

Edmonton, September 30, 2004

## **Alberta Seniors' 2003-04 Annual Report**

### **Ensuring quality services and meaningful assistance to those in greatest need**

As highlighted in the 2003-04 Annual Report, Alberta Seniors made significant gains towards ensuring the sustainability of Alberta's long-term care system and towards enhancing assistance to low-income seniors and low-income Albertans in need of housing.

"I am very pleased with what my ministry has accomplished in 2003-04," said Stan Woloshyn, Minister of Seniors with responsibility for Housing. "In a partnership between Alberta Seniors, Alberta Health and Wellness, and the long-term care industry, we made significant gains towards ensuring that a quality long-term care system remains viable into the future." The introduction of the enhanced assistance through the Alberta Seniors Benefit program ensured that low-income seniors in long-term care facilities were not adversely impacted by accommodation rate adjustments.

"My ministry also made significant gains in addressing the housing needs of low-income Albertans and people with special needs by fostering further development of affordable housing units," said Woloshyn. Through the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program, the ministry partnered with the federal government to provide funding and foster development of 872 new affordable housing units in Alberta's high-growth, high-need communities and remote areas. "Then, by funding transitional housing projects through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, we partnered with organizations such as the Calgary Homeless Foundation and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund to create new opportunities for the homeless to move out of shelters and into homes."

To enhance assistance to low-income seniors, Alberta Seniors implemented a significant reform to the Lodge Assistance Program to reconfigure the way seniors' lodges are funded and lodge residents are assisted. As well, the maximum annual cash benefit for lodge residents under the Alberta Seniors Benefit was increased.

In 2003-04, the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program continued to provide assistance with eligible seniors' utility costs for a four-month period in the winter of 2003.

Please see the attached backgrounder for additional highlights contained in the annual report. The Alberta Seniors 2003-04 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 2003-04 Alberta Seniors Annual Report

### *Seniors Programs and Services:*

- The ministry worked with Alberta Health and Wellness to adjust the long-term care accommodation rates to better reflect the cost of providing accommodation services, and to provide operators with additional revenue to maintain quality of accommodation services.
- The ministry responded to the needs of low-income residents in long-term care facilities by implementing changes to the Alberta Seniors Benefit program to ensure that low-income residents were not adversely impacted by the accommodation rate increases and to ensure that cases of financial hardship were resolved on a case-by-case basis.
- The Special Needs Assistance for Seniors Program continued to provide assistance with eligible seniors' utility costs for a four-month period in the winter of 2003.
- Due to an increase in the number of applications received by the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program from the previous year, the assessment process for applications to the program was evaluated and modified to ensure that seniors continue to receive prompt service.
- The ministry continued to work collaboratively with other ministries on several initiatives including the Health Sustainability Initiative, Roundtable on Family Violence, Rural Development Initiative, and the Alberta Mental Health Services Plan.

### *Housing Programs and Services:*

- Through the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program, the ministry approved projects for the construction of 872 new affordable housing units in Alberta's high-growth, high-need communities and remote areas.
- The ministry assisted in creating new opportunities for people living in homeless shelters to move into appropriate longer-term housing through its continued capital contribution to the construction of transitional housing.
- To more effectively target assistance to low-income residents, the ministry implemented a major reform to the Lodge Assistance Program to reconfigure the way seniors lodges are funded and lodge residents are assisted. As well, the maximum annual cash benefit for lodge residents under the Alberta Seniors Benefit was increased.
- The ministry continued to ensure the emergency shelter needs of homeless people were met by addressing specific short-term inadequacies in the emergency shelter system. Among initiatives, the ministry assumed operations of the Sunalta Shelter in Calgary on an interim basis and worked with local stakeholders and the City of Calgary to provide temporary, and subsequently permanent, housing for families in Calgary who were homeless over the winter months.
- Seven projects funded under the Seniors Supportive Housing Incentive Program (SSHIP) and the Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative (HAPI) were completed and opened in 2003-04, providing a total of 170 new units for seniors supportive housing. Now completed, SSHIP and HAPI resulted in the creation of 1,917 new supportive housing units for low-income seniors throughout the province.

*Backgrounder (cont.)*

***Office of the Public Guardian:***

- As part of a transfer from Alberta Human Resources and Employment to Alberta Seniors, the Office of the Public Guardian was restructured to facilitate integration into Alberta Seniors' structure.
- The Office of the Public Guardian embarked on a consultation and planning process to seek input from external stakeholders, clients, and staff about its future role.

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