



# Message from Honourable Josephine Pon Minister of Seniors and Housing

March 28, 2020

## Special Minister's Statement on COVID-19

As our efforts to address the public health emergency continue, I want to thank seniors-serving and housing partners for taking special care to look out for the Albertans we serve.

We know individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19. Our government is doing everything it can to prevent the spread and protect the most vulnerable.

### Seniors and fraud

In emergencies like this, dishonest groups or individuals often try to take advantage of our fear and uncertainty.

Deceitful individuals who may pose as door-to-door salespeople, telemarketers, collection agents and, sometimes even distant relatives asking for help, can target vulnerable individuals, especially seniors.

If you have a parent, grandparent, vulnerable family friend or neighbour, please watch out for them. Offer to be their buddy, someone they can check in with before responding to matters involving money. A calm, informed person can advise a senior in their life about a caller or salesperson who is legitimate or a scammer.

Please, do not respond to requests for personal information or immediate payment. Take a moment and call a person you trust.

### Public health orders

To protect the health and safety of Albertans, law enforcement agencies now have full authority to enforce public health orders and issue fines for violations. That includes the following:

- Mandatory 14-day [self-isolation for returning international travellers](#) or close contacts of people with confirmed COVID-19.
- Mandatory 10-day [self-isolation for people with symptoms](#) that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.
- Violations of [mass gathering restrictions](#) are now legally enforceable and subject to fines.

We encourage Albertans to report any [infractions](#) to provincial public health officials.

### Snowbirds

All Albertans who have travelled outside of the country, including snowbirds returning home from wintering in the United States and other countries, must enter mandatory isolation upon returning to Alberta and self-isolate for 14 days.

You must not stop at the grocery store on your way home, or pick up the dog at the kennel.

You must go directly and immediately home, self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

Returning snowbirds who are not experiencing symptoms can still go outside, but this does not mean visits to all outdoors areas are advisable. Feel free to take a walk around your neighbourhood, but make sure to maintain distance from others – at least six feet (about the length of a bicycle).

### **Family members in continuing care, long-term care and seniors lodges**

We are taking steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among people who live in various types of seniors accommodations.

A single individual designated by the resident or guardian is the only person who can visit a family member or friend living in continuing care, long-term care and seniors lodges in Alberta.

Facilities will have a greeter to verify that the resident or guardian has designated the visitor. Visitors will undergo a health screening, possibly a temperature check and a questionnaire, prior to entering the facility. Mandatory health screening protocols apply to staff, residents and essential visitors entering a facility.

As well, all facilities must follow enhanced cleaning practices and additional directions around the use of shared spaces and common activities.

We are taking these steps to protect seniors, and the staff who work at these facilities.

### **Non-essential medical appointments**

If your family physician or other health-care provider is unable or unwilling to receive you, we recommend you contact another health-care provider.

To find a family doctor near you who is accepting new patients, Primary Care Networks and the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta offer online tools.

Visit <https://albertafindadoctor.ca> and <https://search.cpsa.ca/physiciansearch>.

We recommend the postponement of any non-essential visits at this time.

You may also download the Babylon by Telus Health App to meet with Alberta-licensed physicians through your smartphone.

### **Family and Community Support Services**

Last week our government announced additional emergency funding to charities, non-profit and civil society organizations through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program to support their COVID-19 response.

Funding criteria and forms for emergency funding to charities, non-profit and civil society organizations is now [available](#).

We will continue to work with our important stakeholders to reach those who are most impacted by COVID-19.

### **Resources for caregivers**

Caregivers Alberta offers supports to all caregivers, including those who might be experiencing heightened feelings of stress, anxiety, and isolation. The organization has closed its office to help slow the spread of COVID-19, but continues to offer support through its Caregiver Advisor and online programming.

Click [here](#) to access Caregivers Alberta's COVID-19 resources including:

- Contact with the Caregiver Advisor at 780-453-5088 or 1-877-453-5088 (toll-free) or [ladams@caregiversalberta.ca](mailto:ladams@caregiversalberta.ca)
- Online peer support
- Online workshops.

Click [here](#) for more information about Caregivers Alberta's ONLINE Caregiver Support Community.

#### **Identifying concerns and solutions**

My ministry is currently working with key partners to find innovative ways we can help seniors-serving organizations continue to provide key services and mitigate the impacts and effects of social isolation.

If your organization has identified a concern, please email [seniorsinformation@gov.ab.ca](mailto:seniorsinformation@gov.ab.ca).

#### **Information and social supports**

For information and referrals to social supports in your community, visit [Alberta 211](#).

For more information on COVID-19, visit [alberta.ca/COVID19](http://alberta.ca/COVID19). For steps you can take to protect yourself and others visit [alberta.ca/prevent-the-spread.aspx](http://alberta.ca/prevent-the-spread.aspx).

Information that can be posted by your organization and shared with your clients is available [here](#). As additional materials are developed, they will be available online.

The health of Albertans is, and always will be, our top priority. We will get through this together.

Josephine Pon  
Minister of Seniors and Housing

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