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November 19, 2008

Mrs. Carol Wodak
213 Village Close
Sherwood Park, Alberta
T8A 4Y2

Dear Ms. Wodak:

Thank you for your October 31, 2008 e-mail regarding continuing care in Alberta. I have consulted with the Honourable Ron Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness, and I am pleased to provide you with the following information.

Albertans have consistently made it clear to our government that they prefer to remain in their own community and receive health services in non-institutionalized settings for as long as possible. The goal of the aging in place strategy is to provide increased community-based continuing care services and enable Albertans to remain in their homes and communities longer. Continuing care clients are referred to the most appropriate care setting based on their assessed care needs, and, in many cases, a supportive living option provides an appropriate level of care and is often the preferred choice of the client and their family.

Led by Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, the Demographic Planning Commission was created to consult with Albertans on how government programs, services and supports for future seniors should be allocated and sustained. The Commission met with stakeholders to look at the shared roles of governments, communities, families and individuals in meeting the needs of future seniors. The Commission also conducted an on-line survey over the summer of 2008, to which more than 10,000 Albertans responded.

Participants were invited to take a broad perspective and provide their input on any issue they felt would be important to future seniors. Although the focus of the consultation was not limited to the discussion of health care services, the topic of care services was not excluded from these consultations, and was indeed a major component of many of the consultations. The final report of the Commission's findings is anticipated to be released to the public later this fall.

Albertans' input from the Commission's consultations will help to shape the Continuing Care Strategy. As the Continuing Care Strategy is currently under development, I regret that I am unable to provide you with specific information about it at this point.

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McKinsey & Company was selected through a competitive process to conduct a provincial service optimization review. This review includes the full continuum of care, ranging from public health, primary health care, acute care, emergency care, continuing care and home care.

It also examines system capacity, human resources and infrastructure capabilities. The review and analysis of Alberta's health services will help the Government of Alberta to make informed policy decisions for our province's health care system.

This system-wide review is being conducted with the intent of improving access to quality health services for all Albertans. The goal is to assess health needs with a view to optimizing the organization and delivery of health services. Once completed, the report will be thoroughly reviewed by Alberta Health and Wellness, and government will determine how to share and apply this information as we strive to enhance access and quality within our health care system.

Regarding your comments in MLA Bulletin 5 about the Private Members Motions proposed by Government MLAs in the 27th sitting of the Legislature (1st Session, 2008), Alberta Health and Wellness agrees that care for Albertans should be integrated and co-ordinated as much as possible. Alberta Health and Wellness is working towards better co-ordinated and integrated care services through initiatives such as the development of a patient navigation model across Alberta. The purpose of the patient navigation system is to help patients with complex health needs navigate the health system and access the right services at the right time. The system will link services and providers to provide patients with comprehensive, seamless care that meets their needs in a more holistic manner.

Thank you for sharing the concerns about the health system that were discussed in the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team Brief on Continuing Care 2008. Alberta Health and Wellness recognizes that if more seniors are choosing to age in place, families and communities need to be supported in order to provide ongoing appropriate care to these individuals. I would like to assure you that as the Continuing Care Strategy is developed, careful consideration will be given to the needs of seniors, their families and their communities.

Thank you for taking the time to write and for your continued interest in continuing care.

Sincerely,



Iris Evans
MLA, Sherwood Park
Minister of Finance and Enterprise

cc: Honourable Ron Liepert Minister of Health and Wellness

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