

November 27, 2019

The Honourable Tyler Shandro, Minister of Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB
Canada T5K 2B6

The Honourable Jason Luan, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
420 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB
Canada T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Shandro and Associate Minister Luan,

RE: 2019 Alberta Provincial Budget – Health & Mental Health and Addictions

Thank you for being a strong voice amongst cabinet members for the value of essential front-line services for Albertans. The YWCAs of Alberta were pleased to see ongoing support for mental health, treatment amongst domestic violence perpetrators and an emphasis on maintaining essential front line services.

The YWCAs of Alberta support over 30,000 Albertans in rural and urban areas across the province. We believe in a better Alberta that removes the policy red-tape that prevents vulnerable Albertans from thriving.

As we move into another four years of working on the important issues of addictions, homelessness, domestic violence and the well-being of Albertans we hope to partner closely with the Ministry of Health and Alberta Health Services to maximize the impact of public dollars and improve outcomes.

More specifically, through these challenging fiscal times, we would like to applaud the following Ministry of Health, and Mental Health and Addiction:

- Investing in the ConnectCare program is exactly the kind of client-focused initiative that ensures all Albertans are well cared for as they move through our health system;
- Ongoing investment in Primary Care Networks (PCNs) is a great way to build capacity in rural, and urban settings for health services access;
- We enthusiastically applaud this government's strong stance for mental health and addiction services, including its intent to develop an opioid response strategy and mental health strategy; and
- The Ministry's ongoing support for domestic violence treatment programs is a critical part of healing and ending domestic violence in Alberta.

To achieve the outcomes outlined in the Ministry's budget and business plan we would like to share the following strategic recommendations:

- Complete a systems map of all pre-existing prevention, and intervention supports for mental health and addiction to ensure strategic alignment of services with the Ministry's vision;
- Create a system of mental health and addictions supports that are low-barrier and integrated into housing, and shelter supports. For example, focus on reducing re-admission rates by ensuring that clients are discharged to appropriate housing and supports at the right time; and
- Design culturally relevant and sensitive addictions and mental health supports that meet the needs of Albertans who are women, Indigenous, newcomers, youth, LGBTQ2S+ and adults.

We welcome an opportunity to discuss these recommendations in further detail with both of you, members of the Mental Health and Addiction Advisory Council and Ministry staff.

Sincerely,

Sue Tomney, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Calgary
Connie MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Banff
Amber Niemeier, Interim Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Edmonton
Lena Neufeld, Program Director, YWCA Lethbridge

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