

Response by the United Nurses of Alberta to the

Continuing Care Centres Concept Feedback Process

Friday, July 13, 2012

QUESTION 1: What level of support do you feel for the concept of Continuing Care Centres, including the vision, principles, key elements and goals as presented in the Moving Continuing Care Centres Forward concept paper?

United Nurses of Alberta strongly supports the general concept of integrated Continuing Care Centres as outlined in these sections of the concept paper. As Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses we are advocates of “an integrated and seamless approach to the provision of continuing care services.” For example, UNA supports the goals of the Canadian Nurses’ Association’s National Expert Commission on nursing that all Canadians would benefit from an approach to health and wellness that includes “merging health and social service workers in multi-disciplinary teams, working in consultation with the citizens they serve,” and further that governments need to develop policies that integrate the health needs of citizens into all proposed policies, laws and programs. In this regard, UNA is in tune with the general concept outlined in the Alberta Health concept paper.

That said, UNA is strongly opposed to increasing the role of private-sector operators in an activity that is a fundamental part of the health care system. Alberta’s continuing care system needs to be operated by the public sector, and staffed by properly trained public employees, with the efficiencies and lower costs the public sector is known to deliver. We are concerned by the presence in this document of words and phrases often used to suggest an increased role for the private sector. If the Alberta Government is serious about continuing care being “affordable to taxpayers” or “informed by evidence and input,” we are confident it will move toward a larger role for the public sector in continuing care.

QUESTION 2: What do you feel are the benefits of developing and implementing Continuing Care Centres?

UNA believes that a holistic approach to both health and wellness at all levels of government and through all sectors of the population is the mechanism by which Canadians and Albertans can achieve affordable and effective health care for all. As nurses, we believe we should work with other professionals to prevent, treat, care for and manage chronic disease. Nurses in particular are ideally placed to be partners with Albertans in their communities to promote healthy lifestyles, self-sufficiency and rewarding aging. So UNA strongly supports the idea of developing and implementing Continuing Care Centres – with the important proviso that to achieve their stated goals these centers need to be publicly managed as part of a broader health policy encompassing the entire population.

QUESTION 3: What if any challenges or barriers do you see to developing and implementing Continuing Care Centres?

UNA is concerned that the continuing emphasis within the Alberta government on the profit motive and the supposed efficiencies of the market sector, as well as the high costs both to the system overall and to individual citizens accessing its services, could pose serious impediments to the development of a truly effective, efficient and fair continuing care system. Further, we are gravely concerned by the process as we understand it to be underway, in which all stakeholders are not being consulted. UNA urges Alberta Health to rethink the consultative process and include all stakeholders, and to not develop proposals based on a preconceived bias toward a larger private sector, for-profit role in this essential part of the overall health care system.