



ALBERTA  
SENIORS AND HOUSING

*Office of the Minister  
MLA, Calgary-Beddington*

AR52369

January 12, 2022

Her Worship Cathy Heron  
Mayor, City of St. Albert  
President, Alberta Municipalities  
300, 8616 – 51 Avenue  
Edmonton AB T6E 6E6

Dear Mayor Heron:

Thank you for your December 6, 2021 letter regarding Alberta Municipalities' 2021 elder care model and long-term care resolutions. I appreciate the opportunity to respond, and have forwarded a copy of your letter to my colleague, Honourable Jason Copping, Minister of Health, for his consideration.

Alberta's government recognizes and supports older adults' goal of continuing to live in their own homes, in the communities they know and love, and provides a number of programs and services aimed toward helping seniors fulfil this goal. In addition, the financial and health benefits available to Alberta seniors with low income are one of the reasons our province has among the lowest senior poverty rates in Canada. The government is maintaining seniors' benefits for those most in need; ensuring vulnerable seniors can count on a stable source of income.

Seniors and Housing works with community leaders to support the development of the Healthy Aging Alberta initiative, which focuses on sector development and coordination across community-based organizations delivering a variety of programs, services, information, and non-medical supports to older adults. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative expedited the implementation of the Collaborative Online Resources and Education (CORE) Alberta platform, which enables Healthy Aging Alberta organizations to efficiently share information and resources province-wide, and discuss key issues, such as social connection, wellness, home supports, food security, transportation, and elder abuse prevention. Almost one-quarter of the over 1,000 CORE Alberta members are from rural communities, and rural service providers have shared how CORE Alberta has enabled them to connect and consult with peers in communities of similar size to improve their service delivery.

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Seniors and Housing and the Healthy Aging Alberta initiative continue to work closely with Health and civil society organizations to identify and promote opportunities to increase the availability of non-medical community supports to help seniors remain at home and prevent or delay the need for facility-based care. Family caregivers have an essential role in this, which is why Caregivers Alberta received a \$3 million grant over three years to expand supports for caregivers during the pandemic and beyond.

Alberta's government aims to protect the health and well-being of seniors through a variety of mechanisms. I understand the importance of seniors, their families, and others who advocate for seniors being able to access information and referrals to the supports and services they need. Although there is not a dedicated Seniors Advocate, Albertans who contact the Alberta Health Advocate's office are able to receive help with information and referrals to supports and services, and staff can connect individuals directly with other departments across government, or assist in finding the information they require.

In June 2021, Seniors and Housing provided \$750,000 to the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council to support elder abuse prevention and intervention initiatives. Approximately \$650,000 of this funding helps coordinated community responses across the province increase supports for seniors subjected to elder abuse. Based on input from stakeholders and the public, my ministry is developing a new provincial definition of elder abuse, which can inform legislation, policies, and programs that address elder abuse and improve the safety and well-being of seniors in Alberta.

Over the summer of 2021, Seniors and Housing hosted a seniors' mental health webinar series and my age-friendly newsletters promoted mental health and addiction programs. The ministry also provides funding toward initiatives that address social inclusion, social isolation, and mental wellness for diverse senior populations.

Another mechanism, that continues to expand, is encouraging age-friendly communities, which help seniors remain engaged by developing environments that facilitate exercise, social connection, and respect for seniors. Seniors and Housing provides expertise, resources, and best practices to support community-led age-friendly initiatives. This work has included supporting the creation of an Alberta Age-Friendly Community of Practice, which helps and mentors communities in various stages of implementing their initiatives. Ministry staff also work with the Public Health Agency of Canada to generate national and international recognition of communities' commitments to becoming an age-friendly community, including membership in the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

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I trust this information has been helpful. Thank you again for writing, and for the continued partnership of Alberta Municipalities' members in prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of seniors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josephine Pon', written over the printed name and title.

Josephine Pon  
Minister of Seniors and Housing

cc: Honourable Jason Copping  
Minister of Health