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For immediate release

Alberta Budget: Disappointing news for Alberta's Continuing Care

EDMONTON – The Alberta Continuing Care Association (ACCA) agrees with Honourable Minister Joe Ceci's assertion in the 2017 – 2018 Alberta Budget, released March 16, 2017, that affordable homes for seniors and families has "historically been an area of the budget that has been starved for resources". This is very true for Alberta's Continuing Care industry as well which is funded well below the national average, according to the Canadian Institute of Health Information.

Our agreement with Minister Ceci and this government on how to help our seniors ends there as it seems the NDP government continues to pay the province's Continuing Care industry lip service. The funding estimate for Continuing Care does very little to address the mounting complex challenges, with an estimate (in millions) of \$1,072 compared to the 2016 – 2017 forecast of \$1,055 (an increase of 1.6% which will not cover the direct additional costs to operators as a result of the Carbon Tax Levy alone, never mind wage increases for staff).

Alberta could have followed the lead of our neighbors to the west. On March 9, 2017, the BC Government and its Minister of Health announced significant funding investments in seniors care. \$700 million over 4 years for home and community care; contracted providers given funding to allow for an average of 3.36 direct care hours which equates to over 1,500 new front line staff and the BC Care Association was provided with \$10 million dollars to assist operators with the purchase of equipment such as wheelchairs and ceiling lifts.

Any commitments made in our province's budget are underwhelming in addressing the aging infrastructure, increasingly complex health and safety needs of residents, outdated regulations, and swelling aging Alberta population.

Budget 2017 states that a vibrant health care system begins with community and that seniors and vulnerable adults want to live healthy, independent lives at home for as long as possible. "Recognizing the importance of investments in community care, with an added emphasis on home care, makes sense for Albertans and for a more efficient overall health system," said ACCA CEO Tammy Leach. While new funding for community and home care (2017-2018 Estimate of \$2,027 Million, up from 2016 – 2017 Forecast of \$1,826 Million) will reduce pressures on hospitals and long term care homes as a positive side effect, "overall, though, this Budget really misses the mark," continued Leach.

Alberta's budget states that "an economic downturn does not mean that our aging grandparents should get second-class health care". Our grandparents have been neglected much longer than our province's recent recession, and, for now, will continue to be forgotten.

Alberta's Continuing Care providers do welcome the Government's stated key strategies towards improving health outcomes for Albertans outlined in the Budget, namely of expanding home care, developing a targeted approach for funding new continuing care spaces, and enhancing care for persons with dementia. How they plan to do this remains to be seen. "We will continue to collaborate with the government on achieving positive outcomes around these strategies. Given the lack of monetary investments, Alberta's Continuing Care system, whether through Home Care, Supportive Living or Long Term Care, will continue to struggle. With today's disappointing announcements, we will simply have to continue to be innovative to strive to sustain the quality care and quality of life our seniors and vulnerable adults deserve," Leach said.

***About ACCA** - ACCA represents a unique alliance of providers in Alberta's Continuing Care sector. Our Members provide care and services for nearly 12,000 long term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) individuals and over 5.3 million hours of Home Care to Albertans. We champion quality of care, quality of life and enhanced wellness for Albertans requiring Continuing Care.*

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