

February 28, 2006

Alberta health care renewal focuses on balance

Framework outlines government's plans for a strong and innovative public health system

Edmonton... Albertans are getting a first look at Alberta's new Health Policy Framework released by Health and Wellness Minister Iris Evans. The framework itemizes ten new policy directions that set the stage for sustainable, flexible and accessible health services for Albertans.

"We know that Albertans value publicly funded health care," said Minister Evans. "We are absolutely committed to public health care, and we are equally committed to ensuring the system survives and thrives in Alberta's second century. The key to a healthy Alberta is finding a balance that improves patient access, provides care options, and allows for more innovation. To achieve this balance, we need change."

The framework will guide government and health care partners in making positive, innovative changes to the public health care system that work for Albertans and Alberta's health care providers. The changes will take into account the many factors that impact the public health care system, such as the rising cost of pharmaceuticals; the need to keep up with rapidly changing technology; and the fact that Alberta's population is aging and growing like never before.

"There is no one solution to achieving this vision and it is not something that will happen overnight - but it's time to get started," said Evans. "I'll be meeting with stakeholder groups during the month of March and I'll also be making opportunities for the public to provide their input," she stated.

Through ongoing consultation, Albertans will be able to help shape a health care system that:

- Focuses on the patient;
- Ensures accessible and sustainable health services, regardless of one's ability to pay;
- Promotes healthy living - empowering Albertans to play an active role in maintaining and improving their health;
- Maintains public funding of essential services, and offers options that reduce wait times; and
- Fosters team work and innovation among health care providers for the benefit of the patient.

The Health Policy Framework is online at www.health.gov.ab.ca. Copies will also be available to the public through Alberta libraries and MLA constituency offices. Further information on the stakeholder and public consultation opportunities can be found on the Alberta Health and Wellness website. Requests from stakeholders groups to make a presentation to the Minister can be made toll-free within Alberta by dialing 310-0000, then at the prompt dial (780) 644-3333.

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Media enquiries may be directed to:

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Background

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Alberta's plans for health care renewal

Vision

Alberta is a world leader in health and wellness, and open to continuous improvement based on the best ideas and innovations, and a shared responsibility for quality, responsive service.

Values

Alberta's world class health care system will evolve and will be guided by the following values:

- Patient-focused health care;
- Delivery of quality health services;
- Timely and fair access to services;
- Accountability for sound evidence-based investments, fiscal management and responsive service; and
- Increased options and control over one's own health and wellness.

Directions for moving forward

Alberta's New Health Policy Framework has been created after many years of listening to Albertans and health experts. A Third Way action package entitled 'Getting on with Better Health Care' was released in July 2005. The announcement of a new Health Policy Framework was the first action area in that package. The framework promotes broader thinking and creativity as we search for ways to better organize, deliver and pay for health services.

The 10 policy directions included in the framework will help guide health leaders as they tackle some of the difficult challenges of the 21st century. The directions will lead the way to a more responsive and sustainable health system for Albertans now and in the years to come.

The directions are:

1. Putting patients at the center
2. Promoting flexibility in scope of practice of health professionals
3. Implementing new compensation models
4. Strengthening inter-regional collaboration
5. Reshaping the role of hospitals
6. Establishing parameters for publicly funded health services
7. Creating long-term sustainability and flexible funding options
8. Expanding system capacity
9. Paying for choice and access while protecting the public system
10. Deriving economic benefits from health services and research

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