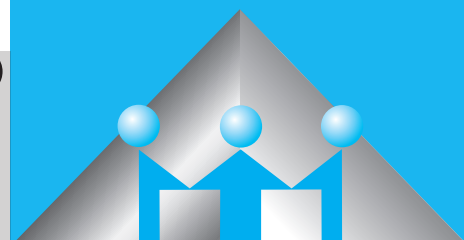


# Caring

June 2007



News and Views of the Alberta Long Term Care Association

## A Message From the ALTCA Board

In this issue of *Caring* we wish to tell you about what your accommodation fee pays for and the accommodation rate that you pay. Our Resident and Family Survey (2006) indicates there is a belief that the accommodation fee residents pay in long term care pays for all aspects of their residency, including all care services provided by the Physicians, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Therapists, and Health Care Aides. In fact, your monthly accommodation fee pays only the room and board portion of residency while the care portion, the services of nurses, therapists, and care aides, is paid for by the province of Alberta.

As you know, the current accommodation fee for private accommodation is set at a rate of \$48.30 per day. This figure is legislated by the provincial government. In comparison Ontario residents pay \$56.87 per day (2006) Nova Scotia residents pay \$74.50 per day (2006) while other provinces are

income-rated. The current rate has been in effect since 2003. Although the government applied additional funding for care in 2006, we find that due to inflation and wage increases we are again back where we started.

In addition to inflation of wages, food, utilities, maintenance, and administration costs, long term care operators also face dramatic increases in expenditures required to meet new government mandated standards along with the rising expectations of our clients.

Long term care operators in all sectors, private, public, voluntary, are subject to the effects of inflation. Since the accommodation rate freeze in 2003, Alberta's annual inflation rate has been nearly double the national average. Operators have absorbed these inflationary costs while under the pressure to meet new standards.

Therefore, we want the provincial government to change how it sets the accommodation fee for long term care to include annual review, and if necessary, an annual adjustment of the rate.

Long term care residents appreciate the need for accommodation rate adjustment and have told us so. If we compare our 2003 and 2006 surveys of residents, we see that in 2003 (the year of the last rate adjustment) the majority felt an increase was not needed. However, by 2006 the majority of residents surveyed said that adjustments should be made every six months.

Like you, we share a great concern for the sustainability of the long term care system. Our surveys show more than 80 per cent of respondents are "concerned" or "very concerned" about sustainability.

In 2007, we will continue to promote the need for accommodation rate indexing to the government. We remind you that benefits for accommodation are available to lower income Albertans from the Alberta Seniors Benefit Program: call 1-800-642-3853.

We value the input we receive from residents and family members and thank you for your continuing support.

## Who Pays for What

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Each month residents receive an invoice for their room and board, or accommodation fee. In Alberta, the accommodation fee is set by the provincial government. The residents' monthly accommodation fee covers less than 25 per-cent of the total cost of care and support in a long term care centre.

Your accommodation fee includes a long list of items and services. Each month you pay for the following items related to room and board, or accommodations.

### Room

A room in a long term care facility

### Building Maintenance

Upkeep and repairs  
Landscaping/snow removal  
Maintenance staff  
Security services/equipment and staff

### Food

Food services/three full meals per day, plus snacks and other nourishment  
Kitchen equipment, plates, cutlery, furniture, etc.  
Kitchen and serving staff

### Housekeeping services

Housekeeping staff  
External cleaning services  
Facility laundry (towels, bedding, etc.)

### Building operations

Utilities, gas, and electricity  
Water and sewer  
General facility costs  
Furniture  
Common area lounges  
Television  
Chapel, meeting rooms  
Dining room

### Administration

Facility management  
Office equipment (computers, desks, etc.)  
General office services  
Accounting/billing/purchasing  
Benefits/labour/administration/payroll  
Trust account maintenance  
Insurance  
WCB insurance

### You do not pay for care

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The Alberta government pays the care portion of long term care, through the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs). The RHAs receive "global" funding from the provincial government, which they allocate to long term care facilities. For comparison, it costs on average, \$160 per day to provide care to a resident in long term care, while RHAs incur significantly higher costs for each day of care provided. Hospital care typically costs between \$500 and \$3,000 on a per day basis, the average being approximately \$1,000 depending on the type of facility and treatment.

### Care funding in long term care provides:

#### Professional staff

Registered Nurses  
Licensed Practical Nurses  
Nutritionists/Dieticians  
Therapists  
Social Workers  
Medical Advisors

#### Non-professional staff

Nursing Aides/ Nurse Attendants/  
Personal Care Aides  
Ward Clerks  
Therapy Aides

### Supplies and Medications

Medical supplies  
Medications/prescribed drugs  
Medical supplies/dressings  
Incontinence products  
Oxygen and equipment  
Diabetic supplies and testing equipment  
Catheters  
Feeding equipment  
Medical beds  
Exercise equipment  
Specialized health equipment  
Specialized bathing tubs and lifts

### Personal care services

Bathing  
Dressing  
Grooming  
Toileting  
Meal assistance  
Recreation programs

### Transportation

Ambulance service

### Special needs

Special programs may provide for:  
Wheelchairs  
Special beds  
Other medically needed equipment  
Wandergaurd bracelets

### Optional services you may pay for

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Some residents may make the choice to pay for extra services not included in the funding provided by the Regional Health Authority. These services may include, but are not limited to:

Optional care services  
Private duty nursing  
Companion care  
Personal medical supplies  
Hearing aids/ eyeglasses/ dentures  
Personal laundry  
Hair dressing  
Special outings

## What is MDS/RAI?

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MDS/RAI is a term you may have heard upon admission to the long term care facility, or you may soon hear. MDS/RAI stands for Minimum Data Set / Resident Assessment Instrument. It is an electronic record and information tool that is being introduced to long term care in Alberta.

MDS/RAI is an organized, systematized, compilation of medical information regarding the assessed health status of a resident. The MDS/RAI system is being mandated for use by the provincial government. The ALTCA supports the introduction of MDS/RAI and anticipates it will be a valuable tool for operators' efforts to enhance quality of care.

### How MDS/RAI works

At admission to a long term care facility the resident will be assessed by a team of health professionals, usually a Registered Nurse, Social Worker, and Physician. During this assessment the Minimum Data Set form will be completed based upon an examination of the resident by the health team. The information includes physical, mental, and social health factors related to resident care needs.

Three important sets of information are created during the assessment: First a baseline of the resident's health is established at admission that can be compared at later dates; Secondly, specific health problems that may put the

resident at risk of complication are identified; Finally, a Care Plan for the resident is developed.

As the long term care facility's health professionals work with the resident, more information is added to the resident's MDS/RAI file. From this, the resident's physical and mental status can be accurately monitored and re-assessed on a timely basis. You will likely see nursing staff at the computer updating MDS/RAI information as part of maintaining residents' care plans.

## Health Care Aides At the core of care

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Providing care to residents is at the core of ALTCA member organizations' mission. The majority of hands-on care is provided by non-professional staff under the supervision of Registered Nurses, or Licensed Practical Nurses. These care staff are called Health Care Aides (HCAs) or Nursing Attendants, or Personal Care Aides.

HCAs provide up to 80 per cent of the hands-on care that a resident receives. Care staff in ALTCA member organizations deliver more than 17 million hours of care per year. The ALTCA, and its member organizations, are proud of the dedication that HCAs show to the

residents in their care. In our recent survey of residents and family members, the majority of respondents rated the care received as "excellent" or "good."

Obviously it takes a special kind of person to be an HCA. To thrive in a career as a care worker in long term care, a person must have strong interpersonal skills and like people.

Care Workers must be empathetic individuals because often residents are living with a high level of physical or emotional discomfort.

Currently, there is a shortage of HCAs throughout Alberta. The ALTCA is addressing the shortage by implementing a strategic plan to improve recruiting and enhance retention of staff. If you, or someone you know is interested in becoming a Health Care Aide, please check the ALTCA web site at [www.long-termcare.ab.ca](http://www.long-termcare.ab.ca) for information on jobs and training.



## Family Councils

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Many long term care facilities have a family council. This is a volunteer organization made up of family members. The role of family councils is to represent and advocate on behalf of residents to the facility's management for the goal of improving quality of life and/or care for residents. The functions of a family council are numerous and can include: communicating concerns to facility managers of care or administration; orienting/educating new resident family members; developing activities for residents and family members; fundraising projects for equipment and more.

The ALTCA recognizes the value and the benefits they provide such as: a support and education system for family members; communications channel between management and families; and as a possible avenue of conflict resolution.

The ALTCA advocates for quality of care for residents in Alberta's long term care facilities and appreciates the efforts of family councils in support of quality of care in individual facilities. Family councils provide numerous benefits such as: a channel for family members to bring ideas to facility managers and staff; a voice for residents who may have difficulty expressing their needs; a channel for facility managers to get feedback on new ideas.

Serving on a family council is an opportunity to inform others, enhance quality of life for residents, provide feedback to facility staff, and promote positive awareness about the role of long term care

in our society. We encourage all persons who have a family member in care to consider serving on their facility's family council.



## How to address concerns regarding quality of care

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If you believe the quality of care a resident receives has been compromised please take the following steps to seek a resolution:

**First, bring your concerns to the facility's care manager;**

**If you do not reach a solution next speak to the facility's Administrator;**

**If you feel a solution has not been reached contact the Regional Health Authority. If a resolution has still not been reached contact the Health Facilities Review Committee.**

The Health Facilities Review Committee investigates complaints about the care, treatment, and standards of accommodation received by residents in hospitals or care centres.

The Health Facilities Review Committee can only investigate complaints that are made by or on behalf of a specific patient or resident in a health care facility.

### Contact:

**Health Facilities Review Committee**

**Telephone: (780) 427-4924**

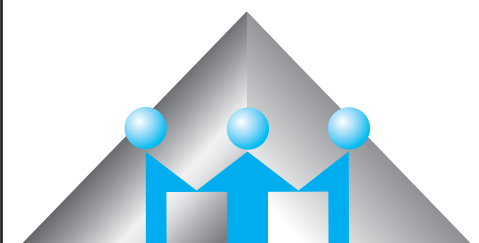
**Fax: (780) 427-0806**

## How to report suspected abuse

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All ALTCA member facilities observe a Zero Tolerance policy concerning abuse towards residents or staff.

If you suspect an incident, or incidents, of abuse towards a person in care, contact the provincial government's Protection for Persons in Care (PPIC) program. Contact the PPIC toll free at **1-888-357-9339**. In cases where you believe a person's safety is in immediate danger, or if the matter is of a criminal nature, please call your local police.



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