

About Continuing Care

Continuing Care (CC) is a term which encompasses Home Care, Supportive Living, and Long-Term Care and currently falls under the purview of Alberta Health Services (AHS). CC is often associated with Ministries responsible for Seniors and Housing; however, it is important to note that not all CC clients are seniors and, in delivering quality person-centred care, housing alone does not encompass all that is involved or necessary. In Alberta, Government funded CC services are delivered by several different operators which include AHS, faith based non-profit, non-profit, private or independent operators, and in some situations by Housing Management Bodies (rural lodges). Oversight and administration including access, funding and auditing is done through AHS and all care providers are held to the same provincially set standards and accountabilities. In addition to relevant levels of care, CC providers also provide housing and accommodation for their residents. The accommodation rates these groups can charge are regulated and capped. Although CC providers are primarily regulated and funded by AHS, they must work through and navigate at least five (5) Ministries and departments to accomplish their mandates.

The Alberta Continuing Care Association (ACCA) is a non-profit, voluntary organization made up of a unique alliance of Home Care, Supportive Living, and Long-Term Care service providers. The ACCA is **the Recognized Voice of Continuing Care in Alberta**. See Appendix I for a listing of our members. Our values and principles are people-centred, community-focused, compassionate, and inclusive. Some of our members have been operating as trusted partners in Albertan communities for over 100 years. ACCA members deliver the majority of Continuing Care Services in Alberta. Our Members:



The Constituents

Regardless of geography or socio-economics, this is an important topic that touches every Albertan family in an intimate way.

We know that our population is aging, with the number of seniors over the age of 65 in Alberta expected to increase to 804,000 by 2025 and to more than 1 million by 2035.



Embracing an Aging Population in Alberta

- 550,000 Seniors (2017)
- By 2035, **1,130,000 +** Seniors
- **2 in 3** people know someone with dementia
- Highest rate of dementia in Canada
- Earliest onset of dementia in Canada
- Needs becoming increasingly complex

The health and safety needs of individuals being assessed for CC 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 everyone's unique needs and preferences.**

Funding for CC 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 well-intended steps to address the lack of spaces by increasing allocations to CC infrastructure for AHS sites, which has led to limited impact on the broader needs of the CC sector in Alberta. This direction has not addressed Alberta's demand, led to inflated costs beyond what is fiscally sustainable and will see a significant proportion of Alberta's seniors and those in need continue to reside in ageing institutional settings that do not represent the home-like setting that is a cornerstone of living with dignity and comfort.

The ACCA wants to work with Government as a trusted partner, providing informed and fact-based advice. The ACCA can share solutions on how CC funding can reach the front lines, have the greatest impact and lead to improvements in the quality of care, at the lowest cost to taxpayers, enabling Albertans to live in a home-like setting while receiving the care they need.

The ACCA respectfully requests you to complete this survey as a starting point to dialogue during the 2019 election and policy considerations for the coming mandate of the Government of Alberta.

Main Challenges

There are many technical challenges facing the CC industry, such as outdated legislation and regulations. There are also major high-level policy issues that need to be addressed should Alberta seek to ensure sufficient, high quality programs and housing options that will meet the growing demand of our population. It is important for the provincial parties, their leaders and candidates to clearly articulate their policy intentions for Albertans to consider in the upcoming 2019 provincial election.

Increase access to home-like spaces for Albertans

The demand for CC is growing and will continue to grow. Government cannot build enough spaces on its own to keep pace and has fallen further behind in inventory in recent years.

Provincial programs designed to empower strong partners and attract capital investment into this sector have diminished or been discontinued in recent years and subsequently, other than Government owned spaces, there has been very little growth announced in inventory across Alberta.

1. If Elected, will you increase inventory, adding more choices for Albertans by creating or re-instituting financial programs that will support non-profit, faith based, and independent operators?

YES **NO** **DETAILS/EXPLANATION**

Click or tap here to enter text.

Another current challenge to providing access is that the current regulated low accommodation rates discourage new projects. Accommodation rates provide for resident’s room, food, housekeeping and laundry services, among other factors that go into creating a comfortable home and are capped by the Government. Operators cannot recover costs while providing quality services, recreational programs and keep up with building maintenance. Alberta’s rates have not kept pace with inflation and are restricted at approximately \$2,100 per month. As a comparison, BC and Saskatchewan rates are approx. \$3,100 per month. This has been a major factor in disenfranchising non-government providers and making enhanced offerings for Albertans financially unviable.

Members of the ACCA recognize that this is a sensitive issue and that any increase in costs to residents may need to be accompanied and offset by other benefit programs and/or phased in over time.

2. If Elected, will you work with providers to permit, over time, Alberta’s accommodation rates to be benchmarked at the national average or at a level that will allow operators to provide higher quality programs for our Seniors and those in need of CC?

YES

NO DETAILS/EXPLANATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

The way in which Home Care is delivered is another issue for Albertans. Only a few large providers are contracted to deliver Home Care, which is less effective than allowing Home Care to be provided in-house by the many proven operators in Alberta (non-profit, faith based and independent). The key to access is to reengage and empower local community partners who have demonstrated they can deliver strong programs and services for Albertans in a way, and in places, that the need for services will support.

3. If Elected, will you allow a broader program of Home Care and empower Continuing Care providers in good standing to offer Home Care in their regions, as well as in their own facilities?

YES

NO DETAILS/EXPLANATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

Streamline Regulatory Processes

Currently, CC providers must work with at least five (5) different Ministries/departments to operate and fully comply with Government expectations and regulations, including Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services (AHS), Seniors and Housing, Municipal Affairs and Infrastructure. In addition, there is the need to work with Finance and Labour. These are all departments that providers must navigate, obtain approvals from and report to. Currently regulation and oversight for the Care component is done by AHS. Working with AHS often means slower decisions and onerous regulations, as AHS’ core business is acute care. The CC setting should be home-like, not hospital-like. The extra regulatory burdens add cost, time, excessive work, and staffing requirements that are not always necessary and reduce efficiency. This is creating numerous challenges for CC providers and for Albertans who need the CC supports. Operators don’t want lower standards – they want clear and reasonable standards with timely and efficient processes.

The Government can streamline the demands on operators with one point of contact in Government, not 5, and with a single high-quality audit process – instead of 5 different inspections and audits as is currently the case. It is important to note that clients of CC, which will soon be over 200,000 Albertans, do not have a Minister to appeal to and their line of entry into Government is AHS.

4. If Elected, will you work with ACCA members to streamline regulatory, reporting, audits, capital planning and decision making for Continuing Care operators and Continuing Care residents and clients?

YES

NO

DETAILS/EXPLAIATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

Transparent Funding

CC is one of the largest opportunities for the Government to save money and deliver effective services. However, there is a lack of transparency to the true costs of different models of operations, contributing to a lack of cost of living increases for Alberta's operators, since funding is disbursed by AHS (one of the operators) and not by a Ministry.

Within AHS, acute care operations are prioritized, sometimes to the detriment of CC funding increase. Year after year, the Ministry of Health provides increased funding for all of AHS' operations, however, comparable increases in funding are not reflected for CC services funded from within AHS to CC providers. For example, in 2014, AHS received a 5.9% increase in overall funding, while Home Care providers received only a 2% increase. In 2018, the overall Health Budget increased by 3%, while CC received a 1% increase for funded wage rates. The ability for operators to keep up with labour agreements is inhibited, and the cumulative effect of this funding pattern ultimately impacts the quality of care.

5. If Elected, will you establish a comprehensive funding mechanism centred in a Ministry that ensures transparency in Continuing Care funding, leading to a clear understanding of costs across all operators (AHS, non-profit, faith based, and independent) and make certain that cost of living increases intended to provide programs for Continuing Care residents and clients are indeed passed through to support programs for those Albertans?

YES

NO

DETAILS/EXPLAIATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

A conflict that contributes to several of the above challenges is that AHS is a competitor with other CC providers for funds, but they are also the entity that makes the funding decisions, they are the placement agency, and one of the industry auditors. In addition, AHS utilize internal supports, adding to the cost of their care delivery. There is no reporting to the public, industry or Treasury Board as to what the true cost of AHS CC spaces are versus the rest of the industry (non-profit, faith-based or independent).

6. If Elected, will you delegate a Ministry to be directly responsible for the oversight, decision making, regulating and funding to all Continuing Care providers (AHS, non-profit, faith based and independent)?

YES

NO

DETAILS/EXPLANATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

Historical infrastructure grant programs existed, where non-profit, faith-based and independent providers were invited into a competitive process for matching Government grants to build CC facilities across Alberta. The Government capital grant came with a condition that the accommodation rates for those buildings would be capped at the regulated rate (below market) for 30 years. The last Affordable Supportive Living Initiative (ASLI) award (2015) saw approximately 2,500 units approved at an average cost to taxpayers of \$65,000 per unit. It is important to note that the average overall cost to build those units was approximately \$250,000 each. Over the last 4 years, ASLI was shelved in favor of directing funding into only Government-owned buildings (AHS). The recent public announcements show that the AHS buildings cost Alberta taxpayers in excess of \$700,000 per unit and in some cases over \$1,000,000 per unit. By using partners to provide quality inventory to Albertans, the Government can provide 10 times as many units for the same amount of capital funded by the taxpayer, with operational funding also going at least 20% farther.

7. If Elected, will you support adding quality living space inventory to Albertans using the lowest cost providers and empowering local community partners, which may include Housing Management Bodies in rural Alberta?

YES

NO

DETAILS/EXPLANATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

Desired Legislative/Regulatory Changes

There are several acts and regulations that govern CC. These acts require updating, which will take some thoughtful consultation and a more detailed submission. These include:

- Nursing Homes Act (1985, does not include several of the professions that exist today such as LPN's and Nurse Practitioners, and ties operators to outdated expectations).
- Hospitals Act (1990).
- Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act (2010).

8. If Elected, will you update older regulations and legislation to streamline regulatory burdens and allow modern care professionals to work to their full scope of practice?

YES

NO

DETAILS/EXPLANATION

Click or tap here to enter text.

The ACCA thanks you for your participation in this survey and appreciates your feedback. Collaborative and productive relations with our Government leaders has been, and will continue to be, a cornerstone of the ACCA as we champion for quality of care, quality of life, and enhanced wellness for all Albertans. This is Our Mission!