

Edmonton, September 30, 2003

## **Alberta Seniors' 2002-03 Annual Report**

*Responding to the needs of seniors and lower-income Albertans in need of housing*

Quick assistance to lower-income seniors facing rising utility rates and the creation of new affordable and supportive housing are among the significant accomplishments highlighted in the Alberta Seniors 2002-03 Annual Report.

“The 2002-03 fiscal year was a very successful one for the ministry,” said Stan Woloshyn, Minister of Seniors. “In addition to operating within our approved budget, we realized a number of accomplishments including a high level of satisfaction with our services by clients and stakeholders. One of the ministry’s major accomplishments was the financial assistance provided to low-income seniors who were experiencing financial hardships because of rising utility costs.”

The annual report showcases the Ministry’s strategy to address the need for more affordable housing development in high growth communities with the signing of the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement in June 2002. The agreement provides \$67.12 million in federal funds to be matched by the province. “In year-one of the five-year program, I announced \$8.5 million in provincial funding to match federal contributions, resulting in the creation of 420 affordable housing units. ”

In 2002-03, the Ministry of Seniors further enhanced its provision of basic housing shelter for low-income Albertans by fostering development of 321 supportive housing units and by contributing \$3 million towards the development of homeless shelter units.

“This year, we continued to work towards our vision in a fiscally responsible manner ensuring that our programs and services remain viable and meaningful into the future. In doing so, we will continue to address the needs of seniors and lower-income Albertans in need of housing.”

Please see the attached backgrounder for additional highlights contained in the annual report. The Alberta Seniors 2002-03 annual report is available by contacting the Ministry directly at (780) 415-9950, or on the Internet at: [www.seniors.gov.ab.ca](http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca)

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**Media enquiries may be directed to:**

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## Highlights of the 2002-03 Alberta Seniors Annual Report

### *Seniors Programs and Services*

- The ministry partnered with seniors' organizations in Lethbridge, Calgary and Red Deer to deliver information services in these cities and surrounding regions. This is part of a new model of working more closely with seniors' organizations and taking services directly to seniors.
- The ministry began participating in a new Canada Customs and Revenue Agency initiative that will provide quicker and more efficient access to information needed for annual adjustments to seniors' benefits to reflect their changes in income.
- A successful campaign was conducted to encourage seniors to opt for direct deposit of their Alberta Seniors Benefit payments, as a more secure and convenient way to receive benefits.
- The ministry continued to chair the Seniors Fraud Awareness Committee, which took a lead role in the development of the seniors fraud awareness campaign, *If in Doubt, Check it Out*.
- A preliminary model for forecasting seniors' income needs was developed and used to generate cost projections for the adjustment to the Alberta Seniors Benefit program income thresholds implemented in July 2002, and for the 2003-04 budget planning process.

### **Housing Programs and Services**

- The ministry completed several projects under the Seniors Supportive Housing Incentive Program/Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative and signed and implemented the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program Agreement.
- A new funding formula was developed for the Lodge Assistance Program that targets assistance to low- and moderate- income seniors and recognizes the higher costs of small facilities.
- The ministry developed a sustainable remote housing initiative to address the urgent need by many northern and remote communities for subsidized housing.
- Through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, the ministry committed \$3 million annually over a three-year period to address housing for homeless people in Alberta's major urban centres. This commitment has generated \$81.6 million in investment partnerships and federal contributions totaling \$50 million.
- During 2002-03, preparations began for the transfer, on April 1, 2003, of responsibility for 16 emergency shelters and three support programs, as well as Gunn Centre, from Alberta Human Resources and Employment to Alberta Seniors.

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