

April 8, 2009

Province strengthens supports for seniors and persons with disabilities

Monthly benefits increase and more Albertans receive support

Edmonton... The Alberta government will invest nearly \$2 billion this year to assist low-income seniors and persons with disabilities, providing increased benefits and helping more individuals in need.

"This budget clearly reflects the Alberta government's commitment to assisting seniors and persons with disabilities who are most in need," said Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. "We've significantly increased funding to more than \$1.97 billion to assist these Albertans and help improve their quality of life."

Effective April 1, the maximum monthly benefit for low-income seniors through the Alberta Seniors Benefit (ASB) program will increase \$40 to \$280 for single seniors and \$60 to \$420 for senior couples. The qualifying income thresholds for the ASB are also increasing to \$24,000 for single seniors and to \$39,000 for senior couples, effective July 1. Approximately 6,000 additional seniors are expected to be eligible.

Low-income Albertans with disabilities will also receive increased support. The maximum Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) benefit is increasing \$100 per month effective April 1, raising the maximum monthly income benefit to \$1,188. The increased program funding will also accommodate an expected growth in the number of Albertans receiving AISH.

A budget increase of 5.8 per cent for the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program will help contracted agencies recruit and retain staff. The increased funding will also assist more clients and improve support for those with complex needs.

"Seniors and persons with disabilities will also benefit from the \$50 million to provide more supportive living units across the province," said Jablonski. "We expect this funding will help build about 450 more units, which will support the Continuing Care Strategy to allow more Albertans to age in the right place."

Low-income seniors and persons with disabilities will also continue to be assisted through successful ongoing programs, such as Aids to Daily Living and Public Guardian Services.

Overall, the 2009 budget for Seniors and Community Supports is increasing by \$108 million to nearly \$2 billion. For more information on programs and services, visit www.seniors.alberta.ca.

Backgrounder: Details of Seniors and Community Supports 2009 budget

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Sonia Maryn, Seniors and Community Supports, 780-415-9950

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Seniors and Community Supports Budget 2009 details

Program Expenses	2008-09 Forecast	2009-10	% Increase	\$ Increase
Seniors and Community Supports	<i>\$1.866 billion</i>	<i>\$1.974 billion</i>	5.8%	<i>\$108 million</i>
Seniors Programs	\$407.3 million	\$455.9 million	11.9%	\$48.6 million
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)	\$644.1 million	\$709.5 million	10.2 %	\$65.4 million
Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD)	\$570.6 million	\$603.9 million	5.8 %	\$33.3 million

Operating expenses:

- Alberta Seniors Programs - provide support to low-income seniors most in need and include the Alberta Seniors Benefit (ASB), Seniors Lodge Assistance, the Dental and Optical Assistance program and other seniors programs. The ASB provides monthly cash benefits to low-income seniors. It is designed to supplement federal income programs such as Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) - provides financial and health benefits to eligible Albertans with a permanent disability that severely limits a person's ability to earn a living.
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) - provides supports to help adults with developmental disabilities to live, work and participate in their community.

Capital funding:

- Affordable Supportive Living Initiative (ASLI) - provides capital funding to help develop affordable supportive living accommodation in communities across Alberta. Budget targets under ASLI call for \$150 million over the next three years (2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12).

-30-

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