

June 29, 2010

## AHS 2010/11 budget expands options for seniors, reduces emergency department waits

CALGARY – The Alberta Health Services Board today approved an \$11.2-billion expense budget that includes priority investment in two areas – improved choice and access for seniors; and reduced wait times in emergency departments.

“The 2010/11 budget responds to two critical priorities – reducing the time Albertans spend waiting for care in emergency departments and ensuring that Albertans have a wide range of options to remain independent and healthy as they age,” said Ken Hughes, Chair, AHS Board. “This budget will help us deliver on those priorities and also create a sustainable foundation on which to build for the future.”

The 2010/11 budget includes committed funding from the Province of Alberta of \$9 billion in base funding, plus \$527 million in one-time deficit coverage and \$745 million in restricted grants. There is an additional \$1.5 billion from other revenue sources. The \$9 billion includes a \$1.3-billion increase in base funding from the Province. A five-year funding agreement with the Province includes increases of six per cent in each of the first three years (beginning in 2010/11) and 4.5-per cent increases for the following two years. AHS’ fiscal year runs April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011. The total revenue budget for 2010/11 is \$11.8 billion.

“Through our commitment to a 5-year Funding Plan, the Government of Alberta has given AHS the financial framework to develop a strategic plan to build Canada’s best performing publicly funded health care system right here in Alberta,” said Gene Zwozdesky, Minister, Alberta Health and Wellness. “This budget responds to the priorities of Albertans and sets the course for strategic and continued improvement in health care delivery.”

Budget highlights include:

- \$81 million to improve choice and quality of care for seniors. More than 1,100 continuing care beds will be added this year as part of a three-year plan to increase the number of continuing care beds by approximately 3,000.
- Funding of up to \$50 million will be invested in Transformation Improvement Programs, including reduction in emergency department wait times. There are about 700 Albertans waiting in acute care or sub-acute care settings for a continuing care bed. Adding the new 3,000 continuing care beds will significantly reduce the number of people waiting for placement and the length of time they have to wait.
- As people move into continuing care facilities, more hospital beds become available, resulting in shorter emergency department wait times as patients move through the system faster. Medical assessment units will also open at the Rockyview General Hospital in Calgary and the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton. (Rockyview General Hospital opened the pilot MAU units in the spring of 2010. The units improve emergency department flow by accommodating patients who need ongoing care but who are not yet admitted to hospital. Patients waiting for an inpatient bed are transferred to this unit, where physicians and nurses initiate consultations, treatment and diagnostics).
- Funds have also been set aside to stabilize staffing levels and provide for growth in priority areas, including TIPs projects.

“This budget builds on our ongoing efforts to create a quality, sustainable health care system in Alberta,” said Dr. Stephen Duckett, AHS President and Chief Executive Officer. “These investments are a means to an end – higher quality care for all Albertans.”

The Board today also approved the consolidated financial statements and management analysis for the year ending March 31, 2010. Those documents have been forwarded to the Minister of AHW for approval and will be released at a later date.

Alberta Health Services is the 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 health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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**Backgrounders:**

1. Expenditure highlights
2. Seniors care plan highlights
3. Acute care highlights
4. Business plan is available for handout and on AHS website