

The Alberta Continuing Care Association (ACCA), of which we are a member, represents a unique alliance of providers in Alberta's Continuing Care sector. Member Organizations provide care and services for over 12,000 long term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) individuals and over 5.3 million hours of Home Care to Albertans. We believe in their mission of championing quality of care, quality of life and enhanced wellness for Albertans requiring Continuing Care.

With more Canadians living past 80, and an aging population, the choice of "home" in Continuing Care is an increasingly important task. For many individuals and their families, it can also be an increasingly complex task, given the many types of care and housing available in Alberta. It is important to understand the options available to make confident, informed choices for yourself or your loved ones. Towards supporting the ACCA's Mission, and our common vision of the best possible Continuing Care in Alberta, we hope the following information provided by the ACCA will be of help to you. Further articles will be shared with you in the coming months.

Continuing Care operators deliver comfort and quality service to Alberta's seniors and vulnerable adults in three ways:

Home Care: For people in their own home. Assessment is performed and monitored by qualified professionals to determine the individual's needs. Services are then provided on a scheduled basis. Services can include nursing and rehabilitation, and personal support services like homemaking, bathing, and grooming.

Supportive Living: For individuals who want the freedom of a maintenance-free environment or who perhaps require a little more help than can be provided by home care alone. Meets the needs of a wide range of people, but not those with complex needs requiring a registered nurse (RN) on-site 24 hours a day. Provisions, more than simply a place to live, can include meals, housekeeping and social activities. Professional and personal support services also available.

Long Term Care (LTC): Care is provided for people with complex needs who are unable to remain at home or in Supportive Living. LTC settings provide accommodation, personal support and health care services. 24 hour care is provided with an RN on-site.

What Makes One Feel "At Home"?

More than just a roof over one's head, is "home" a furnished and comfortable room? Or a nicely maintained and landscaped building, clear of snow during the winter and with beautiful grounds to stroll during the summer? Perhaps it is nutritious and delicious food options with friendly caregivers and staff. Certainly these are all elements of a home. Just as we shape it, a home should shape us; it should give us comfort and pleasure and sanctuary.

Would you be surprised to know that all of these services and supports fall under the "Accommodation Fees" a resident in publically funded Supportive Living or Long Term Care pays? Above simply accommodation, or the roof over one's head, "Accommodation Fees" in publically funded homes are set by the Alberta Government and cover everything that goes into making one feel at home. From food to cleaning supplies, to the newly imposed Carbon Tax, the list of costs that fall under these fees is significant. The term "Accommodation Fees" is like a frame without the photo inside in that it does not begin to show the whole picture. Perhaps more surprising is that Alberta has the second lowest Accommodation Fees in Canada.

In Alberta, care providers can be public, private, non-profit or faith-based operations and all operators are held to the same standards and requirements. Ownership type has no influence on the resident or family experience (according to the Health Quality Council of Alberta 2014/2015 Family Experience Surveys). Having this mix of ownership type leads to investments in care that offer operational efficiency and creativity that help lead to enhanced quality of life. But, providers can only do so much.

Alberta's senior population is growing. Now more than ever a sustainable vision is required with a better quality of life for all Albertans the ultimate goal. Investment and support from our elected officials and other key stakeholders is crucial. Further, in addition to being aware of the menu of options available for yourself and your loved ones, equally important to ensuring the greatest quality of life is knowing what exactly is covered by your dollars.

Please contact the ACCA with any questions. **We encourage you to contact** your local Member of the Legislative Assembly and let them know that Continuing Care deserves **long overdue investment and consideration. We owe it to our loved ones!**