

## About ACCA

The Alberta Continuing Care Association (ACCA) is a non-profit, voluntary organization made up of a unique alliance of home living, supportive living, and long-term care service providers. Continuing Care is a term which encompasses Home Care, Supportive Living, and Long-Term Care. Our diverse and knowledgeable membership allows us to understand and communicate the complex issues that impact people requiring Continuing Care and to advance opportunities for positive change.

The ACCA has been championing quality of care, quality of life, and enhanced wellness for Albertans requiring Continuing Care since 1981. Some of our members have been operating as trusted partners in Alberta communities for over 100 years. ACCA members deliver the majority of Continuing Care Services in Alberta. Our values and principles are people-centred, community-focused, compassionate, and inclusive.

## The Need

We know that our population is aging, with the number of seniors over age 65 in Alberta expected to increase to 804,000 by 2025 and 1.13 million by 2035. The health and safety needs of individuals being assessed for continuing care are becoming increasingly more complex with Alberta having the highest rate and earliest onset of dementia in Canada. Interwoven into these demographics is our evolving cultural diversity, where being truly person-centered means being sensitive to each individual's unique needs and preferences.

Funding for Continuing Care in Alberta must be appropriately directed to ensure Albertans receive adequate health services in their communities when and where they need it. In recent years the Government of Alberta has taken some meaningful steps to address underfunding by increasing allocations to continuing care infrastructure and operations, yet more is needed to truly ensure that Albertans receive quality care and quality accommodation.

The ACCA wants to work with government to advise them on how funding being allocated to homecare and other continuing care services can reach the front lines and have the greatest improvements on the quality of care. Year after year, the Ministry of Health provides increased funding for AHS, however, that has not translated into comparable increases in funding for Continuing Care services. For example, in 2014, AHS received a 5.9% increase in funding while homecare providers received only 2%. In 2018, the overall health budget increased by 3%, while Continuing Care received a 1% increase for funded wage rates.

We need to take steps to ensure Ministry of Health funding is directed to where it is needed the most, to strengthen the care for our seniors and most vulnerable people.

We also want to collaborate with government to support the development and enhancement of continuing care facilities as well as homecare, community care and accommodation services to keep pace with the number of Albertans in need of care and the level of care that is required.

## Requests

To address these concerns, we are calling on the Government of Alberta to:

1. ***Transfer responsibility and oversight for Continuing Care from Alberta Health Services to a defined government ministry.***

The ACCA believes that the current administrative system for distributing funding and setting policy relevant to continuing care is impeding the ability of service providers to keep pace with the increasing demands of both inflation and the number of Albertans in this segment of the population. We believe that bringing these services back under direct ministerial oversight will increase accountability, efficiency and ensure that increased funds make it to the front lines. By transferring responsibility of continuing care to a defined government ministry, the Government of Alberta would be able to ensure that service providers can keep up with scheduled pay increases and adequately remunerate health care providers.

Care providers would also have one point of contact in Government relevant to all their policy, funding and regulatory requirements. One dedicated ministry for this sector could bring increased transparency, more accurate information for policy makers, and ultimately better services to Albertans.

2. ***Improve the quality of accommodation services such as meals, housekeeping, laundry, recreation activities, and capital upgrades by providing government supplements to the base private room accommodate rate to at least the national average—approximately \$2,778 per month.***

Traditionally continuing care providers receive funding from three main areas: 1) Accommodation fees for room and board, housekeeping, laundry etc.; 2) Health funding for care at designated levels; and 3) Capital grants for a portion of new infrastructure costs.

At \$1,992 per month, Alberta's current accommodation service rate is the second lowest in Canada. As a direct comparison, our neighbors in B.C. (\$3,278) & Saskatchewan (\$3,186) have more resources to provide a high quality of service to residents. It is important that the services Albertans receive keep pace with the standards of service elsewhere across the nation.

According to the 2016 Health Quality Council Surveys of Alberta Designated Supportive Living family and residents, respondents' top two concerns are staffing levels and food quality. Food quality is funded through accommodation fees while staffing levels are linked to care funding allocated by AHS. Providing government supplements to the Government Regulated accommodation fees would not only address the significant concerns Albertans have expressed around food quality, it would help service providers modernize their facilities without new capital funding.

***3. Invest in Continuing Care infrastructure as well as provide supports for the broader system infrastructure such as homecare and community care.***

More than 50% of the Long-Term Care facilities in Alberta are 30 years or older. These facilities are operated in partnership with the Government of Alberta and have delivered high quality care for generations. Some of these buildings are in dire need of support. Enhanced infrastructure spending is needed to address the maintenance backlog and improve the environments for vulnerable Albertans.

Broader system infrastructure supports such as homecare and community care are also an integral part of effective continuing care services. Home care and community care reduce pressure on more expensive long-term care and acute care facilities and allow Albertans to stay in their homes and communities as long as possible.

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We believe these recommendations will significantly enhance Continuing Care in Alberta and enable the system to adapt along with the dramatic demographic changes we are experiencing.