

Assessment of Implementation Report

Alberta Seniors and Housing

Seniors Lodge Program

(October 2014) (October 2005)

Summary of Recommendations

We assessed the two outstanding recommendations from October 2005, which were repeated in October 2014, for the *Seniors Lodge Program*. We found both of these recommendations have been implemented:

IMPLEMENTED Recommendation:
Measuring program effectiveness and setting disposable income amount

IMPLEMENTED Recommendation:
Identify changing needs of lodge residents

Introduction

In April 2020, we completed an assessment of whether the Department of Seniors and Housing implemented our recommendations related to the Seniors Lodge Program.

The Seniors Lodge Program, administered by the Department of Seniors and Housing,⁵² provides room and board for seniors who are functionally independent but cannot live on their own. Core services provided in lodges under the program include basic room furnishings, meals, housekeeping services, linen services, security, 24-hour non-medical services and recreational activities.

Program funding comes from three sources: monthly lodge fees paid by residents, Lodge Assistance Program Grants from the Alberta Government, and municipal contributions. The *Alberta Housing Act* requires residents be left with a minimum of \$322 of monthly disposable income, regardless of the monthly lodge fee.⁵³

⁵² Housing staff at the department administer the program on behalf of Alberta Social Housing Corporation

⁵³ *Alberta Housing Act*—Current as of January 1, 2019 - Schedule

In 2005, we conducted a comprehensive audit on government systems to deliver care and programs to Alberta's seniors. In 2014, we repeated our recommendations when we found improvements were still not implemented.

We conclude the Department of Seniors and Housing has now implemented both recommendations.

NOTE:

We completed our assessment prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report focuses on the two outstanding recommendations on processes related to the Seniors Lodge Program administered by the Department of Seniors and Housing. The three outstanding recommendations to Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services from the October 2014 report on Seniors Care in Long-term Care Facilities are not yet ready for our assessment of implementation.

Recommendation:

Measuring program effectiveness and setting disposable income amount

IMPLEMENTED

Context

In 2005,⁵⁴ we recommended that the then Department of Seniors and Community Supports improve its processes to develop the measures it uses to assess the effectiveness of the Seniors Lodge Program and obtain sufficient information to periodically set the minimum disposable income of seniors used as a basis for seniors lodge rent charges.

We found the department:

- did not identify a specific objective for the program
- had limited information on the quality of services provided in the lodges
- did not periodically obtain and review information to assess whether the monthly disposable income rate for lodge residents is appropriate

In 2014,⁵⁵ we repeated our recommendation as processes had not been improved.

Current findings

In 2017, the department established a Lodge Working Group, which collaboratively developed the following objectives for the Seniors Lodge Program:

- Lodge accommodations are accessible to low income senior Albertans
- Lodge accommodations are safe and appropriate for seniors who require basic supportive living provisions, such as hospitality services
- Lodge accommodations provide a supportive living environment for seniors at a lower operating cost
- Senior Albertans are supported to delay transitioning into long-term care facilities

⁵⁴ *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta on Seniors Care and Programs—May 2005, pages 49-50*

⁵⁵ *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta—October 2014, page 183*

We found the department applied a process to evaluate these objectives against legislation and determined they were consistent with the *Alberta Housing Act* and *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation*. The department's process also used accepted best practices to develop performance measures and indicators with targets. We examined 11 metrics developed and confirmed the new process was applied. Some of the metrics developed include:

Resident income – to determine if the lodge program is accessible to its target population

Building vacancies – speaks to the demand for services provided by the lodges

Resident well-being – assessed by staff as well as residents or their families

Number of lodges in compliance with legislation – speaks to safety of the space and serves as a proxy for determining if the program is meeting the basic needs of residents.

In 2018-19, an amendment to the *Alberta Housing Act* mandated an increase to lodge residents' minimum disposable income based on the Alberta consumer price index. Based on this amendment, the department increased the required disposable income for residents by 2.2 per cent to \$322 as of January 1, 2019. We confirmed the department's 2.2 per cent increase met the requirements of the legislation.

The department implemented a new process for determining if disposable income is meeting the needs of its lodge residents, which included a review of the minimum income amount every five years. We examined the five-year review process currently underway with an estimated completion date of November 2020. The process involves the development and analysis of a client survey to produce a report with actionable recommendations and an evaluation of the implications of changes to disposable income.

At the time of our examination, the department was on track with its plan and had developed draft survey tools.

Recommendation:

Identify changing needs of lodge residents

IMPLEMENTED

Context

Our 2005⁵⁶ audit found that the Seniors Lodge Program did not include processes to consider the different physical space needs that lodge residents may require in the future.

We recommended that the department improve its processes for identifying the changing needs of lodge residents and consider this information in its capital plans for the Seniors Lodge Program.

In 2014,⁵⁷ we repeated our recommendation as processes had not improved.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta on Seniors Care and Programs—May 2005*, pages 50-51

⁵⁷ *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta—October 2014*, page 183

Current findings

The department established a Joint Capital-Planning Group with Alberta Health. This group is responsible for identifying and assessing capital needs for both the department's lodges and Alberta Health's continuing care space, and making recommendations for capital projects that will meet the needs of all seniors. Examples of future needs include expanding doorways, hallways and bathrooms to accommodate wheelchairs and upgraded electrical requirements.

The group receives information on seniors from Alberta Health including demographics, disease prevalence, proximity to health care facilities and anticipated space requirements. After analysing the needs assessment, the group determines if seniors' future needs can be met by existing infrastructure and if not, will make recommendations for required capital projects in both the department and Alberta Health to accommodate those needs.

Under the group's Memorandum of Understanding, the department is responsible for capital management and implementation, program and planning, and the financial framework and policy for its lodge projects. We examined the group's analysis of the April 2019 needs assessment, which resulted in recommendations for capital projects that would increase capacity in five lodges. We confirmed the recommendations were identified on the department's May 2019 capital plan and approved project listing.