



# ALBERTA ASSOCIATION ON GERONTOLOGY

## **Vision 2030 for Seniors Services: Symposium Summary Findings**

## Vision 2030 for Seniors Services Symposium

### **BACKGROUND:**

Alberta's population, like the rest of Canada, is aging. In 2019, 13% of the population was over 65 years of age. This cohort is expected to more than double by 2041, representing 19% of the population. The oldest component of the senior population, those over 80 years of age, is expected to show a significant surge, increasing from 3% of Albertans in 2012 to 6.4% in 2041. This age group is expected to place a major demand on health care, home care and assisted living services.

This upcoming group of older adults, the baby boomers, is expected to have different lifestyle preferences than the current generation of elderly Albertans. Independence and choice is important to them, and their expectations of these features in health and social services will be different.

For this reason, the Alberta Association on Gerontology (AAG), together with 16 other organizations as collaborators, decided to host a ***Vision 2030 for Seniors Services Symposium*** to discuss the future vision for seniors' services. They felt it is important that we plan for these future changes, and that health and social services professionals, the public and gerontologists have an opportunity to discuss the future service needs of seniors and express their ideas on the changes required to achieve a preferred vision.

### **EMERGING INTERNATIONAL POLICY TRENDS:**

Prior to planning the Symposium program experts and members of the Collaborative Planning Committee discussed and reviewed policy trends that are being implemented around the world to meet the future needs of this new generation of elderly. They identified the following six emerging international trends:

- 1. Emphasizing wellness and independence for seniors***
- 2. Enhancing community capacity***
- 3. Integrating health and social care***
- 4. Shifting priorities of services in continuing care from institutional care to home and community care***
- 5. Transforming the health system to meet future needs of older adults***
- 6. Addressing the cultural diversity of the future population***

The Collaborative Planning Committee planned the Symposium program around these trends.

#### **EVIDENCE-BASED FINDINGS:**

The findings of the Symposium are based on a three-part evidence-based process:

1. Regional consultations with seniors and other Albertans were conducted at six sites in Alberta to understand the views and needs of Albertans for future seniors' services.
2. Literature review was conducted on grey literature that document demonstration projects, evaluations and briefings from projects that are of relevance to the Symposium planning.
3. A Discussion Symposium was held on November 12-14, 2019 starting with presentations by national and international experts on future needs for seniors' services and concluding with participants' group discussions and recommendations. More than 300 health and social services clinicians, policy planners from government departments, voluntary, private and public agencies, seniors and caregivers attended the Symposium and joined in the Discussion Groups on the future vision, and policy and services priorities for Alberta seniors in 2030.

#### **THE 2030 VISION FOR SENIORS SERVICES IN ALBERTA:**

**The Symposium participants' Vision for Seniors Services for 2030 is one in which the quality of life for seniors is achieved, that they are engaged, empowered and enabled to live their aging lives with financial security, living in inclusive communities, with social connectedness and health care access.**

#### **PRIORITY POLICIES TO ACHIEVE BEFORE 2030:**

The three priority policies recommended to be achieved before 2030 by Symposium participants are as follows:

1. **Support for family caregivers**
2. **Provide community supports and financial security for seniors**
3. **Provide accessible information and health care services**

Other additional priority policies recommended are as follows:

- Provide equitable access to services for all in both rural and urban areas
- Address needs of marginalized seniors
- Acknowledge government accountability
- Enhance primary care, continuing care, dementia/Alzheimer's care, mental health
- Address social isolation
- Improve transportation

Participants suggested that when designing policies, the following features be addressed:

- Provide engaged, enhanced and integrated community care
- Develop adaptable, flexible, responsive policies and care options
- Provide appropriate, sufficient and sustainable funding
- Provide accessible and affordable services that respect personal choice and autonomy
- Design affordable and accessible living communities that bring people together
- Use a team-based approach for client care

### **PRIORITY SERVICES TO ACHIEVE BEFORE 2030**

The three priority services recommended to be achieved before 2030 by Symposium participants are as follows:

- 1. Enhance system navigation**
- 2. Enhance home care and support services**
- 3. Support active and healthy aging, enable technology financial support, support family caregivers, and develop age friendly and inclusive communities**

Other additional priority services recommended are as follows:

- Enhance respite care
- Enhance dementia and mental health services
- Develop companion programs
- Enhance end of life care

Participants suggested that when designing services, the following features be addressed:

- Provide coordinated, integrated, cross-sectoral partnerships, especially between health and social service providers
- Provide convenient, accessible, inclusive, timely and sustainable services
- Design inclusive and intergenerational communities
- Focus on personalized, person-centred services incorporating personal choices and sensitive to cultural and linguistic needs

**CONCLUSION:**

The Alberta Association on Gerontology and Collaborative Planning Committee believe that planning for services to meet the future needs of seniors is important. The number of seniors in Alberta is expected to rise substantially over the next ten years and peak around 2030. The urgency for planning requires us to act now. We urge that policy makers in government departments, organizations and agencies address the above-mentioned findings of the ***AAG Vision 2030 for Seniors Services Symposium*** as a priority. We are available to meet and dialogue with policy makers to plan collaboratively to make this vision a reality before 2030.

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