

Notes on the Alberta Budget

On February 29, 2024, Alberta's Finance Minister presented the 2024 budget with investments in the health, education, and safety of Albertans and families. This memo highlights items that may be of interest to plan administrators, employers, and members.

Health Care

The Alberta Budget for 2024 includes \$475 million to support the continued implementation of the Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System, with \$200 million over two years to improve access to family physicians, \$10 million for primary healthcare initiatives in Indigenous communities, and \$15 million to further develop a compensation model for nurse practitioners. Also, \$2 billion per year is allocated for Drugs and Supplemental Health benefit programs, including \$883 million for the seniors drug program that supports over 700,000 seniors.

The Budget will allocate \$126 million over three years for the Rural Physician Expansion Program to increase rural and Indigenous access to medical education and increase the number of family medicine and generalist physicians. Also, \$6.6 billion will be included for physician compensation and development programs.

Aging with Dignity Agreement

The Budget also includes \$140 million per year over three years for the yet-to-be-signed, Federal Bi-Lateral Aging with Dignity Agreement, which includes \$70 million for long-term care initiatives and \$70 million for home and community care initiatives.

Mental Health Support

In the Alberta Budget for 2024, \$1.55 billion is dedicated to advancing the Alberta Recovery Model. This allocation aims to provide individuals grappling with addiction or mental health issues the chance to pursue recovery.

Families and Children

The Alberta Budget 2024 includes \$1.5 billion for child-care services to create more child-care spaces, and lower fees for parents and support service providers. Also, \$22 million over the next three years is allocated to index foster, kinship, and other caregiver rates to inflation (foster caregivers haven't seen increases to support rates since 2018).

Housing and Social Support

The Budget provides \$717 million in capital grants over three years to advance Alberta's Affordable Housing Strategy, while \$257 million will be allocated for the Seniors Lodge, Social Housing, Specialized Housing, Affordable Housing Strategy, and Rental Assistance programs. Additionally, a new 25% seniors discount for personal registry services and medical driving tests is being implemented in 2024-25, saving seniors between \$16 million and \$20 million per year.

Keeping Life Affordable

The Budget includes \$151 million in operating expenses for Seniors, Community, and Social Services, which works out to a 3% increase over the 2023-24 forecast after excluding that year's one-time affordability programs. Additionally, \$2.9 billion is allocated to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program, the Alberta Seniors Benefit and Income Support programs. \$355 million, or an increase of 9.6%, is included to cover indexation and population growth for payments under the Alberta Child and Family Benefit for lower income families. Families with two children are eligible for payments of up to \$3,641 for the 2024-25 benefit year.

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