

October 14, 2005

Government takes action on wait times: commits \$ 1.4 billion of surplus on additional beds, facilities across province

Edmonton... Access to health care across the province will improve as a result of an injection of \$1.4 billion in funding approved today for 20 capital projects. The announcement means additional bed capacity will be provided in the form of new buildings and renovations and expansion of existing facilities. A total of at least 657 new and upgraded acute care beds and 85 new long-term care beds will be added across the province.

"Our government's plan for the surplus is to use surplus dollars on priorities that benefit Albertans today and tomorrow. This \$1.4 billion commitment from the surplus to health care in Alberta is an historic step toward securing a bright future for the health system and those who use it," said Premier Ralph Klein.

The Calgary Health Region will receive \$662 million for six projects including the new Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre and an expansion to add 140 new beds to the Peter Lougheed Centre. Capital Health Region will receive \$647 million for ten projects including redevelopment of the Royal Alexandra, University, Misericordia and Grey Nuns hospitals in Edmonton to provide over 450 additional beds.

"Government is using the unbudgeted surplus to help build Alberta's future," said Health Minister Iris Evans. "As I travel across this province, people say they are impressed with the quality of care they receive - it's just the access to the system they're sometimes concerned with. By adding capacity like this, we're showing our commitment to taking concrete action on reducing wait times."

Lethbridge Regional Hospitals will receive \$44 million for redevelopment. A further \$65 million will go to renovate and expand health facilities in Edson, Barrhead, Viking and High Prairie. The High Prairie project will see the existing facility replaced on a new site.

"This funding enables us to use current surplus revenues to provide a legacy for future generations and shows our commitment to providing quality public health care at the same time," said Infrastructure and Transportation Minister Lyle Oberg.

This announcement is part of the Alberta government's three-part plan to invest in the future using this year's surplus. More than 75 per cent of surplus dollars are being spent in priority areas like infrastructure, and saved in endowment funds like the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. A smaller part of the surplus - \$1.4 billion - will be given back to Albertans through the 2005 Resource Rebate Program.

Surplus dollars invested in infrastructure this year are in addition to the province's \$9.2 billion, three-year capital plan, a commitment unmatched in the rest of Canada.

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