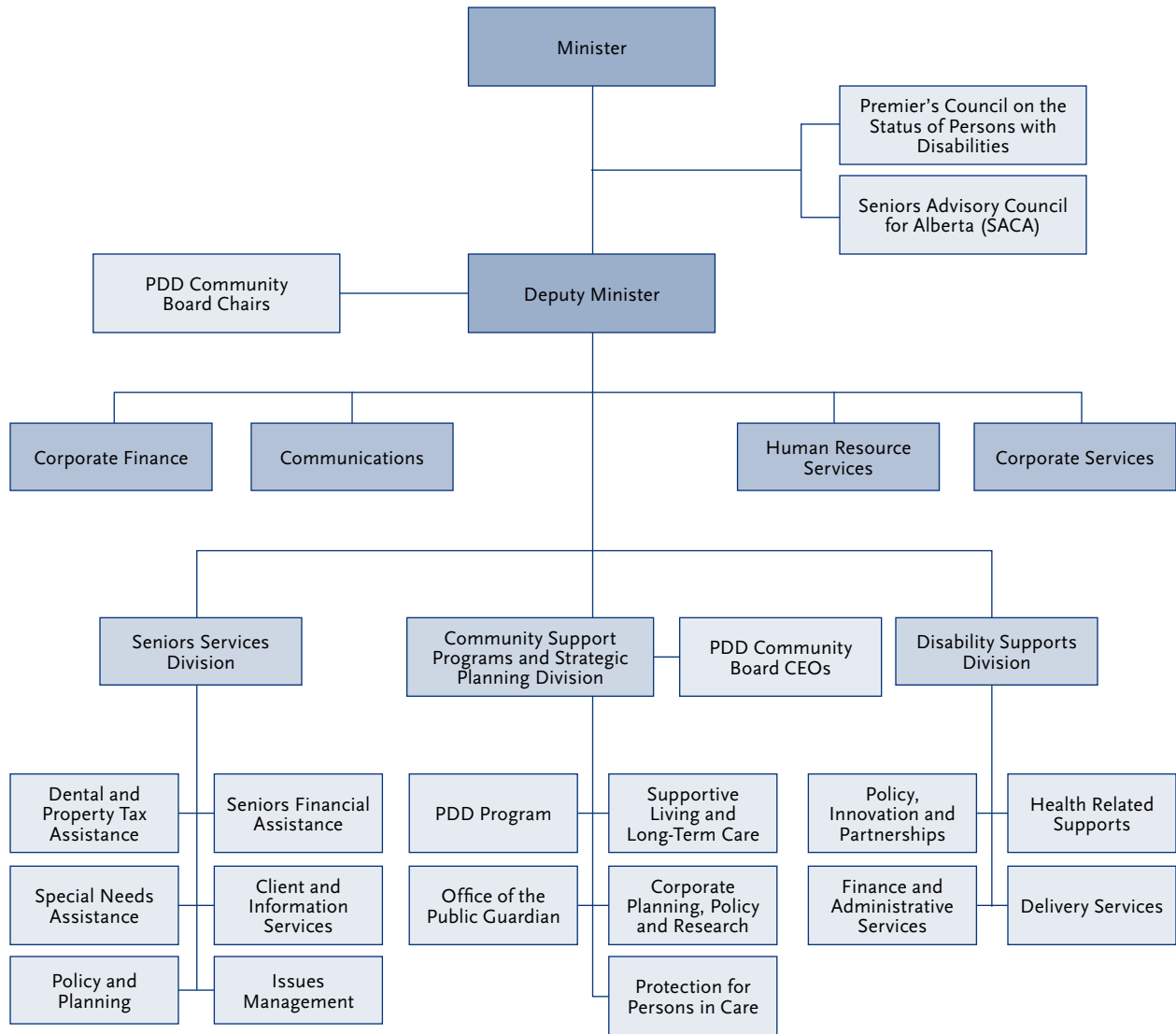


Seniors and Community Supports

Annual Report Highlights
2007-2008



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Ministry consists of the Department of Seniors and Community Supports, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Boards.

The Department includes three divisions: Seniors Services, Disability Supports, and Community Support Programs and Strategic Planning. Corporate functions support department-wide operations. The Ministry underwent internal reorganization during the year and the organizational chart and operational overview reflect the structure of the Ministry as at March 31, 2008.

SENIORS SERVICES DIVISION

The Seniors Services Division is responsible for:

- Delivering the Alberta Seniors Benefit program, which provides monthly cash benefits to over 140,000 seniors across the province.
- Administering the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program, which provides lump-sum cash payments to eligible lower-income seniors who demonstrate they are experiencing financial difficulties meeting one-time expenses.
- Delivering the Dental and Optical programs, which provide financial assistance for dental treatment to approximately 81,000 seniors and assist approximately 28,000 seniors with the cost of eye glasses.
- Delivering the Education Property Tax Assistance program, which provides an annual rebate per household to senior homeowners in Alberta to cover the year-to-year increases in the education portion of their property tax; partnering with municipalities to administer local tax rebate programs for seniors, including delivering the municipal rebate program on behalf of the city of Edmonton.
- Providing information services for seniors, including operating the Seniors Information Line and Seniors Information Services Offices, and publishing the annual *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide*.
- Undertaking research, policy development and planning activities on issues of relevance to seniors and the aging population.
- Providing administrative support to the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta.

DISABILITY SUPPORTS DIVISION

The Disability Supports Division is responsible for:

- Providing financial and health benefits to nearly 37,000 adult Albertans with a permanent disability that causes substantial limitation in the person's ability to earn a livelihood through the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program. Over 10,000 of these individuals also received personal benefits.
- Administering the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program which helps over 80,000 Albertans with a long-term disability, chronic illness or terminal illness by providing equipment and supplies for their medically assessed needs.
- Providing grants to help facilitate wheelchair access to, and movement within, a principal residence through the Residential Access Modification program.

- Providing community supports for adults with disabilities through such programs as the Alberta Brain Injury Initiative and the cross-ministry Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Initiative.
- Undertaking research, policy development, planning and coordination to improve access to supports and services for persons with disabilities in Alberta.
- Providing support to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council of Ministers Responsible for Social Services as it relates to persons with disabilities.
- Providing support to the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DIVISION

The Community Support Programs and Strategic Planning Division is responsible for:

- Providing direct guardianship services through the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) for 1,923 dependent adults who are deemed unable to make their own personal, non-financial decisions. The OPG also acts as decision-maker of last resort for formal mental health patients under the *Mental Health Act* and provides education and support for private guardians. As well, the OPG encourages Albertans to plan for a time when they may be unable to make their own personal decisions by writing a legal document called a personal directive.
- Leading policy development and research to improve quality, supply and client choice across the continuing care system.
- Developing, monitoring and enforcing compliance with accommodation standards for supportive living facilities and long-term care; licensing supportive living facilities; and administering the department's responsibilities for continuing care accommodation services such as setting long-term care residents' accommodation fees.
- Administering the Seniors Lodge, Seniors Self-Contained and Unique Homes programs and the grant programs that support them, and supporting the development of affordable supportive living through capital grant programs.
- Administering the *Protection for Persons in Care Act*, which requires that abuse involving adults receiving government-funded care services be reported and investigated.
- Developing strategic and financial policy, monitoring the quality of services, and conducting research to support continuous improvement of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program. Through the PDD program, approximately 9,100 individuals with developmental disabilities receive supports to participate in community life.
- Leading and coordinating the Ministry's corporate planning, policy and research activities.

CORPORATE FINANCE

Corporate Finance supports the Ministry's financial planning, budgeting, payments and financial accountability activities. Specific areas of activity include budgeting and forecasting, reviewing and monitoring financial transactions, managing financial systems, revenue administration, enterprise risk management, compliance reviews, financial reporting, and producing the annual financial statements.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Corporate Services is responsible for supporting the Ministry's information technology, administrative services, and business continuity and disaster recovery planning. As well, Corporate Services coordinates the Ministry's information and records management and administration of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy processes.

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES

Human Resource Services plans, develops and delivers the Ministry's human resource programs, policies and practices. These include initiatives related to the Alberta Public Service Workforce plan and activities such as performance management, employee relations, succession planning, employee recognition, leadership and learning development, staffing, classification, and workplace health.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications provides advice and support to the Minister and the Ministry on providing clear and timely information to the public about the key initiatives, programs and services of Seniors and Community Supports. Communications also provides consulting services in issues management, strategic planning, media relations, writing, publishing, and website content.

Boards and Agencies

PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COMMUNITY BOARDS

The Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Boards are agents of the Crown as established by the *Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Act*. Each of the six community boards is responsible for the delivery of supports to adults with developmental disabilities within their region. These services assist persons with developmental disabilities to live, work and participate in their communities.

SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

The goal of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta is to ensure the Government of Alberta is well informed on issues impacting seniors. The Council consults with seniors and seniors' organizations across the province, identifies and comments on issues of importance to seniors, develops recommendations, and provides advice to the Minister regarding the needs of seniors.

PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities champions improvements in the lives of Albertans with disabilities by listening to the concerns of the disability community, communicating those concerns to government and providing recommendations and solutions to the issues. The Council does this by focusing on evaluation of policies, policy development and offering advice on programs and services that affect Albertans with disabilities.

SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST YEAR

The following summarizes some of the Ministry's key activities and accomplishments during 2007-08. This summary highlights improvements in operational efficiency; program initiatives; and consultation, legislation, and policy.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

IMPROVED SERVICE

The Ministry undertook a number of initiatives in 2007-08 designed to improve service by increasing coordination and efficiency.

Improvements to business processes in the Education Property Tax Assistance for Seniors program have resulted in reduced processing times and more prompt rebates for seniors. In 2007-08, the majority of seniors received their rebates nearly two months earlier than in 2006-07, despite an increase in the number of people served. In addition, electronic solutions were implemented to further reduce the data collection burden on municipalities, which also made the application process easier for clients.

Continual review and adjustment of processes and procedures has allowed Ministry programs to maintain service levels despite serving increasing numbers of clients. Seniors applying for the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program received the same level of service even though the Ministry received over 1,000 more applications in 2007-08 than in the previous year. Improving efficiency is an important part of the Ministry's preparation for increased demand on seniors' programs as Alberta's population ages.

The Ministry expanded the AISH / Canada Pension Plan (CPP) – Disability Benefits Intake Coordination pilot project province-wide. The sharing of information between the two programs streamlines the intake process for mutual clients.

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

AFFORDABLE SUPPORTIVE LIVING FOR SENIORS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In response to the growing need for supportive living units across the province, the Ministry launched a new program to help low- to moderate-income seniors and persons with disabilities live in their communities. The Affordable Supportive Living Initiative (ASLI) committed \$48 million in capital funding to promote the development of 793 affordable, supportive living units in projects across Alberta. Organizations across the province, including those in Calgary, Edmonton and other high-growth areas, were encouraged to apply for funding under the program. Projects to house people with disabilities and proposals to modernize existing facilities, such as seniors' lodges, were also eligible for consideration under the initiative. The Ministry also allocated \$21.3 million in top-up funding to assist with increased construction costs for supportive living projects approved in 2005-06 under the province's Rural Affordable Supportive Living (RASL) program.

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORTS FOR AISH CLIENTS

The Ministry introduced a number of initiatives to help AISH clients develop the skills and confidence they need to participate in the workforce and to help them benefit from Alberta's thriving economy, including information sessions with AISH clients and presentations to community agencies. The Ministry also collaborated with Employment and Immigration and community agencies to develop pilot projects to meet the unique employment needs of AISH clients.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY AGENCIES

As part of a coordinated government response, Seniors and Community Supports contributed \$15 million to help agencies that serve adults with developmental disabilities and other vulnerable Albertans to recruit and retain staff. The funding was intended to help adults with developmental disabilities continue to get the support and services they need to enjoy a high quality of life in their communities by supporting the local agencies who serve them. The Ministry also allocated an additional \$11.3 million for agency recruitment and retention as part of *Budget 2007*.

CONSULTATION, LEGISLATION AND POLICY

SUPPORTIVE LIVING STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

To improve the quality of accommodation and related services that enhance the safety, security and well-being of adults residing in supportive living settings, the Ministry commenced the development of new supportive living legislation. The new legislation will allow the Ministry to introduce licensing in seniors lodges and respond to an evolving supportive living sector. Public consultations on the proposed Act were held in August 2007 to allow input from major stakeholder groups. Input from these sources was considered in the development of the legislative framework and in drafting the proposed Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act and accompanying regulations.

AMENDMENTS TO THE *PERSONAL DIRECTIVES ACT*

Amendments to the *Personal Directives Act* were passed by the Alberta Legislature on December 5, 2007. A personal directive allows Albertans to write their wishes and/or identify someone they trust to make decisions on their behalf in case an illness or injury leaves them unable to make personal decisions. These amendments include a new voluntary form Albertans can use when writing a personal directive and a voluntary personal directives registry. The registry will provide a way for health professionals to contact the named decision-maker in an emergency. The amended Act also establishes new authority for the Office of the Public Guardian to investigate complaints that the person designated to make decisions is causing harm to the person who wrote the personal directive.

AMENDMENTS TO THE *DEPENDENT ADULTS ACT*

The Ministry continued work on the legislative review of the *Dependent Adults Act (DAA)*. The DAA addresses situations where an adult no longer has the mental capacity to make personal or financial decisions on their own.

Government approved policy directions based on the *Final Report and Recommendations* from the review. Key policy directions include increasing options for people who need decision-making assistance so they can maintain autonomy as long as possible. Other directions involve safeguards such as screening potential guardians and trustees and enabling the Office of the Public Guardian and the Office of the Public Trustee to investigate complaints about trustees and guardians who may be causing harm. Draft legislation for a new act addressing guardianship, trusteeship, and other substitute decision-making options was introduced in June 2008.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Premier's mandates set out the Ministry's priorities for 2007-08 and will guide its work in 2008-09.

In response to the Ministry's mandate to improve quality, supply and client choice in the continuing care system, the Ministry will continue to provide capital grants to help develop affordable supportive living spaces. The Ministry will also implement a public reporting system to provide information on licensed supportive living facilities, including their level of compliance with provincial accommodation standards. The current Supportive Living and Long-Term Care Accommodation Standards will be reviewed and updated, and will continue to be monitored and enforced in all supportive living and long-term care settings. New supportive living legislation is planned to be introduced to allow the Ministry to respond to an evolving supportive living sector.

With Alberta's economy thriving, many of our Ministry clients with disabilities are looking for opportunities to become employed. These potential employees are able to participate in the workplace, but face a range of challenges. The Ministry will continue to work with Employment and Immigration to engage business leaders, employers and community agencies to explore and implement innovative strategies to enhance employability incentives for persons with disabilities to participate in the workforce.

In addition to these incentives, the Ministry will develop a range of employment supports and initiatives to help persons with disabilities to participate in the labour market while maintaining access to needed financial and health-related benefits. As mandated by the Premier, the Ministry will implement measures to support persons with disabilities' independence and self-reliance by providing increased employability incentives, including an increase in the amount that can be earned by single AISH clients from \$1,000 to \$1,500, with a corresponding increase for clients with families.

In 2008-09, the Ministry will draw on the expertise of the Demographic Planning Commission to help plan for the aging population. The Commission consists of experts from a variety of fields: aging issues, health care, economics and the social sciences. The Commission will oversee dialogue sessions with key stakeholders and undertake a survey of the public to solicit feedback on the shared roles of governments, communities, families and individuals in meeting the needs of future seniors, as well as the principles and values underlying these roles. The findings of the Commission will inform the development of an Aging Population Policy Framework for use by decision makers across government. The Framework will outline a series of policy positions about how to allocate public resources for future seniors in an effective and sustainable way, along with the principles and values which underlie these positions.

In the coming year, the Ministry will continue to focus efforts on enhancing the coordination of supports and services for persons with disabilities. This will include supporting young adults living in continuing care facilities, developing regulations to support persons with disabilities using service dogs and identifying the types of supports needed by caregivers of persons with disabilities. Through the PDD Program, the Ministry will focus on achieving better outcomes for persons with developmental disabilities by working with families to explore flexible funding options, and assisting individuals and families in navigating resources available in their communities.

In 2008-09 the Ministry will also pursue a renewed focus on adult protection by proposing changes to existing legislation and introducing new legislation to better protect Albertans who may be vulnerable.

Bill 24, the *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act (AGTA)*, which will replace the 30-year old *Dependent Adults Act*, will address what happens when an adult no longer has the capacity to make personal or financial decisions. The AGTA will complement the *Personal Directives Amendment Act*, which was proclaimed in June 2008. The *Personal Directives Act* allows Albertans to prepare written instructions in case they become incapable of making those decisions later.

Ten years have elapsed since the *Protection for Persons in Care Act (PPCA)* was brought into effect. The PPCA has been under legislative review and in 2008-09 the Ministry will complete policy work so that amendments may proceed in future, with a view to modernizing the PPCA, strengthening the response to abuse, and improving safeguards for vulnerable adults who access government-funded care services. The PPCA Regulation could also be changed so that it remains current.

MINISTRY PROGRAM EXPENSES

(thousands of dollars)

	2007-08 Actual	2007-08 Estimate
PROGRAM EXPENSE		
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped	\$ 598,751	\$ 644,038
Support to Persons with Developmental Disabilities	542,034	526,255
Alberta Seniors Benefit	264,102	285,353
Seniors Dental & Optical Assistance	58,875	66,878
Special Needs Assistance for Seniors	24,234	26,514
School Property Tax Assistance	5,316	11,000
Seniors Lodge Assistance	30,968	35,150
Supportive Living and Long Term Care	37,098	23,686
Support to Providers of Seniors Housing	2,284	3,057
Alberta Aids to Daily Living	99,472	92,354
Community Support Programs	16,068	18,816
Public Guardian Services	8,007	7,946
Ministry Support Services	7,810	8,098
Rural Affordable Supportive Living	21,289	-
Affordable Housing - Supportive Living	15,258	15,219
Valuation Adjustments and Other Provisions	694	185
MINISTRY EXPENSE	\$ 1,732,260	\$ 1,764,549



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ISBN (electronic) 978-0-7785-8047-8