



PRIORITY: Improved Care for **SENIORS**

“The best time to change course and address the wellbeing of seniors was many years ago. The second-best time is right now.”

ANDRÉ PICARD

Reporter, Columnist and Author

Neglected No More The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada’s Elders in the Wake of a Pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the deplorable conditions endured by seniors living in many long-term care facilities across Canada. It also laid bare the dreadful working conditions of health care aides and personal support workers who are asked to do so much yet given so little.


The evidence is clear: dehumanization and institutionalization, disorganized or poorly structured care delivery, inadequate staffing and training, lack of cultural sensitivity, woefully outdated infrastructure, not to mention a regulatory and bureaucratic approach that focuses on tasks rather than on seniors’ needs and quality of life.

In the face of such overwhelming evidence, the Alberta Francophone Health Network (RSA) is stepping up efforts to ensure senior care remains a priority to bring about real systemic change. To this end, the RSA is working collaboratively with key stakeholders, providing strategic support at the decision-making levels of the health care system.

FRANCOPHONE Population: Rapidly Increasing and Changing Health NEEDS




[...] **Significant increases** were noted in the 2016 Census. Half of Alberta's Francophones come from elsewhere in Canada, and the province attracts many Francophone immigrants from Africa. This diversity increases the demographic importance of the Franco-Albertan population which is becoming increasingly visible.

 <https://l-express.ca/portrait-de-la-francophonie-canadienne>



More than 264,700 Albertans can speak both English and French. From 2011 to 2016, there was an increase of 22% of people whose mother tongue is French and of 53% of people who speak French most often at home.

 <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics/french-presence-alberta>



More than half of Franco-Albertans live in and around Calgary and Edmonton. Francophones are also present in the other economic regions of the province, especially in the Athabasca-Grande Prairie-Peace River and Wood Buffalo-Cold Lake areas.

 <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics/french-presence-alberta>



The **65+ age group** is a growing segment within the Franco-Albertan population. According to the Fédération des aînés franco-albertains, there are 32,000 French-speaking seniors in the province, representing 37% of the population [...]. Statistics Canada estimates that seniors could represent more than one-fifth of the population by 2025 and one-quarter by 2059.

 https://www.fafalta.ca/fichiers/rapport_annuel_2021_v2-compressed.pdf

IMPACT of Language BARRIERS

Research has documented the negative impact of language barriers on the health of Francophones. Seniors, especially those suffering from dementia and other cognitive disorders leading to second language attrition, are among the most vulnerable.



“Patients and interpreters-navigators described experiences where language barriers contributed to poorer patient assessment, misdiagnosis and/or delayed treatment, incomplete understanding of patient condition and prescribed treatment, and impaired confidence in services received. Reliance on Google Translate and ad hoc, untrained interpreters are commonly reported, in spite of evidence highlighting the risks associated with such practices.”

Researchers Danielle de Moissac¹ and Sarah Bowen²

 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31236448>



STANDARDS That Take FRANCOPHONES Into Account

The work being done at the national level by the Health Standards Organization (HSO) is of great importance to the health and well-being of Albertans, especially seniors. As a result of the pandemic's impact and following extensive consultations with residents, families and staff, the HSO is developing a new national standard for long-term care.

Consultation reports indicate that most respondents share a common national vision anchored in the following core components:



Resident and family-centred care practices that value respect, dignity, trust and quality of life;



Safe, reliable, high-quality care evolved from evidence-based practices;



A strong workforce that is trained, competent and supported in the delivery of sustainable, team-based and compassionate care;



A results-oriented organizational culture focused on ensuring the safety and well-being of all Canadians.

These insights and a wealth of Canadian input on the development of a new standard, are documented in comprehensive reports. [Click here](#) to learn more.

The RSA contributed to the new national vision for long-term care by ensuring that the voices of Francophone Albertans was and is being heard. This is all the more important as they are already disadvantaged by systemic language barriers. These barriers significantly impact their state of health and undermine their ability to take charge of their own health.

Language and culture are recognized as determinants of health. Long-term care, and the standards that provide a guiding framework for care delivery, must take them into account. In this way, we can ensure that safe, quality care is provided to seniors in a culturally responsive manner and environment.

Another important national standard developed by the HSO is one specifically designed to improve and promote **access to health and social services in official languages**. This standard provides guidance to service organizations, external evaluation agencies and policy makers. [Click here](#) to learn more.

In this regard, the RSA continues to play a leading role, raising awareness and influencing decision-making by government, health authorities and educational institutions.

A Better **FUTURE** for Alberta's Aging **POPULATION**



As a society, we now recognize that a culturally responsive, diverse and inclusive health care system is one that significantly outperforms any other. For Alberta's population, this translates into improved health outcomes.

The seniors of today and tomorrow deserve nothing less than the full deployment of our best joint efforts to modernize long-term care together.

“We need to unleash a similar all-out effort to improve the care of elders. As we rebuild society and the economy, we have an opportunity to do things differently, to do them better. Elders have borne the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic, and they should be the greatest beneficiaries as we come out the other side.”

Source: *Neglected No More*
The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada's Elders in the Wake of the Pandemic, 2021



RÉSEAU SANTÉ ALBERTA (RSA) — OUR HEALTH CARE VISION

A health system that provides culturally responsive care to Francophone Albertans.

In nearly 20 years, we have made strides towards achieving this vision with the support of volunteers and in partnership with our community, health care professionals, the health care system and the government of Alberta. The RSA plays a leading role, informing, influencing and mobilizing stakeholders to work together in improving access to French-language health care across Alberta, where it matters most.