

June 23, 2010

## More support for seniors on the way

*More than 3,000 continuing care beds to be added across Alberta*

EDMONTON -- Alberta Health Services, working with the Government of Alberta, will add more than 3,000 continuing care beds over the next three years across the province as part of a strategy to increase access and care choices for seniors. These spaces are in addition to the more than 19,500 continuing care spaces currently in Alberta.

This year, more than 1,100 beds are being added across Alberta. The total includes 200 continuing care beds at Carewest Garrison Green in Calgary and 38 designated assisted living suites at the Place Beauséjour site in Beaumont. News conferences were held today at both sites; capacity is being added in communities across the province (see backgrounder).

In Calgary, with patients moving into Carewest Garrison Green this month, the opening of those beds will immediately begin to ease pressure on the number of patients waiting in hospital for a continuing care bed. Currently, about 244 patients a day, on average, are waiting in hospital for placement in the community.

In Beaumont, just south of Edmonton, Place Beauséjour offers a range of living support for seniors, including independent housing, supportive housing and the 38 designated assisted living spaces. In Edmonton, about 257 patients a day, on average, are waiting in hospital for placement in the community.

AHS anticipates the additional beds added in the next three years will significantly reduce the number of people waiting for placement and the length of time they have to wait.

"This is another example of our commitment made through Alberta's Continuing Care Strategy to increase access and choice for seniors," said Alberta Health and Wellness Minister, Gene Zwozdesky. "Premier Stelmach's vision is to provide more options and services for seniors to allow them to age with independence and dignity, and we are taking action to deliver on that vision."

"Many seniors in the province have told us they are proud to be independent and simply need a helping hand that will allow them to remain safe and healthy in a home-like setting for as long as possible," said Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. "By increasing the supply and choice of affordable continuing care spaces, we are providing seniors with more options to remain in their community, close to family and friends."

"Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta are building a strong and sustainable continuing care system with a range of services to meet the needs of seniors and adults with disabilities," said Dr. Stephen Duckett, AHS President and Chief Executive Officer. "Most Alberta seniors live in their own homes and want to remain independent and in control of their own lifestyle and health decisions. But we also know there are seniors, and adults with disabilities, who require support for daily living and for complex health conditions. We currently don't have enough beds to accommodate everyone who needs that level of care. These new spaces will better address their needs."

The move to increase capacity includes more than 1,000 spaces the Government of Alberta recently announced through new funding from its Capital Bonds and Affordable Supportive Living Initiative. AHS added more than 400 continuing care spaces in 2009-10.

The new beds are part of the Alberta Government's 5-Year Funding Plan for AHS that will see a reduction in emergency wait times, reduction in surgery wait times, and the expansion of continuing care. Projects with openings planned in 2010 are underway in several communities around the province.

Alberta Health Services is the publicly funded provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7-million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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**For media inquiries, contact:**

**Edmonton:**

Kerry Williamson  
AHS Communications  
780-407-2602 or 780-905-5890 (cell)

**Calgary:**

Bruce Conway  
AHS Communications  
403-943-1212 or 403-815-3754 (cell)