services
- 4 Supportive Housing:** Expand care services in supportive housing to meet the needs of the new aging population
- 5 Home Care and Community Care:** Expand home care and community care services to meet the increased needs of Albertans in the community
- 6 Regeneration of long term care centres:** Regenerate long term care centres to meet the needs of residents with high and complex health needs
- 7 Needs of persons with Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and other special needs:** Develop provincial and regional plans to meet the special needs of clients with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia
- 8 Comprehensive Care for the Elderly and Primary Health Care:** Develop comprehensive care for the elderly to address the special needs of older adults with multiple and complex health problems
- 9 Human Resources:** Enhance the skills and increase the supply of health care workers in the delivery of health services for an aging population

6 Regeneration of long term care centres

Regenerate long term care centres to meet the needs of residents with high and complex health needs

ACTIONS:

- Phase out three and four bed wards by the year 2006.
- Develop new and innovative models of continuing care centres to meet the needs of the new aging population.
- Improve the physical conditions of long term care centres as a priority for provincial capital investment.
- Regional health authorities and care centres will focus delivery of care centre programs on residents with high and complex care needs.
- Human resource and training strategies will be developed to improve quality of care for long term care centres.

7 Needs of persons with Alzheimer's disease, dementia and other special needs

Develop provincial and regional plans to meet the special needs of clients with Alzheimer's disease and dementia

ACTIONS:

- Form an implementation committee to oversee the development and implementation of the province-wide plan to address the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
- Develop a plan to address the mental health needs of older adults.

8 Comprehensive Care for the Elderly and Primary Health Care

Develop comprehensive care for the elderly to address the special needs of older adults with multiple and complex health problems

ACTIONS:

- Develop and implement comprehensive care for the elderly which includes enhanced geriatric assessment, coordination of acute care services, community services and discharge planning.
- Develop a primary health care strategy.

- Sponsor a conference on medication use by the elderly and develop strategies to address appropriate drug use by older people.

9 Human Resources

Enhance the skills and increase the supply of health care workers in the delivery of health services for an aging population

ACTIONS:

- Work with Alberta Learning and training institutions to ensure that in-service and pre-service training programs for personal care aides and home support workers are more affordable to students.
- Develop and enhance in-service training for professionals and nonprofessional health care workers.
- Increase geriatric medicine training spaces and geriatric nurse specialists spaces.
- Project health workforce needs and develop recruitment and retention strategies to respond to the needs of an aging population.

Supports to Implement the Vision:

Alberta Health and Wellness will review and implement the changes necessary in areas such as legislation, information systems, standards setting and accountability measures to facilitate the implementation of the above strategic directions.

Next Steps:

- Multi-stakeholder project groups will be formed to develop and implement the above strategic directions.
- Progress reports will be issued regularly to provide updates on the implementation.

For more information on the Long Term Care Review, contact:

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