

Caring

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NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE ALBERTA LONG TERM CARE ASSOCIATION

A Message from the President

This is the first issue of *Caring*, a news and views newsletter of the Alberta Long Term Care Association (ALTCA). It has been created to provide information to residents, families and trustees involved in long term care in Alberta.

Our goal is to provide current information and advice to those involved with the long term care system in Alberta.

We hope you enjoy this issue and others that will soon follow. If you have ideas about articles or information you would like to receive please write to ALTCA at the address located on the back of the newsletter. We will do our best to respond in the next issue.

Thank you!

During this past December and January long term care residents, their families and their trustees were informed about a survey that the Alberta Long Term Care Association wanted to undertake. We wanted to protect privacy, thus people were asked to return a response form to confirm their willingness to participate.

Response to the survey participation request was exceptional. Over 2000 people replied—far more than could be accommodated by the survey. WesTrends Research interviewed over 400 people, analyzed the results and presented a report to the Alberta Long Term Care Association.

We would like to give a special thanks to all those who returned forms and especially to those who participated in the interviews. Thank you for your time and effort and for expressing yourselves so clearly. The information that was collected will make a difference. It will help us push

for changes to improve the services for those who reside in long term care facilities.

This newsletter is a report about the survey results, with an outline of some of the action steps needed to address the issues that you raised in your responses and comments. Our goal is to champion improved quality of facilities and care for all residents living in long term care in Alberta.



PAUL RUSHFORTH
President

Alberta Long Term Care
Association

Survey Highlights

Telephone numbers were selected at random from numbers provided by the 2,000 people who indicated their willingness to participate. A total of 403 persons were interviewed resulting in a statistical accuracy of 95.6%.

Although the questionnaire was designed to take about 10 minutes, many calls took much longer as participants wanted to fully inform the Alberta Long Term Care Association of their ideas and concerns about long term care. Over 300 individuals offered additional comments at the end of the survey.

The age distribution of the residents as reported by those surveyed shows that 75% are over 75 years of age (see following chart). 67% of

respondents said they had lived in Alberta for over 50 years.

Age of resident	% in category
Under 65	5%
65-69	3%
70-74	4%
75-79	11%
80-84	21%
85-89	23%
90 or older	32%

What the Survey Identified

▼ Services

There is considerable misunderstanding about the services provided to residents for their monthly fee. Most people believe that their monthly fee covers all services including accommodation, food and health care. Few are aware of the government

contribution to health care services and to financial assistance for room and board. Few people understand the role of the facility operator, the provincial government or the regional health authority in the delivery of long term care.

▼ Facilities

The overall quality of the long term care facility in which the resident stays was rated good or excellent by 87% of those interviewed.

Some people however, expressed concern about draftiness, poor maintenance and need for upgrading and repair of some facilities.

▼ Food

Most people rated the food service residents receive as good or excellent (83%). Concern about food service related to food temperature, poor quality, poor service, lack



of variety, and staffing at meal times.



▼ Care

Most people (86%) rated the care the resident receives as good or excellent. Those who gave an unfavorable rating most often commented about shortage of staff and minimal time spent with each resident.

▼ Funding & Fees

Many people indicated that families subsidize monthly fees for residents. This shows that people are likely unaware of the assistance available for low-income residents.

A slight majority (53%) supported fees based upon an asset test and a resident's ability to pay. A majority (71%) reported that they did not want to see any increase in monthly fees.

▼ Provincial Government

A slight majority (51%) felt that there was inadequate attention paid to long term care policy in Alberta. At the same time 86% felt that the sustainability (ability to keep it going) was in jeopardy. Many said that no one was ready for the large population shift in seniors that was going to take

place as the “boomer” generation arrives.

▼ Communications

Currently most people get information from “word-of-mouth” sources such as facility staff and the media. People said they prefer sources of information that are more formalized such as newsletters, billing inserts, information from medical professionals and regional health authorities, information from senior groups and considerably more information from the provincial government.

▼ General Comments

The following is a brief list of comments and concerns from the survey.

- Understaffing is a major concern
- Many people had only positive things to say about the facilities, food and care
- Customer service needs improvement in some facilities
- Improved communications is needed everywhere
- Something has to be done to minimize language barriers between staff and residents
- Some facilities need to be upgraded or replaced
- More staff training is needed in some facilities
- Government has to do more for seniors and invest more money
- More long term care facilities are required
- Everyone needs to recognize contribution of our seniors



*The Government
has to do more
for seniors*



Action

▼ General

ALTCA will immediately inform all facility operators of the results of the survey. The operators will be asked to review the general concerns that were raised and to examine procedures to keep residents and their families more informed. They will also be asked to review the comments about facilities, food and care as it pertains to their facility with a view to improving quality and service where appropriate.

Several concerns were raised about building conditions. Once funding is in place, renovations will proceed.

▼ Communications

The ALTCA will become increasingly involved in communications. The first step is this newsletter, reporting on the survey and the action steps that will be taken. Additional newsletters will address other communications needs identified in the survey.

Because most people consider facility staff members they deal with as a key information resource, all facility operators will be encouraged to ensure their staff are sufficiently informed. The front line staff are the people best able to get information directly to families, residents and trustees.

The ALTCA will produce an introductory brochure to inform new residents, families and trustees about long term care services provided and sources of financial assistance.

▼ Government

The ALTCA will work collaboratively with government to request that they extend Alberta Seniors Benefits to more and more residents as accommodation rates rise. In addition, the ALTCA will push for more funding from government for care of residents. More government money would alleviate many concerns expressed regarding staff shortages.

The ALTCA will provide extensive information to all MLAs and Cabinet Ministers to ensure they are knowledgeable about the needs of residents of long term care facilities so that they can develop policies to improve facility operations and level of care.

▼ Fees

The ALTCA will work with all facility operators and with the provincial government to ensure that all families, residents and trustees are fully informed about the availability of financial assistance to help residents pay for monthly room and board.

The Alberta Long Term Care Association

The Alberta Long Term Care Association is a voluntary non-profit organization, representing owners and operators of most long term care facilities in Alberta.

The Association is an advocate for long term care. The ALTCA mission statement reads, "To provide the best available information and services to our members; and to

work with the Government of Alberta to improve legislation that affects long term care as a growing industry. Our top priority is people."

The ALTCA is an advocate for residents, staff and operators. The ALTCA recognizes the growth of the aging population and addresses the need for changes and new demands on the system. The Association is a credible voice for the industry and is an advocate for higher standards and performance by its members for the benefit of the long term care resident.

Our goal is to ensure there are high quality facilities and care to enable residents to enjoy a healthy quality of life while within our members' care.

▼ How to get more information

1. Talk to the administrator or manager at your long term care facility.
2. The survey and other information will be posted on the ALTCA website.
3. Call or write to the Alberta Long Term Care Association.

