



ALBERTA  
HEALTH

Office of the Minister  
MLA, Calgary - Varsity

AR 209301

March 16, 2023

Dear Continuing Care Clients, Residents, Families, Staff and Operators:

On February 28, 2023, the Government of Alberta released its annual budget, and as Minister of Health, I am pleased to tell you about our plans to transform the continuing care system. We are investing a historic \$4.3 billion in operational funding for continuing care programs in this fiscal year. This is a 15 per cent increase in operational funding over last year, which will provide Albertans with greater access to continuing care supports and services across the province.

This marks Year One of the government's investment of nearly \$1 billion in operational funding over three years to begin the transformation of the continuing care system to help expand home and community care services and supports, increase hours of care in continuing care homes, strengthen workforce capacity, improve access to community-based palliative and end-of-life care, and improve the quality of care in the continuing care sector. We are also investing significant capital funding for new projects to increase the number of continuing care spaces in the province and modernize aging buildings.

#### Legislative Changes

The new legislative framework is the first step to initiating an overall system transformation for continuing care. The Continuing Care Act (the Act) will replace multiple acts with a single modernized piece of legislation and remove barriers to ensure continuing care can meet the growing needs of Alberta's population. The Act is the first stage; supporting regulations and updates to existing standards are also being developed to provide additional context and details. Together, these will enable a person-centred, flexible and innovative system of care that will also improve transparency and accountability to Albertans. Once the full legislative framework is developed, introduced and approved (including the Act, regulations and standards), implementation will begin.

#### Expansion of Home and Community Care Supports

A shift to more continuing care services and supports through home and community care underpins continuing care transformation and responds to Albertans' feedback from the Facility-Based Continuing Care review. Albertans have told us they want to "age in place" but have limited choices for service locations, types and providers, particularly in rural areas. As such, funding will be targeted to provide more options for Albertans. We recognize caregivers are a critical enabler to aging in place. As such, there will be several initiatives focused on supporting caregivers, including staff and caregiver education, increasing adult day program spaces, and both in-home and facility-based respite spaces.

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To ensure Albertans have more choices and options about where and how to receive the continuing care services they require, we have made a significant investment of \$893 million to increase health care and support services provided in home and community settings. This is an increase of \$149 million or 20 per cent from 2022/2023.

#### Increasing Hours of Care in Continuing Care Homes

We have heard from Albertans that staffing needs to be increased in continuing care homes. *Budget 2023* will support increasing the average hours of care provided to residents of continuing care homes. This will enable more person-centered care and is expected to result in increased quality of life and care for residents, and decreased pressure on staff.

Average daily hours of care will be incrementally increased across continuing care homes. When changes like this happen, the care hours continue to be provided based on assessed needs, so even once implemented, not every resident will see a change. This is consistent with recommendations in national reports and direction announced in a number of other provinces.

#### Strengthening Workforce Capacity

A strong and resilient workforce is a critical enabler to system transformation. A number of initiatives are already underway that support the continuing care workforce, such as bursaries for health care aide students and funding to address wage disparities.

Through *Budget 2023*, the continuing care workforce will be supported with mental health supports, and recruitment and retention initiatives. Alberta Health will be working with community partners to develop a continuing care workforce strategy that aligns with the provincial Health Workforce Strategy the government announced on February 16, 2023.

#### Improving Access to Community-Based Palliative and End-of-Life Care

Alberta will continue to invest to improve access to palliative and end-of-life care in the community over the next three years. Albertans will be supported to remain at home in their preferred location, through increased investment in palliative-focused home care and increased community hospice capacity.

We are going to continue our work of implementing recommendations resulting from the Facility-Based Continuing Care review, Advancing Palliative and End-of-Life Care in Alberta report and the Auditor General's report to improve the provision of care to seniors and others who require continuing care supports, including Albertans with a life-limiting illness.

#### Capital Funding

The government is also investing significant capital funding in *Budget 2023* to meet the rising needs of Alberta's aging population, and those living with complex health needs and disabilities. Specifically, \$89.5 million is allocated to the Continuing Care Capital Program in 2023/2024, for a total investment of \$310 million over three years. Funding will be used to modernize existing continuing care spaces; develop culturally appropriate spaces to support Indigenous groups; create new, innovative small care homes; and add new spaces in priority areas having the greatest need.

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*Budget 2023* provides \$120 million in 2024/2025 for two significant continuing care modernization projects in Calgary (Bethany Care) and Edmonton (Good Samaritan Society). Combined, these two projects will modernize 700 spaces upon completion.

*Budget 2023* also supports ongoing continuing care capital projects including the Bridgeland Riverside Continuing Care Centre in Calgary that will add 198 new continuing care spaces in the community, and the Gene Zwozdesky Centre in Edmonton that will add 145 new continuing care spaces and renovate 205 existing spaces.

Next Steps

Transforming Alberta's continuing care system is a huge undertaking. Fortunately, we are on track to make significant changes to service delivery in the months and years ahead. Some initiatives will begin in the next few months while other projects and initiatives, especially capital projects, will take a few years.

We have listened to Albertans, and we are responding to their call for system-wide transformation. We are pleased to share these exciting investments that will make our continuing care system more sustainable and responsive for Albertans now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Jason Coppling  
Minister of Health