

# MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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For Immediate Release

January 20, 2010

## **Minister's Advisory Committee Recommends Foundation for Health System A New Alberta Health Act, Patient Charter and support for Evidence-Based Decision Making**

Edmonton...The Minister's Advisory Committee on Health is recommending a new *Alberta Health Act* built around core principles and calling for a patient charter and stronger support for evidence-based decision making.

"Alberta's health system is burdened by a cumbersome, confusing and complex web of legislation and regulation," said Fred Horne, MLA, Edmonton Rutherford and Co-Chair of the Committee. "Our Committee's report makes a number of significant recommendations that, if accepted, will shape a new, clearly defined understanding or "compact" with Albertans about their health and health care – and we believe this should be written into law"

"We have called for changes that will help give people and families more say about what is happening in the health system and in their care. At the same time, we think these changes will better support health providers and give them the framework they need to help their clients and patients."

The Minister's Advisory Committee is recommending six principles to help guide Alberta's health system:

- Put people and families at the centre of their health care.
- Be committed to quality and safety.
- Ensure equitable access to timely and appropriate care.
- Enable decision-making using the best available evidence.
- Be focused on wellness and public health.
- Foster a culture of trust and respect.

Its other recommendations include: affirming the principles of the *Canada Health Act* in the new *Alberta Health Act*; consolidating core legislation related to publicly funded health services in the new Act; establishing an arm's-length entity to support evidence based decision-making; developing an Alberta patient charter, enabling ongoing citizen engagement and providing clear directions to align decisions across the health system with the principles and intent of the new *Alberta Health Act*.

"We heard again and again that people feel they aren't being adequately consulted about their health services or directions taken by the health system," said Co-Chair Deborah Prowse. "That's why we have recommended much broader public engagement in health policy and in developing a patient charter to clearly set out what we should expect from Alberta's system and what the health system should expect from us."

"These critical components provide a new focus and architecture for health care legislation, added Horne. "Together, they will reframe the way Albertans, health policy makers and the health system view health and health care in the years ahead. We believe this is a necessary foundation to rebuild trust and respect within the health system and to give Albertans the health system they want and deserve."

For further information, contact Fred Horne, Co-Chair at (780) 414-1311

Attachment: Backgrounder on Minister's Advisory Committee on Health

The Committee's report "A Foundation for Alberta's Health System" can be found at [www.ministersadvisorycommitteeonhealth.ca](http://www.ministersadvisorycommitteeonhealth.ca)

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## BACKGROUND

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### Committee's Mandate

On September 1, 2009, the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health was established to make recommendations on the legislative reforms necessary to facilitate health system initiatives now, and in the future. The committee was asked to provide a framework that that would:

- Remove barriers to accessing health care
- Promote wellness
- Promote ambulatory and community-based care
- Enable the public health system to respond to emerging issues on a timely basis
- Encourage evidence-informed innovation
- Establish clear lines of accountability

### Process

The Minister's Advisory Committee on Health heard from 34 key stakeholders and received 29 written stakeholder submissions. The committee prepared a workbook to frame discussion with stakeholders and the public. The workbook included possible principles and themes that could guide health legislation in Alberta. Its website received 3,191 visits from Albertans and a total of 1,756 surveys were completed.

### Summary of Key Recommendations

The Minister's Advisory Committee on Health feels that a new legislative foundation will reinforce and sustain a public health system that is responsive, innovative and relied upon by this generation – and those to follow. After listening to Albertans, four recommendations were established.

#### **Recommendation 1: Articulate a set of principles that must be sustained and maintained throughout Alberta's health system. (Pages 10 – 15 of the report)**

Principles should be consistent with the *Canada Health Act* and reflect a publicly funded health system that is accessible to all regardless of ability to pay. Alberta's proposed health system principles strive to:

- Put people and their families at the centre of their health care
- Be committed to quality and safety
- Ensure equitable access to timely and appropriate care
- Enable decision-making using the best available evidence
- Be focused on wellness and public health
- Foster a culture of trust and respect

#### **Recommendation 2: Legislate an Alberta Health Act for the Future. (Pages 16 – 25)**

The *Alberta Health Act* would establish the fundamental principles on which the health system operates and provide the flexibility and scope necessary to deal with the demands in health today and in the future. Key Components of *Alberta Health Act* include:

- The principles for health care and services recommended by the Committee (above)
- Identification of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for key players in the health system
- Clear and consistent definitions that apply across all health legislation
- Provision for an arm's-length entity to ensure use of best available evidence in decision-making
- Provision for an Alberta patient charter to be developed in consultation with Albertans
- Consolidation of care health acts that deal with publicly funded services

#### **Recommendation 3: Ensure ongoing Citizen Engagement in the development of legislation, regulation and policy. (Page 26)**

The public and stakeholders must be meaningfully engaged in decision-making throughout the health system. This includes:

- Public involvement in setting priorities for health services and developing the Alberta patient charter
- Developing a transparent process to ensure the alignment of existing and new legislation, regulation and policy with the principles and intent of the *Alberta Health Act*
- Public representation in the ongoing process of ensuring evidence-based decision-making
- Validating the proposed framework to guide future directions for the health system

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## **Recommendation 4: Develop clear directions to guide legislative, regulatory, policy and program delivery changes across the health system. (Pages 27 – 33)**

Direct links should be drawn between the new legislative framework and the more detailed regulations, policies and practices that would follow from it. The committee recommends that:

- The *Alberta Health Act* ensures that health governance bodies are aligned with its principles and intent
- All other health legislation in Alberta is aligned with the intent and principles contained with the *Alberta Health Act*
- Other provincial legislation that impacts the health of Albertans is aligned with the *Alberta Health Act*
- A clear guide is developed to align decision-making on legislative, regulatory, policy and program delivery changes throughout the health system (proposed guide in report)

### **Minister's Advisory Committee on Health Co-Chairs**

Fred Horne, MLA

Deborah E. Prowse

### **Committee Members**

Merv Bashforth

Donald W. Johnson

Dr. Patricia Bayne

Dan MacLennan

Dr. John Cowell

Dr. Gary McPherson

Jennie Deneka

Dr. John Pasternak

Dr. Tom Feasby

Mary-Anne Robinson

Dr. Kimberly Fraser

Tom Sampson

Gordon Graydon

Dr. Earle Snider

### **Report**

The Committee's report "A Foundation for Alberta's Health System" can be found at

[www.ministersadvisorycommitteeonhealth.ca](http://www.ministersadvisorycommitteeonhealth.ca)

### **Stakeholder Presentations**

Canadian Union of Public Employees (Alberta)

Canadian Mental Health Association (Alberta)

Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta

Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE)

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta

(CPSA)

Alberta Nursing Education Administrators

Consumers' Association of Canada, Alberta

Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association

Covenant Health

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary

Alberta Association of Optometrists

(Dr. James Silvius)

Alberta Bone and Joint Health Institute

Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry,

Alberta College of Family Physicians

University of Alberta

Alberta College of Pharmacists

Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary

Alberta Continuing Care Association

(Dr. Tom Noseworthy)

Alberta Disabilities Forum

Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical

Alberta Health Services

Sciences, University of Alberta

Alberta Home Care and Support Association

Friends of Medicare

Alberta Medical Association

Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA)

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties

School of Public Health, University of Alberta

Calgary Chamber of Commerce

School of Public Policy, University of Calgary

Canada Diagnostic Centres

United Nurses of Alberta (UNA)

A list of those who made written submissions is available on the Committee's website

[www.ministersadvisorycommitteeonhealth.ca](http://www.ministersadvisorycommitteeonhealth.ca)