

Better Health Care

Issue

Health-care costs have consistently escalated in Canada, with health expenditures in Alberta increasing on average by 10 per cent in the last decade. As costs continue to grow, there is an increasing need to review and revise health care policy to ensure Canadians receive cost-effective and high-quality health care, considering the need for alternative delivery models.

Background

In Alberta, health spending represents close to 40 per cent and continues to claim a larger portion of the budget year after year. Unfortunately, large year over year increases in health care spending have not been matched by comparable increases in value through better outcomes and services. In fact, Alberta ranked second to last in access to primary care in several key indicators.²³ Under current structures, reducing the health-care budget for publicly delivered and funded health-care programs and services through drastically cutting programs and services, in effect, further restricts and rations health care services.

Albertans are continually and increasingly voicing their concern about access and availability of needed health-care services, while simultaneously expressing concern over consecutive provincial deficits and a ballooning debt.

The current health care system is unsustainable and delivering subpar results relative to the money spent. Albertans spend \$5,097 per capita compared to the national average of \$4,389.²⁴ Despite this spending, Alberta is a middle-of-the-pack performer relative to our provincial peers, and severely lacking relative to top-performing peer countries in a number of key indicators, but especially that of infant mortality.²⁵

Fundamental changes to how Alberta Health Care functions are required to ensure Albertans receive the best quality care and best value for their tax dollars.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends the Government of Alberta:

1. Implement the recommendations of the Auditor General's 2017 report on Alberta Health Services; and
2. Execute and implement the recommendations of a third-party review of system delivery and spending of Alberta health care services with the goal of increasing efficiency and delivery of services.

²³ KPMG Physician Services Analysis (2016). Alberta Government. <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Health-Spending-PhysicianServices-2016.pdf>

²⁴ Provincial Gov't Health Spending Comparisons. Health Economics Dashboard. <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/health-economics-dashboard1.html>

²⁵ Health – Provincial and Territorial Ranking (2015). Conference Board of Canada. <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/health.aspx>