

ALBERTA SENIORS 2003-2004 ANNUAL REPORT



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The Public Accounts of Alberta are prepared in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Government Accountability Act*. The Public Accounts consist of the annual reports of each of the 24 ministries.

The annual report of the Government of Alberta released June 29, 2004 contains the Minister of Finance's accountability statement, the consolidated financial statements of the Province and a comparison of the actual performance results to desired results set out in the government's business plan, including the *Measuring Up* report.

This annual report of the Ministry of Seniors contains the Minister's accountability statement, the audited consolidated financial statements of the ministry and a comparison of actual performance results to desired results set out in the ministry business plan.

This ministry annual report also includes:

- **the financial statements of entities making up the ministry including the Department of Seniors, and the Alberta Social Housing Corporation for which the Minister is responsible, and**
- **other financial information as required by the *Financial Administration Act* and *Government Accountability Act*, either as separate reports or as a part of the financial statements, to the extent that the ministry has anything to report.**

Minister's Accountability Statement

The Ministry's Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2004, was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Government Accountability Act* and the government's accounting policies. All of the government's policy decisions as at September 13, 2004 with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Original signed by
Stan Woloshyn
Minister of Seniors

I am privileged to present the Alberta Seniors annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004.

The 2003-04 fiscal year presented many challenges and opportunities, with some exciting new initiatives and additional areas of responsibility. This annual report documents many of these activities and highlights our achievements and results.

For example, we were able to protect lower-income seniors from increased long-term care accommodation fees by providing them with additional benefits. The extra assistance ensures that they have enough money left over for personal expenses after they have paid for their room and board. The daily room and board rates, which had not been adjusted since 1994, provided a much-needed boost to operators' ability to maintain high-quality accommodation services.

We have made remarkable strides in our goal of providing affordable, stable housing to lower-income Alberta families and people with special needs. Through a variety of capital funding initiatives, the ministry has helped reduce the shortage of affordable housing, and created new opportunities for Albertans having difficulties finding an affordable place to live.

For example, through the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program, a federal-provincial program, Alberta approved funding for 872 new affordable housing units throughout the province. At the same time, seven new projects under the Seniors Supportive Housing Initiative and the Healthy Aging Partnership Programs resulted in 170 new units for supportive housing.

The other side of affordable housing is shelters for homeless people. Transfer of responsibility for several homeless shelter contracts to the Ministry of Seniors brought all publicly subsidized housing within one ministry, and also helped our long-term strategy of helping homeless people become more self-sufficient. This strategy was also advanced through the construction of transitional housing, thanks to funding contributions by the ministry and communities. While emergency shelters provide for people's immediate needs, transitional housing enables them to move into longer-term, more stable housing where they can be self-sufficient.



Message from the Minister

Finally, in 2003-04, Alberta Seniors welcomed the transfer of the Office of the Public Guardian to the ministry. This is an important addition to the ministry, as more than half the people under the Public Guardian's care are seniors. The Office of the Public Guardian provides adult guardianship services, and also assists Albertans to prepare for their futures by writing personal directives. I am pleased to say that throughout the transition period of the transfer, the high quality of service continued and clients experienced no disruption.

This year has been marked by several notable achievements. Thank you to all the individuals, organizations, and stakeholder groups, as well as ministry staff who contributed to the ministry's significant accomplishments. I am proud to serve as Alberta's Minister of Seniors.

Original signed by
Stan Woloshyn
Minister of Seniors

Management's Responsibility for Reporting

The Ministry of Seniors includes the Department of Seniors, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and the Alberta Social Housing Corporation.

The executives of the individual entities within the Ministry have the primary responsibility and accountability for the respective entities. Collectively, the executives ensure the Ministry complies with all relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Ministry business plans, annual reports, performance results and the supporting management information are integral to the government's fiscal and business plans, annual report, quarterly reports and other financial and performance reporting.

Responsibility for the integrity and objectivity of the consolidated financial statements and performance results for the Ministry rests with the Minister of Seniors. Under the direction of the Minister, I oversee the preparation of the Ministry's annual report, including consolidated financial statements and performance results. The consolidated financial statements and the performance results, of necessity, include amounts that are based on estimates and judgments. The consolidated financial statements are prepared in accordance with the government's stated accounting policies.

As Deputy Minister, in addition to program responsibilities, I establish and maintain the Ministry's financial administration and reporting functions. The Ministry maintains systems of financial management and internal control which give consideration to costs, benefits, and risks that are designed to:

- provide reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, executed in accordance with prescribed legislation and regulations, and properly recorded so as to maintain accountability of public money,
- provide information to manage and report on performance,
- safeguard the assets and properties of the province under Ministry administration,
- provide Executive Council, Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Seniors any information needed to fulfill their responsibilities, and
- under the *Government Accountability Act* facilitate preparation of Ministry business plans and annual reports required.

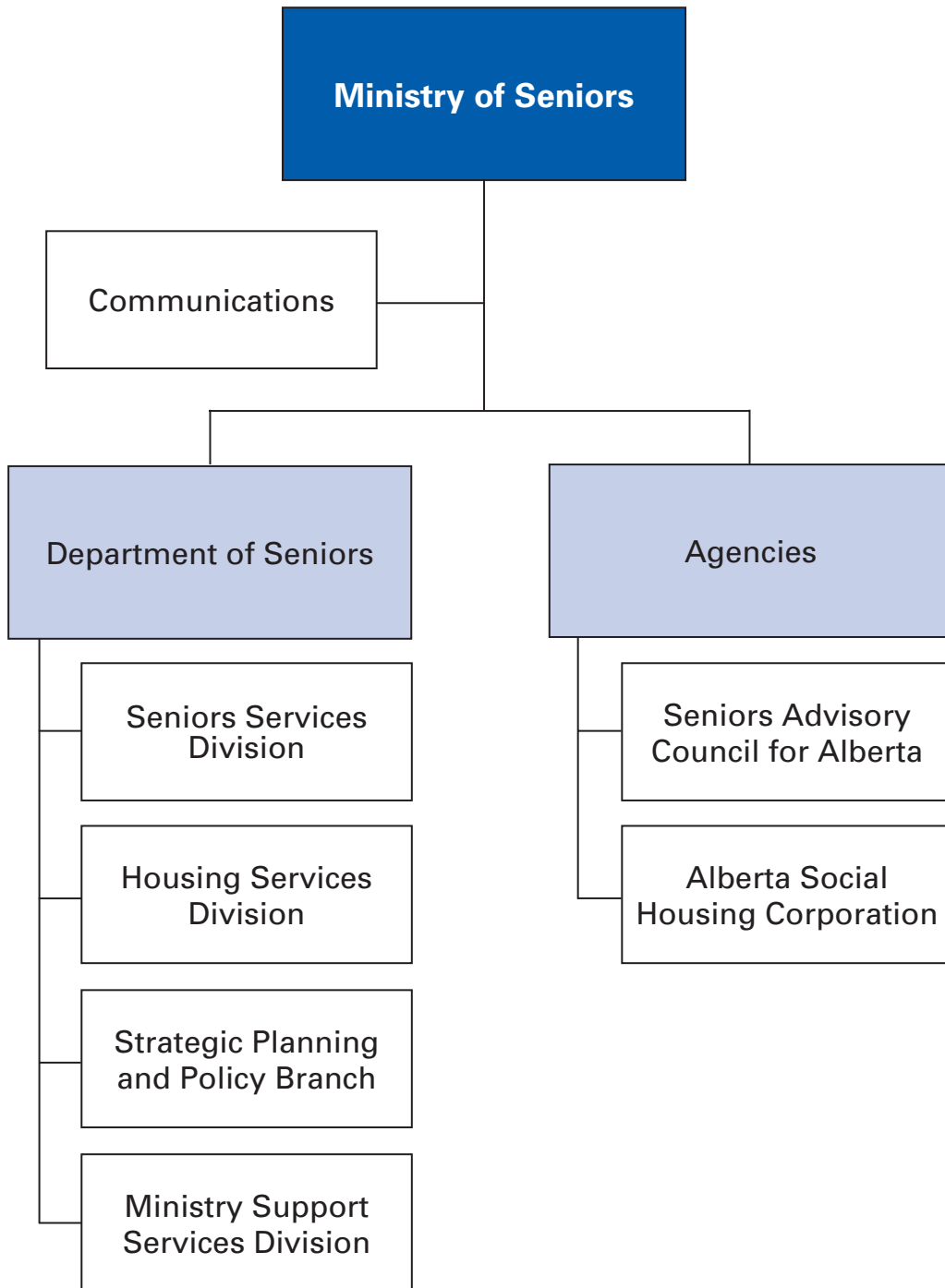
Management's Responsibility for Reporting

In fulfilling my responsibilities for the ministry, I have relied, as necessary, on the executive of the individual entities within the ministry.

Original signed by
Ken J. Wilson
Deputy Minister
August 20, 2004

OVERVIEW

Chart of Ministry Entities



Alberta Seniors' mission for 2003-04 was: *To provide services, programs and information that contribute to the well-being and independence of seniors, Albertans in need of housing supports, and other clients of the ministry.*

The ministry had three core businesses:

1. Provide financial support and information services to seniors
2. Support the management of and enable the provision of family, special purpose and seniors housing
3. Provide planning and policy development for housing, seniors and Alberta's aging population.

THE DEPARTMENT

In 2003-04, Alberta Seniors was composed of Seniors Services Division, Housing Services Division, Ministry Support Services Division, Strategic Planning & Policy Branch, and Communications.

Seniors Services Division

The Seniors Services Division is responsible for delivering financial support programs to lower-income seniors; information to the public on seniors' programs and services; strategic planning and research; and substitute decision-making for dependent adults. It consists of five branches and also has administrative responsibility for the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta.

The Seniors Financial Assistance Branch administers the Alberta Seniors Benefit program under the *Seniors Benefit Act*. Through this program, the branch delivers income-based, monthly cash benefits to eligible seniors and determines the level of exemption from Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan premiums for lower-income seniors. To ensure that supports continue to be targeted at seniors most in need of assistance, the branch monitors issues and undertakes research activities relating to seniors' financial situations.

The Special Needs Assistance for Seniors Branch administers the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program. This is an income-based program that provides a lump-sum cash payment to eligible lower-income seniors who demonstrate that they are experiencing financial difficulties or unexpected expenses above their basic living requirements.

An Operational Overview

The amount received is based on income and the amount of an applicant's allowable extraordinary expenses.

The Client and Information Services Branch provides information to Albertans, focusing on the Alberta Seniors Benefit, Special Needs Assistance for Seniors, and other ministry programs. Information is provided through the Alberta Seniors Information Line, the Alberta Seniors website, Seniors Information Services Offices, and correspondence. The branch provides additional information to seniors, their families, caregivers, and service providers by producing publications such as the annual *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide* (formerly titled *Programs and Services for Seniors*), and promotes knowledge and understanding of seniors and their contributions. The branch also provides support to the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta.

The Planning and Research Branch works with other government departments, other levels of government, and stakeholders to ensure that seniors' issues are considered in government and non-government initiatives. The branch monitors demographic, economic and social trends; undertakes planning for Alberta's aging population; and provides information to assist the ministry in developing responses to issues affecting seniors. The branch coordinates federal/provincial/territorial activities relating to seniors.

The Office of the Public Guardian was transferred in 2003 to Alberta Seniors from Alberta Human Resources and Employment and incorporated into the Seniors Services Division. The Office of the Public Guardian administers the *Dependent Adults Act* and the *Personal Directives Act*. Within the terms of the *Dependent Adults Act*, the Office of the Public Guardian provides direct guardianship services to approximately 1,800 adult Albertans and provides consultation for more than 8,000 Albertans who act as private guardians for family members or friends. The Office of the Public Guardian provides public education promoting use of personal directives, and acts as decision-maker of last resort under the *Mental Health Act*.

Housing Services Division

The Housing Services Division ensures that provincially-owned and/or -supported housing is effectively managed by local housing providers, non-profit organizations, and municipalities; and provides housing for lower-income families, individuals with special needs, and seniors in accordance with the *Alberta Housing Act*. It also manages the assets of the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. These services are delivered through three branches.

The Housing Development Program Delivery Branch provides strategic research, analysis, planning, and support on a broad range of family and special purpose housing issues. The branch also manages the Affordable Housing Program, Remote Housing, and provincial homeless funding, and administers shelter contracts. It is responsible for administration of housing programs in Fort McMurray, and for the Gunn Centre, a government-owned and operated facility for men with mental health and addiction disorders.

The Housing Operating Program Delivery Branch assists local governments, not-for-profit and private sector organizations in providing affordable and appropriate housing options for lower-income earners and persons with special needs. The branch achieves this through administering operating and capital funding; administering ministry-owned properties for the provision of emergency, transitional, and other forms of lower-income housing accommodation; and delivering information, advice and referral services on tenancy, maintenance, and security for residents in lower-income housing. The branch also administers the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, and provides central support services to the Housing Services Division, including financial administration and coordinating the division's legislation development, business planning and reporting requirements for all housing programs.

The Housing Services South Branch is responsible for supporting housing programs in southern Alberta. The branch assists local government, not-for-profit and private sector organizations, developers, and the public at large in providing affordable and appropriate housing options for lower-income earners, persons with special needs, and homeless persons. Initiatives include the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program, Homelessness Initiative, emergency shelters, and

accommodation for lower-income seniors, families, and single and special needs households. The branch also directly manages the Sunalta Shelter for homeless men in Calgary.

Strategic Planning and Policy Branch

Strategic Planning and Policy Branch coordinates ministry-wide planning, reporting and policy research requirements. It leads the ministry's business planning; performance measurement and annual reporting activities, and coordinates the ministry's contribution to the Government of Alberta business plan and annual report. In addition, it works with Seniors Services Division and Housing Services Division to develop responses to issues relating to seniors and housing, and coordinates ministry-wide initiatives, such as legislative and regulatory reviews.

Ministry Support Services Division

Strategic Financial Services

Strategic Financial Services provides support to the ministry with expertise in the areas of financial planning and analysis, budgeting, financial payment systems and processes, financial accountability, and financial reporting.

Strategic Information Technology

Strategic Information Technology provides expertise in developing and maintaining IT systems that are critical to the success of the ministry in delivering its programs and services.

Strategic Office Support

Strategic Office Support coordinates materials and facilities required to deliver ministry programs and services, as well as services provided by the Alberta Corporate Service Centre (ACSC).

ACSC provides transactional services in the areas of financial services, payment of accounts, information technology, records management, and administrative support.

Strategic Human Resources

Strategic Human Resources provides leadership, advice, and consulting services in the planning, development, and delivery of all human resource programs, policies and practices that enable Alberta Seniors to effectively realize its business plan goals. These include Alberta Seniors Human Resource Plan and associated initiatives, such as workplace health, employee recognition, performance management, leadership development, employee learning and development, and succession planning. Strategic Human Resources also manages the delivery of human resource services that take place through corporate service providers in the areas of staffing, classification, employee relations, training and development, and occupational health and safety.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications assists the ministry in communicating initiatives identified in the ministry's business plan to target audiences. In addition, Communications provides consulting services in the areas of issues management, media relations (including acting as ministry spokesperson) strategic writing, and technical support and expertise.

AGENCIES

Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta brings the views of seniors to the attention of government. The members are appointed by Order in Council. The council makes recommendations to the government on the coordination of policies and programs relating to seniors, and responds to government reports and specific requests for advice. It is also responsible for coordinating annual Seniors' Week celebrations.

Alberta Social Housing Corporation

The Alberta Social Housing Corporation is an agent of the Crown operating under the authority of the *Alberta Housing Act*. The corporation is the owner of a substantial portfolio of housing and land assets, and facilitates the provision of social housing to lower-income families and individuals and those with special needs. The Minister is the Chair and the Deputy Minister is the President of the Corporation. The Corporation has no employees.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

Factors in the external environment continued to exert pressure on ministry operations. For example, utility costs remained high, and increases in the cost of living continued to erode the purchasing power of lower-income seniors. The shortage of affordable housing was somewhat eased in some parts of the province; however, the demand for new supportive housing for seniors and persons with special needs remained high. Homelessness continued to be a concern, especially in Alberta's high-growth urban areas.

Internally, 2003-04 was a period of significant change for the ministry, as new responsibilities were added to its mandate, and important changes were made to key programs. These changes represented positive opportunities for improvements to the ministry's services, and also necessitated adjustments to ensure clients were not adversely impacted.

The following summarizes some of the activities the ministry engaged in during 2003-04. Program and policy initiatives, improvements in efficiency, consultative processes, and cross ministry collaboration are noted within this summary.

PROGRAM AND POLICY INITIATIVES

Seniors Situations

During 2003-04, the ministry continued documenting the increasing difficulties seniors were experiencing in meeting their needs and maintaining their quality of living. Using data provided by Statistics Canada, the Alberta Seniors Benefit database, and other sources, the ministry examined the widening gap between seniors' incomes and their day-to-day expenses; in particular, the Ministry began identifying those seniors most at risk of financial hardship.

The data showed that while seniors' incomes from all sources have remained relatively fixed, their costs have continued to increase. Rising utility costs, property taxes, and general costs of living have all eroded seniors' purchasing power. In addition, many seniors incur additional costs as they age, including health care, homemaking, and personal care.

The ministry initiated work on proposals and options for addressing seniors' situations, including examining the potential for assisting with the cost of property taxes, health care premiums, income support, and health care services. In pursuing this work, the ministry endeavoured to balance the benefits to seniors with continued fiscal responsibility and sustainability of supports.

Long-Term Care Accommodation

The ministry worked with Alberta Health and Wellness to adjust the long-term care accommodation rates to better reflect the cost of providing accommodation services, and to provide operators with additional revenue to maintain quality of accommodation services.

With the increase in accommodation rates, the ministry adjusted the Alberta Seniors Benefit program to provide enhanced payments to lower-income seniors in long-term care. This enabled residents to retain sufficient funds for their personal expenses.

In conjunction with the adjustment to the long-term care accommodation rates, responsibility for accommodation services, including room, board, housekeeping, and building maintenance, was transferred to Alberta Seniors from Alberta Health and Wellness. The transfer consolidates housing services within one ministry.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

With the transfer of accommodation services, the ministry initiated a project to develop policy recommendations to the Minister of Seniors concerning:

- long-term care accommodation rates and rate increase mechanisms,
- quality assurance mechanisms for the room and board component of long-term care,
- expectations and reporting requirements for the additional accommodation revenue received subsequent to the increase in long-term care accommodation rates, and
- a provincial policy for assisting residents experiencing financial hardship in paying accommodation rates.

Alberta Seniors is leading the project, with support provided by Alberta Health and Wellness and representation by long-term care operators and regional health authorities.

Lodge Assistance Program

The ministry implemented a major reform to the way seniors lodges are funded and lodge residents are assisted. To target benefits to lower-income residents, the Lodge Assistance Program grant was reconfigured to provide funds to lodges based on a resident's income, as evidenced by a resident's eligibility for Alberta Seniors Benefit, rather than on room occupancy.

At the same time, the maximum annual cash benefit for lodge residents was increased. The reforms support government policy direction of targeting financial assistance to individuals and populations in greatest need, and have the potential to enhance accessibility of lodge spaces for lower-income seniors.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

Affordable Housing

With the launch of the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program in 2002, funding in the form of capital grants was made available for the construction of affordable housing for lower-income families. The funding was allocated through the Affordable Housing Partnerships Initiative and the Sustainable Remote Housing Initiative, and focused on relieving the shortage of affordable housing across the province.

The ministry encouraged municipal, non-profit, local community, and private sector organizations to review affordable housing needs in their communities and submit proposals to the program. Through the year, funding was allocated project by project, based on demonstrated need, financial viability, and sustainability.

During the year, the ministry approved projects for the construction of 839 units in Alberta's high-growth, high-need communities. In addition, approval was granted for a total of 33 new units in remote areas. This housing is not owned by the Alberta government and carries no ongoing operating subsidy.

Homelessness

In April, responsibility for homeless shelters and the Gunn Centre (a facility for men with mental health and addictions disorders) was transferred to the ministry from Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Over \$16 million was budgeted to support activities in these areas. The Housing Services Division was restructured to enable better response to the needs of the operators of emergency shelters.

This new responsibility also provided an opportunity to coordinate homeless shelters within the continuum of housing need. In the longer term, greater opportunities will be available for people living in homeless shelters to move into appropriate longer-term housing. The ministry assisted in opening up these opportunities through its continued capital contribution to the construction of transitional housing units. These units assist homeless Albertans to become more self-sufficient and ease the transition to longer-term housing.

The ministry developed a new case management program at Gunn Centre. The program will allow the centre to be more effective in helping homeless people reintegrate into society. The centre now

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

provides a temporary supportive living arrangement for men who are homeless, and currently unable to provide for their basic needs without assistance. The new case management program will assist centre users in achieving mental and physical stability and will facilitate coordination of housing and support services as they leave the centre.

Office of the Public Guardian

The Office of the Public Guardian was successfully transferred to the Ministry of Seniors from Alberta Human Resources and Employment on April 1, 2003, with no disruption to clients. This transfer added 62 staff in five regions to the ministry's workforce. By July 1, 2003, all transitional and resource issues had been fully addressed. In addition, the Office of the Public Guardian was restructured to facilitate integration into Alberta Seniors' structure.

IMPROVEMENTS IN OPERATING EFFICIENCY

As noted, during 2003-04, Alberta Seniors experienced significant expansion to its mandate and added several new areas of responsibility. In addition, workloads increased due to program enhancements. Readjustments within the ministry were necessary to meet the additional demands created by these changes.

For example, in the first four months of the fiscal year, the average monthly number of applications received by the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program was 369 per cent higher than the same period the previous year. The increased volume was in part a response to the assistance with energy bills that was provided through the program. To deal with this increase in volume, the assessment process for applications to the program was evaluated and modified to ensure that seniors received prompt service.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

Financial Services to Seniors

The ministry implemented a number of strategies to improve delivery of its financial services to seniors. These included internal mechanisms to improve access to the necessary data for calculating financial benefits accurately. Another efficiency measure entailed the introduction of document imaging for client files, which will improve efficiency in using and maintaining client file information, decrease file storage space requirements, and implement aspects of the ministry's business continuity plan. The recoverables policy was revised to substantially reduce the number of recoveries entered and carried on the books.

Information Services

Operating efficiency of the Seniors Information Line was improved with the installation of a new Perimeter Service that made it possible to continuously monitor the volume of calls. This system allows for the measurement of operations, such as average speed of answering calls, conversation time, and abandoned or deflected calls. With this information, the ministry can adjust work schedules to ensure that calls from clients are answered more promptly and efficiently.

In an effort to increase awareness of the ministry website, wording and links were improved, references to the website were made more visible, and Alberta libraries were notified of the information resources available on-line, such as the *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide, July 2003-June 2004*.

Rent Supplement

The Alberta Rent Supplement Program was successfully incorporated into the Private Landlord Rent Supplement Program to ensure consistent delivery of both programs by management bodies.

As a result, the amount of paperwork required by the ministry in respect of these programs has been significantly reduced.

Premier's Award of Excellence

The ministry was represented on the Premier's Award of Excellence Leadership Team, furthering Alberta Seniors' focus on service excellence and continuous business improvements, and facilitating the coaching and review of award submissions.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES

The Office of the Public Guardian embarked on a consultation and planning process to seek input from external stakeholders, clients, and staff about its future role. The impetus for engaging in this process was the impending legislative reviews of the *Dependent Adults Act* and the *Personal Directives Act*. Six consultation sessions were held across the province between January and March 2004. A report of the consultation process and the new direction for Office of the Public Guardian is expected in 2004-05.

The ministry continued to support the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in its work of bringing the views of seniors to the attention of government. With assistance from the ministry, the council held four quarterly full council meetings, tabled its annual report, and presented its report on *Residential Care Homes: A Supportive Housing Option* to the Standing Policy Committee on Health and Community Living.

The ministry liaised with the Alberta Council on Aging Executive Committee, attended the Intergenerational Resource Launch, and participated in the Canadian Standards Association Edmonton Community Panel on Aging Issues.

PRIVATIZATION

The ministry continued to dispose of housing that was inappropriate for its portfolio. A number of buildings and land were sold to private and non-profit housing organizations.

The titles of single-family dwellings in Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Calgary were transferred to local housing corporations, and the vacant 37 unit Sunshine Lodge in Evansburg was transferred to the local Royal Canadian Legion. Twenty-seven remote rural housing units were sold to tenants, and a plan was prepared for the disposal of the remaining directly managed rural housing units.

Transferred units will be redeveloped to provide more effective and efficient affordable housing in the community. The new housing will not be part of the government's inventory and will not require operating subsidies.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

CROSS MINISTRY COLLABORATION

Together with Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Finance, the ministry continued to co-lead the Health Sustainability Initiative. The ministry also responded to the call for contributions to several major new collaborative initiatives. Ministry staff worked cooperatively with Alberta Children's Services on preparations for the Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying that was announced in October 2003, including assisting with workshops and focus groups held across the province. The ministry was able to bring important perspectives to the planning process, including the relevance of abuse of older adults by family members and the need for safe housing for family members fleeing abuse.

The ministry worked collaboratively with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on the Rural Development Initiative and with the Alberta Mental Health Board on a new Alberta Mental Health Services Plan. The ministry continued its participation in the Seniors Fraud Awareness Committee and the capital planning initiative.

In addition, the ministry supported the Service Alberta cross ministry initiative, and the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy. For Service Alberta, the ministry provided financial support and assisted with initiatives on the Directory of Services, Common Service Standards, Over-the Counter Services, Call Centres, the Web Development Council, and the Advisory Committee.

In support of the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy, the ministry developed a Human Resource Plan for 2003-2004. This plan addressed areas, such as performance planning, succession planning, occupational health and safety, and employee service recognition. The ministry also participated in the Deputy Minister of Executive Council's Service Excellence Recognition Program and a number of initiatives in support of workplace health.

A Summary of Key Activities in the Past Year

Business Continuity Planning

The ministry created a business continuity policy and an awareness communication; trained staff; conducted risk assessments; prepared a Business Continuity Plan; and participated in province-wide tests of the Emergency Notification System.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

To the Members of the Legislative Assembly

In connection with the Ministry of Seniors' performance measures included in the *2003-2004 Annual Report of the Ministry of Seniors*, I have:

1. Agreed information from reports that originated from organizations included in the consolidated financial statements of the Ministry to source reports. In addition, I tested the procedures used to compile the underlying data into the source reports.
2. Checked that the presentation of results is consistent with the stated methodology.
3. Checked that the results presented are comparable to stated targets, and information presented in prior years.
4. Checked that the performance measures, as well as targets, agree to and include results for all of the measures presented in Budget 2003.

As a result of applying the above procedures, I found no exceptions. These procedures, however, do not constitute an audit and therefore I express no opinion on the performance measures included in the *2003-2004 Annual Report of the Ministry of Seniors*.

Original signed by
Fred J. Dunn

FCA
Auditor General

Edmonton, Alberta
July 30, 2004

The official version of this Report of the Auditor General, and the information the Report covers, is in printed form.

Expense by Core Business and Expense by Function

MINISTRY EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

(in millions)

	2004		2003
	Authorized Budget	Actual	Actual
Core Business			
Provide Financial Support and Information Services to Seniors	\$ 232.0	\$ 231.9	\$ 194.4
Support the Management of and Enable the Provision of Family, Special Purpose and Seniors Housing	210.8	210.9	189.8
Provide Planning and Policy Development for Housing, Seniors and Alberta's Aging Population	2.4	2.3	1.9
	\$ 445.2	\$ 445.1	\$ 386.1

MINISTRY EXPENSE BY FUNCTION

(in millions)

	2004		2003
	Authorized Budget	Actual	Actual
Function			
1. Social Services	\$ 233.4	\$ 233.1	\$ 194.9
2. Housing	168.7	168.5	146.1
3. Debt Servicing Costs	43.1	43.5	45.1
	\$ 445.2	\$ 445.1	\$ 386.1

CORE BUSINESS 1: PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO SENIORS

For 2003-04, the ministry's strategic priority for Core Business 1 was to deliver income supports that are efficiently administered, effectively communicated, targeted to seniors most in need, and responsive to seniors' changing circumstances.

Goal 1.1 Seniors in need have access to financial supports that enable them to live in a secure and dignified way.

Alberta Seniors delivers two income assistance programs for seniors. The Alberta Seniors Benefit is an income-based program that provides lower-income seniors with monthly financial benefits, and calculates Alberta Health Care Insurance Premium exemptions. Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program provides a lump-sum payment for one-time, extraordinary expenses. For seniors who access the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program, speedy assessment of applications is particularly important.

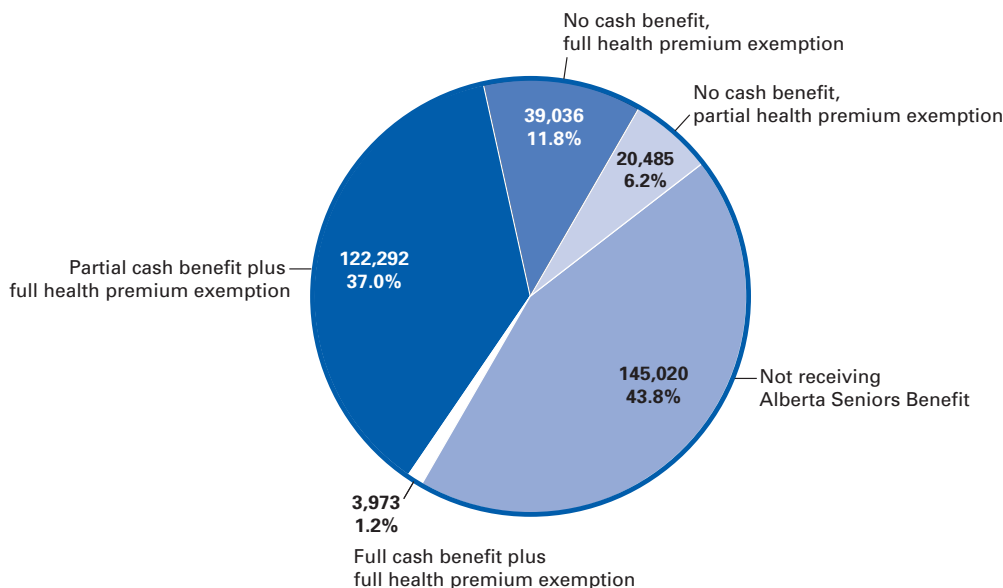
The financial supports provided by these programs help seniors to live with dignity by enabling them to make their own financial decisions, secure their basic living needs, and continue as participating and contributing members of the community.

Alberta Seniors Benefit

As of March 2004, there were 185,786 seniors receiving benefits from the Alberta Seniors Benefit program, an increase of 1,821 from 2002-03. The percentage of seniors receiving a benefit decreased from 56.9 per cent to 56.2 per cent. Of the 185,786 seniors receiving benefits, 126,265 received a monthly cash benefit, averaging approximately \$126 per household (consisting of one or two seniors). These seniors also received full exemption from their Alberta Health Care Insurance Program premiums. The remaining 59,521 beneficiaries received full or partial exemption from their health care premiums.

The graph below presents data derived from a total of 330,806 seniors recorded in the Alberta Seniors Benefit database.

Percentage of seniors receiving Alberta Seniors Benefit (as of March 2004)



Special Needs Assistance for Seniors

In 2003-04, the ministry received 35,390 applications for the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program, a 161 per cent increase in applications from 2002-03. The program provided benefits to approximately 28,231 households for a total expenditure of approximately \$36.9 million. Over the year, approximately 35,590 seniors received support from this program (the number of seniors is greater than the number of grants because couples submit one application). Individual benefits ranged from \$50 to \$5,000.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Adjusting benefits to reflect changing personal supports and needs

The ministry responded to the needs of lower-income residents in long-term care by implementing changes to the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. Approximately 7,900 seniors in long-term care received increased cash benefit amounts to ensure that they were not negatively impacted by accommodation rate increases. The additional monthly benefits averaged approximately \$230 per senior. The ministry also worked with operators and health authorities to ensure that cases of financial hardship were resolved on a case-by-case basis.

The Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program continued to provide assistance with eligible seniors' utility costs for a four-month period in the winter of 2003. From March to June, 2003, 15,000 applications were funded, for a total of \$5.6 million. The maximum individual benefit provided for utility costs was \$400.

Improving income support to residents of seniors lodges

The maximum annual cash benefit for lodge residents was increased. Approximately 6,200 seniors living in lodges received increased cash benefit amounts. Average monthly benefits increased from approximately \$88 to approximately \$133.

Ensuring fair and efficient program delivery

The accuracy of Alberta Seniors Benefit calculations was enhanced by the use of a new data exchange mechanism with seniors' lodge management bodies, implemented in June 2003. The mechanism ensured that calculations are based on current residence status.

The ministry was also able to improve the accuracy with which seniors benefits are calculated as a result of participation in a pilot program initiated by Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). With client permission, the program uses on-line income tax data exchange between the ministry and the CRA. An evaluation of the pilot demonstrated that the faster return of income data reduced delays in setting or adjusting client benefit eligibility. This is now the standard mechanism for obtaining information for over 94 per cent of the ministry's clients.

In 2003-04, approximately 6,600 returned cheques, deposits, and t-slips, were reviewed and new addresses traced. This ensured that seniors who had moved or changed their banking arrangements continued to receive correct benefits.

Performance Measures for Goal 1.1

Percentage of seniors provided with the opportunity to apply for Alberta Seniors Benefit.

It is important that seniors have the opportunity to receive the benefits for which they are eligible. The Alberta Seniors Benefit program helps lower-income seniors maintain their independence and live in a secure and dignified way. Although some eligible seniors may choose not to apply for the Alberta Seniors Benefit (the program is voluntary), if it can be demonstrated that seniors have been made aware of the program, have received an application package and have made a decision whether to submit an application, then the ministry has been successful in communicating the program.

The ministry introduced a new contact and feedback mechanism in 2003-04 to ensure that all eligible seniors were given the opportunity to apply for Alberta Seniors Benefit.¹

Results achieved:

The percentage of seniors provided with an opportunity to apply for Alberta Seniors Benefit was 99 per cent.²

This is the first year that results for this measure have been reported. The target for this measure has been established at 100 per cent.

¹This measure has entailed adding additional steps to previous efforts informing seniors of the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. All Albertans continue to receive an Alberta Seniors Benefit program application package three months before their 65th birthday or when they move to Alberta and apply for health insurance. In addition, starting in April 2003, the ministry mails an information sheet and business reply mail card to all seniors who have not applied for benefits, asking them whether or not they intend to apply; they are also given the option of receiving a new application form. The information obtained during this follow-up is used to measure seniors' "opportunity to apply". The validity of the results depends on the number of households that respond.

²Results are based on a response rate of 65 per cent on approximately 9,900 households contacted. Feedback from this proportion of the census group is valid for the entire population within +1/-1 per cent, 99 times out of 100.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Assessment time for Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program applications.

This measure calculates the number of working days it takes to assess applications to the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program. For seniors who apply to the program for assistance in meeting extraordinary expenses or financial emergencies, timeliness of access to financial assistance is an important aspect of an applicant's ability to live in a secure and dignified way.

Results achieved:

In the 2003-2004 fiscal year the average number of days it took to assess an application to the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program was 20 days.³ The increased number of applications received in 2003-2004 as a result of funding increased utility costs affected the average assessment time.

This is a new measure established for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. For future years, a target of 15 working days has been established.

³Results were calculated using data from the Special Needs Assistance Information System. The results identify the number of work days from the received date to the decision date. Applications that required additional information from an applicant were excluded.

Goal 1.2: Seniors and their families have access to information and educational material about programs, services and initiatives that are designed to enhance their well-being.

Every year, the ministry receives and responds to thousands of letters and e-mails from seniors and other Albertans. Correspondence ranges from specific questions about program applications to general queries and concerns regarding ministry policies and programs. In addition to daily correspondence, the ministry operates the Seniors Information Line, provides in-person services through Seniors Information Services Offices, publishes a range of information materials, and maintains a website with up-to-date information on programs and services.

Quality information about programs and services enables seniors, their family members, and service providers to learn about supports for which seniors may be eligible, and assists them in making wise choices concerning housing, living situations, and service needs.

Information Services

In 2003-04, the ministry distributed to seniors, seniors organizations, and other Albertans across the province:

- 50,000 copies of the *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide*
- 7,500 copies of the *Overview of Alberta and Federal Programs and Services*
- 4,908 copies of *Saying Farewell*
- 239 copies of the *Directory of Seniors' Organizations in Alberta*
- 56,600 Special Needs Assistance application packages
- 15,000 Alberta Seniors Benefit application packages
- 22,000 copies of the Alberta Long Term Care Association directory.

The Alberta Seniors website received 1,097,239 visitors (almost 300,000 more than in 2002-2003).

A total of 160 seniors service workers, representing 51 Alberta communities, attended the 2003 Seniors Services Workshop, which was coordinated by the ministry.

In partnership with the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, the ministry coordinated three launch events for Seniors' Week 2003.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Through the annual Minister's Seniors Services Awards program, the ministry recognizes the contributions of individuals and organizations that improve the quality of life of seniors in our province through volunteer services. In 2003, John Coombes (Coalhurst), Helen Toews (Linden), Maureen Wills (Cochrane), Drumheller Composite High School, and St. Albert Senior Citizens' Club were recognized with a Minister's Seniors Service Award.

Helping to inform and educate the public on issues of importance to seniors' well-being.

Over 6,000 copies of an awareness poster concerning seniors and gambling were distributed to seniors organizations, physicians, hospitals, libraries, and Family and Community Social Services offices. The poster was produced in collaboration with Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) to promote awareness concerning seniors and gambling.

In 2003-04, the ministry was a member of the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network, a network of Albertans dedicated to increasing awareness and supporting a community response to fraud and elder abuse. The network developed and aired a 30-second public service announcement, and developed a 20-minute training video to be used by provincial police services. Ministry staff also appeared on Access' Help TV to raise awareness of elder abuse.

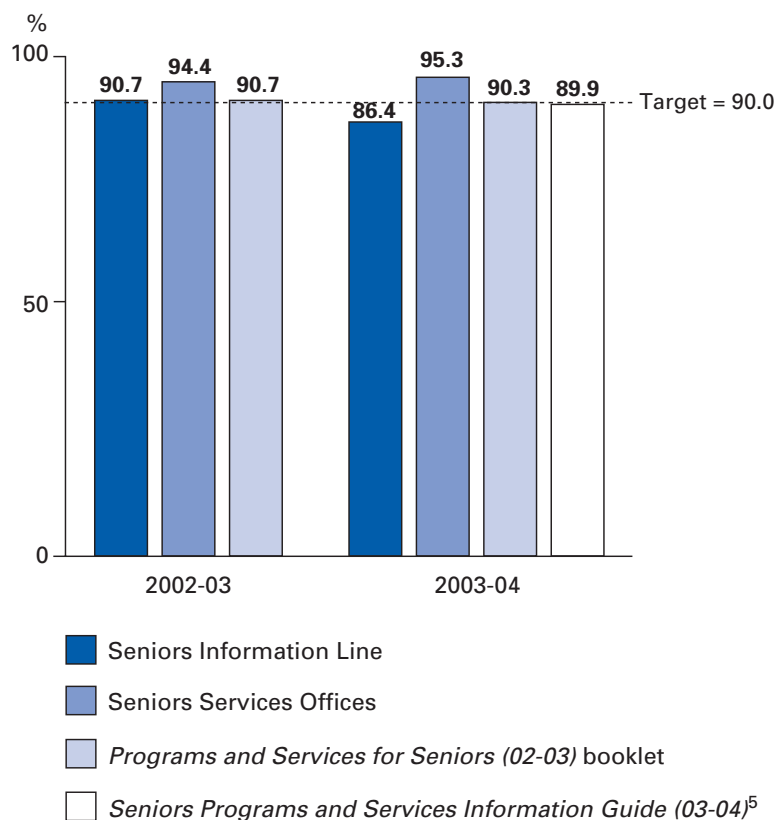
The ministry promoted awareness of Grandparents Day in September by distributing proclamations to municipalities, and Seniors Safety Week in November through media releases.

Performance Measure for Goal 1.2

Satisfaction of seniors with information provided.

This measure is a means of verifying the quality of information services provided to seniors by the ministry through the Alberta Seniors Information Line, Seniors Services Offices, and the *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide*. These information sources are designed to help seniors become well-informed about programs and services for which they may be eligible and which contribute to their independence and well-being.

Percentage of clients satisfied with information provided⁴



Source: Alberta Seniors, Seniors Services Division

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Analysis

Survey results indicate that in two of the surveys, the target of 90 per cent was met or exceeded. The results for the 2003-04 information guide fell short of the target by less than one per cent. The results for the Seniors Information Line fell short of the target by 3.6 per cent. The target will be retained.

⁴Data for this measure is collected through three separate surveys. Satisfaction of callers to the Seniors Information Line, and visitors and callers to the Seniors Services Offices, is assessed by telephone questionnaires of randomly selected clients who had contacted the ministry on the previous day. The surveys are conducted during a two-week period, twice a year, and include questions about courtesy, knowledge, and promptness of service, as well as overall satisfaction with information provided.

Satisfaction data for the *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide/Programs and Services for Seniors* booklet is gathered from completed and returned self-administered questionnaires included with the guide/booklet. A questionnaire included with the booklet invites users to evaluate its content and usefulness. For all three surveys, the top two categories of a six-point scale, “very satisfied” and “satisfied”, were combined for an overall rating of satisfaction.

⁵In 2003-04, the previously titled *Programs and Services for Seniors* saw a name change to *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide*. For the reporting period, survey results for the two publications (2002-03 and 2003-04 versions) are given separately. The number of completed surveys increased from 204 in 2002-03 to 262 surveys received from both versions in 2003-04.

CORE BUSINESS 2: SUPPORT THE MANAGEMENT OF AND ENABLE THE PROVISION OF FAMILY, SPECIAL PURPOSE AND SENIORS HOUSING

In 2003-04, the ministry identified two strategic priorities for Core Business 2. These were to continue the process of transferring ownership of housing and land assets to local housing authorities; and to provide capital support to community-based agencies to assist them in developing long-term, local responses to housing pressures in their communities.

These two priorities represent steps towards a long-term direction of empowering local communities and facilitating local development of housing targeted to lower-income Albertans and those with special needs.

Goal 2.1: Provincially owned and supported housing for low-income families and individuals, seniors, and persons with special needs is efficiently and effectively managed, and appropriately and fully utilized.

Alberta Seniors is charged with the stewardship of a housing portfolio that enables access to subsidized housing for Albertans whose income does not allow them to pay full market rent for their accommodation. Subsidized housing in Alberta includes housing for lower-income families and individuals, housing for persons with special needs, apartments for lower-income seniors, and seniors' supportive housing facilities.

In some cases, the ministry contracts with community organizations to deliver this housing. In other cases, the ministry works with community organizations such as municipalities and non-profit housing organizations, to transfer ownership and delivery.

The ministry also provides financial assistance to organizations that provide shelter to homeless persons.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Provincially Subsidized Housing

Based on the results of the 2003 Client Profile Survey, the ministry estimates that Alberta's owned and supported housing portfolio served over 67,000 Albertans in 2003-04. This number included approximately 25,000 seniors in seniors' housing, over 39,000 residents of family housing, and 2,400 persons in special needs housing. It also included assisting 1,300 Albertans with ownership of the rural and Native mortgage portfolio.

During 2003-04, the ministry contributed more than \$62 million towards housing supports, of which \$18 million was targeted to seniors' housing. Almost \$29 million and \$5 million were provided for family housing and special needs housing respectively, and the remaining \$10 million for other miscellaneous housing.

Reconfiguring the Lodge Assistance Program

Seniors' lodges receive provincial assistance through the Lodge Assistance Program. In 2003-04, a new method of funding lodges was implemented. This new method resulted in funds being provided to lodges based on a resident's eligibility for Alberta Seniors Benefit, rather than on room occupancy. The impact of this initiative is that lodges are now provided with an incentive to target lower-income seniors who need supportive housing.

Transferring ownership of housing and land assets

The ministry continued the process of transferring housing units to local housing corporations for redevelopment. Transfers of 98 units of family dwellings were completed in Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Calgary, and a 37-unit seniors' lodge in Evansburg. In addition, 27 rural units were sold to tenants.

The transferred units will be redeveloped into affordable housing by local housing authorities and will be targeted for those most in need. The new housing will not be part of the Alberta government inventory and will not receive any operating subsidy.

The total assessed value of nominal sum disposals was \$14.3 million.

Implementing better ways to manage subsidized housing

Facilitating the consolidation of housing management organizations is a key ministry strategy for improving these organizations' self-sufficiency. In 2003-04, consolidation was completed in several locations, including BFN Senior Housing Authority into Bethany Nursing Home of Camrose; Pentecostal Benevolent Association projects into Capital Region Housing Corporation and Norwood Legion; Gunn Housing Authority into Lac Ste. Anne Foundation; and Parkland Homes Group into Lacombe Foundation.

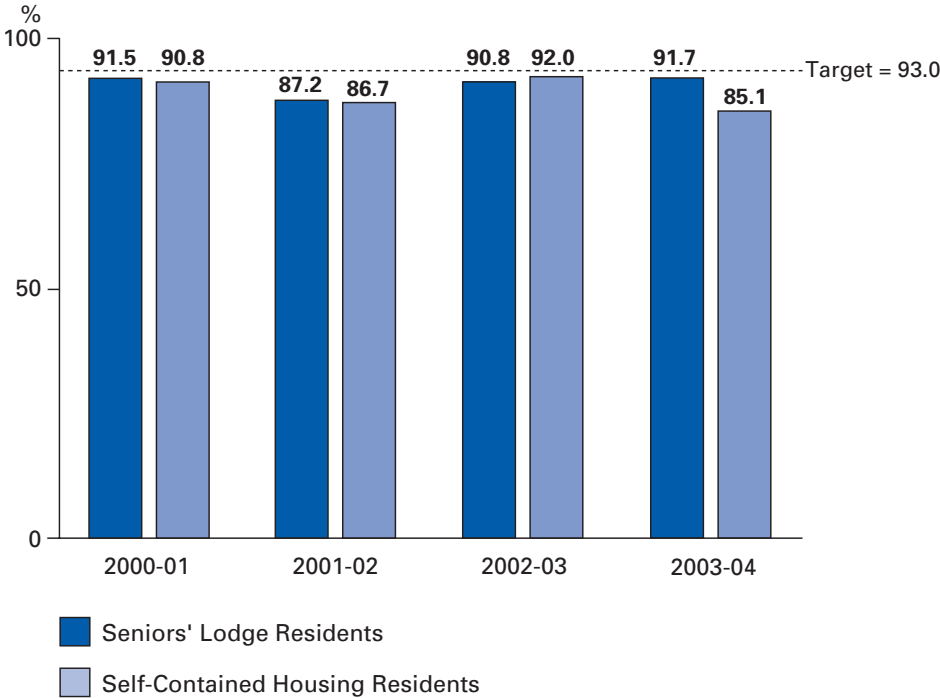
Discussion and Analysis of Results

Performance Measure for Goal 2.1

Satisfaction of housing residents with the quality of accommodation and, where appropriate, services provided by housing operators.

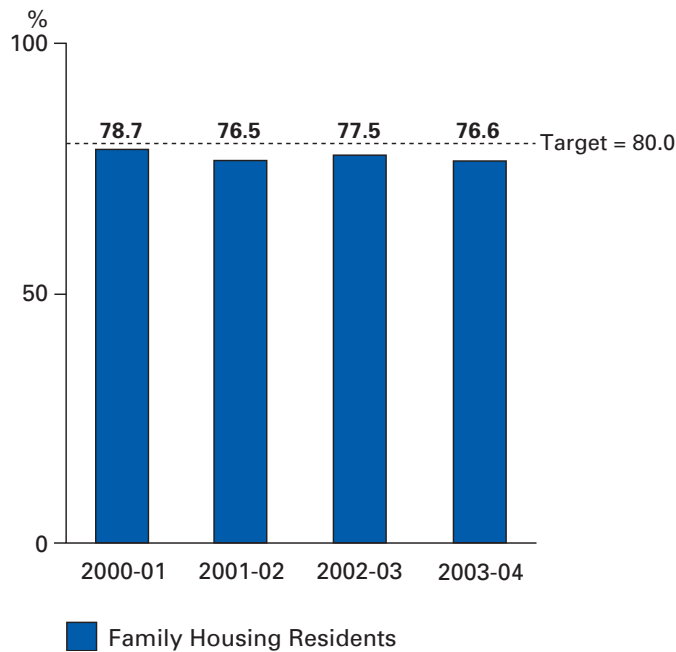
This measure assesses satisfaction with the quality of accommodation of residents living in seniors' lodges, self-contained housing, and family housing. It provides a means of verifying that the residents of provincially-owned or -supported housing are receiving safe, adequate, suitable, and affordable housing that is properly managed and maintained.

Satisfaction of housing residents with the quality of accommodation and, where appropriate, services provided by housing operators⁶



Source: Alberta Seniors, Housing Services Division, Housing Satisfaction Study, 2004.

Discussion and Analysis of Results



Source: Alberta Seniors, Housing Services Division, Housing Satisfaction Study, 2004.

⁶Satisfaction was determined through a survey conducted for the Housing Services Division by a private research company. A random sample of clients from the ministry's housing programs was surveyed by telephone about their overall satisfaction with the quality of their accommodation. Approximately 1,200 telephone interviews (approximately 400 for each of the three groups) were completed with residents of senior citizens' self-contained housing, senior citizens' lodges and family housing. This year, due to an unusually high proportion of unlisted telephone numbers among family housing residents, additional interviews were completed with these residents to bring the total family housing sample to 432. The survey also measured a number of variables to assess the quality of accommodation, including overall condition, safety and affordability, and the services provided by the housing management body. The results from the top two categories of a six-point rating scale, "very satisfied" and "satisfied", were combined to obtain an overall rating of satisfaction. The research was conducted in February and March 2004 over a two-week period. Results based on a sample size of 400 are accurate within +/- 4.9 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Analysis

Survey results indicate that 92 per cent of lodge residents and 85 per cent of self-contained housing residents were satisfied overall with their accommodation, based on 400 and 403 responses respectively to each survey. For family housing clients, 77 per cent of residents surveyed were satisfied overall with their accommodation, based on 432 responses.

This is the fourth year this survey of housing residents has been conducted, using the same methodology, questionnaire, and rating scale. Reported satisfaction rates for seniors lodge residents and family housing residents have remained stable from year to year while levels for self-contained housing residents have exhibited some fluctuations. In 2003-04, the satisfaction level for self-contained housing residents, at 85 per cent, was seven percentage points lower than 2002-03 levels, and closer to the reported 2001-02 level of 86.7 per cent. The differences among the three years may or may not reach statistical significance.⁷

Only 19 residents of seniors' self-contained housing gave reasons for dissatisfaction; this is not a sufficient number from which to draw conclusions regarding why satisfaction levels for these residents are lower this year than last year. Of these 19 residents, 26 per cent focused on issues of building maintenance. Maintenance, affordability and safety are all areas within the ministry's ability to influence and are all related to satisfaction levels.

As with all satisfaction surveys, there are certain factors that may affect the results of these measures, many of which are beyond the control of the ministry. These includes issues that residents may have with their neighbours or the neighbourhood, and the variability and subjective nature of satisfaction.

The ministry will continue to work towards the targets set for these measures (93 per cent overall satisfaction for seniors housing residents, and 80 per cent for community housing) as it strives to ensure that provincially-owned and -supported housing is efficiently managed and well-maintained.

⁷Due to sampling error, when comparing results between two or more years, differences of more than 7 per cent would be considered statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Differences of less than 7 per cent may or may not be significant, depending on the level of consensus of results to a question.

Goal 2.2: Seniors, low-income families and individuals, and persons with special needs have access to a range of housing appropriate to their needs at reasonable cost

Alberta continues to experience serious housing shortages in certain areas and for certain population groups. These include lower-income Albertans who cannot afford to pay market rents for accommodation, or are unable to find specialized housing and support services to address special needs they may have, such as mental or physical disabilities. There is also a need to provide suitable accommodation and supports to assist homeless Albertans to achieve stability and independence in their living environments.

Strategies for this goal entail working with Alberta's community organizations to facilitate development of housing targeted to the specific needs of these populations.

Working in partnership to facilitate delivery of affordable, appropriate housing

Implementation of the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement resulted in the approval of 839 new affordable housing units. The total project cost was \$85.9 million. This sum comprised \$38.5 million in federal and provincial contributions (50 per cent federal, 50 per cent provincial), and \$47.4 million in contributions from community organizations. In addition, federal and provincial funding of \$2.5 million (50 per cent federal, 50 per cent provincial) was provided for 33 new units in remote areas of the province.

The housing units provided under the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program are located in the high-need, high-growth communities of Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Brooks, Cochrane, Grande Prairie, and 10 remote communities in northern Alberta. The province worked with municipalities and housing operators to develop housing proposals to increase the supply of longer-term affordable housing.

Seven projects funded under the Seniors Supportive Housing Initiative Program and the Healthy Aging Partnership Program were completed and opened in 2003-04. These projects provided a total of 170 new units for seniors supportive housing.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Encouraging and supporting community housing plans

Alberta Seniors worked in partnership with housing organizations, other ministries, and federal and municipal governments to address housing shortages in Alberta. The purpose of these partnerships was to identify local housing needs, and generate capital to increase the supply of affordable and low-cost housing options for lower-income families and individuals, persons with special needs, and seniors.

In particular, the seven major urban municipalities (Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, and Grande Prairie) successfully involved community organizations in developing and updating their community plans for housing. Most of the plans have identified their priority needs based on the concept of a housing continuum, including their needs for special purpose housing and affordable housing.

Addressing homelessness

The emergency shelter system provides for the immediate basic needs of food and shelter for persons who find themselves homeless. From these shelters, many homeless persons are now able to move into longer-term housing as a result of the development of new affordable transitional housing units. These new transitional housing units help homeless clients become more self-sufficient.

Since 2000, the province has contributed \$12 million to address homelessness in the seven major municipalities of Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie. This funding has contributed to over 1,900 new units being created.

To control costs of providing shelter to homeless persons in Calgary, the ministry began directly managing the Sunalta Shelter in July 2003. The Sunalta Shelter provides up to 150 spaces for overnight accommodation.

The ministry was proactive in working with the City of Calgary and local stakeholders, such as Inn from the Cold and Aspen, in opening up the former Westgate Hotel to provide temporary housing for homeless families from January to the end of March 2004. This temporary arrangement assisted 21 families with children. By the end of March 2004, almost all of these families had secured permanent accommodation with the Calgary Housing Company.

The ministry entered into a contract to fund up to 44 spaces for affordable housing in Calgary with the Dream Centre. This helped to alleviate the pressure on the emergency shelters by providing an opportunity to single working men to move into appropriate housing.

Performance Measures for Goal 2.2

Appropriate performance measures for this goal continue to be under development. Two new measures to be developed were noted in the ministry's 2003-06 business plan. The first proposed measure, "Percentage of communities within the province that have plans for responding to the housing needs of their citizens", was adjusted during 2003-04. The new measure to be developed will refer to the seven major urban municipalities that have plans or that are in the process of completing plans to address homeless, special purpose, and affordable housing needs. The seven municipalities are Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, and Grande Prairie.

The second proposed measure, "Effectiveness of Community Plans in developing low-cost housing to respond to community housing needs" is no longer considered an appropriate measure of results achieved. In future years, the ministry will consider other ways to measure the effectiveness of strategies for meeting the range of low-income housing needs in specific communities.

CORE BUSINESS 3: PROVIDE PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR HOUSING, SENIORS AND ALBERTA'S AGING POPULATION

In 2003-04, the strategic priority for Core Business 3 was to continue to develop the ministry's leadership role with other ministries, other levels of government, housing operators and stakeholder groups in respect of seniors issues and housing initiatives.

Goal 3.1: Government policies, programs and plans effectively anticipate and respond to the needs of current and future seniors and Albertans in need of housing supports.

The ministry pursues this goal by engaging in research, monitoring, and analysis activities on social, economic and political trends, issues, policies, and programs within Alberta, across Canada, and globally.

The ministry leads a number of planning projects, and participates as a partner in others. It collaborates at different levels to draw attention to demographic trends, helping to ensure that any potential impact on current or future seniors of proposed program or policy activities is fully understood and considered. A knowledge-based, collaborative approach to working with partners helps in the development of sustainable policies and programs that are sensitive and responsive to demographic factors.

Supporting the cross ministry Health Sustainability Initiative

Together with Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Finance, the ministry continued to co-lead the cross ministry Health Sustainability Initiative. One of the objectives for this initiative for 2003-04 was to expand opportunities to facilitate "aging in place", entailing the promotion of supportive living options. The ministry co-chaired the Long-Term Care Facilities and Supportive Living Working Group which focused on this objective.

The two targets for this objective were to reduce the gap between the charges and services for facility-based long-term care and community living, and to decrease the ratio of persons over age 75 in long-term care compared with Alberta's population over 75, from 80.7 per 1,000 to 78 per 1,000. The rationale for these targets was that supportive living is a more appropriate environment for many seniors and long-term care should be reserved for seniors requiring only the highest level of care.

Both these targets were met by strategies intended to increase options and incentives for seniors to be accommodated more appropriately in supportive living rather than long-term care.

Incentives for supportive living were created through increasing Alberta Seniors Benefit amounts to seniors' lodge residents in recognition of residents' additional service costs. As well, Alberta Seniors continued to support the development of partnerships between housing operators and health authorities to establish supportive living projects that enable seniors with high health needs to remain living in home-like environments, and delaying or preventing the need for moving to long-term care.

The gap in charges for long-term care and community living was addressed by the August 1, 2003 increase in long-term care accommodation charges.

Addressing long-term care accommodation issues

Alberta Seniors worked in partnership with Human Resources and Employment to address issues arising from the increase in long-term care accommodation rates. The result was a common approach to assisting lower-income senior and non-senior residents of long-term care with meeting the increased accommodation rates.

The ministry worked closely with Alberta Health and Wellness, regional health authorities, and with long term care industry representatives to transfer responsibility for long term care accommodation to Alberta Seniors, and to establish processes for ensuring full accountability for this responsibility. Clear definitions of accommodation services to be provided in long term care were established, together with clarification of roles and responsibilities for delivering these services.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Working in partnership with stakeholders, other ministries and other levels of government

Under an agreement made between the ministry and the University of Alberta Department of Dentistry, 536 seniors received \$184,807 worth of dental services, with an additional \$264,000 in services committed.

The federal/provincial/territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors held their seventh meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia in November 2003. The Honourable Stan Woloshyn attended as the senior minister, and led the discussion on three agenda items.

Ministers discussed a wide range of issues, including Canada's aging population, abuse and neglect of older adults, and ways to support caregivers of seniors. Ministers tasked their officials to determine the social and economic costs of abuse and neglect; and to work with other federal/provincial/territorial fora to review various options for providing supports to caregivers. These will be examined within the context of Canada Pension Plan/Quebec Pension Plan and Canadian taxation policies.

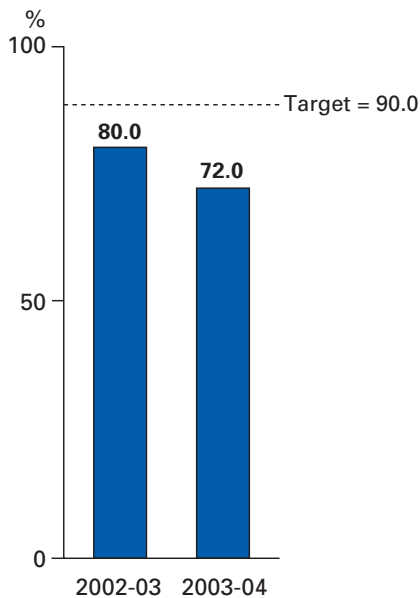
The ministry worked with the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association (ASCHA) on an industry-led project to develop new operating standards and accreditation processes for seniors' housing. Following discussion and agreement with ministry officials on the intent and scope of the project, the ministry committed \$170,000 over two years for the developmental phase of the project. Of this, \$85,000 was contributed in 2003-04.

Performance Measure for Goal 3.1

Measure: Satisfaction of departments and agencies with the ministry's leadership and collaboration, and with the information, advice and analysis received

The ministry's collaborative activities with other government departments and agencies assist in policy and program research and analysis that take into account the needs of seniors and Albertans in need of housing supports. These activities include membership on joint working groups and initiatives, and the provision of information, advice and analysis of data on seniors and housing. Satisfaction of government departments and agencies is a measure of the quality of the ministry's services in these areas.

Satisfaction of departments and agencies with the ministry's leadership and collaboration, and with the information, advice and analysis received



Source: *Alberta Seniors, 2003-2004 Satisfaction Survey, Final Report.*

Analysis⁸

Results of a satisfaction survey of the ministry's key stakeholders indicate that 54 respondents (representing 72 per cent) were satisfied overall with services provided. Nine respondents (12 per cent) were slightly satisfied, seven (9 per cent) were slightly dissatisfied, and five (7 per cent) were dissatisfied (including one who was very dissatisfied). The results fell short of the 90 per cent satisfaction target by 18 per cent.⁹

⁸Satisfaction data were gathered by means of a telephone survey of 76 stakeholders. The survey was conducted by a private research company. To select the list of survey participants, ministry staff were asked to review their files and projects from 2003-04 to identify all key stakeholders who met predetermined criteria for inclusion. The final list of stakeholders included Alberta government employees, employees of other provincial governments and the federal government, and representatives of organizations and agencies that work in the areas of seniors services or housing. A private research company conducted the survey in April and May, 2004. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the courtesy, accessibility, responsiveness, knowledge and leadership of staff, as well as the quality, accuracy, completeness and timeliness

Discussion and Analysis of Results

By comparison, in 2002-03, 80 per cent of respondents reported being satisfied overall, with 12 per cent slightly satisfied, four per cent slightly dissatisfied, and four per cent dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

According to the survey results, areas of highest satisfaction (between 79 and 93 per cent) included quality of information provided and staff knowledge, preparation for meetings, accessibility, and courtesy. Areas reporting lower satisfaction levels include informing stakeholders of issues relating to seniors and housing. Results also indicate areas such as initiating or planning projects and contributing to joint project goals scored relatively low in satisfaction.

The reduction in satisfaction rates in this year's survey may reflect that the measure does not capture the way the ministry's businesses have evolved. The ministry's activities are now targeted to specific ministry and cross-ministry initiatives as well as partnerships with housing organizations. General information provision is less of a priority.

This measure has been revised in the 2004-07 business plan. The new measure is "satisfaction of departments and agencies with the ministry's collaborative activities, and contribution to joint initiatives." In the next survey, questions for this measure will focus more specifically on projects in which the ministry is directly involved. The ministry will continue to work towards improving its performance and meeting the 90 per cent target for 2004-05.

of information received. Respondents were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the services provided.

A total of 76 questionnaires were completed, with 75 responses to the question on overall satisfaction. The results from the top two categories of a six-point rating scale, "very satisfied" and "satisfied", were combined to obtain an overall rating of satisfaction.

⁹It should be noted that the relatively small size of the population surveyed influences the validity of the results. Small populations tend to magnify differences among respondents, which may result in exaggerated rather than truly representative results.

Financial Performance Highlights

The financial results for the Ministry of Seniors for the year ended March 31, 2004 include the activities of the Department of Seniors and the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. More detailed information can be found in the attached financial statements.

The consolidated financial results for 2003-2004 show that the Ministry of Seniors spent \$445.1 million against an authorized budget of \$445.2 million.

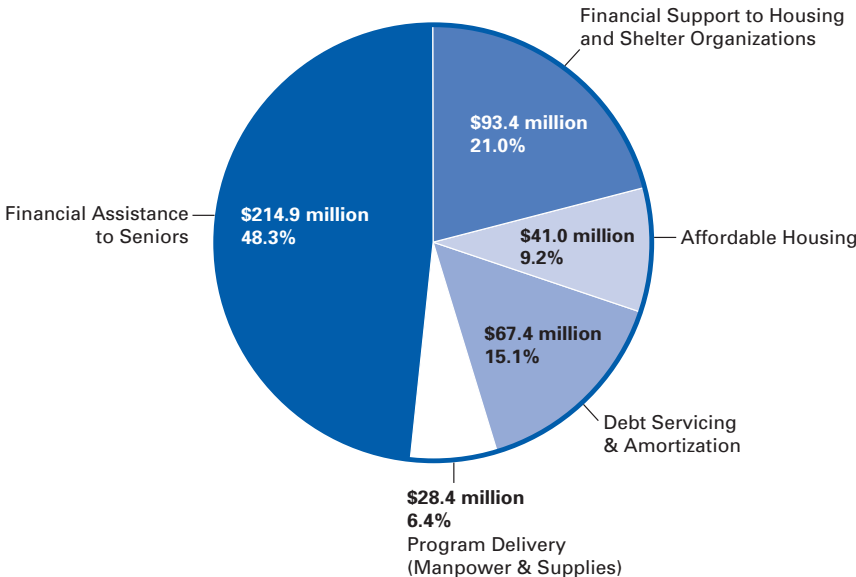
\$416.6 million, or 93.6 per cent of ministry expenditures in 2003-04 were spent in the core functions of the ministry. These involved direct assistance to individuals and organizations in the form of grants; contracts for operators of homeless shelters and transitional housing; and debt servicing and amortization costs for the housing units used in delivering our programs.

Grant expenditures totaled \$335.3 million, with \$214.9 million of the grant expenditures being directed to provide financial assistance to eligible lower-income seniors through programs like Alberta Seniors Benefit and Special Needs Assistance for Seniors. Under the housing programs, the ministry expended \$101.0 million for grants to local housing providers. \$41 million of this amount involved expenditures under the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement, which will result in the development of over 870 new affordable housing units. In addition, \$17.9 million was spent to assist homeless shelter operators and to support homeless initiatives.

Financial Performance Highlights

Other expenses for the ministry consisted of \$67.4 million for interest charges for long-term debt and amortization relating to the housing portfolio. Manpower and general supplies and services costs to deliver ministry programs totaled \$28.4 million, and made up just over 6 per cent of ministry expenditures.

Summary of Ministry Expenses – \$445.1 million



Changes in the social and economic environment of the province may affect the Ministry of Seniors' performance and results in the future. Long-term and short term trends in income, employment, and economic prosperity affect both seniors and persons in need of housing supports, and have important implications for the ministry's programs, initiatives, and future planning.

With regard to seniors, evidence indicates an increasing gap between seniors' income and expenses over the past few years. More seniors have had difficulty making ends meet on relatively low, fixed incomes, and certain groups of seniors in particular have incurred especially high costs as they age. The government acknowledged these trends with significant reinvestment in seniors' programs announced in August 2004. Elimination of health care premiums for all seniors, reinstatement of dental and optical benefits, and other enhancements to seniors' finances will mitigate some of the effects of rising costs.

However, as Alberta's population ages, the ministry will look beyond today's seniors and consider how Alberta might prepare its programs, services and infrastructure for tomorrow's seniors, especially those Albertans who make up the "baby boom" generation. Continued monitoring of trends, long-range planning, and sound policy research will help seniors' programs remain sustainable, relevant, and flexible to serve future generations of seniors as well as current seniors.

The growing seniors population, and in particular the increase in the numbers of seniors aged 85 and over, indicates a need for continued vigilance in regard to the quality of services provided to frail seniors. With Alberta Seniors' assumption of responsibility for long-term care accommodation rates, the ministry will continue to focus considerable effort on ensuring that processes are in place to monitor the quality of accommodation services in long-term care.

With regard to housing, the ministry, in partnership with the federal government and local housing organizations, has made great strides in increasing the availability of affordable housing and supportive housing for lower-income Albertans and those with special needs. Through initiatives such as the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program and the Homelessness Initiative, the ministry has been successful in assisting communities to build and manage housing that is targeted to local community conditions and demonstrated need.

Forward Looking Information

However, if Alberta's strong economic growth continues, the private real estate market will remain buoyant. While this is a positive trend for Alberta as a whole, much private sector housing will continue to be beyond the reach of many lower-income Albertans, including seniors on fixed incomes, persons working in low-wage jobs, and persons with special needs. The ministry will need to keep track of market trends, and continue to build on the partnerships that have been successful in identifying community housing needs and priorities and generating capital for new housing. A continuing challenge will be to enable homeless shelters to assist their clients in moving to longer-term housing, and to access the supports they need to achieve stability in their lives.

New opportunities are presented with the ministry's continuing involvement in the cross ministry Health Sustainability Initiative, including the initiative's response to the provincial mental health services plan. Alberta Seniors looks forward to working on the initiative with Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Finance to facilitate aging in place by seniors and the development of appropriate supportive housing for persons with mental illness.

Finally, the ministry anticipates new challenges and opportunities for delivering quality services to dependent adults and other clients of the Office of the Public Guardian. In particular, reviews of both the *Dependent Adults Act* and the *Personal Directives Act* are planned. These legislative reviews are likely to provide important new insights into how Alberta may continue to respond appropriately to the needs of dependent adults and their families and support networks.

These opportunities and challenges have guided the ministry in developing the following strategic priorities for 2004-07:

- Contributing to sustainable and high quality continuing care
- Supporting an aging population
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities for housing
- Achieving sustainable housing services
- Developing strategic directions for the Office of the Public Guardian.

These are in addition to the ministry's important ongoing core activities, and are intended to form a central focus of the ministry's work over the coming business planning cycle.