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## Elder care in Alberta remains ‘in a state of crisis’

Unmet pledges of new government continuing a troubling trend

Stagnation in the number of long-term care beds, a continued shift to less-resourced and less regulated “supportive living” spaces, and higher levels of private for-profit delivery have left residential elder care in Alberta in a state of crisis, according to a new report released today by Parkland Institute.

***Losing Ground: Alberta’s Elder Care Crisis***, which updates a 2013 Parkland report, found that while long-term care (LTC) beds have increased by just 2.6% since 2010, the number of less-regulated, less-expensive designated supportive living (DSL) spaces have grown by 92.3%, and now account for 40% of all elder care beds. Over the same period, the province has lost a total of 333 beds in public facilities, while 3,255 beds in private for-profit facilities have been added, and now account for 43% of all available spaces.

“There’s a clear and troubling trend away from regulated, public long-term care beds in the province at precisely the time when demand is growing quickly due to a rapidly aging population,” according to report author David Campanella. “The result is that the LTC availability rate for seniors over 85 has fallen by almost half since 2001. This drop has greatly reduced the province’s ability to meet the care needs of its most frail seniors.”

The report also compared the level of care provided in public, private, and non-profit facilities, and found that public facilities provide on average an additional hour of direct care compared to other ownership types. Private facilities provided below-average levels of care across all categories of nursing staff.

“When it comes to quality of care, the data shows that ownership clearly matters,” Campanella says. “All ownership types actually fall short of recommended care standards, but the average public facility offers significantly more hours of care than other ownership models – nearly two weeks each year of additional hands-on care. But despite that reality, the province is continuing to move in the wrong direction.”

While the NDP pledged during the election a commitment to new public long-term care beds, the trend since the election has largely been to continue the approach of their PC predecessors. Of the 951 continuing care beds added since forming government, 75% have been supportive living spaces and 55% have been in for-profit facilities. Moreover, the report found that even if the targets were being met, the government’s goal of 2,000 new public beds is too modest to rectify the crisis.

Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. The report ***Losing Ground: Alberta’s Elder Care Crisis*** is available for download on Parkland’s website at [parklandinstitute.ca](http://parklandinstitute.ca).

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