

November 30, 2010

5-year Health Action Plan sets clear course for health system

Edmonton... Reduced wait times for surgeries, quicker access to cancer treatment and more continuing care options are some of the improvements Albertans can expect as part of a new health action plan released by the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services (AHS).

Becoming the Best: Alberta's 5-year Health Action Plan provides Albertans clear direction on what they can expect from their health care system over the next 5 years. Alberta is the only province in Canada to have a 5-year health funding commitment in place. *Becoming the Best* provides the detailed targets the province and AHS will use to drive further improvements in the health care system.

Some highlights Albertans can expect to see under the plan include:

- **reduced wait times** for hip surgery (60% reduction in wait times);
- **quicker access** to radiation oncologists for patients (70% reduction in wait times)
- **faster treatment** at emergency departments (90% of patients to be treated and admitted to hospital within 8 hours, and 90% of patients to be treated and released within 4 hours);
- **more spaces** for continuing care (68% increase in the number of people moved out of a hospital bed and into a community care setting); and, an
- **emphasis on wellness** to keep Albertans healthy (32% increase in child immunization rates).

“Our government has a clear plan for Alberta’s publicly funded health care system,” said Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Health and Wellness. “It began with the establishment of one health authority, followed by an historic 5-year funding commitment and then the introduction of an Alberta Health Act. This new *5-year Health Action Plan* builds on our commitment to create the best-performing publicly funded health system in Canada. It’s what Albertans told us they expect and it’s what we are delivering on.”

“The Health Action Plan clearly defines short and long-term goals for AHS that will ensure Albertans have access to quality health care,” said Dr. Chris Eagle, Acting President and Chief Executive Officer for Alberta Health Services. “With the stability provided by the 5-year funding plan, AHS is committed to delivering on these goals and being accountable to all Albertans.”

Some short-term actions to be included by March 2012 include:

- adding 360 more hospital beds and 3,000 more surgeries;
- expanding HealthLink (a 24/7 nurse telephone advice and health information service);
- adding 2,300 more continuing care spaces;
- adding 65 more mental health staff to schools and clinics; and
- launching a Wellness Forum involving community, business, and health leaders.

- more -

Some mid-to-long-term actions to be completed by March 2015 include:

- adding 2 more radiation therapy centres, one in Red Deer and one in Grande Prairie. These are in addition to the radiation therapy centre opened in Lethbridge this year;
- adding 3,000 more continuing care beds on top of the 2,300 listed under the short-term actions; and
- introducing new programs that promote healthy eating and active living.

These actions complement the initiatives outlined in the government's Health Workforce Action Plan, which will ensure Alberta's health workforce has the capacity to make these systemic changes happen.

The *5-year Health Action Plan* sets out clearly defined targets for health system performance and outlines how AHS, the Government of Alberta and their health care partners will work together to meet those targets. Albertans will be able to track the progress of the health system against these targets online.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta; the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta; the Alberta College of Pharmacists; and the Health Quality Council of Alberta provided input and advice that was used to develop the *5-year Health Action Plan* and a set of 50 supporting performance measures.

View *Becoming the Best: Alberta's 5-year Health Action Plan* and the accompanying performance measures at www.health.alberta.ca or at www.albertahealthservices.ca.

The Alberta government has a clear plan for a strong economic recovery. An important part of *The Way Forward* is maintaining support for programs and services Albertans need most, such as health care, education and safe and vibrant communities. For more information on the plan visit Alberta.ca.

***Becoming the Best* Questions and Answers**

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