

January 22, 2007

Dear Premier Stelmach,

My husband and I met you during your campaign for Premier; I truly congratulate you on your win. I met with you along with fellow members of the seniors' task force. I also mentioned to you during that meeting about the conversion of Hinton's long-term facility to a Designated Assisted Living facility, this is one of the five points the seniors task force is campaigning to have stopped. I will explain again to you why Hinton no longer has any long-term care beds and why we need them back as soon as possible.

Back in the late 1980s one of Hinton's major priorities and objectives was to build a long-term care facility. With the drive of two women Mabel Lee and Grace Hart and with the communities support by December 2000 there were plans to build a 40 long-term care bed and 25 supportive living unit facility. Even though Hinton only managed to secure funding to get the approval to build a 25 long-term care bed and 27 supportive living unit facility, the community was still overjoyed.

The Mountain View Centre operated by the Good Samaritan Society opened in October 2002 and residents that had been shipped out of Hinton and placed in other long-term care facilities throughout the region were finally coming home to be close to their families.

On January 30, 2005 your government under Premier Klein took away all of Hinton's long term care beds and actually paid \$500,000 to have it done. The Good Samaritan Society was allowed to downgrade and reclassify our long-term care facility to a 52 bed Designated Assisted Living facility. For years before these residents came back to Hinton they were long-term care residents then overnight that same resident became a Designated assisted living resident. The reclassification of the Mountain View Centre was not done to improve the quality of life for the residents living there, but was done strictly for the almighty dollar.

I would call the reclassification of Mountain View Centre one of the worst disasters to have happened to this community since the train derailment of 1986.

At a September 2006 meeting in Hinton the Advisory Council for Alberta that was headed by Raymond Prins, heard from our hospital administrator that one of the major priorities again for our community was the desperate need for long-term care beds due to the fact that our hospital beds were filling up with long-term care residents.

I read in this months Edmonton Senior paper that you issued letters to your cabinet ministers outlining priorities that you expect them to accomplish. The paragraph that I was most interested in was, "A major job for the new Seniors minister will be to bring forward an update plan to expand long-term care and improve standards" I was very glad to hear that the two major jobs are exactly what my husband and I have been advocating years for.

The Evergreens Foundation wants to expand onto the Pine Valley Lodge and this has been in the planning phase since 1996. The community of Hinton has already been approved for the funding to build a long-term care and a supportive living facility years ago so please look at this project for immediate funding to build the 40 long-term care beds and 25 supportive living units Hinton needs and was approved for back in December 2000.

The other paragraph that states, "Alberta seniors have worked hard to create Alberta's success and they deserve to be treated fairly, compassionately, and with dignity." I have emphasized the words treated fairly, because the residents of Mountain View Care Centre, their families and the community of Hinton have not been treated fairly.

By reclassifying our long-term care facility that was under health, was given more funding to operate, had RNs on duty 24/7 in the facility and was governed by stricter standards, etc. reclassified into a Designated Assisted Living facility that is under housing, with less funding, no RN 24/7 in the facility plus this was not what the community raised the funds for or spent over ten years lobbying government for is what I call not fair, but totally unjustifiable. This conversion has decreased the quality of care for these residents and has also put their safety and wellbeing at risk.

By giving Hinton the funds to rebuild and get back our long-term care beds and supportive living units would bring justice back to this community.

With Hinton's aging population the community does not have years to wait. We need the necessary funding to start building in the spring, so that this community will be able to look after our senior population that helped to build the community of Hinton 50 years ago.

Yours truly,

Seniors I Care  
Lynda Jonson

March 28, 2007

Dear ~~Mr. Ron and Mrs. Jenson~~ Lynda:

Thank you for your e-mail concerning long-term care needs in the Town of Hinton. Government is aware there is a desire for programs that provide support to people in their own communities. Albertans want to remain in their own communities in a non-institutionalized environment for as long as possible and to maintain a sense of control and responsibility for their well-being. Designated Assisted Living (DAL) arrangements are designed to meet these needs.

I must stress that there is a significant difference in the health care needs between those individuals who suffer from a severe chronic illness and require a high level of care compared to the elderly, who generally only require assistance and supervision to allow them to live more independently. In general, DAL settings offer 24 hour personal care and 24 hour Licensed Practical Nursing. When required, further health care services are organized through the region's home care program. The Aspen Regional Health Authority assures me that the residents of the Mountain View Centre are receiving appropriate care and that the Health Authority and the Good Samaritan Society are fully committed to ensuring all resident needs are met in a safe, competent and caring environment.

It was the Aspen Regional Health Authority and the Good Samaritan Society that made the decision to convert the 25 long-term care spaces at the Mountain View Centre in Hinton to DAL spaces. This was done to better utilize the facility, while providing appropriate continuing care services for residents with high health care needs. The conversion was approved on the condition that the Good Samaritan Society keeps the accommodation rates affordable.

DAL residents are eligible for the same enhanced income supports through the Alberta Seniors Benefit and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) programs as long-term care residents. Health care services are provided to residents based on their assessed needs. According to the Good Samaritan Society, with the enhanced income supports and low accommodation charges, residents in Mountain View Centre have not raised any affordability concerns, and most residents, regardless of health needs, have been able to remain in Hinton.

One of this government's priorities is to update the government's plan to expand long-term care in Alberta and improve standards of care. The new Continuing Care Health Service Standards (released May 2006) apply to health services provided in assisted living residences as well as traditional long-term care settings.

The Aspen Regional Health Authority is responsible for determining the location and number of long-term care spaces required within their region. I encourage you to contact Mr. Andrew Will, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Aspen Regional Health Authority at (780) 349-8705 if you wish to discuss this matter further.

In accordance with the desire expressed by Albertans to age in place, I support the strategy for increasing the range of community-based supportive living options available to Albertans, while ensuring there is appropriate and reasonable access to continuing care services. I recognize the considerable contribution seniors have made to our society and will continue to work towards providing them with exceptional support services.

Sincerely yours,

Ed Stelmach

cc: Honourable Dave Hancock, QC Minister of Health and Wellness  
Honourable Greg Melchin, FCA Minister of Seniors and Community Supports  
Ivan Strang, M.L.A. West Yellowhead