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## Media Release

### **HQCA –Results of 2017 Long Term Care Family Experience Survey Indicate Operators Continue to Do More with Less**

**EDMONTON** – The Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) recently released the results of their 2017 provincial survey measuring the experience of families with the quality of care and services received at long term care facilities in Alberta. Conducted by HQCA, the research is the fourth time the surveys have been conducted in 10 years, with results showing little to no change over the course of the survey cycles. With very minimal to no increase in care funding for several years in the face of mounting costs of operation, the results of the survey are indicative of operators’ offering of operational efficiencies, expertise and creativity, but care providers can only do so much.

The survey highlights the voices and experiences of 7,562 family members of long term care residents within the province’s continuing care system, and also serve to identify areas needing improvement. The results of the survey, while mostly positive with 93% of respondents saying they would recommend their home to someone looking for long term care, are also demonstrative that there are common misconceptions about our province’s continuing care industry that, through perpetuation, only lead to confusion for someone looking for information in an already complex system. For instance, as with the 2014 surveys, ownership type (AHS publicly funded, private, or voluntary) has absolutely no influence on family experience.

All continuing care providers, regardless of ownership type, are held to the same standards and accountability. Many conduct their own surveys in addition to the HQCA research, as quality service and care improvements are always the focus for all organizations caring for Alberta’s seniors and adults requiring continuing care. More and more though, with aging infrastructure, decades-old regulations and policies, and limited or no increases in care funding, care providers have to be innovative in ensuring this is possible. Respondents’ satisfaction comes as a result of cultures of caring having been fostered. “Residents spend most of their time with the staff; hence, caring staff are essential”, said one respondent. Yet, staffing levels and availability, along with food quality and dining experiences, remain respondents’ top two concerns.

Family members, while appreciative that long term care services are available in Alberta, “expressed concern with provincial funding of long term care, specifically with the number of staff available to provide support and in the resident’s ability to have all of their care needs met when long term care was not appropriately funded”. Food service is, in fact, funded through accommodation charges, which are regulated by the government. Alberta’s current accommodation fees, which also cover housekeeping, heat and power, building, maintenance, and other facets that lead to an individual’s comfort and security, are the second lowest in Canada.

While Alberta Continuing Care Association (ACCA) members are encouraged by and support the results of the HQCA Report, we are increasingly concerned by the mounting challenges of a rapidly aging population with increasingly complex needs and dwindling resources. Now, more than ever, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and ACCA members need to be focused on investing in our province’s continuing care industry, as was recently done in British Columbia and in other jurisdictions, so that Albertans receive the quality care and services in the safe and comfortable environments they so deserve.

In addition to being aware of the menu of options available for Albertans and their loved ones, equally as important is understanding what exactly is covered by their dollars and the historical lack of government investment and strategy to support those in need of quality continuing care. Without long-overdue investment, Albertans need to be prepared for future survey results to go down; not from lack of continuing care providers' efforts, as evidenced by comments directly from families, but from a system that, despite what the statistics have been telling us for years, continues to be forgotten.

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**About ACCA** The Alberta Continuing Care Association (ACCA) is the recognized voice of Continuing Care in Alberta. We are champions for quality of care, quality of life and enhanced wellness for all Albertans requiring Continuing Care; this is Our Mission. Representing owners and operators of home care, supportive living (SL) and long term care (LTC), whether private, non-profit and/or faith based, our diversity allows us to better understand and communicate the issues that impact people in the Continuing Care System. [www.ab-cca.ca](http://www.ab-cca.ca)