



Alberta Liberal Party Response to Questions Posed by the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association

1. What is your party's commitment to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Coverage for Seniors Benefit?

The Alberta Liberals are fully committed to maintaining funding for the Alberta Seniors' Benefit and have no plans to reduce financial support for that valuable program.

2. What are your party's plans to improve the access to safe and affordable assisted-living facilities?

Assisted living is one of the key areas that the Alberta Liberals will boost spending in. See our response to Question #4.

3. How would you make ageing in place and/or Home Care a more viable solution and option for our senior population?

Home care is one of the key areas that the Alberta Liberals will boost spending in. See our response to Question #4.

4. Specify essential programs and identify the funding your party will put in place to support all seniors in Alberta.

In terms of health supports for seniors, the Alberta Liberals will target continuing and preventative care to drive down skyrocketing costs. Our plan will not spend more; it will spend more smartly. And seniors will receive better services. Our continuing care plan includes a commitment to build 2,200 new long-term care beds over the next four years. Non-profit, faith-based and private companies are currently able to build these beds for half the cost. We will take advantage of this opportunity to save Albertans money. We will also invest another \$150 million over the same period into home care and assisted living. Many Albertans would be better served by long-term care and home care instead of taking up acute care beds. Both are significantly less costly. Albertans will see the immediate benefits. We will focus on a proactive health care strategy. This includes boosting community care. We will also redirect patients and resources into long-term care and home care. More acute care spaces will be freed up for priority patients. The Alberta Liberals will also commission a preventative health care task force. This commission will evaluate preventative health care strategies that help reduce long-term costs without jeopardizing outcomes or access.

We will initially invest \$100 million towards expanding preventative care. We will also boost funding for mental health initiatives to 9 per cent of the total Health budget, an increase of \$662 million.

5. What are your party's plans to enhance the availability of resources to provide health care for seniors in Alberta? (i.e. geriatricians)

The Alberta Liberals fully acknowledge that seniors are a rapidly growing demographic in Alberta, and that our health care system needs to adjust to this reality. We are committed to keeping up with this demographic shift by boosting resources for seniors, including the creation of more continuing care and assisted living spaces, expanding home care services and ensuring that AHS has a sufficient number of senior-focused medical specialists on staff.

6. What is your party's position to ensure that there are appropriate programs (tax and wellness initiatives) in place for seniors so they can continue to maintain an active and affordable lifestyle in retirement?

The Alberta Liberals believe that preventative health and wellness measures pay huge dividends both in terms of maintaining and encouraging a healthier population and reducing health care costs. The idea of a seniors' fitness tax credit has merit, and is certainly worth exploring as part of the preventative health care task force that we'd commission.

7. What does your party see as the role of the Alberta Office of the Seniors' Advocate?

The Alberta Liberals believe that the role of the Seniors' Advocate is to provide information to seniors on programs, services and benefits that are available to them. This should not be limited to government-sponsored items alone, but should encompass the full breadth of programs and services available to seniors – including things like housing options, consumer and fraud protection, and items of a social or recreational nature. The office should really serve as a one-stop shop that is able to respond to or provide advice on any questions that seniors might have. The office should also be available to help seniors complete forms or applications for programs and services and assist with appeals or representing seniors in their dealings with program officials. The office should also proactively speak out and provide public commentary on issues of importance to seniors and represent them whenever any legislative or program changes affecting seniors are under consideration by government.

8. Does your party have any other policy positions that you feel would be of interest to Alberta seniors?

The Alberta Liberals will discontinue the Seniors Property Tax Deferral Program and reinstate the Seniors School Property Tax Assistance Program.

The Alberta Liberals will also exempt branches of the Royal Canadian Legion from having to pay property tax.