

September 16, 2010

## **Health consultation report available to Albertans**

### ***Health Charter, Health Advocate among recommendations***

*Edmonton...* Edmonton Rutherford MLA Fred Horne has released a report containing recommendations on developing an Alberta Health Act which is intended to help guide Alberta's publicly funded health system into the future. Minister of Health and Wellness, Gene Zwozdesky received the report on September 15 and requested it be released to the public as soon as possible. He also indicated he would respond to the report's recommendations in October.

The report, comprised of 2 parts, was prepared by MLA Horne and an 8-member Advisory Committee, and is the result of a 4-month dialogue with Albertans that was focused on gathering their views about an Alberta Health Act.

Part One, *Putting People First - Recommendations For An Alberta Health Act* provides 15 recommendations that cover areas such as guiding principles, a health charter and public engagement. Part Two, *Putting People First - A Summary of Views*, provides a comprehensive summary of input provided by Albertans through community workshops held across the province, a public survey, and written submissions.

"This was a tremendous opportunity to listen to what people had to say about the state of health and health care in Alberta," said MLA Horne. "I am grateful to everyone: to Albertans for taking the time to share their views, wisdom and insight; to the members of our Advisory Committee for their help and stewardship; to Alberta's 12 Health Advisory Councils for hosting the community workshops; and, to all those who provided written submissions. The recommendations in this report, shaped by Albertans, lay out a framework for moving forward on new health legislation and improvements to the health system and most importantly deliver a clear message: Albertans want a health system that puts people first."

In February of this year, Minister Zwozdesky asked MLA Horne to lead the consultation with the support of an advisory committee. This consultation followed government's acceptance of the 4 recommendations from the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health this past January.

"Albertans want to be engaged in decisions that affect their health care system," said Zwozdesky. "The consultation process that I asked MLA Fred Horne to undertake involved more than 1300 Albertans in 23 communities across the province. This is important work that will provide our government with a greater understanding of what Albertans expect from their publicly funded health care system and what we, as a government, can do to make it even stronger."

Recommendations include: establishing principles in the Alberta Health Act that clearly put people &nbsp;first; mandating a Health Charter that acknowledges that health and health care are a partnership between individuals, families, communities, health providers and the government; establishing a Health Advocate; and new approaches to public engagement on health legislation, regulation and policy matters.

The report also recommends making a commitment in the Health Charter that all Albertans have access to primary care through primary care teams.

You can view the report and the written submissions provided to MLA Horne and the advisory committee at [www.health.alberta.ca](http://www.health.alberta.ca).

The Alberta government has a clear plan for a strong economic recovery. An important part of *The Way Forward* is maintaining support for programs and services Albertans need most, such as health care, education and safe and vibrant communities. For more information on the plan visit [Alberta.ca](http://Alberta.ca).

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**Backgrounders:** Alberta Health Act consultation recommendations; Proposed Alberta Health Act Principles; Proposed Draft Health Charter; Major milestones in ongoing development of Alberta Health Act

**Media inquiries may be directed to:**

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## Alberta Health Act consultation recommendations

### Principles to guide the health system

1. Set out the aspirations Albertans have for their health system. Legislative language in the preamble to the Act should recognize Alberta's commitment to the principles of the *Canada Health Act*.
2. Include overarching principles in the preamble that "put people first" and will guide policies, organization, operations and decisions throughout the health system. These principles should further define how our beliefs are to be reflected in the health system and guide our approach to health, including a view of health that gives greater focus to wellness.

### Public engagement framework

3. Establish a requirement within the Act that public notice be provided when regulations under the Act are proposed, with a specific notice period to provide adequate time for public input.
4. Establish a requirement within the Act that any feedback received in an engagement process must be considered by the Minister prior to making proposed regulations.

### Provide for a Health Charter

5. Require the establishment of a Health Charter and make it explicit in the Act that the Health Charter will:
  - Recognize that health is a partnership among individuals, families, communities, health professionals, organizations that deliver health care and services, and the Alberta government;
  - Acknowledge the impact of a person's health status and other circumstances on their capacity to interact with the health system;
  - Not be used to limit access to health services;
  - Not be subject to or be the basis of litigation within the court system.
6. The Health Charter should specifically commit that all Albertans have access to primary care services through primary care teams.
7. Establish a requirement within the Act for a Health Advocate who reports to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Health Advocate should be mandated to do the following:
  - Provide education on the Health Charter and what it means for people and the health system;
  - Help people determine the appropriate resolution mechanism through which they can have their concerns addressed and resolved;
  - Provide assistance to Albertans in accessing appropriate resolution mechanisms in the health system through the use of education, guidance and referral;
  - Advocate on behalf of citizens who bring forward concerns under the Health Charter;
  - Review and report on individual Health Charter-related issues that are not addressed by current resolution mechanisms;
  - Report annually to Albertans.

8. Stipulate within the Act a specific time frame for periodic review of the Health Charter.
9. Include a requirement that professional colleges and other entities regulated under key pieces of health legislation, such as the *Health Professions Act* and the *Regional Health Authorities Act*, ensure their bylaws, codes of conduct and operating guidelines are consistent with the Health Charter, as well as complying with the principles contained within the Act.

#### Realizing the Aims of the Alberta Health Act

10. Establish processes of public engagement with respect to:
  - The development, amendment or repeal of strategic government policies, statutes, or regulations relating to the health system; and
  - Consultation on the health system generally, including local health priorities.
11. Mandate the Health Quality Council of Alberta to measure, monitor, assess and regularly report to Albertans through the Minister on whether the health system is performing in accordance with the principles in the Alberta Health Act and the Health Charter mandated by the Act.
12. Engage the general public and health stakeholders in validating a draft Health Charter.
13. Develop and pursue ways of building knowledge and understanding about the Health Charter throughout the health system and broadly among Albertans.

#### Establish measures for Alberta's health system

14. Measures should be developed and monitored for each of three key areas: health status of Albertans; health care outcomes; and health system performance.

These measures should reflect the intent and purpose of the Alberta Health Act, be tied to performance indicators and be publicly reported by the Minister of Health and Wellness on an annual basis.

#### Establish an independent entity to support evidence-based decision-making

15. A Steering committee should be established to develop a model for an arm's-length entity (first recommended by the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health) that would support evidence-based decision-making, and to determine the role and function of that entity. This Steering committee should include public members.

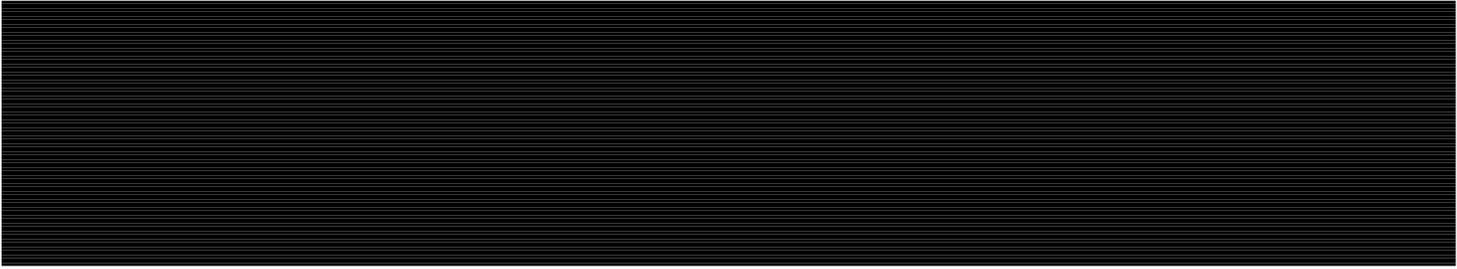
The government will review the consultation report and present a formal response in October.

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## **Proposed Alberta Health Act Principles**

The principles being recommended for inclusion in the Alberta Health Act will be used to guide policies and decisions made throughout Alberta's health system.

Albertans believe that the policies, organization, operations and decisions about Alberta's health system should be guided, measured and sustained consistent with a set of principles, specifically that:

- The quality and safety of health services received by individuals, families and communities is assured.
- All Albertans have access to timely and appropriate care.
- Accessibility is based on need, not on an Albertan's ability to pay.
- The system recognizes that health encompasses a person's physical, spiritual and mental health, from birth to the end of life.
- Health services are delivered in ways that understand the experiences, recognize the perspectives, and respond to the health needs of individuals, families and communities.
- Health professionals are encouraged and empowered to work collaboratively, ethically, efficiently, and in ways that maximize their skills, training and competencies.
- Alberta's health system is built on long-term planning, innovation, adaptation and continuous improvement.
- Health decisions and the allocation and use of health resources are done in such a way that they are transparent to Albertans, and ensure the publicly-funded system is sustained for the future.
- Decisions made across the health system are based on the best available evidence, a holistic view of health and wellness, and the principles articulated within the preamble to an Alberta Health Act.

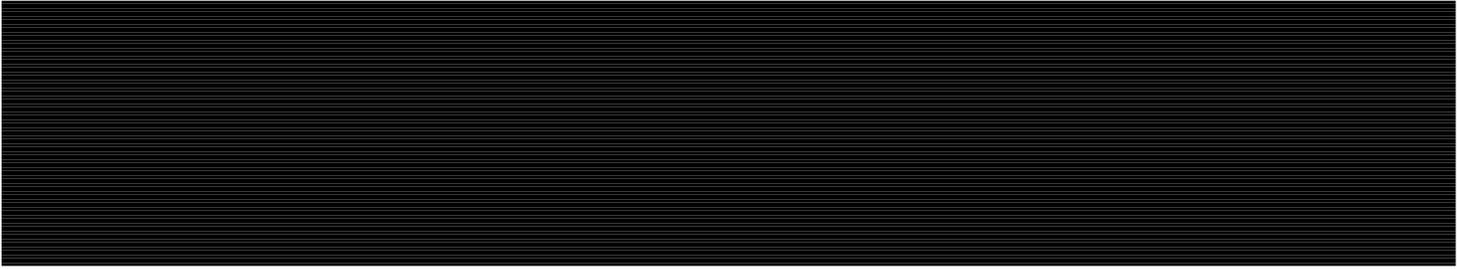
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## **Proposed Draft Health Charter**

Albertans acknowledge that health is a partnership among individuals, families, communities, health professionals, organizations that deliver health care and services and the government. My health status is impacted by my family and social circumstances, my education, my community, housing, and broad economic and social policy. As a citizen, I am involved with my health and wellbeing.

### **When I interact with the health system, I expect that I will:**

- Have my health status, social and economic circumstances and personal beliefs and values acknowledged;
- Be treated with respect and dignity;
- Have access to team-based primary care services;
- Have the confidentiality and privacy of my health information respected;
- Be informed in ways that I understand so that I may make informed decisions about my health, health care and treatment;
- Be able to participate fully in my health and health care;
- Be supported through my care journey and helped to find and access the health services and care that I require;
- Receive information on the health system and education about healthy living and wellness;
- Have timely and reasonable access to safe, high quality health services and care;
- Have timely and reasonable access to my personal health information;
- Have the opportunity to raise concerns and receive a timely response to my concerns, without fear of retribution or an impact on my health services and care.

### **Taking my circumstances into account and to the best of my abilities, when I interact with the health system, I understand that I will be asked to:**

- Respect the rights of other patients and health providers;
- Ask questions and work with providers to understand the information I am being provided;
- Demonstrate that I, or my guardian and/or caregivers, understand the care plan we have developed together and that steps are being taken to follow the plan
- Treat health services as a valuable public resource;
- Learn how to better access health services;
- Make healthy choices in my life.

### **As I work to be a healthy citizen within Alberta, I expect that:**

- When economic, fiscal and social policies are being developed by the Alberta

government the impact of those policies on public health, wellness and prevention will be considered and steps taken to ensure that public policy is healthy policy.

**All health professionals, their professional colleges, and organizations providing health care or services must acknowledge and respect the expectations expressed within this health charter.**

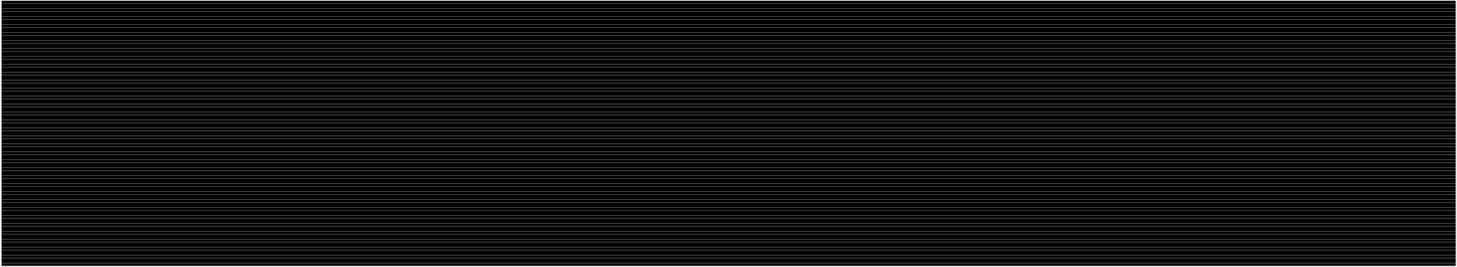
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## **Major milestones in ongoing development of Alberta Health Act**

### **September 2009**

- The Alberta government establishes the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health (MACH) to examine Alberta's health legislation.
- Membership of the MACH includes health professionals and researchers, health stakeholders and members of the public.
- The MACH consults with stakeholders and members of the public.

### **January 2010**

- The MACH presents its report, *A Foundation for Alberta's Health System*, which receives broad support from health professional organizations and other key stakeholders.
- In its report, the MACH determines that Alberta's current health legislation is creating barriers to the efficient and effective delivery of health services to Albertans.
- The MACH recommends the creation of a principles-based Alberta Health Act that would guide policies and decisions throughout the health system and serve as the focal point to modernize Alberta's legislative framework for health.

### **February 2010**

- The Government of Alberta accepts all of the recommendations made by the MACH, and announces its intention to introduce an Alberta Health Act in the Alberta Legislature.
- Minister Zwozdesky appoints MLA Horne and an 8-member Advisory Committee to consult with Albertans regarding the 4 major recommendations in the MACH Report, and requests that a blueprint for action be provided to him before September 30 regarding how those recommendations might be implemented.

### **April - August 2010**

- Website with online survey is developed. Workshops are held in 23 communities with more than 1,300 people participating, 1,500 web-based surveys are completed and more than 80 organizations make written submissions.

### **September 15, 2010**

- Minister Zwozdesky receives the Alberta Health Act consultation report from MLA Horne.

### **September 16, 2010**

- Fred Horne, MLA Edmonton Rutherford, and Chair of the Alberta Health Act

Consultation, releases to the public the final report of the 4-month long public consultation, as requested by Minister Zwozdesky.

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