



Care of the Elderly

Handle with Care



How will we fix what's ailing our health care system?

Issue

Across Canada, the impact of the pandemic has highlighted pressures and inadequacies of facility-based continuing care. Staff struggled to provide a basic or consistent level of care while families were unable to visit or assist their loved ones.

- A recent Auditor General report noted that Alberta's continuing care facilities were insufficiently prepared for the pandemic, including outdated infrastructure and staff shortages.
- Seniors who remain in the community are often challenged to access essential primary care and home care resources. Most Canadian seniors live in the community rather than in facility-based care.
- Providing care to the elderly requires continuity of care, delivered by a primary care team that works together to provide a functioning "medical home." A medical home offers compassion, understanding and knowledge, while connecting seniors to specialist care and other supports.
- The increasing shift of care into the community is creating significant gaps and increasing demands on primary care, home care and family caregivers.
- It is imperative that we support seniors to stay in their homes longer, which will require expanding the scope of Alberta's home care program and helping physicians and caregivers coordinate the best possible care.
- Home care is often harder to access in rural communities, which may result in seniors having to leave their homes sooner, travel to other communities, or remain in hospital longer after surgeries or illness.
- There are approximately 1 million family caregivers in Alberta, who together provide as much as 90% of the care for people living in the community. It is essential that we create supports for family caregivers. They make enormous sacrifices to care for their loved ones and are the backbone of the health care system and the largest workforce in society.
- Government has taken some actions that will play into eventual solutions. These include:
 - > Alberta has passed the [Continuing Care Act](#), replacing multiple acts with a single, modernized piece of legislation to address changing needs and expectations
 - > Alberta has already implemented some of the recommendations from the [Report of the Auditor General—COVID-19 in Continuing Care Facilities](#).
 - > Budget 2023 includes \$4.3B in combined operating support for Community Care, Continuing Care and Home Care programs, as well as \$310M over three years to modernize continuing care facilities, including culturally appropriate care for Indigenous peoples and new spaces for communities in need.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES & PARTIES SHOULD THEY WIN THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION

- How will your government ensure Alberta's seniors receive the care they need, when they need it, in their own communities so that they can choose to remain at home?
- How will your government support family caregivers to better sustain the care they provide, and to maintain their own health and well being?
- What will your government do to ensure Alberta's seniors are better cared for in any future public health emergency?