



Nov. 30, 2010

Becoming the Best: Alberta's 5-Year Health Action Plan **Questions and answers**

1. Why will this plan make a difference in improving wait times and access for Albertans?

There are 3 important elements that will help the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services deliver on this plan.

First, this plan is tied to a strong vision: to build the best-performing publicly funded health system in Canada. That vision aligns with what Albertans want.

Second, Alberta Health Services has been provided with the first-of-its-kind 5-year predictable, stable funding that allows for the best possible planning for the delivery of health services.

Third, is accountability. This plan is also about building a more transparent and accountable health system.

- We're putting our goals for the health system on paper; those goals are our commitments to Albertans.
- We're publishing the plan that we and AHS have agreed on to work toward those goals. For example - 360 more hospital beds this year; that's more than the health system has added in a single year in at least the past 5 years.
- AHS is going to report publicly on its progress toward these goals, including the detailed Emergency data that they began posting on their website this month.
- We're going to show Albertans exactly what the health system is doing to deliver the improvements we're promising. More beds, more operating rooms, more surgeries, more nurses and other health professionals, more radiation therapy centres for cancer treatment: we're going to show the progress we're making in building up the system, so Albertans can see for themselves.

2. How much is it going to cost to implement this Action Plan?

As stated in the plan, the Alberta government has a 5-year commitment to Alberta Health Services that includes funding increases of 6% in each of the first 3 years and 4.5% in each of the next 2 years. In 2010-11, AHS will receive \$9 billion in base operating funding that increases to \$11.1 billion in 2014-15.

3. Why are wait times targets not being reduced more quickly?

AHS is already acting on many of these performance measures. There is a clear action plan to address emergency department waits. This year, AHS has opened more than 800 continuing care beds, and another 600 more beds will be coming on stream. Surgeries are also ramping up. AHS is constantly reviewing its processes and services to see how it can provide better and faster health services. As one example, on November 19, Alberta Health Services had a meeting of clinical and operational leaders to develop new protocols to reduce Emergency Department wait times. These protocols will be piloted in some hospitals, and will build on the actions already identified in the 5-year plan.

4. In the short term, why are actions being announced that are already in place or that have already been rolled out?

The plan is intended to encompass actions taking place from 2010 to 2015. AHS and AHW have been aggressively working to address key health care priorities such as emergency room pressures and continuing care. We started developing this plan in the spring of 2010, and have made announcements on many initiatives. The 5-year plan integrates the actions that have already taken place with others that will come in the future, and shows the impact the overall plan will have on the health system.

5. What if the targets in the plan are not met?

Every effort will be made to meet and/or exceed the targets. The 5-year funding commitment provides the predictable, stable funding that allows for better long-range planning to help us meet those targets. This is an exercise in building a stronger health system, about being transparent about how we're doing, and being accountable to Albertans. If the targets aren't being met, Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services will work together with their partners in the health system to determine why, and will take the steps necessary to improve the system so the targets can be achieved.

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